

SOCIO-CULTURAL DYNAMICS AND RESILIENCE SKILLS IN FEMALE HIGHER EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY OF DISTRICT LORALAI, BALOCHISTAN

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Abstract

The educated female role is significant in the socio-economic development of a country. Unfortunately, female participation in socio-economics growth is unsatisfactory because of the low literacy ratio. The current study aims to understand sociocultural and economic factors' impacts on female higher education in the Loralai District. This study employs a qualitative approach to examine the perception of female students about the barriers in higher education. For the data collection, semi-structured interviews were conducted to investigate the socio-cultural hindrance female students face in getting enrolment into higher education in Balochistan. The data was collected from (11) participants including enrolled and dropped-out girls from university. Interviews were analyzed using thematic coding analysis. The results indicated that conservative families' mindsets, rigid societal norms, financial constraints, parent educational backgrounds, early marriages, and co-education limit female access to higher education.

According to the study, peer-led programs like study groups, informal mentoring, and group problem-solving help female students show remarkable social resilience in spite of these obstacles. Especially in areas with inadequate formal resources, these grassroots support networks promote resilience in education and decrease institutional gaps. In conclusion, the development of peer leadership and group coping strategies shows the adaptive strength of female students in Loralai, even though sociocultural constraints still play a significant role. This emphasizes the necessity of identifying and promoting these unofficial resilience strategies within educational policy frameworks.

1. INTRODUCTION

Education is a gear wheel for the development of a country, whether it is the education of males or females. They both equally function in uplifting the nation in every field of life. Still, unluckily due to different issues, female education receives less attention in the rural areas of Pakistan. Socioeconomic issues are one of these issues. Memon (2007) stated that Pakistan's education sector's condition is not as encouraging as that of other developing countries. Despite this, it elevates individuals' productivity and produces a skilled workforce who can find the path of supportable economic development (World Bank, 2018). Indeed, higher education may strengthen female empowerment because it empowers qualified and skilled women to become role models and leaders for young girls. It helps women select areas of expertise, whether as verdict makers through influence on plan or policy issues associated with cultural, economic, and social development, or by their contribution to household and community life (Shaukat & Siddiquah, 2013).

Zubair (2008) analyzed that low enrollment ratios at higher levels, extensive inequalities between genders, and regions, deficiency of qualified and trained teachers, inadequate physical infrastructure, and lack of teaching

materials indicate the deficient performance of the education sector. Currently, the question is how to attract female students to higher education despite various restrictions in these areas of Balochistan. Haider (2008) concluded that highly educated females can share their services for the improvement of the national economy which can ensure continuous social change across the country. In this context, it is documented that qualified females can act as role models for the rest of the women (Iqbal & Iqbal, 2011). In the modern world wealth or poverty is closely associated with the quality of education which is reflected as a scale for the feat of nation. Therefore, the countries are understanding the emerging necessity of educational progress and taking suitable steps to augment the benchmark of education (Bilal & Imran, 2012). Moreover, the Higher Education Commission (HEC) has been striving to improve female quality of education and mitigate gender disparity.

Pakistan slowly changed its identity from a conservative religious state to a liberal and moderate state for female education, but unluckily, the traditional norms are still dominant in far-flung parts of the country. Earlier studies show that educated and cultured parents prefer their daughters to be enrolled in higher education, but less educated parents enforce restrictions on their daughter's higher education (Mehmood, et al., 2018).

Magaji (2010) revealed that even though getting an education is a fundamental right of human beings, various factors have been determined to be accountable for the low ratio of admission of girls in universities when compared with the enrollment of boys. Including these factors, as indicated in the study, are sociocultural obstacles, destitution, strict confusion of the religious book, cultural refusal attitude toward female higher education, sex tendencies, and early marriages. These components hinder the advancement of females in the civic arena. Orakzai (2011) stated that in Pashtun societies female participation in the public sector is not regarded because a few rigid groups of people have misinterpreted religion, thus the misinterpretation of religious matters damaged female education in these areas. Indeed, these localities are under the influence of clumsy local clerics. The present condition of baffled Islamic beliefs is tough to settle with female higher education in Pakistan. Many assaults have been made on female educational institutions in various parts of Pakistan.

