

Gender Disparity in Sindh – A Tale Beyond Cultural Bounds

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OVERVIEW

- Education in Pakistan is as old a subject as the country itself. Soon after independence Pakistan realized the need of education for its existence and economic progress.
- This need was felt for the all the genders – we aimed for Gender Parity.
- However, what we see even till date is a stark contrast to what we have been aiming for.

OVERVIEW CONTINUED...

- The paper briefly analysis the contrast between the provinces in Pakistan while focusing on Sindh to understand the dynamics of gender disparity in the province at all levels of public education.

How grave is the situation??

According to Global Gender Gap Report 2016 Pakistan ranks second last at 143 out of 144 countries, performing only better than Syria. Pakistan also scores the lowest in South Asian region which is itself the second-lowest performing region.

Pakistan has had six educational policies so far with Education Policy 2009 to be latest national education policy document

Education Policy 1979 was introduced with the background that half of the children were out of school with 50% drop out rate by grade 5. This is the exact same challenge that Pakistan faces today.

Sindh in 1979 had 16% rural female enrolment at primary level. However, today Sindh has 17% female rural enrolment at primary level, which only marks an increase of 1% over all these years*

Pakistan's 2009 education policy aimed to bring all boys and girls of primary age by 2015. Today 61% of all the primary age girls nationally as opposed to 39% primary age boys are out of school

*Ministry of Education, Government of Pakistan. "National Education Policy 1979." Islamabad: Government of Pakistan.

THE PUZZLE

Traditional view highlights that gender disparity is the result of cultural limitation. However, we cannot determine as to what proportion of this can be attributed to cultural bounds.

On the contrary data reflects significant administrative failure contributing to this challenge.

PROVINCE AND LEVEL-WISE OUT OF SCHOOL FEMALE CHILDREN AS A PERCENTAGE OF NATIONAL FIGURE

Levels	Punjab	Sindh	Balochistan	KPK
Primary	30%	36%	12%	12%
Middle	41%	30%	7%	14%
Secondary	45%	27%	7%	15%
Higher Sec	50%	23%	6%	15%
Total	42%	29%	8%	14%

Of the four provinces Sindh has the second-highest number of total out of school females followed by KPK and Balochistan.

However, Sindh has the highest contribution of 36% to the national figure of primary female out of school children, followed by Punjab's 30% for the same level.

PROVINCIAL PERCENTAGE SHARE IN NATIONAL GIRLS' ENROLMENT IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Level of Education	Sindh	Punjab	KP	Balochistan	Pakistan
Pre-Primary	13%	51%	24%	3%	100%
Primary	19%	51%	20%	4%	100%
Middle	14%	59%	18%	3%	100%
Secondary	15%	63%	14%	2%	100%
Higher Secondary	27%	56%	10%	-	100%
Total	17%	54%	20%	3%	100%

Punjab has the highest percentage share of female enrolment at all levels of education followed by KPK, Sindh and then Balochistan.

Across pre-primary, primary and middle levels, Sindh's contribution to national enrolment is lower than that of KPK's, however, the percentage share increases for secondary and higher secondary level.

Sindh falls behind KPK in terms of total female enrolment and seems to be performing better than Balochistan only.

PERCENTAGE OF GIRLS' ENROLMENT IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS AGAINST PROVINCIAL GIRLS' ENROLMENT

Level of Education	Sindh	Punjab	KP	Balochistan	Pakistan
Pre-Primary	16%	19%	25%	21%	20%
Primary	55%	46%	51%	58%	49%
Middle	14%	19%	15%	14%	17%
Secondary	8%	11%	7%	6%	9%
Higher Secondary	8%	5%	3%	-	5%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

There is a common downward trend in girls' enrolment as they move up the education level. For all the provinces the greatest percentage of enrolment is at primary level, however, the percentage falls significantly post primary level.

FEMALE PARTICIPATION RATE IN SINDH

Level of Education	2001-2	2005-6	2010-11	2015-16
Primary	28%	41%	35%	27%
Middle	15%	15%	18%	13%
Secondary	16%	15%	17%	16%

There is a downward trend in females' participation rate in Sindh over the span of 15 years

over the period of time, when education should have become more accessible in Sindh a contrary has actually happened.

Is **CULTURE** alone an issue?

AVAILABILITY OF FEMALE TEACHERS IN SINDH

Student teacher ratio (STR) shows the number of students per teacher which also gives a quick view of resource rationalization.

As per Sindh Education Profile 2015-16 STR for primary level ranges from 135 students per teacher in Badin to 888 in Sujawal district.

In Dadu district there are around 582 girls' primary schools with only a total of 82 female teachers posted in primary schools in the district.

Similarly, there are 530 girls' primary schools in Tando Allahyar with only 1 female teacher posted in a primary school in the district.

There seems no apparent rationale behind teachers' recruitment and posting. Shortage of female teaching staff discourages parents from sending their daughters to schools.

If culture demands sending daughters to girls' schools and for them to be taught by female teachers, the state should provide so.

AVAILABILITY OF FEMALE TEACHERS IN SINDH

Education Policy of 1970 mentioned the need of posting more female teachers in schools.

The same was reiterated in 1998-2010 policy where government explicitly stated provision of teachers as per empirical needs of the schools.

2009 education policy also mentions the need of hiring more female teachers even if that requires relaxing qualification requirements for them.

Same rhetoric but no serious implementation

LACK OF RATIONALIZATION ACROSS VARIOUS SCHOOL LEVELS

Another challenge that lies in sustaining female enrolment is ensuring their effective transition from primary to post primary schools. Drawing from cultural demands one would expect girls from primary schools to transition to post-primary girls' schools.

