



## PERCEPTION; MOTHERS UPON HAVING A DAUGHTER IN RAWALPINDI CITY

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**ABSTRACT:** Sex discrimination in a newborn child is still present in Pakistan. It is despite relative wealth, rapid globalization, female education and socioeconomic development. Although mother's education improves quality of childcare, but still it does not reduce discrimination against her children. The mental torture a female goes through in a life time for being female starts at the time of her birth and ends only with her life. These cultural bounded thinking has overshadowed a woman's own perception about a daughter. But some times to a family it does not make any difference that the child is a son or a daughter. **Aims:** The aim of the Research is to discuss how mothers of a female child feel about having a daughter if they wanted to have a son. **Objectives:** To explore what are the feelings of a mother upon having a daughter. To identify why they feel what they feel. To identify what are some of the reasons behind their thinking. To discuss how their experiences can be used in planning for interventions of future this can help in a better understanding of our mothers and daughters requirements. **Methodology:** The methodology of current research is based on qualitative anthropological research method. **Period:** Dec 2014 to Oct 2015. **Settings:** The sampling is taken from different socioeconomic strata. It is divided into low, middle and upper socioeconomic groups. Every stratum is with a different point of view regarding the same question. **Results:** "In Pakistan 42 percent of women accept violence as part of their fate; 33 percent feel too helpless to stand up to it; 19 percent protested and 4 percent took action against it. Discussion: It is also found that the middle socioeconomic group is the most crushed group of all in Pakistan. This is the strata who wanted to be modern like upper socioeconomic group but have lesser resources and opportunities. Females are educated equally like males in urban areas such as Lahore, Islamabad and Karachi. However, in rural areas, the education rate is substantially lower. **Recommendation:** For woman there must be a right to life, security and protection from violence which can be mental, physical, psychological and verbal. Government should ensure effective, prompt and impartial investigations into alleged cases of crimes and other incidents, and ensure that particular attention is paid to the investigation of such crimes and incidents and that those responsible for such acts are effectively brought to justice and, where appropriate, punished in order to avoid impunity.

**Key words:** Gender discrimination, Woman's preference, Women's health, Mental health, daughters.

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### INTRODUCTION

Gender is defined as "roles and responsibilities attributed to men and women in society".<sup>1</sup>

In Pakistani context, population-based quantitative study in Pakistan have been carried out which found that postpartum depression was associated with lower social status, increased stressful events which usually takes place in the preceding year. The higher levels of psychological

distress usually occurs in the antenatal period.<sup>3</sup> In another study from Pakistan in 2007 it was found that poverty, , lower education level of spouse and having more than 6 children was associated with persistence of depression in the postnatal period.<sup>4</sup>

### Literature review

"Clever men create themselves, but clever women... are created by their mothers. Women

can never quite escape their mother's cosmic pull, not their lip-biting expectations or their faulty love. We want to please our mothers, emulate them, disgrace them, oblige them, outrage them, and bury ourselves in the mysteries and consolations of their presence”

In the year 2009-10, Kalinin and Arthur reviewed 74 studies from 21 Asian and south Asian countries. The range of postpartum depression was found from 6.5% to 68.8%. In this review, The Authors found that Malaysia was with the lowest rates of postpartum depression due to economic stability and Pakistan with the highest rates due to economic depression.<sup>2</sup> The strong association was also found in the same domain between history of antenatal depression and postpartum depression in Japan , Sweden, Australia , Canada , Iran, and India.

### Carol Shields

We are a patriarchal society. It can be defined as;

Patriarchy is a social norm of sexual differentiation. It provides privileges to males by transforming biological sex into political gender, which prioritizes the male gender more powerful as compared to the women, which is considered weak biologically.<sup>5</sup>

Gender discrimination is what is based on a person's way of thinking:

Sexism is considered to be mostly affecting women and girls; however, gender discrimination can affect any gender. It has been linked to gender role in the society and profession, and may include the belief that one sex or gender is intrinsically superior to another gender particularly the male are more superior.<sup>6</sup>

Gender stereotypes are beliefs which the people think about the characteristics and behavior of women and men. Objectification is treating a person, most commonly a woman, as an object having no emotion or feelings.<sup>7</sup>

Discrimination is always considered to be a social

issue in Pakistan and also all over the world. In our society, male child is always regarded more valuable to the family than girls who are considered valueless in the lower income groups. A girl's right to love and care, education, food, personal choices, free living is often denied as compared to male members of the society.

It is a well-known truth that women have been deprived from their basic human rights such as gender equality, education, healthcare and protection in Pakistan for a long period of time.<sup>8</sup> Social & cultural factors like customs, lifestyles and values always characterize a society. They are usually be grouped as religion, attitudes, economic status, class, language, politics law etc. These factors can have a positive or negative affect quality of life, job environment and health of a person.

Patriarchal system means the power dynamics of households and members of the family in the society where males are always acting as the dominant groups and females are the usually acting as a subordinate group. In rural areas especially, it is a strong belief that a son should be educated only, because a son will need to support his parents when they need it in their old age. These beliefs are found in most families which prepare the girls for marriage only and are taught to be obedient and quiet in all circumstances.