In addition, higher education institutions are controlled by the wings of Islamic groups that are active in banning male-female gatherings and participation in debates and political discussions that may stress the tolerance of the guardians. Female students are not permitted to participate in musical programs, such as concerts, drama, poetry, and theater (Mehmood, et al., 2018). Similarly, Mullahs in mosques and madrassas teach kids only the Holy Quran, and basic Islamic knowledge, and deprive them of scientific and modern education. Thus, they develop a close association with the parents. These Mullahs misinformed parents that Islamic teachings do not allow females to go outside for education, but they need to perform only household activities (Mehmood, et al., 2018). Consequently, parents with poor educational backgrounds forbade their daughters to be admitted to educational institutions which has enlarged the gender gap in the society (Hoodbhoy, 2006). In another study, Bior (2019) concluded that sociocultural elements are a major threat to girls' access to education. These factors comprising early marriages, pregnancies, parenteral level of education, child labour, and strong cultural beliefs are the main obstacles to female education.

Mehmood, et al., (2012) concluded that the cultural limitations and gender-wise education in Pakistan, have been crucial to empower women. Indeed, the female population is more than half of the total, but their education has been neglected which is leading to augmented dependency and impeding economic growth. Moreover, educational policies have been formed and implemented by different governments but have failed to deliver due to cultural and social challenges that hamper gender equality. Thus, women in Pakistan have been facing social, cultural, and economic challenges, especially in rural areas which resulted in low-managed female education (Mehmood, et al., 2012). Reinforces causes contradiction requirements

The female population faces numerous issues when pursuing higher education and admitting to professions. Even some females who cope to attain higher education face a male-subjugated culture in the workplace, which underpins socio-cultural norms and causes an inconsistency between cultural and professional necessities, leading to demotivation (Shaukat & Pell, 2017).

Mehmood (2018) stated that females are the deprived segment in Pakistani society. Despite numerous policies that have been introduced by the government to empower its females none of them is successful in obtaining the target. Gender disparity has continued in the sector of higher education due to different economic and socio-cultural issues. Indeed, it shows that parents are extremely sensitive to their daughters' physical safety and the danger of sexual harassment prevents them from admitting their daughters to colleges and universities. In addition, outdated and conservative cultural values and norms also become a hurdle in the way of female higher education. Similarly, deprivation and financial scarcity are prevailing which leads to low female enrolment in higher education (Mehmood, 2018).

In another study, it was revealed that female students have been facing transportation issues, especially in rural areas in Balochistan. They have no adequate transport facility from home to university. Thus, transportation significantly hinders their higher studies in the far-flung areas of the region (Shahzad, 2017).

Objectives

- To reveal the impacts of sociocultural factors affecting female higher education in the Loralai Division
- To explore the economic factors affecting female education in the Loralai Division.

Research Questions

- What are the impacts of socio-cultural factors on female higher education in the Loralai Division?
- To what extent do economic factors affect female education in the Loralai Division?

Research Design

In the current study, the method used was a qualitative approach. For an in-depth understanding of the phenomena, the qualitative approach was chosen rather than the quantitative which intends to obtain a breadth of understanding (Palkinkas, 2015). In parallel, this research explored the types and influences of socio-cultural factors that confine the admittance of females to higher education institutions in Balochistan. Thus, to examine the girls' perception of their experiences regarding higher education, interviews were conducted with the help of literature and primary data, therefore, a semi-structured interview protocol was adopted. Kabir (2016) concluded that an interview in the qualitative research approach is one of the most important instruments for generating in-depth data in a natural setting. Moreover, a semi-structured interview allows the investigator to obtain more data on the themes. Another study by Adams (2015) stated that a semi-structured interview is an essential instrument for collecting qualitative data. Indeed, the main purpose of a semi-structured interview is to gather information from the respondents who have undergone similar circumstances, such as personal experiences, perceptions attitudes, and beliefs related to the topic (Vaughn, 2018).

Therefore, to collect data pertinent to sociocultural factors impeding female higher education, semi-structured interviews were conducted with parents, girls enrolled in university and dropped-out girls from higher education institutions in the Loralai Division. The main purpose of conducting interviews from three categories (girls enrolled in and dropped out from university) was to find the relationship among variables within the targeted population. In addition, interviews were conducted to reveal their experiences and opinions on the sociocultural factors that hinder in pursuit of higher education. Questions in the interviews were related to social, cultural and financial issues they have been facing in their higher education.

