

Socio-Economic Constraints for Women Regarding Food Security

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Abstract: More than half of the total population in Pakistan has been unable to reach the nutritious and balanced diet. The food availability is not sufficient criteria to secure food but socio-economic access is also important. The main purpose of the research was to analyze the socio-economic constraints for women in achieving food security at the household level. The research was carried out in the District Pakpattan and District Vehari. The data were collected from 480 women by face to face interview. Both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were used to analyze the data. Results exposed that only 22.3% of the rural women were economically active and out of them, 96.2% of them were earning 5000 or less form their work. 42.9% of the working women reported that they use their earned money to achieve the better standards of balanced diet. 61.0% of the respondents told that they often feed their children with less nutritious food because lack of money to buy nutritious and healthy food. Moreover, 53.8 % of the women expressed that they have been facing the difficulty in having access to the clean water due to lack of financial affordability. Current study unveiled that socio-economic constraints have strong association with household income and working status of the respondents. Multiple linear regression also endorsed that income, age, education and working status were significantly associated with the dependent variable of socio-economic constraints. Therefore, it is recommended that women's economic status should be strengthened through practical efforts at policymaking.

Keywords: Food Security; working women; socio-economic constraints; laborious work

INTRODUCTION

Food insecurity has been a burning issue across the globe. In case of Pakistan, more than half of the total population has been unable to reach the nutritious and balanced diet, therefore, undernourishment prevails. According to Food and Agricultural Organization, "people of particular area are food secure, when nutritious and safe food is available at all times and everyone has access to that by socio-economic and physical means, in addition to it, available food should be according to nutritional necessities and preferences of the people for healthy and active life" (FAO, 2004). From this definition, it can be

inferred that food availability is not sufficient criteria to secure food but socio-economic access is also important.

Currently, the world has adequate food to feed everybody but even then, approximately 854 million individuals are still undernourished (FAO, 2006). Due to lesser intake than everyday need, people living at the below food poverty line are one third of the total. They cannot satisfy their everyday dietary requirements. The people of villages are more food insecure i.e. 35% than cities as 26% of the total (United Nations, 2001).

Mucha (2012) reported that gender and food security are not detached issues. Agriculture, health and nutrition are also interrelated. Some experts perceived that in the areas of agricultural, health and nutrition, females are the central part (IFPRI, 2011). Health of women destroys due to continued malnutrition as females' health have a direct effect on the health of kids especially newborns. Furthermore, it is stressed that mostly Southeast Asian nations especially their villages mainly depend upon farming for their livelihood (Paris, 2000).

Agriculture is backbone of Pakistan's economy. Females have major share in food production in Pakistan. They earn money through farming. All over the world scarcity of food is on the rise and mostly hitting the females, landless and poor. Increasing food prices intensified the situation. People who are already suffering from food insecurity find themselves in deteriorating situations. They are merged by millions more of new food-insecure individuals. Females have fundamental role in food production and food security at household level. In Johi, Pakistan, Female agriculturalists went out on the roads to claim their right to use land (Karl, 2009).

According to research, women's input in domestic earnings is noteworthy for improving the access to the nutritional diet chiefly in financially poor families. Due to women's share in income, food security is high. In short, households in which females 'income share is high, there food security level also high. Wages shared by females indirectly affects the food accessibility and prevent the household by abrupt food scarcities. Likewise, the research also finds out that those families also sustain their capacity of securing the food in which women managed family income. (Kalansooriya and Chandrakumara, 2015). Income level is very important to determine socio-economic situation because greater the level of income stronger would be the economic position. (Amrin and Ashfaq, 2020). Women with high income face the lesser socio-cultural constraints regarding food security.

Similarly, the Tribal Pashtun women in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan have been suffering from the worse levels of drought, illiteracy and low level of health, this situation is persistent in almost all areas of South Asia. Inflexible ancestral customs outline the responsibilities of females and stop them from having protected human rights to assets. Females are allowed for limited level of movement and they have restricted or no right to use assets, mainly property. Moreover, in tribal areas there is no encouragement for females regarding decision-making. However, females subsidize a noteworthy percentage of farming manual labor, by the participation in wide-ranging farming actions, but their involvement is not legitimately acknowledged. Females have been deprived of heritage and right to assets under these ancestral values (Giovarelli and Agarwal, 2007).

All over the world, females are least expected to possess or control property and when they do, the property they can take accessibility are the least significant plots. For instance, in Kenya, land, which is controlled by males, are three times bigger on average, and the situation is not different in Bangladesh, Ecuador and Pakistan. (FAO, 2011 & Razavi 2007). Where females lack privileges or chances for

landholding, there is an average of 60 per cent more undernourished kids. It is also reported that when females have uninterrupted charge over resources for example, control over land and profits, this rises their administrative supremacy and prominence, resultantly, the nourishment level of their own and their family members get better (Landesa, 2012).

