

## **IMPACT OF WOMEN EDUCATION ON THEIR FAMILY POSITION AND REPRODUCTIVE DECISIONS**

### **ABSTRACT**

This study was aimed to investigate the impact of women education on their family position and reproductive decisions. Along this, it was also planned to find out effect of women's age and family size on their family position and reproductive decisions. For this purpose, women's family position and reproductive decision scale was designed in first phase of the study while second phase dealt with testing of hypotheses and with fulfilling the objectives. By using the purposive sampling method, 50 women who were below primary in education and 50 women who were above Matric in education were involved in the study from Rawalpindi. The results of the study showed that there was no impact of women education on their family position and reproductive decisions. However, in depth response analysis revealed that there were certain issues like decision-making, mobility, and contraceptive use in which education has some impact. Results also showed that age of women and number of children has no impact on women's family position and reproductive decisions.

**Keywords:** women's education, education and family position, women's education(below primary and above matric) and reproductive decisions.

### **Introduction**

The education is the process of providing with and developing knowledge, training or skill or knowledge so developed (Racelis, 2001). However, it is important for both men and women but woman education is badly neglected and is not given as much importance as education for males has been given in Pakistan and that is why there is minimal investment on women education, (Mamoon, 2006). The role of women education is well known and recognized as an agent of social change (Rahman, 2005). The higher education of women has often been highlighted as the most important factor towards restoration of condition at their social and economical level as well as level of reproduction health rights. (Gulati & Patnaik ,1996).

Women decision-making power on family sizes and contraceptive use highlights the women status and family position that influences the status in family (Govindasamy & Malhotra 1996). Usually husbands are the one who on the adoption of family planning. There appears to be a positive relationship between the education of women and

contraceptive knowledge. Cleland and Jejeebhoy (1996) argued that the role of schooling becomes more apparent in terms of detailed knowledge i-e the number of methods, especially non-terminal methods, the correct use of a particular method; and from where a particular method can be acquired. There is significant effect of both education and employment on the belief that women should make decisions about family size, either alone or with their husbands ( Kazi & Sathar ,1990). In many developing countries, it has been observed that even women who are highly educated do not have an adequate understanding of reproductive physiology -- upon which the success rate of traditional and modern contraceptive methods depend. Moreover, there still exists a large gap between knowledge and actual practice of contraception (Jejeebhoy & Shireen, 1995; Cleland & Shireen1996; Jeffery & Basu,1996). The study on fertility differential by education have narrowed in Latin America over the past decade, childbearing patterns among the various educational strata remain disparate. Education has such a pervasive effect in shaping the whole spectrum of women roles, reproductive behavior obviously cannot elude its influence (Martin & Jurez, 1995). Another study, which considered the relationship between female education and fertility in Bangladesh, a significant, inverse relationship was found. Miah's (1993) study showed negative effect of education on fertility. A number of other researches (Khuda and Howladar (1990), Amin and Faruquee (1980), and Mizan (1992), Chowdhury (1877) cited by Miah, 1993) also revealed an inverse and negative effect of education on reproductive decision making.

Position of women and their status are always reflected by their rights, educational standards, health status, decision-making roles in the families and communities, and their freedom of mobility (Govindasamy & Malhotra 1996). The closeness of the husband-wife relationship and the degree of communication between spouses has also been suggested as an important dimension of women's household position (Furuta & Salway, 2006). According to Govindasamy and Malhotra (1996), there is a positive relationship between education and decision-making and mobility. Research conducted in Nepal asserts that there is a positive effect of education on women's mobility but not their ability to participate in domestic decision-making (Niraula & Morgan, 2000). In Sri Lanka, schooling is positively associated with young women's input in financial decision in the household, but not in the social and organizational decisions (Malhotra & Mather, 1997). On the other hand, research by Bhatti showed that education is not a contributing factor to the higher status in the family decision making power because illiterate women have greater percentage of high status as compared to educated women (Bhatti, 1998). Studies in India also showed that women wielding decision-making power in different household do not improve consistly along with their educational standards. The excepted positive association with women's education and their decision-making powers does not turn out to be significant in any other household matter (Gulati & Patnaik, 1996).

