

COUNTRY SUMMARY-PAKISTAN

No. of interviews the summary below is based on: All interviews from Pakistan (2014)

In most societies in the world, historically, women have not been treated equal to men. Patriarchal societies have been the norm and matriarchal societies have been considered 'primitive' and 'tribal'. Gender discrimination can take the form of prescribed gender roles which are inculcated from birth or societies can use value differences between men and women, which serve to constitute a men's culture and a women's culture. Achieving equality and empowerment for women is not just a matter of persuasion and education. History shows that ideas can change, but they cannot be changed by persuasion or even education alone. In the four countries of the current study, we have identified a host of inter-linked structural issues that repress women; in choosing what they want to do; in accessing opportunities; in freedom of movement. Education alone will not bring sufficient change. As housewives (educated or not), women can be isolated and are still dependent on men within patriarchal cultures and structures. However, our study shows that education *along with employment*, especially employment in a recognised and organised sphere, will make women gain self-respect, confidence, and independence, even if they are not chief income earners.

Uneducated women are more subservient and dependent on men. Educated women are more confident.

Yes, there is difference between educated and uneducated women, and the way they handle family issues. An educated woman can solve any sort of problem more easily than uneducated woman

Pakistan historically legitimised an inferior position for women and made it 'legitimate' in the name of Islam. The political regime of Zia especially, undermined what little that existed by way of women's rights and equal treatment. Under his regime, movement, access, choice, and opportunities were all institutionally denied for women. Women were suppressed and harassed under the pretext of enforcing Islam. There was no protection, security or justice for women, even if they were molested or raped.

Our current study shows that, despite changes and promise, everywhere, in both the rural as well as the urban society, Pakistan remains a rigidly patriarchal society in which women are treated differently to men, and as a group of people who are usually 'given' or 'acquired' through arranged marriages, to spend their lives in the service of a male dominated social system. Marriages are still arranged so women *have to* marry (Aaliya H3P). It is mainly in the modern, urban societies of cities such as Karachi and Islamabad in this study, where the changes challenge the most forcefully established social practices and attitudes.

By and large women are married into a male dominated kinship organisation which has a stake in the subordination of women. The study shows that, no woman, even one with an independent career in a city cannot set up a home on her own, without protection of a male. A divorced woman or a widow must turn to her father or brother, if they will have her. Unless she

has a grown up son under whose protection she can live. This is a powerful factor of control over women.

Education is the key to acceptable and respectable jobs and careers. For some families in this study, it was degrading to let their women take up jobs and financially support a family. It is an assault on family name and on masculinity, and a failure of masculinity. If there is great financial need or absence of a male income earner, then it was acceptable for a woman to go out and earn, as long as she conformed to gender expectations of employment, dress, and behaviour. Families who expect their women to take up jobs as teachers or nurses tend, therefore, to put a higher value on women's education. But it remains that financing the education of sons still takes precedence especially if there is little money to go around.

Among changes that the study showed, there is demand for women's education from professional men who want to marry reasonably educated wives, although not too highly qualified. There is a concept of an 'over-qualified' woman i.e. a woman who has better qualifications than her spouse or potential spouse. Such a woman is positively at a disadvantage. Where both spouses are working and earning, if the wife's career advances more rapidly or she earns more, it generally becomes a threat to the (false) pride of the husband, or a threat to masculinity and family name.

Given these social changes and the high degree of functionality of women's education for middle class and lower middle class families, there seems to be emerging new values and attitudes (education for women for example).

Changes and Opportunities: Education, Marriage, Gender expectations

For me, it is the responsibility of every man and woman to get education, so everyone should get education. Without education, a person's life is incomplete. BaharH7P 18 yrs

The overwhelming majority in the Pakistan study, both men and women of all ages and socio-economic status, **support women's education** (at least in theory). The difference is the *purpose* for which girls and boys should be educated. For the majority of men and also women, education for girls is seen as important for motherhood and child rearing. An educated mother is seen to be more aware of how to bring up good children. For this purpose especially, education for girls is supported.

Educated women are good even if they are not working. They will run families better and take better decisions. They can also do a lot of service by educating their children and being of service to others (like teaching sewing, giving tuition etc). [male]

Obviously, if she is not educated how she will bring up her children well (BaharH7S1)

The other difference is in giving girls in marriage (education as bargaining for marriage). For a girl to be married and to find a good husband, her education is seen as important.