In Africa and Asia, studies described that to secure food at domestic level, women have a key role. For instance, Quisumbing et al. (1995) revealed that females at all times prefer family food requirements in contrary to males. That's the major reason ladies' earnings considerably recover domestic food intake and better status of kids' dietetic needs in emerging nations. Similarly, Kennedy & Peter (1992) showed that in Kenya and Malawi the ratio of earnings managed by females has a progressive effect on family caloric intake. Additionally, numerous researches revealed that educating the females draw a very progressive effect on the overall farming efficiency, nutritional excellence, and kids' dietary position (Ekanayake et al. 2003; Levin et al. 1999; Olumokaiye & Ajayi, 2006).

Women income has different impacts on family nutrition in-take, this effect is highly dependent upon the female's share of income in a household. The homes, in which women contributed more than half of the household income, the nutritional level of those families was 0.8 higher, in contrast to the households where females added less than 50% of the total domestic earnings (Kalansooriya and Chandrakumara, 2015).

The main objective of the current research was to assess the social and economic limitations for women in food security at household level. The study also evaluate the relationship between these limitations and demographic features of the respondent. It was envisioned that this research would help to highlight the importance of females' financial condition in household food security.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Current research was carried out in the rural areas of District Pakpattan and District Vehari in the Province of Punjab, Pakistan. Multistage sampling technique was used (Agresti and Finlay, 2008). At the stage first, three tehsils were selected randomly from both districts. District Vehari consist of total three tehsils, out of which two were selected (Burewala and Vehari). Furthermore, out of two tehsils from district Pakpattan one tehsil (Pakpattan Sharif) was selected. At the second stage, 30 villages were selected randomly from the tehsils. At the third stage, 16 respondents were selected from each village through purposive sampling, one woman from one household. A sample of 164 respondents were selected from tehsil Pakpattan, 158 from tehsil Vehari and 158 from Burewala. In this way a sample 480 respondents were chosen from the area of study. Respondents of present study were females above 18 years, who were highly engaged in cooking and other important tasks related to food security. A well-designed pre-tested interview schedule was constructed according to research objectives. For the description of the socio-cultural characteristics of the respondent, descriptive analysis such as frequency distribution and percentage were computed. Bivariate analysis applied for the evaluation of the relationship between independent and dependent variables. Moreover, Chi-square and Gamma statistics were applied to find out the association and strength of relationship between variables. Whereas multiple linear regression model was used in multivariate data analysis to observe the implications of independent variables upon the dependent variable of socio-economic constraints.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In Pakistani rural culture, it is wide spread concept that females are responsible just for household chores. Such as cooking the meal for family, cleanliness of household, care of elderly and kids, and it is not obligatory for them to earn money for family. The Table 1 depicts that majority of the selected women as 77.7% had no professional career, in contrary to it, rest of the 22.3% of the selected women were working women. Women incomes share indirectly affects the food accessibility of family by managing a smooth utilization of foodstuff and preventing the household by abrupt food scarcities (Kalansooriya and Chandrakumara, 2015).

Table 1. Career of the respondents

Are you working women?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	107	22.3
No	373	77.7
Total	480	100

Working-women were mostly underemployed because they get least remuneration for their work. Moreover, their work is totally under estimated in village areas, so they get lesser money than men receive for same work. In addition to it, females earn money seasonally, as during the season of sowing, harvesting etc., and they earn money by selling milk, eggs, cow dung or other sort of works, very few of selected women were government employees. The table 2 shows that out of all the working women as 107, a huge majority were earning per month 5000 rupees or less, in addition to it, rest of the selected women as 2.8% and 0.9% were lying under the category of 5001-15000 and above 25000 respectively. While no respondent fell in the category of 15001-25000. Moreover, Zafar (2003) rightly found in his research that females in Pakistan work as mother, domestic manual worker and societal production labor force, but despite all this, economically her efforts are unrecognized. He further reported that in farming, individuals put their efforts on equal basis but their struggles are remunerated on the basis of gender rather than on contribution.

Table 2. Income of working women

If working then income level	Frequency	Percentage
5000 or less	103	96.2
5001-15000	3	2.8
15001-25000	0	0
Above 25000	1	0.9
Total	107	100

Pakistan is a developing country and its rural areas have been suffering from poverty, lack of education, low standard of living, poor health facilities and from food insecurity. Results of this study showed that that 43.8% households' monthly income was 15000 rupees or less. Almost equal number of households as 40.6% earned the money between 15001-30000 rupees per month. In addition, 13.8% of the household's income was between 30001-75000 per month. Only 1.9% were lying under the category of 75000 rupees or above per month.

Poverty is a big issue of rural areas of Pakistan because of least industrialization, least technical education, and least awareness and over population. Consequently, better income allows the family to purchase nutritional foodstuffs and additional facilities (Zhou *et al.*, 2017).

