

## Fighting Odds in Domestic Sphere: Mothers' Role to Alter Cultural Values Governing Daughters' Rights in Pakistan

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### Abstract

Feminism begins at home. To test this question this article is based on findings of a survey and discussion with three generations of mothers, who had struggled for ensuring rights of their daughters in particular. They represent diverse ethnic groups of Pakistan. True, in an overall patriarchal environment, mothers are blamed for perpetuating son preference and socializing the daughters to a submissive role, but it is also true that mothers of somewhat different inclination have been continuously resisting the odds put in their daughters' ways to enjoy and progress in life. Even in rural areas, illiterate mothers' have been asserting for daughter's education, mobility, cultural participation and choice in marriage. Mothers have been promoting daughters' rights, a struggle which can be labeled as 'activism in domestic space', which is transmitted and reinforced down the generations of mothers. Thus the role of mothers in changing cultural values and gender stereotypes is essential to be studied. They have the agency for taking initiatives in a domain which instills feminism very successfully in an unnoticeable way. The study proves that even mothers can be corrosive for patriarchy. Selection of three generations of mothers from rural and urban areas and different ethnic groups provides a good cross-section and shows the trend in various sociological regions.

### Introduction

Feminism running through the generations to ensure more and more women's rights is becoming increasingly visible in the Pakistani society. Factors contributing to it include: spread of women's education; expanding access to modern media; increasing mobility and migration of population; changing political and economic scenario; more participation of women in public domain; supportive role of civil society; new protective legislations; breaking up of occupational stereotyping; and class-specific facilitating factors. The indigenous cultures of the Pakistani regions, since centuries, have preserved a tradition of respect for women which was endorsed by religious notions as well.

Historically, feminism, not an alien concept to the Indian subcontinent, has been promoted largely by social reformers, intellectuals and political movements. True, one may argue that the tribal and feudal traditions have been victimizing women, yet fathers, in certain cases, have been instrumental in promoting feminist rights of daughters, as was shown by biographies of few eminent women of Pakistan.<sup>1</sup> In the present day Pakistani society popularity of education for daughters has triggered two trends: (a) women also get professional education and develop an urge for self-actualization; and, (b) concept and practice of marriage as a break in education and career has been weakening. Nowadays women and married couples, as such, are practicing more contraceptives, thus allowing more freedom to wives/mothers for self-development and career-building. Now women are getting more confidence to control their own life and earnings, and also about deciding to walk out of a violent marriage. More love marriages and rising rate of divorce are noteworthy proofs of it. Many oppressive practices embedded in traditional cultures are being condemned and resolute efforts to undo their effects are underway. Role of polity and judiciary is prominent in this direction.

Within the domestic domain, daughters are generally more protected hence are raised as weak personalities, whereas boys are socialized to be strong, brave and controlling. Feminist parenting is slowly taking more roots, as both mothers and fathers are becoming more permissive for their daughters. The trend is trickling down the generations.

### Literature review

Available literature on Pakistani women has documented the cultural notions, norms and values governing daughters' status. These notions are instilled, preserved and changed by the system in such a way that the resistance is accommodated to an affordable extent, or in extreme situations, justification is sought out from more favourable examples. Due to fast changing social conditions, various levels of freedom are observed within one family, so a mother or a parent trying to create more space for the daughter might find a support as well as resistance from within the extended family. Income levels of brothers have gone widely different and their families are living and enjoying different levels of opportunities. Moreover, marrying out of family and in different cultural

<sup>1</sup> For instance see; Lubna Kazim (ed.), *A Woman of Substance The Memoirs of Begum Khurshid Mirza (1918-1989)* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2006), Shaista Suhrawardy Ikramullah, *From Purdah to Parliament* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1998, 1st edn. 1963).

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groups mixes the values and standards governing gender-based status. Level of education of women is also changing thus giving them new expertise, confidence, and opportunities, which encourage parents to let them enter and excel in non-conventional fields of activities. When daughters bring income to family, quality of life improves and aspirations for better life are invigorated. Consider these old sayings: 'we do not let her be educated, as we are not going to eat her income; it is matter of shame to use daughters' income', and 'why to educate her, as the benefits would go to some other family', and a closely held view that 'women's income does not bring any prosperity'. These sayings indicate hatred, disrespect, or at least distaste for the daughters' income. Ground realities have changed to a considerable extent for women in Pakistan. Their participation in economic and political spheres has increased and diversified, endorsing a changed level of tolerance and appreciation among the society. From personal observation of the author it was confirmed that entering new avenues of jobs creates new challenges for the women, their family and the employers, but soon by increasing women employees' number, such issues loose significance. From the family, parents' attitudes and permissiveness help daughters in breaking new grounds.