Lack of academic culture is one of the biggest obstacles to girls and women's discriminations in our society.

### Rationale

There is much work done on quantitative aspect of this topic but very less data is available in the qualitative research design. Gender discrimination is a big issue with different dimensions in every socioeconomic class of Pakistan. A qualitative research is much need approach for an in-depth know how of this issue.

### Theoretical framework

Qualitative study method is used in sociology with main objective to understand the pattern of

social life. But, with rising questions of how many, or how much, quantitative methods became important. The choice between qualitative and quantitative methods is difficult in studies with sociological perspective. The decision to use qualitative methods for this study was based on desire to learn how mothers feel, the pressures she is in and the expectations she has to fulfill.

Today qualitative research is often seen as an anti-Research to quantitative research (Starrin et al., 2001) and the representativeness of these two research methods is sometimes controversial.

The theoretical frameworks used in this Research are as follows;

- Social constructivism (world around us) is the theoretical basis of this study. This study used the theoretical framework suggesting three mechanisms behind the perception of a mother on a female child's birth.
- The first one is the social norms that female is the burden on parents.
- The second one, the reasons related with the existence of son preference in the society.
- The third mechanism is the high fertility rate to the extent to force parents for sex preference.

Other frameworks involved are;

- Gender dynamics (role of gender in an issue)
- Feminist theory (theories dealing with women's diverse situations)
- Critical theory (empowering people)
- Empiricism (knowledge through logic), and Rationalism (knowledge through experience).

The philosophical assumptions involved are;

- Axiology (role of values)
- Ontology (nature of reality)
- Epistemology (philosophy of knowledge).

This research topic demanded a multifaceted approach to get an in-depth knowledge of the mechanisms behind this discrimination. This is the reason that a lot of frameworks are in cooperated in this research.

## METHODOLOGY

### Design

The methodology of current research is based on qualitative anthropological research method. There are In-depth interviews, field notes and researcher observation. Interviews are a very useful instrument for innovative research taking into account the exact status of the interviewee regarding a specialized topic. The semi-structured interview guide supports comparability between the interviews. It also allowed for the inclusion of not anticipated, but important issues.

### Sampling

For this research design a purposive sampling is done. The sampling frame is mothers of at least two children. The sampling is done by using techniques of

- maximum variation sampling
- typical sampling, and
- Opportunistic sampling

The sampling is taken from different socioeconomic strata. It is divided into low, middle and upper socioeconomic groups. Every stratum is with a different point of view regarding the same question. The inclusion criteria is being a married woman of any age, May or may not be Pregnant, having at least two children, high, middle, and low socio-economic strata.

### Data collection tools

The data collection tools are In-depth interviews, field notes and observations. The participants of in depth interviews are contacted according to the time of their availability. The sites of data collection are local places and two of the hospitals in Rawalpindi District.

### Data collection method

Data is recorded; field notes are made and used. Semi-structured in-depth interviews is conducted. Data management is event based and on regular basis. Confidentiality is maintained.

### Interview Guide

The interview guide is based on the following topics

- Preparation: a semi-structured interview guide is prepared to have a proper flow.
- Informed consent: A full transcript of an informed consent attached and signed.
- Take the notes/record: The complete in-depth interviews are recorded and attached.
- Leading questions and Probing questions: It is done while in interview.

### Data Analysis

For data analysis Constant Comparison/ Grounded Theory is used. It is a widely used way of analyzing new theories. As described earlier, the recordings are transcribed in the native language; from this transcribed data codes are created using a line to line process.

### Identify emergent themes

The main themes emerging out of the in-depth interviews are heart breaking. The major issues found are in the middle socioeconomic group. This is the class where mainly a mother is under constant fight of her inner self, husband, in-laws, and other family members. The decision power is very low in these women. The push and pull effects continue throughout their life.

"In Pakistan, 48 percent of women accept violence as part of their fate; 36 percent feel too helpless to stand against it; 22 percent protested and 6 percent took action against the violence,'<sup>9</sup>

### Helplessness

A: No control over her pregnancy B: Cannot do anything on the birth of a girl

C: Cannot change the thinking's of the family members D: Being a mother she cannot ignore her daughter

E: Daughters needs to fight for love and care even

### Stigmatized

To have a daughter is a stigma (to label, to treat disgraceful) in our society. A daughter is as stigmatized in our society as HIV or AIDS is in the west.

A: Peer pressures B: Cultural and normative beliefs.

C: A female child is disowned D: Dowry for the

unwanted daughter.

### DISCUSSION

Although a female is thought to be a delicate creature yet in my opinion she is one of the most powerful one on the earth. She can be as soft as a mother's touch, as gentle as a flower, but at the same time she can be as strong as a stone and as evil as evil itself. Whatever the responsibilities assigned to a female by nature she has all the capabilities to fulfill it. But sometimes she is overburdened with our misbelieves, social norms and cultural taboos. Long bounded with these issues a woman has to survive in our world.