Table 3. Monthly income of the households

Monthly income of overall household	Frequency	Percentage
15000 or less	210	43.8
Between 15001-30000	195	40.6
Between 30001-75000	66	13.8
Above 75000	9	1.9
Total	480	100

In 1980s, because of the success of green revolution, food was available everywhere but people were still food insecure, then it was realized that food shortage caused less food insecurity than poverty of particular cluster of people. For that reason, nutrition safety was widened to contain, accessibility to foodstuff by physically and economically. In this epoch, efforts were made to alleviate the poverty and to increase the role of women (Gross *et al.*, 2000). Research depicts that, enhancements in status of females is responsible for 12 percent of the over-all decrease in pubertal undernourishment (Smith and Haddad, 2000).

In table 4, it depicts that 42.9% of the working-women revealed that their own income is often helpful to achieve the better standards of balanced diet. About 34.0% told that they use their own income for food purchasing occasionally. On the other hand, 23.1% of the total working females described that they never purchase food with their own money at all.

Mainly in Pakistani rural culture, male members are responsible to finance the family for daily needs, especially for purchasing the food. That is why about 72.1 % of the selected women revealed that they often get the money from their guardian/ husband/ father/ or other elderly member of the family for food, and they purchase the food from street hawkers or nearby shops while their husbands go to their jobs. It is also necessary to mention that, mostly selected women were poor but they reported that they get ample money from their guardians for food, their this statement was due to contented minds, whereas they get amount for purchasing food from their guardians according to their financial status which is mostly low. However, 21.9% of the selected women told that they get money for food purchasing occasionally. While, about 6.0% of the total respondents described that they never get money from male members because of multiple reasons.

Furthermore, nearly 66.3% of the selected women revealed that they often get sufficient money from their guardian without any arguments/ confrontation and anger for food. However, 23.8% of the respondents told that occasionally they get money without arguments. While, about 10.0% women were of the view that their male members or elderly females purchase food by themselves mostly.

Furthermore, majority of the respondents as 77.9% depicted that they never cut the meal size of their children at all. In contrary, almost 6.7 % of the selected women revealed that, they often reduce the children meal size due to shortage of money for food purchasing. According to (Gross *et al.* 2000) increase in unemployment, levels may indicate lower access to food. About 5.7% families in America were bound to decrease their meal size, this situation has been considered as the "low food security" (Coleman-Jensen *et al.*, 2011). On the other hand, about 15.4% of the females told that they cut the meal size of their children rarely.

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Nearly 61.0 % of the respondents unveiled that they often feed their children with less nutritious food because they did not have enough money to buy nutritious and healthy food items. However, 16.5% of the selected women told that they occasionally feed their children with lesser nutritious food because of shortage of money. In contrary to it, about 22.5 % of the total selected women said they never feed their children with less nutritious food.

In addition, more than half of the selected women as 65.0 % revealed that, they often face economic difficulty in purchasing the standardized and professionally manufactured cooking utensils for healthful cooking. However, 18.5% of the selected women told that it happens occasionally. While, 16.5% of the total selected women were of the view that they never face economic constraint in purchasing cooking utensils for healthful cooking.

Female in several poor, countryside groups of people have the responsibility to fetch drinking and irrigation water, and are compelled to walk farther in search of water. Accessibility of female to these limited means is also being weather-beaten because water is being gradually sold. Mostly, female are incapable to purchase water from the companies of water supply (Sever, 2005; Bell, 2001; Skinner, 2011). In table 4, it is depicted that 53.8 % of the selected women often face difficulty in having access to the clean water. However, 13.3% of the respondents told that they face this difficulty occasionally. On the other hand, nearly 32.9 % of the total selected women described that they never face this difficulty at all.

Table 4. Distribution of respondents regarding socio-economic constraints in food security

Statement	Often		Occasionally		Never	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
(If working women) Earned money helpful to achieve the better standards of balanced diet	46	42.9	36	34.0	25	23.1
Getting money from guardian/ husband/ father or any other elderly member of the family for food	346	72.1	105	21.9	29	6.0
Getting sufficient money from guardian without any arguments/ confrontation and anger	318	66.3	114	23.8	48	10.0
Cutting the size of children meal because of shortage of money to purchase food items	32	6.7	74	15.4	374	77.9
Feeding the children less nutritious food because of not having enough money to buy healthy food items	293	61.0	79	16.5	108	22.5
Facing economic difficulty in purchasing the standardized and professionally manufactured cooking utensils for healthful cooking	312	65.0	89	18.5	79	16.5
Facing difficulty in having access to the clean water	258	53.8	64	13.3	158	32.9

Table 5 represents the relationship between women’s socio-economic limitations regarding food security and their income. According to Chi-square value ($\chi^2 = 85.21$), there is a highly significant ($p = .000$) association between income of the respondent and their economic limitations in food security. Moreover, a negative and significant relationship is demonstrated by Gamma statistics. That simply means high income women faced less socio-economic constraints in food security as compared to low-income women. Therefore, the hypothesis “socio-economic status of the women has association with economic limitations in food security” is accepted. For the sake of food security purpose built kitchen are very helpful but about

57.5% of the rural women in Punjab cook their food on roof top, courtyard or living rooms because of not having purpose built kitchen at their households. (Manzooret al., 2019).

