



Socioeconomic Conditions of Women in Sindh with Special Reference to Kamber-Shahdadkot District

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Abstract: *Present research has been carried out on 120 randomly selected households from three Talukas (sub-districts) of the District Kamber-Shahdadkot (Sindh), with aims to investigate the socioeconomic conditions as well as the insecurity among rural women in the District. Results revealed that the majority of the respondents lived in rural areas with small and simple houses, because of their limited resources. It was also recognized that the majority of the respondents' source of income was agriculture followed by government jobs and daily wage labor, where the income from a government job was higher from the income earned from cultivating lands, may be because of less technological advancement in the region. Particularly, the female literary rate was only 39 percent in the study area, where women's participation in the decision making seemed also low. The results also revealed that women were feeling insecurity in the society, for example, domestic violence, bullying, harassment, and honor killing. The respondents in the study area were worried about the availability of basic amenities, where poor infrastructure and draining systems were severely damaged as well as were of poor quality. Based on the findings, it is recommended that besides infrastructure development, the health facilities and agricultural extension services may be executed on immediate bases in the region.*

Keywords: *Kamber-Shahdadkot; socioeconomic; women; Sindh; Pakistan.*

1.0. Introduction

In socioeconomic systems some planned actions have always effect on the economic trends of local population in the territory, which further answer that how people are living in terms of their possessions, activities and available choices. The basics of socioeconomic concepts may be acquired from population characteristics, living standard as well as from infrastructural conditions and surrounded markets (Magsi et al. 2015). Moreover; socioeconomic conditions of people in South Asia, including Pakistan are mainly associated with the agriculture and agro-based industries (Khan, 2004; Shujat, 2004; Rahman, 2003; Saxton and Morrision, 2003). Thus, socioeconomic characteristics of a region or nation may be used as tools to examine their development potentials (Memon et al. 2015; Magsi, 2012; Feinerman and Finkelshtain, 2003). It is necessary for human societies to utilize its human capital to achieve social, cultural and economic prosperity (Mulyanto and Magsi, 2014). Moreover, equal role of men and women cannot be denied in development activities (Klasen and Lamanna, 2008). Rural women's

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participation in the development process has been the focus of intensive debates by most international forums in the past years (Kongolo and Bamgose, 2002).

Less developed countries like Pakistan remain poor due to domestic obstacles of low socioeconomic condition of the local population (Magsi et al. 2015). These obstacles act and react upon one another in such a way that they form a vicious circle, which keep the country in a perpetual low level of development. The consequences of lower development are: keeping local populations far from basic amenities like education, health, clean drinking water and proper sanitation (Magsi and Torre, 2013). In fact the same situation is prevailing in the rural upper Sindh, Pakistan, where the women became the victim of so many socioeconomic issues from the very beginning (World Times, 2015). For example, they have been stopped from enjoying their basic right of education due to conservatism. Their parents think that it is against their customs and traditions to send the girls to the school as it will create problem of honor for them. Moreover, the women are also kept in four walls and made handicapped in homes just to rear the children thinking that women have nothing to do with the earning of the family. Statistics show that only 22 percent of women are busy with economic activities out of 56 percent, which has not only tortured them socially, but also humiliated them on every stage of life (World Times, 2015). On the one hand, she faces very stereotyped and traditional issues in Sindh, like she is socially not independent in solving her issues, especially the issues of her health, children's education, and marriage settlements. On the other hand, becomes the victim of acid throwing cases, honor killing, early reunions and marriage to the Holy Quran, domestic violence, etc, (Chandio, 2013). In fact, there is not enough literature and literary survey available in order to see the magnitude of development options and opportunities to rural upper Sindhi women as well as for governing organizations.

Thus Kamber-Shahdadkot district is selected for this research, which is lying in the northwest of the province, and got split from Larkana district in 2004. The study involves the following specific objectives are:

- (i) to examine the sources of income, employment and women decision making in domestic matters as well as women independency in expenditure at Kamber-Shahdadkot area;
- (ii) to gather information on population characteristics, including total number, race, and median age, education, housing characteristics, including number of units, vacancy and tenure, median contract rent, and median home value; and
- (iii) to unveil the factors of insecurity among women in the study area, i.e., domestic violence, harassment, honor killing, acid throwing, etc. It is also aimed that present research might help policy makers to develop strategies to further improve the living standard and other socioeconomic conditions of women at rural area.