In our village if a girl is uneducated, people think who will marry her, she is worthless (75 year old man) (AaliyaH5S1)

Yes. It matters [if a girl is not educated]. Girls do not find good proposals as boys do not like uneducated girls.(BaharH7S1)

Some participants have mentioned that educating boys is more important as, stereotypically, men are breadwinners and need employment and stable income to perform the expected duty of financially providing for the family. If poverty or insufficient income is cited as a reason for choosing to educate one child over another, then respondents point out that boys will obviously be preferred over girls as they are brought up as breadwinners and the social strata is more conducive to males finding and maintaining employment than females.

It has also been pointed out that giving preference to girls over boys may be useless as society is not structured in such a way that it supports women's long-term employment. In that, women are often harassed at workplaces, there is so much corruption in employment where bribing for jobs is imminent, there are fewer jobs available in the job market, women are not expected to work in every sphere but in limited ones such as teaching, banking, and health care, and because of gender role expectations they will not be able to sustain employment in the long terms (marriage, childcare, children's education, and running a household).

The study overwhelmingly shows that the areas of work that are culturally accepted and promoted for women are sewing (usually from home), teaching, tuition classes from home, working in banks, and nursing. **Gender expectations** are not changing that much – despite slow changes for some women, stereotypes continue.

The **dualistic and gendered thinking of roles** thus continue in Pakistani society. Within this structure, men and women both have their own specific roles (e.g. men leading, and women supporting) and men almost always occupy the most important and visible roles (e.g. executives, politicians, public leaders, etc.). Male is expected to provide security for the family and females are expected to run the family well inside the protective shelter provided by men.

I think teaching is the best profession for girls because that's how they can come back home on time and also take care of their children. If they go to office its timing is usually 9-5 because of that a family might suffer as well. BaharH4P (graduate woman) I think every woman's first priority should be their family.

Despite education, women are still primarily responsible for child care and housework. Women also believe this. (AaliyaH3P). These gender role expectations are deeply inculcated into the social roles that both genders are required to perform. Only a few participants (female) mentioned that men should play strong role in parenting/child care and house work.

Men should work outside and financially look after the family (Aaliya H3S1)

I think it is same for women however women are more responsible than men. They have to take care of their children and family, and the social and economic development of their houses. They should take care of their family, and listen to their elders (AaliyaH7P)

Men should get preference on women because men have to earn for his family (MeherH4S1)

It's a good thing that female earns money but she shouldn't forget that it's the responsibility of her husband to make money and he leaves behind his house and family for his wife to take care of; if she also gets out and start working then their family will suffer so it's better that wife should prefer family more than money.

There should not be any restrictions, if she can give time to her home and if she wants to do job then she should. But she should also look after her home. Means she should manage because it is her responsibility. What is the role of women in the family and in a society?

The first responsibility of women is to look after her home and children. Job is secondary role.

There are, however, a few participants (both men and women) who have said that it is more important to educate girls than boys

It doesn't matter if boys get educated or not. Girls should study hard and live their life. An educated woman can educate a whole family and when a man is educated he can only educate himself, or he just gets a job being educated. but an educated woman looks after her whole family properly.

If parents have positive approach they will definitely educate their children. See, what a son does when he is educated, but if a daughter is educated then the whole family is educated.[male opinion]

I believe that parents are wrong if they are not giving basic education to their daughter. [male] It is their responsibility to educate both male children and female children. They should not discriminate between them, but I would rather say they should more focus on girl's education.

Participants who were critical of those who prevented female education surmised that most male-dominated, conservative, and oppressive ideas emanate from men who have limited education.

