



ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

OPEN ACCESS

## THE CAUSE OF LOW ENROLMENT OF FEMALES IN SECONDARY EDUCATION: A COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN BANGLADESH AND PAKISTAN

<sup>1</sup>Monira Sultana and <sup>2</sup>Md. Shahabul Haque

<sup>1</sup>Graduate student of International Master's Program in Educational Leadership and Policy (Comparative Education), Beijing Normal University, China

<sup>2</sup>Faculty (On study leave), Department of Political Studies, Shahjalal University of Science & Technology, Sylhet -3114, Bangladesh

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article History:

Received 27<sup>th</sup> June, 2018  
Received in revised form  
14<sup>th</sup> July, 2018  
Accepted 03<sup>rd</sup> August, 2018  
Published online 30<sup>th</sup> September, 2018

#### Key Words:

Secondary Education, Female,  
Low Enrolment,  
Bangladesh and Pakistan.

### ABSTRACT

Education is the fundamental right to every citizen. As developing countries, Bangladesh and Pakistan have many challenges to meet. Among the challenges, to ensure female education is the most important. In this research, the issue of gender imbalance in education and right to education within the two countries have been analyzed with recommendations. This study is qualitative and both primary and secondary sources of data have been used. The purpose of this paper is to explore the cause of low enrolment of females in secondary education and make a comparison between Bangladesh and Pakistan. The study also explore the main barriers of female education of the two countries.

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**Citation:** Monira Sultana and Md. Shahabul Haque. 2018. "The cause of low enrolment of females in secondary education: a comparative study between Bangladesh and Pakistan", *International Journal of Development Research*, 8, (09), 23110-23116.

### INTRODUCTION

Education is a light and it makes students literate. Both boys and girls have equal right to be educated and it is important to make the nation's development. The growth and progress of any society can be achieved by education. Technological innovation and economic growth can be raised, motivated and established by the human capital. Social improvement can be achieved by Education. The development of a country depends on educational achievements and equal distribution of education in both males and females. Girls' education is more challenging and significant than boys education. The tendency of unequal distribution of education in male and female students, creates problem of a nation's development. There are many barriers for ensuring girls' education in developing countries like Bangladesh and Pakistan. Secondary education has so far received less attention and investment than primary education within these two countries. The study aims to explore the cause of low enrolment of females in secondary

education and thereby increase the number of educated women capable of participating fully in the economic and social development of Bangladesh and Pakistan.

**Statement of the Problem:** Poverty and gender imbalance within secondary education pose the most significant forms of obstruction and barriers to social and economic development of a country; regardless of this, educating females proves to be the most cost effective measure, a developing nation can adopt in enhancing its quality and standard of life. Low enrolment of females tends to increase fertility rate of young girls, thereby leading to higher teenage pregnancy rates. Gender imbalance as a result of past cultural influence has restricted females from going to school. Moreover, females are often sexually harassed by male teachers and students of the opposite sex which tends to frustrate and deter young girls' efforts to attend school.

**Background of the Study:** Education For All (EFA), Dakar Forum and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have declared as a medium of setting goals and targets to reach universal right to education for all in order to achieve development. Educating girls is a crucial to development, aside

**\*Corresponding author: Monira Sultana**

Graduate student of International Master's Program in Educational Leadership and Policy (Comparative Education), Beijing Normal University, China

from the intrinsic value of education, better-educated women have higher incomes and fewer, healthier and better-educated children (Hill and King, 1993). Half of the world's population is female. Girl's dropout is more than boy's dropout and have poorer learning achievements. Gender Inequalities in education exist in almost all poor countries of South Asia ( like Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, etc), Africa and sub Saharan .The large numbers of out of school children in many developing countries is a policy concern that draws a considerable attention from researchers and policymakers alike. In Bangladesh and Pakistan, where poverty, early marriage, social attitudes towards women influences gender imbalance and also stop the female students attending the school.

**Significance of the Study:** This study will produce a range of policy outcomes and those can be used by the government of the two countries, educators, policymakers, journalists, national and international NGOs, multilateral, bilateral and organizational donor communities, civil society organizations, academics and researchers. This research will explore the cause of low enrolment of females in secondary education between Bangladesh and Pakistan. This is a comparative study, so there are many areas within this field for further research.