2. 0. Methodology

In order to come-up with socioeconomic conditions of women of district Kamber-Shahdadkot, Sindh (Pakistan), a multistage random sampling technique was applied. At first stage, the District Kamber-Shahdadkot has been selected for this research because of the low level of socioeconomic development in this district; the district is comprised over

seven sub-districts (talukas). At a second stage three talukas were selected, i.e. Kamber, Shadadkot and Mirokhan. At final stage two villages from each Taluka were randomly selected and from each village 20 respondents (female) were personally interviewed during May to July 2016. Thus, in total 120 respondents were consulted.

For primary data collection a detailed questionnaire has been designed in order to have maximum information on their demographic characteristics, literacy, freedom in domestic matters, economic activities, types of housing, health, income, expenditure and other basic amenities. Mostly, the questions were asked at Likert type psychometric scale. On the other hand, secondary data for this study have been collected from various literature published by public and private organizations as well as from unpublished records of the union council and district council offices. Once the data collected were tabulated and analyzed with the help of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), in order to have desired descriptive statistics, are given precedent section of the article.

3. 0. Results and Discussion

Mainly the results of this study are comprised over the demographic characteristic of the respondents, their livelihood sources, women's decision in domestic matters, available basic amenities at their doorsteps and insecurity among women.

3.1. Household characters and working experience

The average household size in the study area was investigated about 10.3 persons per family, where on average; each family was composed of 5.3 male, 5.0 female. The observed statistics are quite different from national and provincial family size, i.e. 6.5 and 9.5 persons per family respectively (GOP, 2015). Results revealed that the average age of the respondents was 32 years, which indicates majority of them were professionally experienced and lived in pacca, kacha and semi-pacca houses. Furthermore the literacy level is considered as one of the parameters in human and regional development (Sen, 1992). Across the developing world women have always been disadvantaged as compared to men, whereby under patriarchal social structure and political systems they are denied fair access to land, education, technology and resources (Horenstein, 1989). The overall literacy rate in the study area was about 60 percent, while female literary rate has been just 39 percent, which seems too low, as the national female literacy rate is more than fifty percent (GOP, 2015).

The status of women in Sindh had remained deplorable. Education has always been opposed by the feudal lords in rural villages since the beginning, which was caused women to suffer as their literacy rate was almost non-existent (Chandio, 2013). During field surveys it is observed that the district government, along with other CBOs had been tailoring new techniques to boost the status of education, especially female education, which were appreciable efforts towards an increase in overall enrollment. This is also observed that 26 percent of the family members were non-working age group (below 16 years). Details on the household characteristics can be seen through table 1.

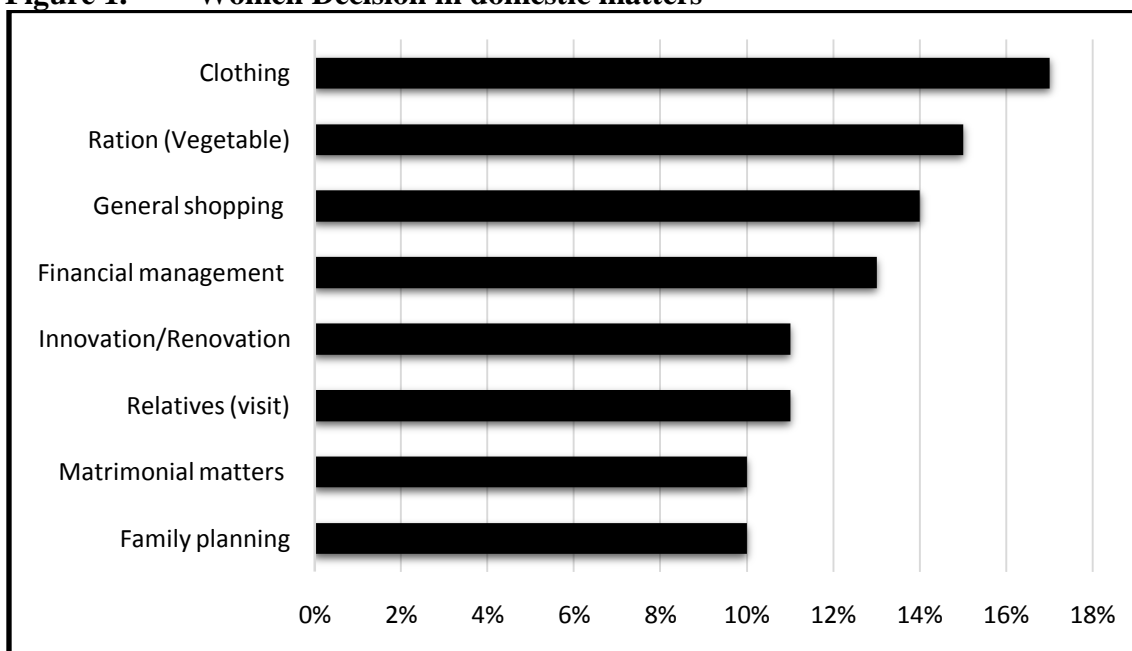
Table 1. Descriptive statistics

Description	Statistics
Family size: number	10.3
Age: years	32
Age: bellow 16 years	26
Age: above 16 years	74
Literacy rate: percent	60
Pacca houses: percent	56
Kacha houses: percent	26
Semi-pacca houses: percent	18