Gender discrimination is a practice which a female faces more in every front of life. The powerful is the aggressor and other the victim. This is an issue also faced in more civilized societies, in our society it is in the worst way. Islam and its laws are mishandled and misinterpreted by self-proclaimed people of Islam.

As the themes emerged in the current research having a daughter is a shameful event in a mother's life. This is a vicious circle. The women are against the women. When a women, who is daughter is law becomes a mother in law, she repeats the same. The girl is brought up in a completely different way than that of a boy. She has a lesser portion in food, love, privileges and opportunities in life.

The most important category which came up in this research is that an abnormal son is better than a normal daughter; this is itself a shameful statement. But the whole lot of background behind this statement is even darker. We push the mother to a limit where she thinks that an abnormal son is better! The social and cultural beliefs are too strong which weight a son and a daughter, although these are the gifts to cherish not weighted.

In our society, it is widely accepted that men can do almost everything even the ones which are not acceptable in our society. The women accepts these decision being considering themselves as

Fragile, weak and powerless is the description of a woman.

Women face significant challenges in society, in all her appearances of mother, daughter, wife and sister. The gender inequality index in Pakistan is 0.573(2011) and we rank 115th in the world out of 136 countries.

The Gender Inequality Index (GII) for measurement of gender disparity was introduced in 2010 Human Development Report 20th by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).<sup>10</sup> The report tells that the global gender gap index is 0.53437(2012) and we rank 131<sup>th</sup> out of 138 countries in the world who are the members of United Nations. Through the Global Gender Gap Report 2014, the World Economic Forum quantifies the magnitude of gender-based disparities and tracks their progress over time. There is no single measure that can capture the complete situation, the Global Gender Gap Index presented in this very particular Report seeks to measure one important aspect of gender equality: the relative gaps between women and men across four key areas (1) health, (2) education, (3) economy and (4) politics.<sup>11</sup>

The annual Gender Gap Index by the Geneva-based Forum in 2014 showed Pakistan ranked 140 out of 144, second to last in global gender equality. This was the third year in a row that Pakistan has maintained the second to last ranking. The only country where women face worse inequality issues was Yemen. Even the worst of all India's ranking improved from 114<sup>th</sup> to 101<sup>th</sup> in 2014. This is really very alarming situation which immediate needs the attention of the authorities of our country.

It is also known to everyone that the middle socioeconomic group is the most crushed group of all in Pakistan. This is the strata; who wanted to be modern like upper socioeconomic group; but have lesser resources and opportunities. Females are educated equally like males in urban areas such as Lahore, Islamabad and Karachi. However, in rural areas, the education rate is

substantially lower all across the country. The situation is worse in the Baluchistan and rural Sind and KPK.

A light of change is expected with the government policy in KPK, in which 73% of new schools are built for girls<sup>12</sup>, and there are plans to increase the infrastructure of women's school so that it matches with boys' school and more female colleges' establishment for higher education in the KPK in these Years.

Immaturity is the root cause of marriage issues. The legal age for men to be married is 18 and a woman is 16 Years. Many girls are still married off into a child marriage in spite of Government orders. The Jurga system is very effective in conducting child marriages in all the rural areas of the country.

This is one of a very common site in lower and middle socioeconomic strata where daughters are taken as burden and married as soon as they get any proposal for her, and whose eligibility is often ignored. A cultural marker of marriage is the Dowry system in indo Pakistan, where the groom often make heavy financial demands on the bride's family and the bride's family mostly negotiate and fulfills these demands as a condition of marrying their daughter.

Within the dowry system of the subcontinent, abuse is likely to continue after the marriage has taken place.<sup>13</sup>

Females are found to be the bigger enemies of other females. In a joint family system a mother in-law is the most difficult part to manage. She cannot let go her son to other woman, where the wife thinks he is her property. The push and pull continue throughout life. The main job of a male to keep balance in these relations is mostly lacking.

Community struggling at personal level through a NGO cannot be successful in the eradication of discrimination until and unless women themselves do not try to understand their proper status in the society. Women are required to



support each other. Respect is the strong start of any relationship. Both man and woman has to respect each other, as an individual, and every individual is free to choose way for his life. Programs addressing these issues must contain unbiased teachings of Islam.

### Recommendation

- A proper policy guideline should be there for female education, job opportunities, and security.
- For woman there must be a right to life, security and protection from violence which can be mental, physical, psychological and verbal.
- Government should first acknowledge the situation. Most of the Leaders just speak on the issues but do not want to interfere in these problems. They have accepted as social norms. It is the need of the time that society should prepare them to face these issues. So many laws have already been made but no implementation; Therefore, It is required to be implemented with full zeal.
- Government should do all measure to raise level of awareness among public representatives and public institutions about gender discrimination in Pakistan.

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
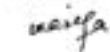
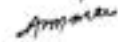
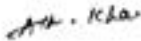
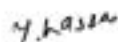
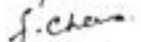
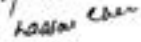
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