Table 5. Association between income of the household and socio-economic constraints in food security

Income (Rs.)	Socio-economic constraints			Total
	Low	Medium	High	
Up to 15000	42	56	112	210
	20.0%	26.7%	53.3%	100.0%
15001-25000	16	38	141	195
	8.2%	19.5%	72.3%	100.0%
25000 and above	40	21	14	75
	53.3%	28.0%	18.7%	100.0%
Total	98	115	267	480
	20.4%	24.0%	55.6%	100.0%

Chi-square = 85.21 d.f. = 4 P-value = .000** Gamma = -0.164 P-value = .021

Table 6 depicts the relationship between working status of the selected women and their socio-economic constraints in food security. According to Chi-square value ($\chi^2 = 143.80$) there is a highly significant ($p = .000$) association between working status of the respondent and their socio-economic limitations in food security. Between under discussion variables a highly significant and negative relationship is demonstrated by Gamma statistics. That simply means, working women faced less socio-economic restrictions in food security as compared to housewives. Therefore, we accept the hypothesis “working status of the women has association with economic constraints in food security”.

Table 6. Association between working status and socio-economic constraints in food security

Working women	Socio-economic constraints			Total
	Low	Medium	High	
No	36	83	254	373
	9.7%	22.3%	68.1%	100.0%
Yes	62	32	13	107
	57.9%	29.9%	12.1%	100.0%
Total	98	115	267	480
	20.4%	24.0%	55.6%	100.0%

Chi-square = 143.80 d.f. = 2 P-value = .000** Gamma = -0.830 P-value = .000**

The results in table 7 shows that value of R-Square is 0.526 which indicates that 52 percent change in dependent variable of women’s economic constraints in food security was explained by 4 variables of age, education, income, working status. The P-value depicts that overall model is statistically significant. It means all the independent variables are significantly affecting the dependent variable. The impact of each individual variable is described as:

Impact of Age

In the table 7, we analyze the individual effect of each variable (independent). The first variable is constant which is called y-intercept and its p-value is highly significant. The first independent variable is age

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with coefficient value of -0.323. It means if we increase one unit in age then 0.323 unit will decrease in the dependent variable. Its p-value is (0.000) which is highly significant. It indicates that women of lower age had more economic constraints in food security as compared to elderly women.

Impact of education

The coefficient for this variable had a negative sign with the value of 0.243 and is significant at 1% level of significance. It indicates that women with low level of education had to face more socio-economic constraints regarding food security. So, it is inferred that education is an important factor in promoting the culture of healthy and balanced dietary pattern.

Impact of income

The coefficient for this variable had a negative sign with the value of 0.209 and is significant at 1% level of significance. It indicates that high-income women faced less economic restrictions in food security as compared to women with low income.

Impact of working status

The coefficient for this variable had a negative sign with the value of 1.266 and is significant at 1% level of significance. It depicts that working women faced less socio-economic restrictions in food security as compared to women with no job.

Table 7: Regression Model

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	3.783	.165		22.94	.000
Age	-.323	.057	-.461	-5.64	.000
Education	-.243	.046	-.394	-5.25	.000
Income	-.209	.080	-.188	-2.61	.009
working status	-1.266	.093	-.661	-13.58	.000
Adjusted R ² = 0.526 F = 51.98 P-Value (Significance) = 0.000**					
** = Highly Significant, * = Significant Response Variable: Economic constraints					

CONCLUSION

The socio-economic constraints regarding food security at household level are serious issues for women in rural areas. Most of the rural women have been facing economic problems and are feeding their children with less nutritious food because of lower financial capacity. Households, where women are economically active, the nutritional intake and health status is better as compared to those households where women are dependent on just male's income. Majority of the females in rural Punjab rely on men's income, so, it is an open secret that they get very little amount of money to purchase food according to their own physiological requirements which are different from men. Moreover, there is lot of work need to done on the education and awareness of the women to raise the importance of healthy and balanced dietary pattern throughout the Pakistan. Furthermore, women, who are working to earn money, are getting lesser remuneration for the same work done by men. These gender disparities further aggravate the situation. It is highly recommended that for overall household food security, some serious steps should be taken, not only on grass root level but also on policy-making level to strengthen the women economically in rural areas so that the better standards of food security can be achieved.

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