In the context of Pakistan, the axioms to be followed, or maintained, regarding daughters' rights have been generally referred as sprouting from the concept of 'honour'. A number of writers have written on the theme of honour as understood and practiced in Pakistan. Khan<sup>2</sup> explains it in the historical context giving Marxist interpretation, which is also confirmed by Sheen and Shah<sup>3</sup>. Shah explained how the customs of killing in the name of honour have gained so much popularity in Pakistan, especially upper Sindh. Sheen explains how money is found involved in maintaining such customs. The violence involved in killing or blackmailing in the name of honour is the real threat. It keeps people always on guard and, as a result, they deny their girls lot of civil liberties which otherwise would have been allowed to them, as freely as men. Khan insists that the social structure should be changed to get rid of ancient concepts of honour which treats them as mere 'bodies'. Due to local and global changes in economic and material conditions the tension between men and women has been growing in it. For this, she suggests that we need to have a good understanding of the sphere of family as it is

<sup>2</sup> Tahira Shahid Khan, *Beyond Honour* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2006).

<sup>3</sup> Nafisa Shah, *Honour Unmasked Gender Violence, Law, and Power in Pakistan* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2017).

the linch-pin of the whole society and the socialization system. Nowadays, the concepts of '*majboori*' (desperation), and 'economic independence' have also been encroaching upon the puritanical rules of 'honour'. This social puritanism, basically getting legitimacy from the religious and cultural norms, when interacts with aspirations for a better life for the daughter and her family (both of orientation and of procreation), leads to compromises, wherein the mother and father play important roles. Their roles may vary, supersede each other, or get in harmony to arrive at an understanding which is acceptable for the majority of immediately concerned or 'significant' people.

In case of daughters who are not allowed earning by family, or are restrained due to any other issue, or are pushed into marriage at an early age, the role of mothers might become very supportive after marriage. Since time immemorial, women of the Indian subcontinent have been recorded as learning the social norms and customs from their mothers. The biographies of Pakistani women are a testimonial to it. For instance, the best book in this regard is of Ikramullah<sup>4</sup> who explains in minute details the rituals, customs and procedures of cultural events associated with life cycle that she had learnt from her mother. Shahla Haeri<sup>5</sup> has explained how the women in jobs are portrayed and what theories help explain that representation. She explains that only a veiled, rural, impoverished woman is portrayed as typical Pakistani woman, whereas the professional women are a new and different face of Pakistani womanhood. Weiss<sup>6</sup> has explained the plight of home-based workers of Lahore, who are engaged in multiple productive jobs but they need to be empowered to get rid of the exploitation of the middle-men or the market system. This exploitation is in fact a product of fear, *majboori* (desperation) and honour paradigm, which together, do not allow women work outside their homes even if they are at the verge of starving. So they work at highly exploitative terms. Jamal (2010)<sup>7</sup> has tried to explain how the women are barred from exercising their rights as free citizens in Pakistan. As gender becomes the basic determinant for citizenship rights,

<sup>4</sup> Shaista Suhrawardy Ikramullah, *Ceremonies, Customs and Colour behind the Veil* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1992).

<sup>5</sup> Shahla Haeri, *No Shame for the Sun: Lives of Professional Pakistani Women* (Syracuse University Press, 2002/2004).

<sup>6</sup> Anita M. Weiss, *Walls within Walls: Life Histories of Working Women in the Old City of Lahore* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992).

<sup>7</sup> Amina Jamal, 'Gender, Citizenship and the Nation-State in Pakistan: Willful Daughters or Free Citizens' in Sadaf Ahmed (ed.), *Pakistani Women Multiple Locations and Competing Narratives* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2010), 120-39.

women of Pakistan are trapped in between the discourses of Islamization and modernity, both pulling them in opposite directions. Such research sources are helpful in understanding the issues which circumscribe daughters' rights, in which the family becomes instrumental, first of all, to act as a barrier. However detailed studies on mother-daughter relations are not available as such.

### Objectives of the study

This paper deals with an ignored topic: evolving role of mothers in realizing daughters' rights. The objectives include:

- Finding out how far the mothers of today's Pakistan are supporting and struggling for their daughters' rights?
- Identifying what categories of rights are mostly denied to daughters and how mothers have to fight for them?
- Finding out the nature of evolving trends across four generations of mothers and daughters regarding supporting women's rights.