Data of Pakistani men and women reveal significant disparity in educational attainment. The discrepancy between rural and urban areas is even more marked. Pakistan's low female literacy rates are particularly confounding because these rates are analogous to those of some of the poorest countries in the world (Lewis, 1994). This is because of number of reasons, for example, being an Islamic country where the practice of purdah is

more prevalent and women are not considered the earners for family for which education should be considered compulsory. Along this it is a patriarchal society in which the women household position is determined by the social and cultural characteristics, which are very important in determining the women household position and reproductive decisions. In Pakistan, despite a governmental programme supporting family planning and despite the improvements over the last few decades (Hakim & Ahmad, 2000-01), Pakistan had lower rate of contraceptive use than most other Muslim countries. On the basis of literature this study has planned to find out the impact of women's education on their family position and reproductive decisions in Pakistani society. This research is also investigating the impact of other variables (age and number of children) on women family position and reproductive decisions.

## **METHOD**

### **Objectives:**

- To find out the impact of women's education on their family position.
- To find out the impact between women's education on their reproductive decisions.
- To find out the effect of women's age on their family position.
- To find out the impact between women's age on their reproductive decisions.
- To find the relationship between family size and women's family position.
- To find out the relationship between family size and women's reproductive decisions.

### **HYPOTHESES:**

Education has positive impact on women's family position.

Education has positive impact on women's reproductive decisions.

### **RESEARCH DESIGN:**

This research was conducted in two phases, Phase I and Phase II. Phase I was about the development of an instrument which was done by following systematic procedure in which item pool was generated through literature review and focus groups and instrument of 22 items was finalized for tryout after taking opinion from judges.

The phase II (Main study) dealt with testing of hypotheses and fulfillment of objectives.

### **Sample**

The main study was conducted in Rawalpindi. Sample size of main study consisted of 100 married women. Among those 50 women were above Matric and 50 women who were below primary. Sample was taken from Chaklala and Dhoke Syedan because these areas were in approach of researcher and sample of both categories was available. The age range was from 20-50 years.

### Instrument

The scale, women family position and reproductive decision, developed in Phase I of the study was used for studying reposes on rating scale. It was likert type rating scale with five response categories of “strongly disagree”, “disagree”, “undecided”, “agree” and “strongly agree” consisting of two parts, part A was for women’s family position consisting of items 15 and part B was for women’s reproductive decisions consisting of 15 items. Alpha Reliability of the part A was .83 and .74 for part B.

### Procedure

All participants were briefed about the purpose of study and were asked for their willingness to participate in the research. For uneducated sample researcher read out statement and there was no time limit to respond the questionnaire. Data was analyzed by using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences 13).

### RESULTS

**Table 1**

*Mean, standard deviation and t-test value on scale women family position and reproductive decision scale (N=100)*

Scale	Above Matric (n=50)		Below Primary (n=50)		T
	M	SD	M	SD	
<b>Family position</b>	58.70	7.06	59.66	9.09	.590

*df=98, p= n.s*

The findings in the table 1 indicates that non significant difference exist between women who were in education above matric and below primary, which means that education has no significant influence on women’s family position.

**Table 2**

*Mean, standard deviation and t-test value on women family position and reproductive decision scale(N=100)*

Scale	Above		Below		T
	Matric (n=50)		Primary (n=50)		
	M	SD	M	SD	
<b>Reproductive decisions</b>	24.26	5.48	23.86	6.69	.327

*df=98, p= n.s*

Table 2 indicates that no significant difference exist between women who were in education above matric and below primary, has no significant influence on women’s reproductive decision.

**Table 3**

*Items having high percentages on agree and strongly agree responses of women who were with below primary education (N=50)*

No	Items	Strongly agreed %	Agreed %	Total %
<b>Part A</b>				
1	In house hold matters my decision is taken.	54	38	92
2	I am able to purchase household items and other things.	42	44	86
3	I am able to purchase every kind of things for my children.	40	42	82
4	I am able to meet with my relatives and friends independently.	52	36	88
5	In household matters, my decisions have importance.	44	40	84
10	My decisions have importance in my children's life matters like education, carrier and marriage.	46	36	82
<b>Part B</b>				
12	I use contraceptive methods.	52	18	70
19	Along with my husband's decision, I myself have power to decide number of children.	48	24	72
22	My children were born with mutual agreement and planning.	58	26	84

Results in table 3 shows the high percentage was on item no 1 of part A (92%) and item no 8 of part B (70%).