**Purpose of the Statement:** The purpose of the study is to identify the underlying causes of the low enrolment of females in secondary education in Bangladesh and Pakistan. In order to get a deeper understanding of the topic, the study will address some specific objectives which are as follows:

#### Specific Objectives

- To find out why so few females in Bangladesh and Pakistan are enrolled in secondary schools as compared to their male counterparts.
- To identify the challenges of female secondary education in Bangladesh and Pakistan and make some recommendations for the betterment of female education.
- To identify those government policies those are being put in place to bridge the gender gap in education in Bangladesh and Pakistan.
- To do a comparative analysis on female secondary education between Bangladesh and Pakistan.

#### Importance of Female Education

According to Education for All Global Monitoring Report, Fact sheet, 2013, there are still 31million girls of primary school age out of school and there are 4 million fewer boys than girls out of school. That paper addresses the importance of female education. Mother's education is important for childbirth and child caring. If mothers become educated, she can take care herself and also can take care her babies properly. It will reduce maternal death. Researchers find that if all women get at least primary education they can save 15% less child deaths and if women get secondary education, it will save 3 million lives. Educated women are more likely to find work, and it will make them economically solvent .They can play role in decision making and it will empower themselves. For the nutrition of the babies, mothers' education is very essential. If mothers get primary and secondary education they will be more conscious about their babies' health. Half of the world population is women and no nation can develop without

the women's development. So there is no doubt that female education is very important.

#### Limitations of the Study

A major limitation of this study is the small sample size. Though it was not possible to go to the field for data collection, the challenges and recommendation of the study has been made using mainly secondary data. As online interview was used for data collection, it was very difficult to identify the major problems of enrolment of females in the secondary schools using only primary data. Another limitation is the lack of relevant data, as the cause of low enrolment of females within two countries, is not very populous research theme and not much research has been done in this field. One more, some respondents have no idea about government policies of their country and also they have no idea about the initiatives taken by the government and the non governmental organizations. Further, in such kind of research field work is required but it was difficult to arrange fund and time. Finally, to get the original scenario, it was essential to talk with the female students, parents of the students, teachers of the schools, policy makers, journalists, government employees, NGOs and others.

#### Research Questions

- Why are there fewer numbers of girls as compared to boys in secondary schools in Bangladesh and Pakistan?
- What are the challenges of female secondary education in Bangladesh and Pakistan ?
- What are the recommendations to ensure female secondary education in Bangladesh and Pakistan?
- What are the government policies to bridge the gender gap in education in Bangladesh and Pakistan?

#### Literature Review

##### Country profile

**Bangladesh:** The People's Republic of Bangladesh is a parliamentary democracy with a multi-party system. The president is the head of the state and the prime-minister is the head of the government (US Department of State,2007). The capital city of Bangladesh is Dhaka. There are eight administrative divisions in Bangladesh, like: Dhaka, Rajshahi, Rangpur, Mymensingh, Sylhet, Barisal, Chittagong and Khulna(web portal) (bdnews24.com). From 1858 to 1946, Bengal province was part of British India (Coward, 1987). Bangladesh became independent in 1971. Its population is about 162,951,560(World population prospects). Ninety percent of the populations are Muslims and 9.5 % of the population is Hindu (US Department of State, 2007). The literacy rate of Bangladesh is 66.5 % for males and 63.1% for female (US Department of State, 2007). Bangladesh is a low lying country. Myanmar and India are the two bordering country of Bangladesh. It is a agricultural country and produces rice , jute, sugarcane and now it is developing by its textile products.

**Pakistan:** Pakistan, officially the Islamic republic of Pakistan is unique among Muslim countries to have been created the name of Islam (Talot and lan, 1984). Pakistan became an independent country following the partition of India in

1947(Cohen, Stephen Philip,2004). It has 4 provinces: Punjab, Sindh, Baluchistan and North-West Frontier Province (NWFP). Islamabad constitutes a separate federal district. The President is the ceremonial head of the state and is the civilian commander-in-chief of the Pakistan Armed Forces and the prime-minister is the chief executive. The country population is about 209,970,000(www.pbscensus.gov.pk/2017). It has an area about 796,096 square kilometer .Pakistan is a south – Asian country and it borders with China, India, Iran, and Afghanistan. At present Pakistan is the sixth largest country in the world population. It is a agricultural country and it produces cotton, sugar, rice, and textile. The literacy rate of the country is nearly 58 %.