Table 01: Overview of interviews

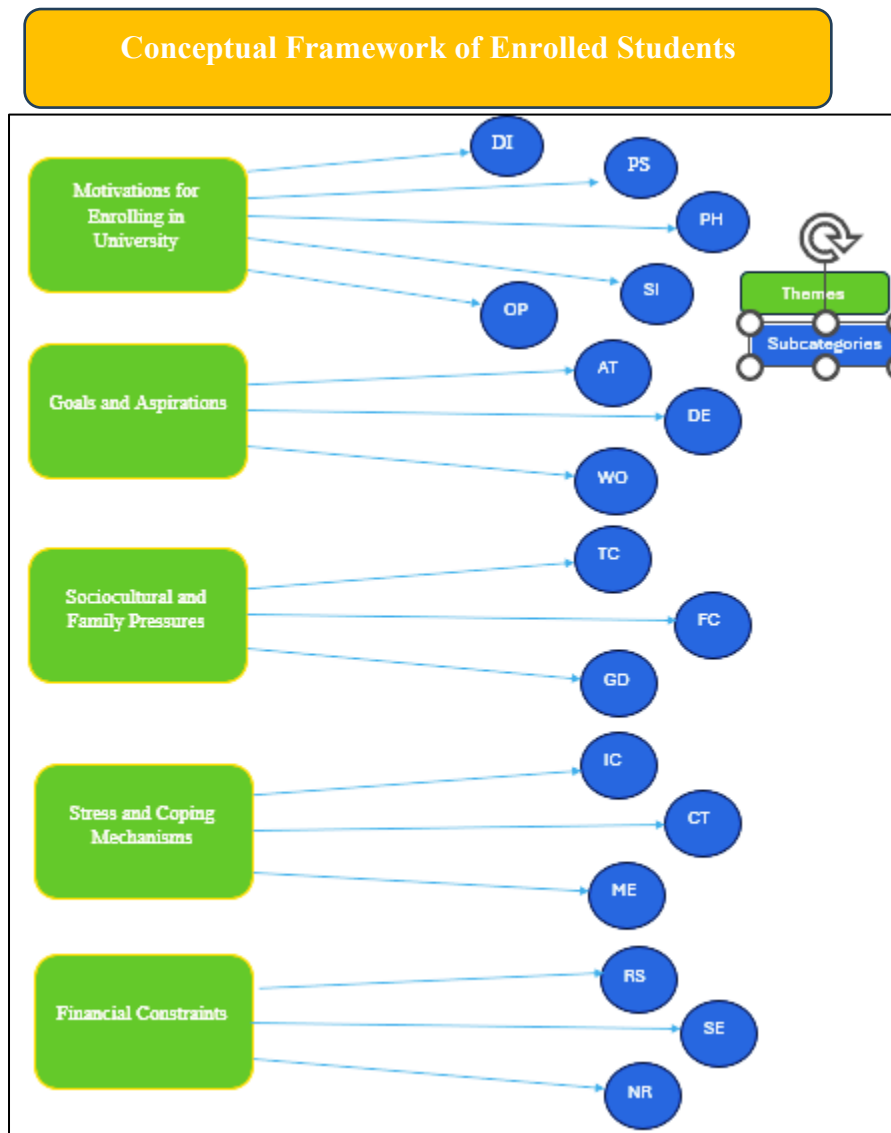
Respondents	Number of Responses	Area	Income Level
Enrolled Girls at the University	07	Urban Urban Rural Rural Urban Rural Urban	Low Income Low Income Middle Income Middle Income Low Income Middle Income Low Income
Dropped out Girls from University	04	Rural Urban Rural Urban	Low Income Low Income Low Income Middle Income

Sampling

The respondents, including those currently enrolled in the university, and those who had dropped out were selected using a purposive sampling technique. The girls were deliberately chosen from low- and middle-income backgrounds.

Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is a qualitative research method used to identify, analyse, and interpret patterns or themes within qualitative data. After collecting qualitative data, the responses are analysed with thematic coding. The thematic coding is chosen which facilitates the investigator because one knows what someone is looking for (St. Pierre, 2014). Based on the interview transcript, in the first phase, themes are developed by reviewing the responses of enrolled students in university, identifying key ideas, and grouping them into categories. Below is a step-by-step thematic analysis for these interviews:



*DI Desire for Independence, *PS Parental Support, *PH Proximity of the University to Home, *SI Societal Inspiration from independent Women, *OP Overcoming Family Opposition, *AT Aspiration to become a Teacher, *DE Desire for Social Contribution & Empowerment, *WO Wanting to Serve as a Role Model for Others, *TC Transportation Challenges, *FC Family Opposition to Co-education, *GD Gender Norms & Societal Disapproval, *IC Ignoring Negativity & Avoiding Conflicts, *CT Consistent hard work for Academic Tasks, *ME Minimal Stress Due to a Supportive Environment, *RS Reliance on Family Support, *SE Self-funding Education and Household Expenses, and *NR No Financial Challenges Reported

Table No. 02

Total Themes	Sub-categories
1. Motivations for enrolling in university	• Desire for independence • Parental support • Proximity of the university to home • Societal inspiration from independent • Overcoming family opposition
2. Goals and aspirations	• Aspiration to become a teacher or lecturer

	• Desire for societal contribution and empowerment • Wanting to serve as a role model for others
3. Sociocultural and family pressures	• Transportation challenges • Family opposition to co-education • Gender norms and societal disapproval
4. Stress and coping mechanisms	• Ignoring negativity and avoiding conflicts • Consistent hard work for academic tasks • Minimal stress due to a supportive environment
5. Financial constraints	• Reliance on family support • Self-funding education and household expenses • No financial challenges reported

Theme. 01: Motivations for enrolling in university

1.1 Desire for independence

According to the responses, it is concluded that the desire for independence is a major driver in obtaining university admission. They agree that higher education leads them to be independent in the decision-making process. Therefore, their motivation for higher education is quite explicit and clear. Moreover, many participants highlight a strong desire to become independent and contribute to society. One of the respondents said:

"I always take money from my father, now I wish to complete my degree and join a school as a teacher to earn money for independence." (En-07)

1.2 Parental Support

They think that their parents' role in motivating them is pivotal and significant in the enrolment for higher education in Loralai Division. It is revealed that parental educational background motivates their daughters for higher studies. No preference for the higher education of sons is found over the daughters' education if parents are themselves qualified. Another respondent shared her views and said, *"My father is highly qualified in my entire family, he motivated me and my siblings to pursue our studies,"* (En-04)

1.3 Proximity of the University to Home

Many of the respondents stated that in the past they had to be enrolled in other universities away from their residents. In addition, very few parents could afford to send their daughters to other cities for higher studies. Ultimately, it was also difficult for the girls to live in a hostel. Therefore, a university in their city is a blessing for them which motivates female students to enroll in higher education. One of the enrolled girls said, *"I am fortunate to have a university near my home because my elder sister completed her degree from another city and resided in a hostel for four years,"* (En-5)

1.4 Societal Inspiration from Independent Women

Most of the respondents agreed that they are eager to contribute to society when they complete their degrees because women would not just be inspirations but promoters for societal transformation. Independent females serve as an effective source of motivation in society. Therefore, they have been motivated for the attainment of higher education.

1.5 Overcoming Family Opposition

Despite conservative families in the region, several respondents admitted that they have convinced their families to enroll in the university for higher studies. They stated that higher education can be the right of their brothers not of them. They have succeeded in overcoming their family's opposition and enrolled for higher degrees at the university. One respondent said, *"My grandparents never allowed me to go to university because they told my father that only boys are allowed to study in university,"* (En-03)

Theme. 02: Goals and Aspirations

2.1 Aspiration to Become a teacher or lecturer

A few respondents showed their goals of obtaining higher degrees to become lecturers or teachers to serve society. They stated that their region is having a deficiency of female teachers. Therefore, they have shown their interest in teaching more girls who are empowered to play their role parallel with male teachers. En-01 said, *"My father is a professor, and it is my dream to become like my father."*