**Table 4**

*Items having high percentages on disagree and strongly disagreed responses of women who were with below primary education (N=50)*

No	Items	Strongly disagreed %	Disagreed %	Total %
<b>Part A</b>				
8	I do most of the work with the agreement of my mother in law.	22	16	38
9	I have permission to work out side.	20	16	36

12	In my house matters, my father and mother in law give importance to my decisions.	8	20	28
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**Part B**

17	I use contraceptive methods with the agreement of my husband.	8	18	26
20	My husband is also using contraceptive methods.	26	64	90

Results of table 4 show that high percentage was gained in part A was on item 1 (38%), and high percentage was gained in part B on item no 5(90%).

**Table 5**

*Items having high percentages on agree and strongly agree responses of women who were with above matric education (N=50)*

No	Items	Strongly agreed %	Agreed %	Total %
<b>Part A</b>				
1	In house hold matters my decision is taken.	46	38	84
2	I am able to purchase household items and other things.	42	40	82
3	I am able to purchase every kind of things for my children.	48	36	84
4	I am able to meet with my relatives and friends independently.	46	38	84
5	In household matters, my decisions have importance.	50	38	88
6	I have control on my house hold budget so I can make decisions for lending and borrowing of money	50	32	82
10	My decisions have importance in my children's life matters like education, carrier and marriage.	54	38	92
<b>Part B</b>				
18	With my husband's decision, I myself have the power to decide gap within the children.	54	30	84
19	With my husband's decision, I myself have the power to decide number of children.	52	24	76
17	My rest of children were also born with mutual agreement and planning	54	30	84

Results in table 5 showed the high percentages were on item 7 (92%) of part A of scale and part B of scale was on item 15 & 16 (84%, 84%).

**Table 6**

*Items having high percentages on disagree and strongly disagreed responses of women who were with above matric education (N=50).*

No	Items	Strongly disagree %	Disagreed %	Total %
<b>Part A</b>				
8	I do most of work with the agreement of my mother in law.	26	20	46
9	I have permission to work out side.	12	14	26
14	In my house matters, my father and mother in law give importance to my decisions.	10	14	24
<b>Part B</b>				
16	I use contraceptive methods.	36	50	86
20	My husband is also using contraceptive methods.	20	12	32
17	I use contraceptive methods with the agreement of my husband.	20	12	32

Results in table 6 the high percentage was gained in part A of scale on item 1 (46%), and part B of scale was on item 1 (86 %).

**Table 7**

*ANOVA shows the difference between women who were in education above matric and below primary on likert type rating scale of women’s family position and reproductive decision making based on their ages (N=100).*

Scale	Age(20-30)(n=29)		Age(31-40)(n=57)		Age(41-50)(n=14)		F	P
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
<b>Family position</b>	59.51	7.15	58.45	8.34	61.42	9.10	.786	<i>n.s</i>
<b>Reproductive decisions</b>	23.86	6.53	24.50	5.35	22.64	8.00	.54	<i>n.s</i>

The findings in the table 7 show there was non-significant difference on women’s family position and reproductive decisions based on their ages.

**Table 8**

*ANOVA shows the difference between women who were in education above matric and below Primary on likert type rating scale of women's family position and reproductive decision making based on their number of children. (N=100)*

Scale	No of children (1-3)(n=59)		No of children (4-6)(n=38)		No of children (7-9)(n=3)		F	P
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
<b>Family position</b>	59.61	6.622	57.92	9.76	66.66	10.21	1.84	<i>n.s</i>
<b>Reproductive decisions</b>	24.77	5.85	23.05	6.29	22.66	8.50	1.01	<i>n.s</i>

The findings in the table 8 show that family size has no significant impact on women's family position and reproductive decision-making.