#### **Female Enrolment in Secondary Education in Bangladesh:**

Educating girls and young women is an important development objective, reflected for example in the United Nations Millennium Development Goals. Enrolment and success rates are very crucial for any educational system in the world but they are more important for the developing countries like Bangladesh. Motivated by the potential long-term benefits of improving education levels, a number of developing countries have abolished school tuition fees. The Female Secondary School Stipend Program (FSSSP), which was introduced in Bangladesh in 1994 with the objective of improving rural girls' education. Under this Program, all female students from grade 6 to 10 receive monthly stipends for their school participation. In addition to stipend money, school fees for female students are paid by the government to the respective schools (Haq,M and Rahman Motiur,PK,Md,2008). The Program made secondary education free for girls residing in rural areas and provided a cash stipend for them (Halm *et al.*, 2016). The Bangladesh government is committed to many internal and external organizations, such as Human Rights and UN bodies, to implement rights for women and children. Ensuring adequate availability of educational facilities is necessary but not sufficient for enrolment, completion, survival and reduction of dropout in the secondary level education. In terms of gender parity in enrolment, statistics show that the gender gap is steadily decreasing from 52.2 % enrolment in boys and 49 % in girls in 1998, to 51 % in boys and 47.8 percent in girls in 2001((Raynor *et al.*,2006).

In the early nineties, the Government of Bangladesh (GOB) sought to increase rural female enrolment at the secondary school level by launching a stipend program for female secondary students.

There are four projects,1.The Female Secondary School Assistance Project(FSSSA) funded by IDA and it is doing their work in 118 thanas. 2. The Female Secondary Stipend Project (FSSP) funded by Government of Bangladesh and it is supporting the female students of 282 thanas. 3. The Secondary Education Development Project (SEDP) funded by Asian Development Bank and it also doing their work in 53 thanas. 4. The Female Secondary Education Project ( FSEP) funded by NORAD and it is helping female students of 7 thanas in Bangladesh. At present these four projects with the help of NGOs are trying to increase female enrolment in secondary education. These projects introduced a similar nationwide stipend program targeted at girls in grades 6 through 10 in 460 rural thanas ,starting in 1994 (Khandaker, 2003). To minimize dropout rates in the secondary level of education , special emphasis has been given upon the female students. For this reason the government of Bangladesh giving Stipends, including grants for books and stationary, to all

unmarried girls of rural areas up to grade 7 who have ensure 75 % of attendance and achieve marks of 45 % or over in the annual examinations (Raynor *et al.*,2006). Bangladesh has achieved an expected success in increasing female enrolment in secondary education. As reported by the UNICEF, Bangladesh, the rate of children completing a five-year primary education cycle increased from 65% in 1998 to 67 % by 2001.During the same period, the dropout rate decreased from 35 % to 33% (Zaman, 2014).

After gaining independence from Pakistan in 1971, Bangladesh had a literacy rate of 18 %, with female literacy standing at only 11%(Ahammed,2003).The Government of Bangladesh ,with the help of both local and international non-governmental agencies and organizations, crafted a nationwide plan to eradicate illiteracy and reduce gender parity in education . The primary driving force was toward improving the primary education sector, to be followed by subsequent development in the secondary, tertiary, and higher levels. In seeking reforms, the government of Bangladesh hence made most primary schools state-owned, established new education policies, and involved NGOs in its education sector. The Government of Bangladesh provided for free primary education and supplies (including books and uniforms) and began developing basic infrastructure ( such as school buildings and wells) to create better learning environment as part of the nationwide initiatives. As a result of these initiatives ,at the start of the new millennium, girls comprised more than 50 per cent of total secondary enrolment in Bangladesh (Raynor, Wesson and Keynes,2006).In the primary education sector, a similar balance could be seen around 2005 (BANBEIS, 2010).