3.2. Women decision in domestic matters

Women have a special position in all societies and no society can progress without women. Women's participation in every field of life is very important, because they comprise about half of the population of the country. Ignoring of women is like ignoring half of the population. But Pakistani society is conventional to some extent. Like many other third world countries, Pakistan has also a male-dominated society that is why women's participation in the decision making process is very low. As results, the majority of the respondent (women) of the study area were independent in purchasing clothes, followed by ration (vegetable), matrimonial matters and innovation and renovation of their houses (see figure 1).

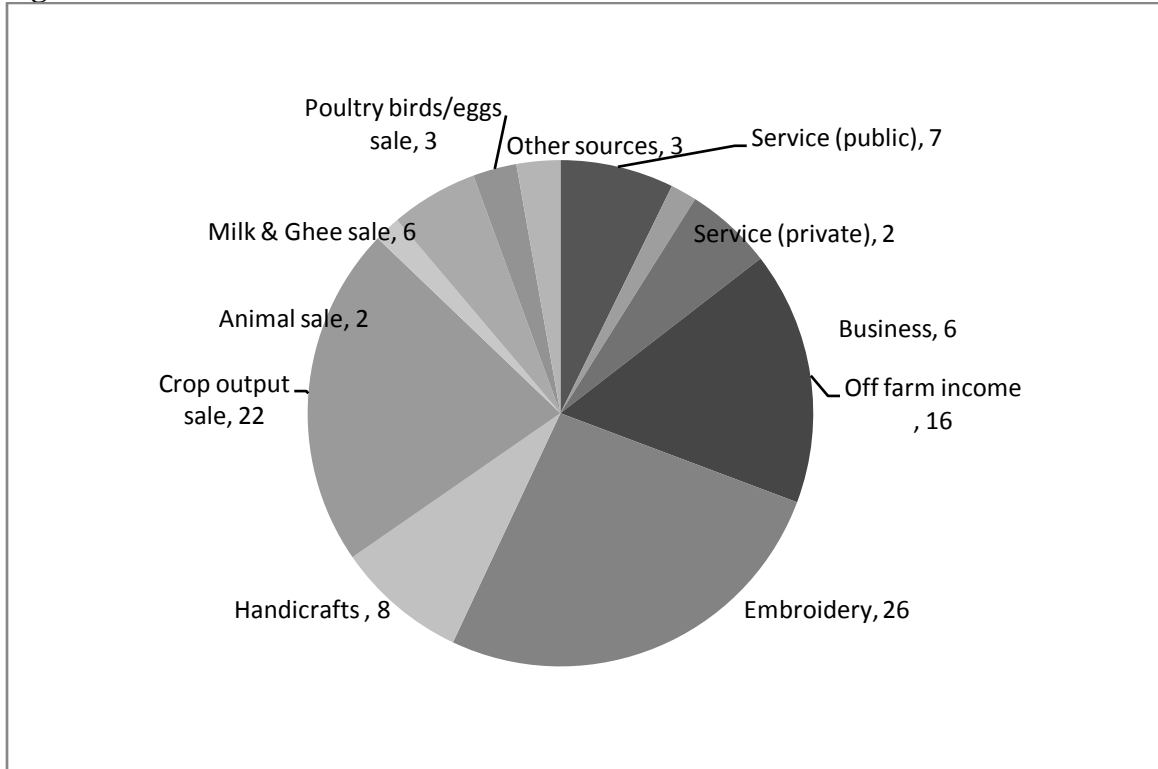
Figure 1. Women Decision in domestic matters