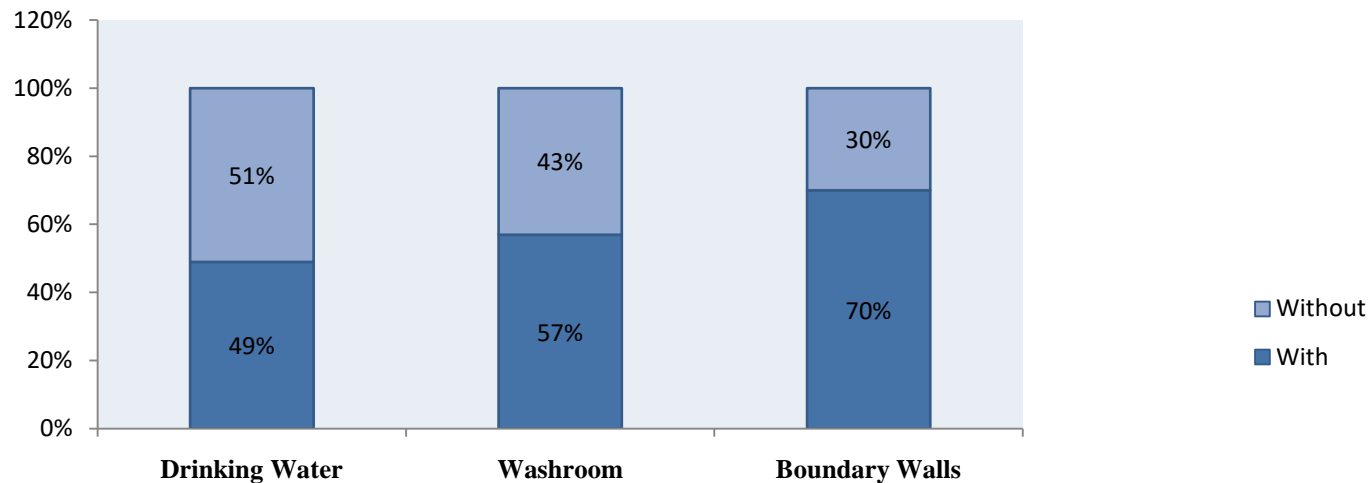
There is a striking contrast between the number of primary and post-primary girls' schools in the province.

For instance, Thatta has 709 girls' primary schools with only 17 middle; 3 elementary; 13 secondary and 2 higher secondary girls' schools. That is, Thatta has 1 girls' middle school for every 42 girls' primary schools; 1 elementary school for every 236 girls' primary schools; 1 secondary school for every 55 girls' primary schools and 1 higher secondary school for every 355 girls' primary schools.

On average Sindh has 1 girls' middle school for every 23 girls' primary schools, 1 elementary school for every 81 girls' primary schools, 1 secondary for every 17 girls' primary schools and 1 higher secondary school for every 107 girls' primary schools.

AMENITIES IN PUBLIC GIRLS' SCHOOLS

As per UNICEF, for schools to impart quality education, it is essential they provide “Environments that are healthy, safe, protective and gender-sensitive, and provide adequate resources and facilities



51 percent of the girls' schools in Sindh do not have drinking water facility, 43 percent girls' schools do not have washrooms and 30 percent do not have boundary walls.

SINDH'S LEAP – SINDH EDUCATION SECTOR PLAN

Sindh Education Sector Plan (SESP) reflects Sindh's prompt response to education responsibility after constitutional devolution in 2010.

The Sector Plan itself mentions possible factors leading to increased drop-out rates at all levels of education. These include:

(i) Early marriages, (ii) lack of awareness amongst parents and guardians; (iii) opportunity costs; (iv) lack of school facilities, especially separate toilets for girls; and (v) non-conducive environment for professional development of female staff.

Of all these factors only “*early marriages*” is a cultural factor and the remaining factors accentuate administrative failures.

Source: Sindh Education Sector Plan 2014-18

SINDH'S LEAP – SINDH EDUCATION SECTOR PLAN

SESP lists a complete implementation framework to address the issue of gender disparity in education. It lists the objectives in a sequential manner rightly commencing with Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) & followed by primary level since they are the first touch points to ensure education access to females.

As per recruitment policy 2017 qualified and competent teachers will be hired to ensure student development.

Particular focus laid on Early Childhood Teachers (ECT) to recruit 1,100 teachers in the first round of recruitment.

ECCE was introduced in 2009 Education Policy and the plan of its implementation was given in 2014 via SESP, whereas, the government has only recently announced the aim of hiring 1,100 ECCE teachers on merit (after 8 years).

CURRICULUM

The process of curriculum revision to make it gender neutral has been completed for some grades and is underway for others.

Post revision the same should be retained until textbooks development.

Sindh Textbook Board (STBB) undertakes this responsibility of textbooks development and distribution to public schools across Sindh.

It is alarming that the board does not have defined criteria for authors and editors selection to write and edit textbooks which explains the number of typo and conceptual errors in the current textbooks

CONCLUSION

Considering the stated administrative failures it would be unjust to attribute gender disparity to solely cultural factors.

The major challenge lies in ensuring females transition post primary level. However, this cannot be attained until the ratio between primary and post primary schools is improved.

Sindh Education Sector Plan lists almost 12 action points to address gender disparity in Sindh. No significant progress has been made on any of these targets

If culture itself is a hindrance to girls' education, the current education system further strengthens the parochial cultural outlook on girls' education