#### **Female Enrolment in Secondary Education in Pakistan:**

Education is the key of success. And it also good engine of person's personal development and obviously it is the instrument of national development. Educating girls and women is significant in economic development (Tembon and Fort, 2008). The education system in Pakistan is divided into five stages; primary, middle, secondary, higher secondary and tertiary. Generally, primary education refers to grades one to five, middle schooling comprises grades six through eight and secondary education includes grades nine through ten(Ibid). The constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 1973 lays down that 'state shall be responsible for eradication of illiteracy and provision of free and compulsory education up to secondary level, within minimum possible time (Article 37-B, 1973;Constitution of Pakistan). Secondary education is an important sub-sector of the entire education system. This level of education, therefore, needs to be organized in such a way that it should prepare young men and women for the pursuit of higher education, as well as make them able to adjust with their practical lives meaningfully and productivity (Suleman *et al.*, 2015).In Pakistan, many children are out of school and in this case the position of Pakistan is next to Nigeria (Ullah MZ,2011). It is very essential to educate women in male dominated society such as Pakistan because "educating girls delivers a high return than other investment in the developing world" (World Bank Report, 2011).Government estimates of the overall dropout rate suggest that only 30 percent of students continue beyond the primary level (Planning commission, 2009).Girls' education is as important as that of male. Girls' education has enormous social and economic benefits. And girls' education has been identified as a key of national development. It is an instrument for the spiritual

development. Within the context of Islamic perception, education is an instrument for developing the attitudes of individuals in accordance with the values of righteousness to help in building a sound Islamic society (Govt. of Pakistan, 1998). But unfortunately, the Muslim society has neglected the girl's education. Culture and tradition is another factor that negatively affects girls' education up to secondary level. That is why literacy rate of female education is extremely low in the Muslims societies. Pakistan has a low primary enrolment, only 54% of girls are enrolled in primary school, which dropout to 30 % for secondary school.(Malala,2013) In addition, no efforts have been made to design the system to provide them opportunities for the attainment of education. There are many factors that affect girl's education. Researcher stated that in Pakistan, twenty seven million children does not enter in any school and seven million does not get primary education (Haq, 2013). In Pakistan, only 2% of budget is dedicated to education sector. This situation is not satisfactory for education system of a country. (Latif *et al.*, 2015). According to the Global Competitiveness Index (GCI), Pakistan's performance is weak on the basis of health and education related elements of competitiveness, and it was compared with other developing countries in the region like India, China, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Malaysia (Pakistan Education Statistics, 2015). There have been more than nine policy documents, eight Five-year Plans and Several Action Plans setting out broad principles of policy, targets and strategies to address the education deficit in the country (Aly,2007).Commitments are also made in the country's strategy vision paper for 2030, within the PRSP (Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper),and various international convention. The education policies, plan and programs in Pakistan are focused to improve school education but girls are still less privileged than boys. In this regard government policies and action plans focuses on the issue, that all citizens have the right to go to school but still Pakistan's progress on achieving the MDGs has been considered 'off-track'(Ayesha, 2009).

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

In this study both primary and secondary data has been collected .The study is empirical and explorative in nature and therefore the information presented is based on both primary and secondary data. To fulfill the main objectives of this research, primary data is collected by using online interview. The main questionnaires has been divided into two major parts, one is for the Bangladeshi students and other for the Pakistani students. Secondary data has collected from books, newspapers, journals, annual reports, internet, government website, etc. The questionnaire has given as appendix.

**Study Area:** The study has been conducted in the Beijing Normal University campus. There are many Bangladeshi and Pakistani students who have been studying here as foreign students. It is located in the Haidian district in Beijing. There are about 60 students from Pakistan, and they have been studying in Beijing Normal University at the different levels, including Ph.D., Graduate and undergraduate levels. There are about 12 students from Bangladesh and they are also doing Ph.D, Masters and Honours here.