Uneducated men are conservative. They do not have the same level of thinking power which an educated person is having. It changes the personality of human. [young male]

Broadly, changes that are slowly being felt in some families pertaining to socio-economic stability through education related employment. Some villages are also getting educational facilities as a result of an increased interest and participation in education. Women are more economically independent and there's more open-mindedness among families. But Education does not necessarily bring about employment outside the home. Educated women who get married tend to stay at home, sometimes also by 'choice' to look after children. For most women, **Education is disrupted by marriage. Early marriage impedes higher education.** However, educated women ensure that their daughters are also educated. Most married participants who have worked before have stopped after marriage. Educated women stay home because of housework, child care, family members or in-laws who are conservative and social rules (Aliya H3P). Also, when women study or work, families or in-laws are worried about what 'others' will think (Aaliya H3S1).S2. **Unsupportive social, economic, political structures impede empowerment of women in every sense.**

There is a strong **urban-rural (city-village)** divide. Villages are conservative, women lack education and employment, independence and empowerment. They have to abide by traditions such as being escorted by a man outside home. In cities and urban areas, there is still a level of control that is exercised by men and this is in the form of harassment of women – verbally and physically.

Being poor and living in remote 'tribal' areas will prevent women from having equal rights. Women will not be able to seek justice. For example, men will rape you when you go to seek help for issues like violence. So it is better to stay at home rather than seeking help from anyone. This happens in our village. Aaliya H3P

In the cities, women work more liberally, but in the villages, perceptions are restrictive (AaliyaH3P).Tribal areas are the worst where the situation for women is very restrictive, opportunities are limited.

Gender Equity in Islam

The data from Pakistan on women, education, employment, and change show that life at every level is enmeshed with religion. Gender roles, gender expectations, and ideas of honour, are ultimately coloured by religious values, for both men and women. Interestingly, however, almost 100% of the data from Pakistan indicates the belief **that Islam supports gender equity.**

Our religion has given the highest respect to women, no other religion and society gives such respect to women

So, the overwhelming idea that emerges is that Islam treats women and men equally in every way, especially in terms of rights to education, employment, movement, choice etc which are some of the key themes in this study. Although this may be seen as the perfect platform and

rationale for women to be educated and employed in unrestricted ways, the data does not reveal this reality. Although women and men are said to be equal according to Islam, the study reveals **severe restrictions on what women can do in private and in public**, where they can go, and how far. The equal position and rights that Islam confers on women are not applied to 'social and family rules', thus we see a limiting of women's mobility, independence, choice, education, and working outside home. There is a contradiction between what people overwhelmingly believe are religious rights for all and the actual reality especially for women in Pakistan.

They are kept at home and according to them they follow Islamic teachings; however Islam gives equal right to both men and women to get education.

Our religion has given equal status to women... Islam is permitting equal education for women and men

In our village there are strict families who do not allow their girls to go outside by themselves. They strictly follow their religious principles.

Islam strictly prohibits gender discrimination (AaliyaH3S2)

Our religion teaches us ethics and principles. We follow those principles because we cannot go against our religion Aaliya H5P

Despite the majority of participants stating that Islam treats both genders equally, a few participants stated that Islam has given a higher social position to men.

To some extent, our religion has also given men superiority over women and we should accept that; Even our religion has given superiority to men and they are the heads of the families and women cannot be. (BaharH4P)

Religion is obviously more important than anything else and religion is such a thing that everything should work according to our Quran, and Sunnah. Nothing should go against it and everything should be according to what we have given (BaharH4S1)

Whether to divorce or not, is men's right

Working as a telephone operator or other things are suitable for men not for women." So I had to quit my job because I thought he is a man and he knows what is right and what is wrong (MeherH4P)

A few participants expressed their critical ideas of the misinterpretation of Islam. They were educated women from higher socio-economic backgrounds.

However, the religion majority of the people in Pakistan follow is not religion, it's extremism. People should take it normal; one doesn't need to include religion in everything. The situation here is so worst that even a political statement is considered religious and this thing is worst.

Look we follow Islam, but Islam is being misinterpreted by people. I follow Islamism and for me Ismailism is the best religion. My religion allows me to get education, to be independent, and to move forward. Generally, most of the time in Islam things are being misinterpreted, especially, females are restricted and are not given their rights

As I said, Islam is being misinterpreted by people. Sometimes, females are restricted within the four walls of the house, these are wrong concepts. When you will go back to the history, Hazrat Khadija (The Prophet's wife), she is an example for all of us, she was a trader. So, I think, women shouldn't be restricted within the four walls of the house. People should do research and make their own perception about religion, instead of believing in what their religious leaders are feeding them.

Women have always been oppressed, but most of them are oblivious to the fact. This is happening generally in Islam.

Pakistan is going towards the darkness because of extremism in religion. Men in this sense are more responsible for that. I would say it's getting worst.