3.3. Occupation, income sources and expenditure

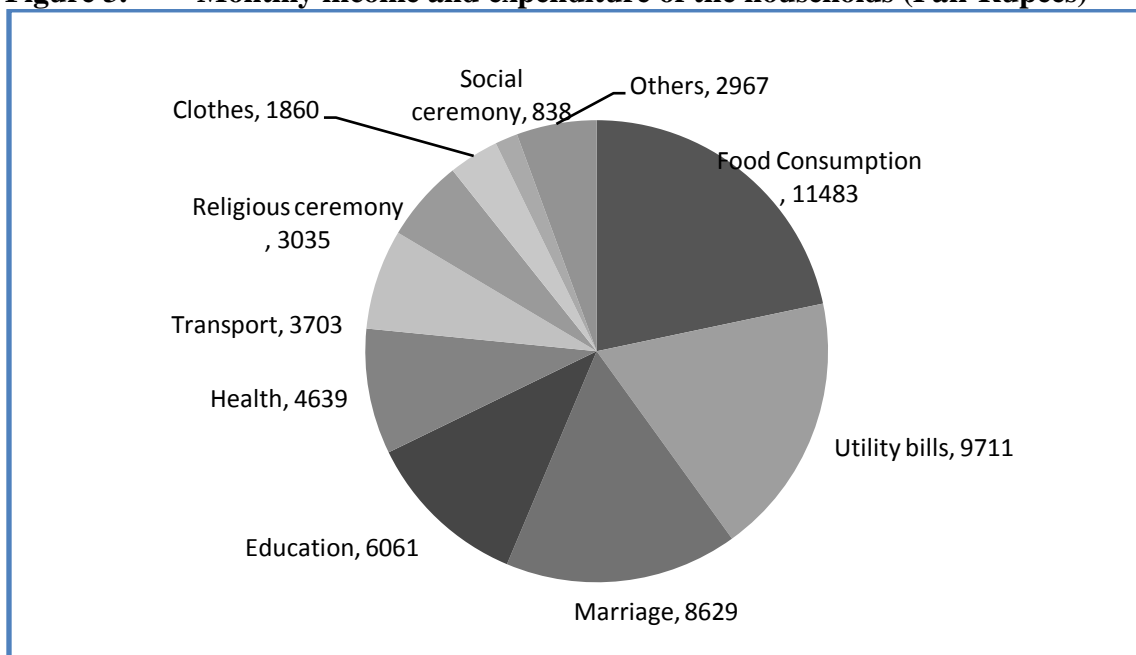
The results revealed that the female ratio of working age group was only 17.31 percent in the study area for that majority of the women were engaged in embroidery making when there was no harvesting or cultivating season, but they were more dependent on agriculture. Since agriculture is the backbone of our economy, no doubt most of the population is involved in this profession (GOP, 2015). Relatively, the major source of income in our study area finds the same. Apart from the agriculture, the second major source of income was employed in different sectors, i.e. public and private, private schools are the only alternatives for the educated girls, that's why each year a sufficient number of students after passing intermediate or graduation; enters into the field of teaching as there were no other resources available for the girls. Small entrepreneurship has been found the third major source of income for the people in the selected area, which is categorized as a business (See figure 2).

Figure 2. Womens' involvement in different economic activities



Even though the majority of the respondents was engaged in agriculture, but the income (per month) earned from government jobs and business is higher than other economic activities (see figure 2), which is may be due to lack of agricultural extension services in rural areas of the country (Mengal et al. 2014). It is also observed that on average about 2.1 male and about 1.8 female household members' were involved in revenue earnings. This is the only reason that in rural areas people want to search government jobs in order to secure their livelihood (SRSO, 2012), which is also personally observed among the youth (female) of Kamber, Shahdadkot and Mirokhan Talukas.

Figure 3. Monthly income and expenditure of the households (Pak-Rupees)



The above figure shows the average consumption pattern of each household and the items on which they usually spend their earnings. Briefly, they spend more than 75 percent of their income on food, utilities, marriages, education and health followed by other necessities. It was also observed that mode of expenditure was quite different among different income classes according to their needs and preferences. The results revealed that women of this area were just 17 percent independent in average expenditure. The majority of the respondents indicated that sometimes they borrow money from friends and neighbors in order to meet social and religious ceremonies, as there is an increase in rural poverty in the country since last decade (Afzal, 2006).

3.4. Basic amenities and infrastructure

In the developing countries like Pakistan planning for public health is an important function of a state, because no progress can be imagined without maintaining general health, literacy level and infrastructural development (Memon et al. 2015; Magsi and Torre, 2013). The respondents in the study area were asked about accessibility and availability of basic amenities, where their responses show that the majority of them were satisfied for drinking water, communication system, school and transportation, while they found unsatisfied for the rest of the other available facilities (see table 2). In fact, poor infrastructure and draining system are found to be serious issue in other developing countries like Pakistan (Mulyanto and Magsi, 2014; Osinubi, 2005; Sangwan and Chauhan 2002).