2.2 Desire for Societal Contribution and Empowerment

They showed great interest in contributing to society in return by serving in various positions. Few of them revealed that the role of female in our society has been less regarded despite their need in every field. Thus, they agree that female empowerment could significantly contribute to its uplifting. One of the interviewees said, *"Women in our society are less important because they have no money to spend on their families as compared to men who earn and spend. Thus, I want to complete my education and get employment to be empowered,"* (En-01)

2.3 Wanting to Serve as a Role Model for Others

Few respondents stated that in many fields females can perform their duties better than their counterparts. They said that their role in the society would be an inspiration for others in the region. They wanted to become role models for other girls in the society. Similarly, they intended to participate in outreach programs and convince other girls to pursue higher studies. Among them one of the enrolled girls said, *"Girls in our society are deprived and they have limited desires to be fulfilled, I am eager to complete my degree to fight for the rights of females in my vicinity and to become a role model for the rest of the female."* (En-06)

Theme 03: Sociocultural and Family Pressures

3.1 Transportation Challenges

Transportation in such a backward area is a significant challenge, especially for female students trying to reach their institutions. Most respondents stated that the absence of public transport is a major issue. Additionally, conservative Pashtoon families do not allow females to travel with males. While girls living near university bus stops can avail themselves of university buses, those residing in the outskirts or villages face considerable transportation challenges. Few of them expressed that their parents are restless unless they come back from university. One of the respondents said, *"I live in a village that is approximately 03 kilometers from the city, my father drops me at the bus stop, but when he is not at home I often take off from university."* (En-07)

3.2 Family Opposition to Co-education

According to the respondents, co-education is not widely accepted in the region. Most families are reluctant to enroll their daughters in mixed-gender educational settings. One of the primary reasons for the low enrollment of females in higher education is the presence of co-education. It is often misrepresented that studying in a co-educational environment leads to immodesty and increases the risk of sexual harassment within institutions. To address these concerns, the university provides separate buses for female students. En-04 said, *"It was a great challenge for me to study in co-education because I had no experience studying in the same class with boys. I was very nervous in the first semester but now I have become confident in studying in mixed classes."*

3.3 Gender Norms and Societal Disapproval

The respondents stated that their society is male-dominated, where male children are given preference over females. All decisions regarding the future careers of females are made by their fathers, brothers, or husbands. Girls are not treated equally compared to boys, which leads to feelings of inferiority and a sense of being less important. One of the interviewees said, *"In my family boys and girls are equally treated and I am the only sister among 05 brothers."* (En-04)

Theme 04: Stress and Coping Mechanisms

4.1 Ignoring Negativity and Avoiding Conflicts

It was revealed that many respondents said they have been trying to avoid negative behavior and comments from those people who intentionally criticize them for studying at the university. Moreover, they explained that ignoring and walking away from such kinds of people destroy their mental peace and avoid provoking the behavior of these toxic people. One enrolled student said, *"The only issue I have been facing is starring of the people, I feel that they have never seen any girl in life, they follow and scan us."* (En-02)

4.2 Consistent Hard work for Academic Tasks

Some of the respondents stated that with limited resources they keep consistently hard work for the academic excellence. It is found that female students are more diligent in their academic work as compared to male students. They are very concerned about maintaining their academic performance. They expressed that they would sustain their academic performance so that their parents would be satisfied with their results. One of the interviewees said, *"I have been studying 5 to 6 hours daily to maintain my 4 out of 4 CGPA in the remaining 2 semesters."* (En-05)

4.3 Minimal Stress Due to a Supportive Environment

Few of them indicated that the entire environment of the university is conducive to learning. The teaching faculty is quite supportive, due to which their stress level remains low. Female students are being encouraged to participate in curricular and co-curricular activities. En-07 said, *"The teachers at university are very cooperative and encouraging us to participate in co-curricular activities, since I have joined the university, my confidence boosted."* (En-2)