### Methodology

Mainly focused on survey methodology, a questionnaire was prepared to elicit mother's experiences, perceptions and aspirations about their daughters. It contained 13 questions and one additional introductory section inquiring about the biographical data of the respondent mothers. It inquired about mother-tongue to trace ethnicity, then age, education, previous and present occupations, personal income, marital status, length of marriage and number of children. It was followed by questions about number of sons and daughters with details about daughters' ages. Then respondent's social activities and occupation of the respondents and their husbands were inquired about. Next were questions about comparison between fathers' and mothers' treatment. Then responding mother's views were asked about reasons behind any discriminatory attitude.

After the above questions, a matrix was presented to inquire about nineteen dimensions of daughter's rights. The mothers were supposed to respond about their own views and the rest of the family members' views separately on these dimensions. In case of difference, the mothers were to report about any effort they made to ensure that particular right to daughters. Their degree of success and level of satisfaction was also inquired accordingly. Then in the next question detail was inquired about the issues of conflict with the family. Mothers were to explain how much they persuaded their daughters to assert their rights, as well as to how much they were advised by their own mothers to assert their rights. This across-the-generations process was important to identify any change in the social trend. Moreover, personal observation,

personal narratives and in-depth interviews with 10 respondents proved very useful.

Since humans are product of socialization, in which the family and mothers play a crucial role, the mothers were asked to compare their sons and daughters with respect to ten dimensions. These included: bravery, perseverance, patience in hard times, financial help/sacrifice, asserting own rights, steadfastness, awareness of own human rights and religiously approved rights, selfless service to others and helping other practically. This was meant to compare the product of gender-specific socialization, based on the mothers' claims.

Data was collected from four provinces and Azad Kashmir, ensuring inclusion of variety of classes, educational background and social settings. Respondents were informed of the purpose and confidentiality before obtaining their consent for interview.

### Findings of the study

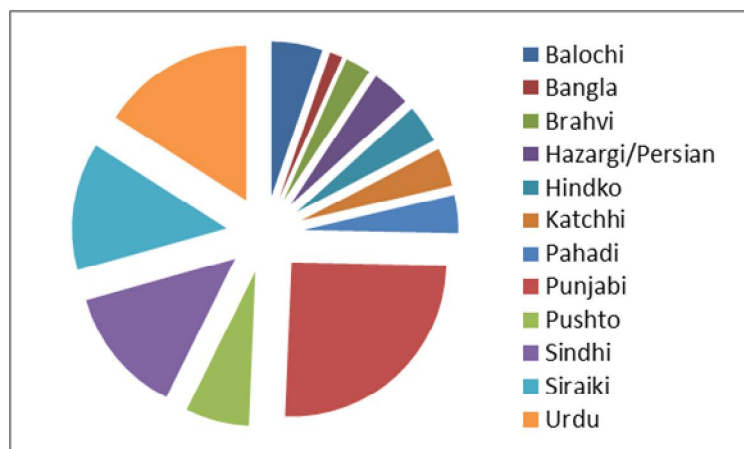
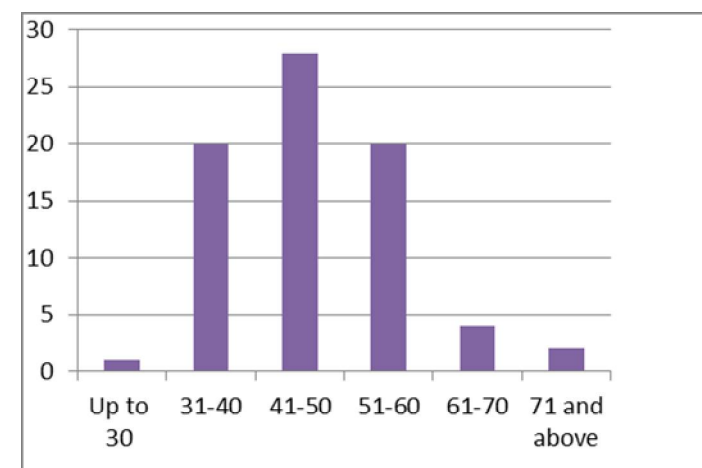
#### Biographical data of participants

*Ethnic Background of Participants' Families:* It is generally detected by the mother-tongue of the participants' households, as per details given in Table 1 in alphabetical order:

**Table 1: Participants by Mother Tongue**

Mother Tongue	Frequency	Percentage
Balochi	4	5.3
Bangla	1	1.3
Brahvi	2	2.7
Hazargi/Persia	3	4.0
n		
Hindko	3	4.0
Katchhi	3	4.0
Pahadi	3	4.0
Punjabi	19	25.4
Pushto	5	6.7
Sindhi	10	13.3
Siraiki	10	13.3
Urdu	12	16.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100.0</b>

*Source:* Survey data collected by the author.