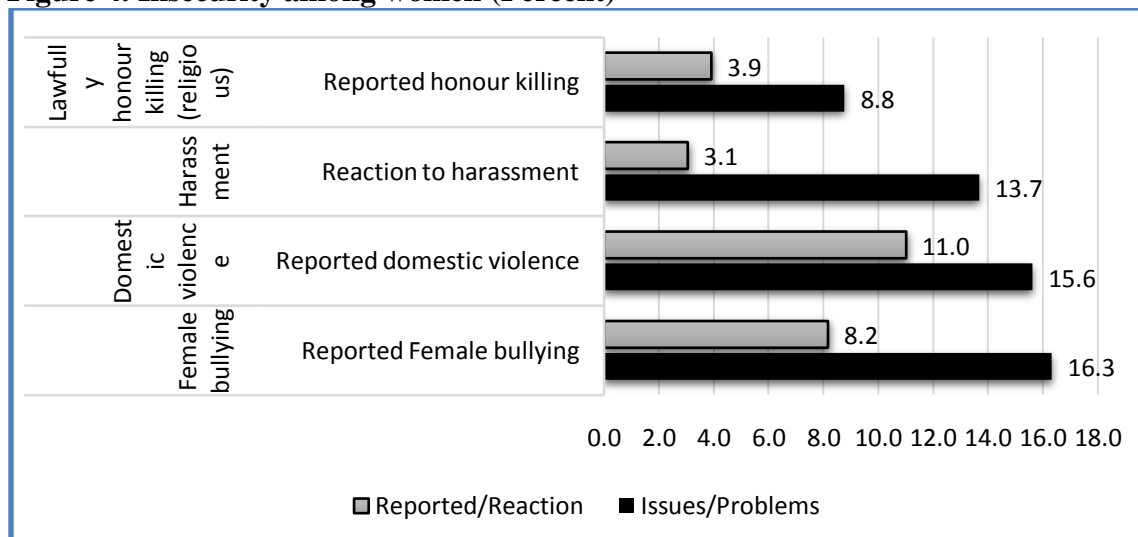
Table 2. Availability/accessibility of basic amenities

Amenities	Percentage	
	Satisfied	Unsatisfied
Drinking Water	78.8	21.2
Communication	74.3	24.7
School (nearby)	54.0	46.0
Transportation/road	52.5	47.5
General family health	45.0	55.0
Post office (nearby)	38.0	62.0
Hospital accessibility	37.4	62.6
Drainage	36.7	63.3
Metallic road	29.4	69.6
Veterinary facility	25.0	75.0
Banking	16.0	84.0
Electricity	14.3	85.7

3.5. Insecurity among women

Honor killing is nearly the exclusive murder of a female who is blamed to be having illicit relations and thus has brought shame to the family's name and honor. Pakistani women live under constant fear as they are vulnerable to being exploited, murdered, and raped and prosecuted (Chandio, 2013). In the rural areas, some of the women are married off to the Holy Quran, the holy Islamic book (Shah, 1998). The insecurity among women in different forms is increasing day by day such as female bullying, domestic violence, harassment, injustice and honor killing. The respondents in the study area were asked about insecurity among women, where their responses show that the majority of them were facing female bullying followed by domestic violence, harassment and honor killing while the majority of females are reporting against domestic violence followed by female bullying and very few females are reporting against honor killing and harassment due to conservative society (see figure 4).

Figure 4. Insecurity among women (Percent)



4. 0. Conclusion and Suggestions

From present research it is concluded that in the study area majority of the respondents were 32 years old (socially matured) with 51 percent male and 49 percent female population, while they used to live in pacca, kacha and semi-pacca houses, because of their limited income. The overall literacy rate in the study area was about 60 percent, while female literary rate has been just 39 percent, which seems too low as compared to the national statistics. During the survey, the study area was found as a male-dominated society, because women's participation in the decision making process was very low; for example, women of the area were just 17 percent independent in average routine expenditure only. According to the interviewed women, the insecurity among them at different aspects is increasing day by day, like; they were facing female bullying followed by domestic violence, harassment and honor killing, etc.

Even though the majority of the respondents was engaged in agriculture, but the average income earned from government jobs and business was higher, which might be due to lack of agricultural extension services as well as the advanced technology. Besides low agricultural productivity and higher expenditures on food, clothing and education have encouraged the local population (especially youth) to switch for other jobs than traditional agriculture. The respondents in the study area were worried about the availability of basic amenities. In fact, poor infrastructure and draining system are found to be a serious issue for them. Thus, besides other infrastructural development projects, health facilities and agricultural extension services need to be executed at the village level on an immediate basis and negative attitudes of the society members can be changed through awareness raising programs of media. Finally, it is also recommended that a study should be conducted on the role of NGOs and CBOs for regional development in Kamber-Shadadkot district.

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