**Data Collection:** The primary data has collected through online. E-mail and face book has been used to collect data. A structured questionnaire has been used for the getting answer

from the respondents. A total eight questions were prepared for the respondents, four questions were for the Pakistani students and four questions were for the Bangladeshi students. The total respondents are 20, among the respondents, 10 respondents are from Bangladesh and 10 respondents are from Pakistan. Half of the respondents are female.

**Discussion and Findings:** On the basis of the study (both primary and secondary data) the findings are given below:

### Declaration of free and compulsory education in the constitution

**Bangladesh :**Article 17, " It is mentioned that the state shall adopt effective measures for the purpose of establishing a uniform, mass oriented and universal system of education and extend free and compulsory education to all children to such stage as may be determined by law."

**Pakistan:** Article 25A (Right to Education) "The state shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of five to sixteen years in such manners as may be determined by law."

### Education system

**Bangladesh:** The system is divided into four stages: Primary, Secondary, Higher Secondary and Higher Education

**Pakistan:** The system is divided into five stages: Primary, Middle, Secondary, Higher Secondary, and Tertiary Education.

### The cause of Low Enrolment of Females in Secondary education

#### Bangladesh

**Poverty:** In Bangladesh poverty is the main reason for low enrolment of females in secondary education. Poor parents prefer to keep their girl child at home to do household works as they work outside for earn money. Ahmad *et al.* (2005) explored the relationship between inequality in the access to secondary education and poverty in Bangladesh. Asadullah, M, N. and Chaudhury, N. (2006) mentioned that the gender disparity in education in Bangladesh has different dimension along with career path for females which, to a certain extent, linked with social, religious and economic values of Bangladesh.

**Early marriage:** Early marriage is very common in Bangladesh. Here females are supposed to taking care of husband's family and also taking care their babies. So the female cannot continue the school.

**Distance of Schools:** There are many remote areas in Bangladesh, where secondary schools are not available so girls face insecure and family cannot bear the transport cost.

**Poor family background:** Researcher also find that students drop their school due to poor health caused by poor diet and starvation. Family background is the important barrier. Educated families have a tendency to involve their girl child in education. Raynor (2005) focuses on the attitudes of people of Bangladesh about the female education which is to blame for the gender disparity in education in Bangladesh.

**Lack of poor infrastructure:** Low quality of the education, lack of female teachers, inadequate school environment and building, overloaded class rooms, lack of school transport, improper languages of teaching, carelessness of teachers and security problem in girls school, were common causes which increase school dropouts.

## Pakistan

**Poverty:** Poverty is the main reason for low enrolment of females in secondary education. In the rural areas parents are deprived from education and they are not concern about their children's education. They prefer to send their boys to the school and keep their girls at home to perform their household works like cooking, washing, cleaning, caring the siblings, look after the animals, bring firewood etc. Poor families cannot afford the expenditures of the books, uniforms, and transportation to school.( Imran and Rizwana ,2004).The Pakistan social and living standards measurement survey 2007-2008 found that more than 80 percent of the rural women is the poorest quintile are illiterate(PLSM,2008). Majority of the parents do not admit their girls in school or withdraw them before completion of schooling (Humala and Eshya, 2000).

**Parents' attitude:** Parents are the decision maker of a family so parents' attitude is very important and it negatively affects girls' education. They consider girl's education is only the waste of time and money because they will not get benefit from educating their girls. They also consider it against their culture and tradition (Suleman *et al.*, 2015).

**Parents' education:** If parents are educated they are more concern about their children's education. More educated parents have more wish to their daughter's education. Urban people are paying more attention in the education of their daughter than the rural ones (Rafiq, 2000).

**Lack of sufficient educational facilities:** In the rural areas there are insufficient schools and those schools are not well decorated. There is shortage of classrooms, benches, electricity, fans, drinking water, transport facilities, etc (Suleman *et al.*, 2015). It is another important barrier. It is generally objectionable for girls to attend a school having no toilets for females only, especially after girls reach puberty, yet many girls' schools still lack them (Hunter, 2005).

**Lack of female Teachers:** Most of the time girls prefer female teachers. Female teachers are more caring by nature and sometimes girls face sexual harassment by their male teachers so they prefer female teachers.