**Chart A: Participants by Mother Tongue****Chart B: Participants by Age****Table 2: Participants by Age**

Age (Years)	Frequency	Percentage
Up to 30	1	1.3
31-40	20	26.7
41-50	28	37.3
51-60	20	26.7
61-70	4	5.3
71 and above	2	2.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100.0</b>

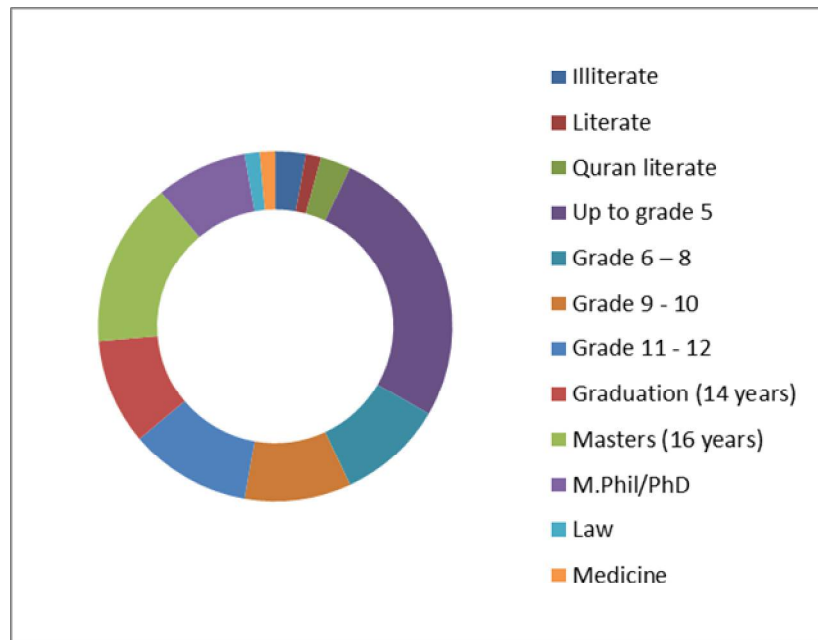
*Source:* Survey data collected by the author.

**Table 3: Participants by Education**

(n= 75, multiple response)

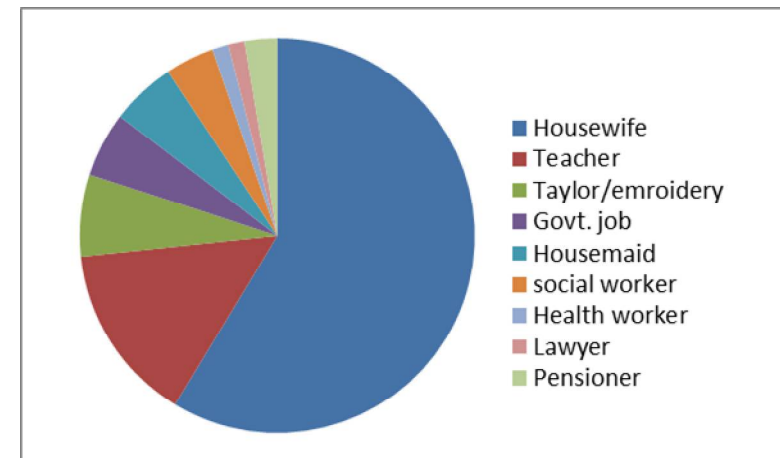
Educational Level	Frequency	Percentage
Illiterate	2	2.7
Literate	1	1.3
Quran literate	2	2.7
Up to grade 5	19	25.3
Grade 6 - 8	7	9.3
Grade 9 - 10	7	9.3
Grade 11 - 12	8	10.7
Graduation (14 years)	7	9.3
Masters (16 years)	11	14.7
M.Phil/PhD	6	8.0
Law	1	1.3
Medicine	1	1.3
B.Ed.	5	6.7

*Source:* Survey data collected by the author.