Theme 05: Financial Constraints

5.1 Reliance on Family Support

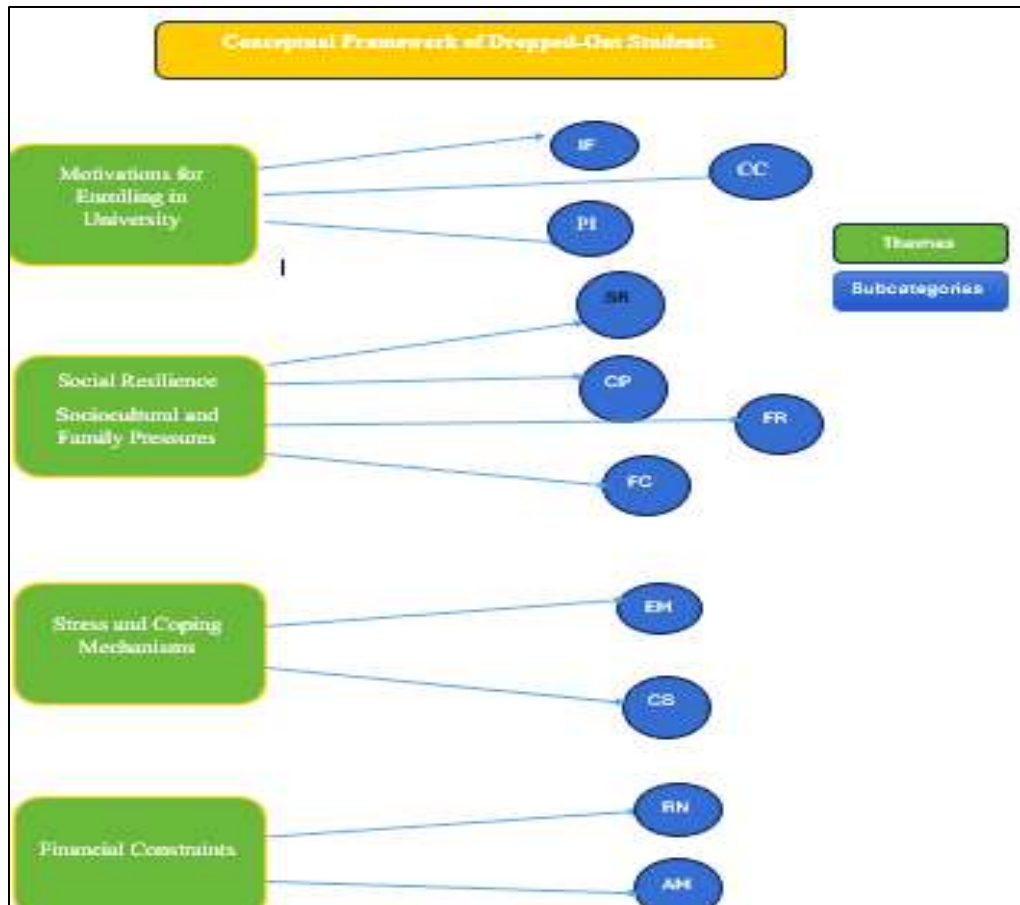
According to their opinion, most female students are dependent on their families for financial assistance. Their semester fee, stationery, uniforms and pocket money are the responsibility of their fathers. They have no part-time jobs to continue with their studies and meet their financial requirements. En-06 said, *"My father is a government low-grade employee, and his monthly salary is hardly insufficient for groceries and other expenditures. Hence, my last two semester fees have not been paid for and I received a warning not to appear in the final examination."* (En-04)

5.2 Self-funding Education and Household Expenses

Most think that they are not able to cover the cost of their educational expenses, while their parents are hardly able to manage their household expenditures. They expressed their views that if they lived in a mega-city, they might have part-time jobs to meet educational requirements.

No Financial Challenges Reported

Among these respondents, very few said that they have financial constraints as their parents are well off and can easily cope with their educational requirements. They stated that their parents bear their educational expenses without any delay. One of them said, *“My father is a professor, and he has been convincing me to pursue my studies. I get enough pocket money and do not have any financial issues.”* (En-01)



No. 03 Contributing Factors to Dropout from Higher Education

Total Themes	Initial Codes
1. Motivations for Enrolment	- Personal Growth and Independence - Community and Societal Contribution - Influence of Peers and Family
2. Barriers to Continuation	- Cultural and Social Pressures - Family and Domestic Responsibilities - Financial and Academic Challenges
3. Specific Incidents Leading to Dropout	- Early Engagement and Marriage - Cumulative Stress and Lack of Support
4. Societal and Systemic Constraints	- Rigid Cultural Norms - Absence of Support Mechanisms