I think, when it comes to the entire religion for example, Islam, that reminds me of poetry of Allama Iqbal, he says that, "If I was not a Muslim and I would have read the Quran, I would have thought that it has been written by a female." A lot of respect has been shown to women in Islam but there are certain things those have been interpreted in different ways. Yes, there are certain things or verses and I am critical about those. Interpretation has actually spoiled all of that.

MeherH7P

Things that promote education

Having **educated parents, family members (aunts, cousins etc) or community role models** served as a strong impetus for educating girl children. Role models in the village, family, or community have a positive influence on others. Participants speak of their aunts, mothers, older sisters for example, who were nurses, teachers etc as examples of women who are doing well (MeherH6S2). For young girls, especially, having strong, positive role models in the families has been strength. Most participants mentioned who were both highly educated and employed well.

Even where parents (or mothers) lacked much education, the belief that all children should be educated was very strong. I see this as important from a psychology perspective as well. This is social influence and social facilitation: having others around you encourages you to perform better and in this case it encourages you to positively conform to what others are doing.

Seeing each other being educated. People in a society, realizing that an educated person in a society is being respected, they go for competing each other in the field of education. Further, when relatives visit each other and see how their relatives praise others educated children, they wish to be educated, so that they will be praised too

What impedes education

Overall, it was **poverty** which prevented girl children from continuing education. As mentioned above, if poverty forces parents to make a choice, it is invariably the male children who will be educated.

It is because, basically our lower class people are very poor. They are not sure from the next meal will come. So they are after searching for jobs. They have more children and make children work .. one child can earn for other two siblings. If the needs of those siblings are being fulfilled they will study and even their parents would not be having any issue with their studies.

A significant structural factor that impeded girls from continuing their education included **lack of schools** close to where they lived. But, importantly, this was related to **unsafe societies** for girls. Parents worried about the safety and security of their daughters as they travelled to school. **Marriage and/or early marriage** also halted girls' education. Often, female participants lamented that they were unable to continue with their studies. This was also related to **in-laws** who do not encourage education.

Then fixing marriages in childhood comes forth. They boy's family come up and say that we are not going to let your daughter to earn for us then what is the necessity to make her educated.

There were other interesting attitudes that were presented - better educated women seem to have and exercise greater autonomy, thereby rejecting marriage proposals (greater autonomy through education). This challenges a patriarchal culture and a common idea thus prevails that that it was difficult to find husbands for highly educated women.

Over educated means that tomorrow you have to marry her off so it should not create problems for her married life. People do not get proposals.

If educate less then get more marriage proposals. If educate highly then it goes on selection list. They say that she refuses proposals

It appears a symptom of a changing society where men (and sometimes women) attempt to justify problems such as marriage delays and changes in women's situation by accusing women of higher education. In patriarchal cultures, if a person or a group (women, in this instance) challenge patriarchy, then the patriarchal response is to increase control. In particular, this means increasing control over oppressed groups.

Family honour

A range of ideas about honour were expressed. Most women in the study mentioned that honour is about good behaviour in *both* men and women. It is about good character, respecting elders, especially the father-in-law, as well as being charitable. Some mentioned that honour is about being educated. But for most times, honour remained a tool for gender discrimination, control, and power.

People do think that their honor is when their girls do not go out and they do not do any job, do not talk to anyone. However, I think that a family's honor is when it is educated and not just educated but well educated or they are doing any good job or deal with other in a good way.

In this region, honour is measured through your struggle to get education and good job. How much you are striving to achieve a good position in your life, the way you interact with others also count in this. Above all, your thinking level.

Family honour means to not be dependent on others (MeherH6S1)

A person brings dishonor to the family when he/she gets involved in certain activities those are bad, such as terrorism, killing, not getting education, wasting one's parent's money, and harming others. Also, when a wife doesn't respect her husband, or doesn't respect other family members, and hurt them in any way can also bring dishonor to the family. Also, if she doesn't pay attention to her children's education can also bring dishonor. The same thing goes for men as well. (MeherH3P)

Most participants believed that women break 'family rules' when they go out without informing their families. Although getting an education and working outside home is 'breaking family and social rules' and most women support education and work, family honour is also dependent on family and social rules especially for a woman. In a few extreme cases, *some girls have been killed y their fathers and brothers (AaliyaH5S1).*

Conceptualisations of honour is enmeshed with religious beliefs. This aspect makes change difficult and complex as religion is deeply indoctrinated in everyone from a young age, as something to be accepted without question.