**Chart C: Participants by Education****Table 4: Participants by Occupation**  
(n= 75, multiple response)

Occupation	Previous No. (%)	Present No. (%)
House-women	43	44
Teacher	14	11
Tailor/embroidery	8	5
Government job	4	4
Housemaid	3	4
Livestock raising	2	0
Field worker	2	0
Social/development worker	2	3
Health worker	1	1
Political worker	1	0
Lawyer	0	1
Pensioner	0	2

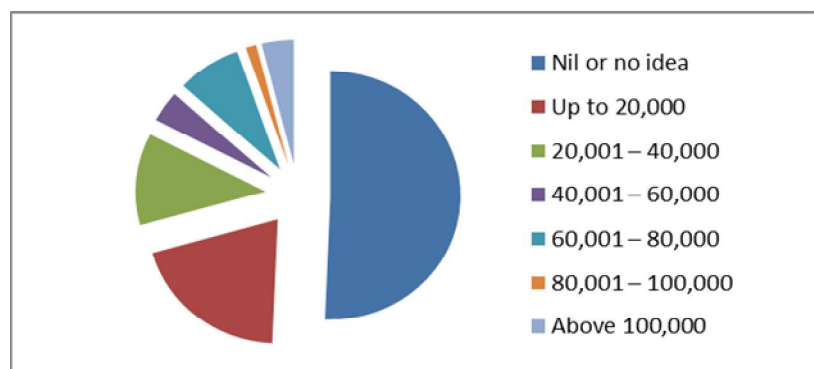
Source: Survey data collected by the author.

**Chart D: Participants by Present Occupation****Table 5: Participants by Personal Monthly Income**

Income (Pak. Rupees)*	Frequency	Percentage
Nil or no idea	38	50.7
Up to 20,000	15	20.0
20,001 – 40,000	9	12.0
40,001 – 60,000	3	4.0
60,001 – 80,000	6	8.0
80,001 – 100,000	1	1.3
Above 100,000	3	4.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100.0</b>

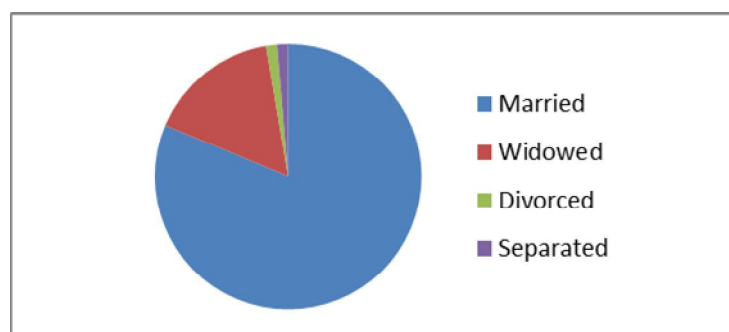
Source: Survey data collected by the author.

\*1 US Dollar = 116 Pak Rupees (in early 2018)

**Chart E: Participants by Personal Monthly Income (Pak Rupees)****Table 6: Participants by Marital Status**

Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage
Married	61	81.4
Widowed	12	16.0
Divorced	1	1.3
Separated	1	1.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Survey data collected by the author.

**Chart F: Participants by Marital Status****Table 7: Participants by Length of Marriage**

Length of Marriage (years)	Frequency	Percentage
UP to 10	6	8.0
11 – 20	21	28.0
21 – 30	23	30.7
31 – 40	15	20.0
41 and above	10	13.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Survey data collected by the author.

**Number of total children, sons and daughters:** The 69 sample mothers reported total number of children as 298 making the average number at 4.3. The average number of sons was 2.44 and of daughters was 2.24, which confirms the natural distribution of males being in bigger number and of females in smaller number, and same matches with the sex ratio in the population.

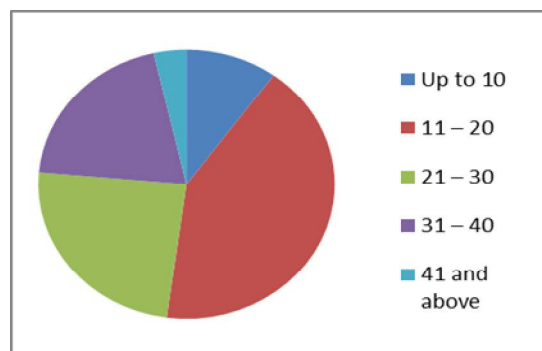
**Table 8: Participants by the Ages of their Daughters**

(n=75, multiple response)

Age (years)	Frequency	Percent
Up to 10	14	18.7
11 – 20	59	78.7
21 – 30	34	45.3
31 – 40	28	37.3
41 and above	5	6.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>--</b>

Source: Survey data collected by the author.