Theme 01: Motivations for Enrolment

1.1 Personal Growth and Independence

Participants viewed higher education as necessary for their personal and professional growth. Therefore, they have been enrolled in the university to become empowered and financially independent. For example: *“I aimed to get financial independence and develop a deeper understanding of my field of interest.”* (Dr-01)

1.2 Community and Societal Contribution

According to respondents, their motto was to contribute to society and bring positive social change in the lives of its inhabitants. Moreover, they wished to inspire other girls, which was highlighted. For example: *“I wanted to educate other girls in the community for social change in their society.”* (Dr-02)

Influence of Peers and Family

Few participants stated that they have been motivated by their friends to be enrolled in university for higher education. For example: *“My friends and cousins were enrolled in university, which encouraged me to take admission.”* (Dr-03)

Theme 02: Barriers to Continuation

2.1 Cultural and Social Pressures

According to the views of the respondents, the main barriers to female higher education are the traditional roles of their families, early engagements, and norms and values of the conservative. Example: *“After my engagement, my in-laws were opposed to continuing education at the university.”* (Dr-03) Similarly, another girl said, *“In my family, there is a strong expectation to balance academic success with traditional roles.”* (Dr-01)

Expectations around traditional roles, early engagements, and conservative cultural norms were recurring issues.

2.2 Family and Domestic Responsibilities

All the respondents agreed that post-marriage responsibilities, such as caregiving and household chores are the major barriers for female higher education. In addition, in the entire Loralai there are no daycare centers for kids. Example: *“After marriage, I got busy with domestic chores and looking after my one-year-old baby.”* (Dr-04) Another female stated, *“I have a baby of 7 months who needs my presence at home.”* (Dr-02)

2.3 Financial and Academic Challenges

The dropped-out respondents stated that their decision had been influenced by their parental financial constraints. They said that they could not afford to pay the semester fee, to buy books and other materials necessary for their study. Example: *“Academic challenges, financial difficulties, and personal family-related issues played a significant role.”* (Dr-03)

3. Academic and social Resilience

students frequently discussed issues related to procedural clarity, administrative responsiveness, and personal coping strategies. Many reported that university procedures were often ambiguous or poorly communicated, requiring them to rely on peers or staff for guidance. Administrative responsiveness was perceived as inconsistent—some offices provided timely help, while others caused delays that added to students’ stress.

3.1 Theme A — Institutional Systems and Access to Academic & Counselling Support

In response, students developed self-advocacy strategies, such as making repeated visits, following up persistently, or using personal contacts to get tasks done. Those from remote areas like Loralai also faced structural barriers, including limited digital access, long travel distances, and infrastructural shortcomings that made administrative engagement more difficult. Overall, these factors shaped how effectively students could navigate institutional processes and sustain their academic resilience.

A student commented, *“When I needed to change a course, the process wasn’t explained — I had to visit the office three times and ask different people.”* Another student commented that

“I usually ask a senior or staff member who knows the system — that helps me get through the paperwork faster.”

The student stated that counselling services are not available but in cases if available at community or hospitals, majority of the students are not aware of it or they show reluctance to sue these services due to cultural constraints. A student stated that

“There’s no visible counselling office — when I was stressed, my teacher suggested I speak to a friend instead.”

3.2 Peer Leadership & Collective Coping Mechanism

The active role of students in supporting one another both academically and emotionally, particularly in contexts where formal institutional support is limited.

Student narratives illustrate how they are facing major academic challenges, organized study groups and shared notes to ensure collective success:

“When many students struggled, we formed study groups and shared notes — it helped everyone pass.” A student commented. Similarly, students also revealed that senior students often mentor juniors; this peer mentoring is more accessible than formal services.” These examples highlights the organic emergence of leadership and support structures among students.