Family honour from my point of view (referring towards a verse of Quran) as Allah has said, there is no superiority in going against a family, superiority is of your character.. A person should have a good character. [male]

Among women who are educated also, traditional ideas of honour persist, perhaps out of a combination of conviction and compulsion or pressure to conform. The data shows a blurring of religious principles, family honour, and attitudes of allowing women to study and work In the name of family honour.

Gender and Employment

Despite liberal ideas of supporting gender equality in education and employment, the **gender division of labour** tends to remain stereotypical.

Not only my husband but in all over Pindi husbands do not help their wives out in household work. I do all alone and thanks to God everything goes well

First of all education then marriage, job is not in my list (male, referring to her daughter)

Some women were considered with respect especially if they were educated and employed, but there were many variations to this. Families at higher socio-economic levels seemed to be more liberal with these ideas. For most, however, although there was a clear economic advantage to a family when there was an additional income from a woman (which also eased the burden on the man), a working woman remained an issue coated in patriarchal stereotypes. For example, only certain professions were seen as suitable for women. Most of the time, women in employment was considered unproblematic *if* the woman worked from home. These ideas continue to show gendered thinking in roles for women and also what women should be doing in the private and public domains. The other significant aspect (which also came up in the Afghanistan data) is that employment of women is supported if there is an economic or social need.

Those girls who work, I have girls in the Hazara colony, where they do not have any idea about education and in one home the father was earner and once he got sick and during eid time the daughter sewed cloths and earned and did pay house rent instead of her father. Her father was really glad and brought her a new sewing machines.. now that father says that she is not my daughter but my son, who wants to work like her brothers.

Some men admit that the burden to financially support families is reduced when a female family member or spouse works (AaliyaH5S1)

Yes, in my surrounding almost every girl works. In my family too, my sisters are doing job, my nieces are doing job. They are working in social sectors; some are working in education field, some in economics field. So, in this way there are so many females working outside. I feel good about them, I think they should grab opportunities and be confident in order to get job

In order to control women from working in public sphere, many attitudes prevail. That working women are 'bad' or 'loose' women; that they become quarrelsome and create conflict in the home or in their marriage; that they neglect children and households, hence, they fail in their duty as women and good women.

It is not written that a woman should not work, it is not written. It is not written in Islam. So, it is like within a limit she should do every work. If she goes out of the limit than that is wrong and within the limit everything is better

Even though change is slow, change is gradually taking place

Most participants, especially women, believe that girls should be educated and employed and given equal opportunities as men. Most young women say that girls should study what interests them and that they can do anything that men/boys can do.

Women should be educated so that they don't depend on men Aaliya H3S1

All women should become educated because they are ones who will bring change

Many women in the study mentioned that women have the equal capacity as men to do anything, thus showing confidence in themselves and their abilities. Most women also believed that men and women are equal.

Among rigidly patriarchal ideas, and one that the majority of women also do not believe in, is that households should *not* be run by women (single parent families).

Men are more powerful, women are weak (AaliyaH4P)

If we talk about heading a family so in Islam and even in a society, we know women cannot do as good as men can

Single women or female heads of families were seen as 'sluts' or as 'irrational'.

People don't appreciate women leading homes. They think women are dominating men, and this undermines men's self-esteem. Aaliya H3S1

There was only one participant in the whole study who expressed liberal, gender-neutral ideas on who should run a household.

A father or mother both can be the heads. And, the one who is more capable she could do it. MeherH7P

Violence as control

Patriarchy tells men that their need for love and respect can only be met by being masculine, powerful, and even violent. The traditional nuclear family, with men as the "leaders" and women as the "nurturers," is still incredibly prevalent. This translates into male figure as the "authority" on all important decisions. This viewpoint of being 'masculine includes violence' also contributes to the high percentage of bystanders who do little or nothing to prevent violence. Unsurprisingly, none of the participants in the study (similar to Afghanistan) mentioned personal or family violence, but almost every participant knew of other families where women faced violence.