**Culture and tradition:** In the Muslim society early marriage is very common and they are against of open mixing so they arrange marriage of their girl child earlier. Culture and tradition has a great influence on education. It negatively affects female education. In rural areas of Pakistan, when girls enter adolescence they are married before completion of secondary level. Therefore they become unable to continue their further education (Suleman *et al.*,2015).

**Long distance of schools:** In Pakistan, secondary schools are very limited. In the rural areas schools' distance creates various problems like child abuse, sexual violence, security and transport cost.

**Discussion of Primary data:** In this research respondent were 20, among the respondents ten were from Pakistan and ten were from Bangladesh. They cordially respond to the questionnaire and based on their answers the findings are as given below:

Most of the respondents (both Bangladeshi and Pakistani) told that there are low enrolment of females in secondary education in their country. They also told that there are many reasons for low enrolment of females in secondary education. One of the respondents of Pakistan told, "Girls grow up very fast, so their parents prefer to arrange marriage for them". Another respondent Sultana told, "Most of the people of our country are poor and illiterate and they are not more concern about their girls' education. They prefer to send their boys at school but keep their girls at home". Another respondent Shamillah told, "There are many Muslim families in our society who prefer Islamic schools and they send their children at religion schools called Madrassa."

Bangladeshi respondents Nabeal said, "In our country many people lives in rural areas and they are very poor, they involved their children in work for money. They are ignore of girls education and there are not so many secondary schools in rural level, so the girls face difficulties to attend the class from a long distance."One of the Bangladeshi respondents Shammi said, "early marriage is the reason why students cannot continue their secondary education." Another respondent Shamima told, "Many students are afraid of test, when they failed in the examination, they stop attending the school." Another respondent Ummi told, "In the remote areas and in the slums poverty is very common, in this areas girls do work in the field and in the garments factory. They do job for money and they do not go to school." Most of the Pakistani respondent told they have no idea about government policy and Bangladeshi respondents told they have a very little idea about government policy on this issue. One Bangladeshi respondent Bayzid said that in the villages some NGOs were doing their work to increase the enrolment of females in education. Ali from Bangladesh told government had already ensured free primary and secondary education for the females and also giving stipend for the female students.

## Recommendations

To control the unexpected situation of female students' low enrolment in secondary education, Government of the responsible countries may take some remedial measure, such as:

- Availability of necessary infrastructure is prerequisite to keep students at schools. Establishment of school with all basic Facilities such as; furniture, electricity, water and computer and science lab (Zarif,2012).
- Parents, students, and social awareness is needed to increase females enrolment,so Community awareness seminar may be launch to develop the interest of parent and students towards study and avoid school dropout.
- Communication problem is very high in rural areas of these developing countries so the Government may establish schools near villages to ensure accessibility of education for rural population.
- There should be free education minimum at secondary level. The Government should try to support students with free coaching materials such as uniforms, free

books, etc., (Bajoria, Braunschweiger, 2014) (Behrman, James, 1999).

- If students are financially solvent, they can study properly. So the Government may offer scholarships for intelligent and needy students, specially for the female students.
- Sometimes parents need loan to send their girl child at school. Study loan may be offered to provide financial support to the parents.
- Early marriage of the female is the common scenario of the developing countries so trends of early marriages may be abolish by the government law.
- Sometimes female students are afraid of male teachers and tests, so schools may provide favorable environment for female students and include more female teachers. Environment of School would be interesting and students feel it as a place of learning as well as relaxation and liberation (Agbenyega, Klibthong ; 2013).

## Conclusion

Secondary education is very important to build up an educated nation. But developing nation, like Bangladesh and Pakistan are facing many problems to ensure secondary education for all. Within these problems low female enrolment is the most important problem in secondary education. Pakistan has paid a little attention in this field of female education but Bangladesh has achieved some progress in female education. It can be concluded that poverty, parents' attitude, early marriage, lack of school facilities, long distance of the school, domestic work, cultural and traditional cause, etc, are the main causes of low enrolment of females in secondary education in Bangladesh and Pakistan. In this case government can take some initiatives and they may make some policies that will provide attractive incentives for increasing female enrolment in secondary education. It is also important to create awareness of female education among parents, mainly the parents of remote areas.

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