Theme 03: Specific Incidents Leading to Dropout

4.1 Early Engagement and Marriage

According to the respondents' views, early engagements and marriages of girls are major incidents that influence dropout decisions. After their marriages, all the decisions are in the hands of in-laws, therefore, mostly in the middle of females' education a sudden and unexpected break occurs. Example: "The incident was my early engagement which devastated my career." (Dr-01). Similarly, another participant stated, "*My engagement and early marriage discontinued my education.*" (Dr-02). Another dropped-out girl said:

"I dropped out in May 2023 because I got married in March of the same year. I had a 3.7 CGPA and even I expected to maintain it till the last semester, but I was also expected to be an outstanding daughter-in-law. Finally, I lost, and the society won." (Dr-03)

4.2 Cumulative Stress and Lack of Support

Few respondents indicated that accumulation of stress from financial constraints, academic pressure and personal domain led them to make the dropout decision. In this regard, one of the participants said, "*The cumulative impact of financial constraints, family responsibilities, and academic pressures eventually led to my decision.*" (Dr-04).

Theme 05: Societal and Systemic Constraints

5.1 Rigid Cultural Norms

The area of the current study is quite rigid and strictly abides by the cultural norms where a great gender disparity is found. Women's higher education is unacceptable, particularly in co-education. They indicated that pursuing higher education is considered against their traditional norms. They said, "Our cultural norms are quite rigid in favor of female higher education." (Dr-02)

5.2 Absence of Support Mechanisms

According to the view of married participants, no facility or support is available for them to look after their kids in their region. These married students stated that there is no baby daycare in Loralai District, where they keep their babies and attend classes at university. One among them said, "In Loralai, there is no baby daycare center." (Dr-02)

DISCUSSION

The study's major findings indicate that socio-cultural barriers impact female higher education in the rural areas of Balochistan, Pakistan. As in the current study, socio-cultural challenge is significantly stronger in district Loralai, suggesting that cultural pressure might be more. Personal insecurity rating is higher in Loralai district because of the poor transportation facilities available in the outskirts and villages.

No policy has been introduced to ensure female higher education, especially in rural areas. Despite this fact, many participants showed their interest in serving the society after completing their studies. They wanted to be empowered in their decision-making process. Most respondents indicated their interest in becoming teachers and lecturers to teach other girls in their community. They craved to become role models for other girls in the society. In remote settings like Loralai, expect longer administrative delays, lower digitalization of systems, and reliance on personal contacts. Analytic note for Loralai: Expect low institutional counselling capacity and stigma around mental-health help-seeking; students may rely on informal peer networks.

It was noticed that some girls face transport issues because university buses pick up students from central points in the city, but those who live on the outskirts or in villages hardly get transport. Secondly, their parents are reluctant to send their daughters on combined buses with male students. It was also discovered that some conservative families are against co-education for fear of harassment. In terms of social context, it is revealed that male children are given preference over female students because of a male-dominated society, even though female students are more hard working in their studies as compared to their counterparts. Another impact on female higher education is their parental financial status because there are no opportunities for part-time jobs in rural areas, so the students meet their educational expenses.

Regardless of the nature of respondents, early engagements and marriages are found to be the main barriers to female higher education. Even those females who have almost completed their higher education drop out due to their marriages. Indeed, early marriages and conservative beliefs are key factors behind the low female tertiary enrolment ratio. Moreover, female post-marriage responsibilities become an acute barrier to continuing their education because there is no baby daycare centre in Loralai City. Therefore, findings show that in rural areas obstacles are more influential than in urban areas. Indeed, girls living in rural areas are to face bigger challenges to higher education institutions rather than in urban areas.

Recommendations

This research study suggests overcoming the issue faced by female regarding higher education in District Loralai and strongly recommends facilitating separate buses for their pick and drop. The university administration, local government and government of Balochistan need to ensure safe and feasible transport for female students.

The current study helps advise guidelines to the policymakers and stakeholders to highlight and address this issue by working on the awareness of female higher education in all educational institutions. It is recommended that social recognition of females should be ensured through higher education in society.

It is recommended that the growth of female higher education take place in all departments to ensure female emancipation to serve side-by-side with their counterparts in society. Need-based and other scholarship policies need to be ensured for deserving female students to remove this disparity among them, especially for those students who cannot afford university fees and books.

It is also recommended that anti-harassment and sexual assault policies need to be made and implemented for female students' safety and security. For on-campus security, cameras and lights should be installed in dark places to ensure the protection of female students.

Moreover, keeping in mind the dire need for a daycare in the university for married students should be established because many students drop out due to looking after their babies.

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