I have seen situation where their needs are not met and also there are cases that I have seen where they are beaten. BaharH7S1

It was disturbing that one young man had this to say about violence against women:

If there leaves no other option then you can hit softly, not violence, just slightly hit her but it is better to ignore or neglect than beating, if someone does not understands at all (18 years).BaharH7S1

The data reveals some significant shifts in the way especially women conceptualise violence and what is accepted. There were some women who defined domestic violence in terms of a man not financially supporting a wife. Many women saw 'religious and family restrictions' on them also as violence.

In reality, Islam teaches to treat women well. However, in practice usually women are not treated in that way. The ones who are having long beard are those who pretend to be Islamists. Look at them, what are they doing? They are the ones who are not following Islam appropriately. The rate of corruption is higher in the ones who have beard than the non-beard ones. Let's take an example from our daily life. Traffic signals are always broken by the Mullas. Whenever, we go out and the traffic signal is broken, my brother always says look he must be with a beard. He then turns out to be the same. MeherH6S1

If they are not allowing females to go out, get education, or do job is a kind of violence

Difference in Region and Ethnicity

Even in the Northern areas there are 7 districts and you will see Hunza very much receptive of all these changes, when I worked in Baltistan, I saw a lot of resistance there. There is resistance to change and any type of innovation, there schools in their community, they are not very much happy with that. When we compare them with Hunza, I personally feel, we are far, far better than them in terms of facilities, in terms of mindset people have, in terms of approach people have we do have for females, and in terms of the decisions making power that has been given or the women have been using in that area. MeherH7P

Men and education in relation to family (i.e. under-educated parents): respondents with illiterate parents have earned a university degrees. For men, does it make a difference to have educated parents or not? Or is education a privilege of their biological sex irrespective of whether parents are educated or not? Current generation of young people – having educated parents (especially mother) seems to make a difference in whether girls especially are encouraged to continue with education.

Younger men think that girls are more educated than boys. They believe that it is because they stay at home and do distance learning, and don't go 'wandering about'

Demoralised youth (young men with education and no employment. You need money and political influence to get somewhere.

Resentment: “Women are doing better” “Women get preferences.. No, no one should get preference. Girls get preference for better positions. It is not a bit but very wrong.”

Frustration with politicians: “whichever government it be...means when [you] cannot then let it but practically they are doing nothing”

Scapegoating? The Frustration-Aggression theory might explain that it is the frustration with the political context, scarcity of economic opportunities, and financial constraints that are leading men to see women as part of the problem.

Control of women – mobility .Despite education, women are still expected to be escorted by a male in public. Otherwise women are looked down upon as bad women, or women are suspected.

It is everywhere that the societies all over the world are male dominant that’s why it is important for women to have men along her. Even if she goes alone for some work, not for just hanging out, then there is nothing wrong in that (BaharH4S1)

If she goes out then she should ask from men. Men’s permission is compulsory. It is okay, if she is going alone but she should ask and tell that where she is going. She can go and do her work. It is okay. BaharH7S1

These social rules and beliefs contradict completely with what participants said about respecting women and treating women especially in light of religion.

In our society for women, it is not considered appropriate if she goes out alone

Women have their rights. Whatever their rights are they should be provided

Shift in Perceptions as the biggest change

Overall, the narratives show a significant shift in perceptions and also an increase in awareness of what the problems are.

If women earn more than men, then I think mainstream patriarchy will perish (I really liked this statement - i think it was made by a young girl).

It is great to see women working outdoors, this mark an educated society. However, at the same time there is a large group of people who are deprived of their basic rights, who don’t have access to facilities, so until and unless they are not provided opportunities, the country’s progress will be at stake.

It is a positive sign as it shows a modernized, hardworking and empowered society

There should be enough schools, but until or unless family members are not educated and even willing to make their children educated they cannot do anything. It is imperative for family members to be supportive. I have number of such girls, who are

willing to study but their family does not permit them, so that cannot do anything. They are talented and mostly girls are restricted in comparison to boys; still parents spend money on the boys

However, men need to be given awareness about human rights and above all women rights. In Pakistan context, the men here are deprived of these awareness, majority of them treat women in a very unjust way. Until and unless the men have not given that sort of education, the society will not change. So, it's necessary for us to have balanced society where one gender has equal rights to the other.

Bias in sample? most females (except for a few Primary respondents) were educated or in education.