## DISCUSSION

In order to test the first hypothesis that the education has positive impact on women's family position and reproductive decisions for which t-test was computed (see table 1 & 2) and the results showed that education has no significant impact on women's family position and reproductive decisions. Although education is considered a contributing factor towards their family position and reproductive decisions, there are some studies, which reveal that there is no impact of education on women's family position. Bhatti (1998) found that education is not a contributing factor to the higher status in the family decision making power because illiterate women have greater percentage of high status as compared to educated women. This also indicates that reproductive decisions are not influenced by education. Miah's (1993) study shows negative effect of education on fertility. One reason for this non-significant difference in present study might be that the sample of less educated (below primary) women was taken from the rural area of developed city where the awareness level is high because people have too much exposure for information, either through media or through interactions with one another. Along this, NGO are also working in the sector that is another source of information and creating awareness, so the uneducated women who are homemakers have more contact with media and regular T.V viewer have more exposure to information, which to some extent brings more awareness in them. Although education has its own importance and gives more awareness and status to educated women, but in some household matters their education has no direct and solid impact either in their house hold position or in reproductive decisions. The reason might be the impact of education depends on the degree of gender sensitization, which they achieve through regular degree education and in reality this is missing from academic education. But from in depth response analysis, it is revealed that there are certain issues of women's family position and reproductive decisions on which education has some impact, for example issues like women's decision making in house hold matters ,control on financial matters, mobility to purchase major house hold items, to meet friends and relatives, and use of contraceptive methods. These are some issues on which women, with above matric education, scored high but there are certain items, for example to work outside , working with the agreement of mother in

law, decisions for their children's life matters, and shopping for their children on which women with below primary education also scored high. This shows that they are aware about their rights. In reproductive decisions, the contraceptive use in women is much greater as compared to their husbands; there is no impact of education on contraceptive use with mutual agreement, birth of first child with planning and mutual agreement of their husband.

To find out the impact of ages on women's family position and reproductive decisions total sample was divided into three groups (20-30, 31-40, and 41-50). ANOVA was computed and results showed non-significant impact on women's family position and reproductive decisions (see Table 7). This indicates that women of all ages have almost same family position and right of being part of reproductive decision-making. The findings comply with the results of a study conducted by Hadi (2001) in Bangladesh that reproductive decisions issues had non-significant relationship to the ages of women. Islam (2006) also supported the finding that women age is not a contributing factor in determining their decision-making role and mobility in their family.

ANOVA was computed to see the relationship of women's family position and their reproductive decisions based on their number of children (see Table 8). The findings showed non-significant relationship, which indicates that women having more or less number of children have no effect on their family position and reproductive decisions. Similar findings were found in a study conducted in Latin American countries (Martin & Juarez, 1995) less educated women share the same small family norm as educated women, but they are less successful at implementing it. However, a few other studies (Jejeebhoy, 1995; Cleland & Shireen, 1996, Jeffery & Basu, 1996) found that desired family size becomes smaller with the increase in women's educational levels. However, the strength of relationship varies from culture to culture depending mainly on the degree of gender stratification in the society under study.

## **CONCLUSION:**

Present study aimed to analyze the impact of education on women family position and reproductive decisions. It is found that overall there was non-significant impact of education on women's family position and reproductive decisions. The reason might be that the sample of uneducated women was taken from the rural area of developed city where the people are more aware, the people have more interaction with each other, and that the education, which is provided in the institutions, is not targeting such type of issues. However, in depth response analysis revealed that there are certain issues of women's family position and reproductive decisions, in which education has some impact on their family position and reproductive decisions. For example, decision making in house hold matters, control on financial matters, mobility to purchase major household items, and to meet friends and relatives, use of contraceptive methods. The present study also found that the women's family position was not influenced by their ages and family sizes.

**LIMITATIONS:**

- As the data was collected mainly from the married women and those women are always shy in giving the information for their family position and especially in the area of their reproductive matters. So the one reason for findings might be that they did not share the true information.
- The present study only deals with impact of education on women's family position and reproductive decision-making.
- In present study, only married women are taken so gender differences could not be explored.
- The study was carried out on a small sample, which will not support the generalization of results.
- As the sample of women who were below primary in education women was taken from rural area of developed city of Rawalpindi where the people are a little bit more aware about their rights, so clear difference could not be investigated.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- As this research investigated the impact of education on women's family position and reproductive decisions, therefore future research is needed to investigate how the working status, socio economic status, husband's education and family system effects women's family position and reproductive decisions.
- The research was conducted with small sample so in future it can be conducted with larger sample generalization of results.

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