**Chart G: Participants by the Ages of their Daughters**

**Table 9: Participants by Occupation of the Husband**

Occupation	Frequenc	Percent
Government employee	14	18.7
Business	5	6.7
Agriculture	4	5.3
Private job	4	5.3
Unspecified	5	6.7
Teacher	8	10.7
Professional	6*	8.0
Shopkeeper	5	6.7
Skilled worker	6	8.0
Unskilled labourer	4	5.3
Prayer Leader (Imam)	1	1.3
Retired/pensioner	2	2.7
Unemployed/sick	1	1.3
Alive no more	9	12.0
Divorced	1	1.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Survey data collected by the author.

\* This included doctor 1, engineer 1, bank officer 1, accountant 2, CEO 1.

**Table 10: Perception about Daughters' Rights and Practices**

Aspect and Practice	Frequency	Percent
<i>Who kept the Respondent (mother) dearer?</i>		
Mother	29	38.7
Father	27	36.0
Both	17	22.7
Not applicable	2	2.6
<i>Who keeps the Respondent's daughter dearer?</i>		
Mother	40	53.3

Father	13	17.3
Both	21	28.0
<i>Do sons and daughters have equal rights in respondent's views?</i>		
Yes	64	85.3
No	8	10.7
Perhaps	3	4.0
<i>Who disciplines the daughters more?</i>		
Respondent (the mother)	49	65.3
Father	24	32.0
None	2	2.6
<i>Do the respondent, as compared with their husbands, favour giving more freedom to daughter?</i>		
Yes	36	48.0
No	35	46.7
Equal	1	1.3

Source: Field survey by the author.

*Perception about daughters' rights and practices:* Perception about who kept the respondent (now a mother) dearer, her mother or father, presented an interesting picture. In almost equal number the responding mothers reported that both parents loved them equally. It shows that whatever is the perception of 'being loved', it did not deprive the today's sample mothers of their father's love, too, whereas the general perception is that fathers of older generation did not love daughters much. However, the responding mothers claimed that they kept their daughters dearer than their husbands, a fact which needs to be verified from some other source. This contention is further confirmed by the following question about responding mothers' revealing that an overwhelming majority of them believes in equality of rights of sons and daughters. Moreover, it is interesting to note that responding mothers are very active and, they admit too, that they discipline their daughters more than the fathers (respondents' husbands) do. The reasons are obvious: mothers remain close to the children; spend more time with them and they are also held more accountable for any misdeed of children. Hence, this aspect of disciplining is a clear indicator of shaping a daughter's personality as to fit the norms of the family and society she is currently living and will live in the future.

**Table 11: Mothers Granting Rights to Daughters**

(n=75)



S. No.	Daughter's Right	Degree of Daughter's Rights Granted by the Mother				
		Very Much A	Much B	Somewhat C	Conditional D	Nil N
1	Love	64	6	4	1	0
2	Good food	63	9	3	0	0
3	Good dress	57	11	7	0	0
4	Good education	66	6	3	0	0
5	Social training	64	8	1	0	0
6	Religious training	55	11	6	2	1
7	Playing freely	31	5	20	7	12
8	Pocket-money	40	13	14	4	4
9	Going out alone	14	6	11	13	31
10	Driving car/bike	25	8	9	8	25
11	Visiting friends	26	9	19	10	11
12	Going out of city alone	8	6	9	6	49
13	Book/movie of choice	37	7	15	5	11
14	Using internet/mobile	31	10	13	9	11
15	Work/job of choice	29	9	9	20	8
16	Favorite recreation	30	11	13	15	6
17	Partying with friends	27	6	20	4	17
18	Marriage by free choice	28	6	11	8	22
19	Help in post-marriage	58	2	7	3	5

Source: Survey data collected by the author.

**Mothers granting rights to daughters:** Table 11 presents data regarding mothers granting a range of rights, considered important for general well-being and development of a healthy personality. It is applicable for both males and females. In the particular context of Pakistani society, the sample from different ethnic groups, reveals that the most undisputed right of a daughter is of good education, followed by 'receiving love' and good training, then come good food, good dressing, and religious

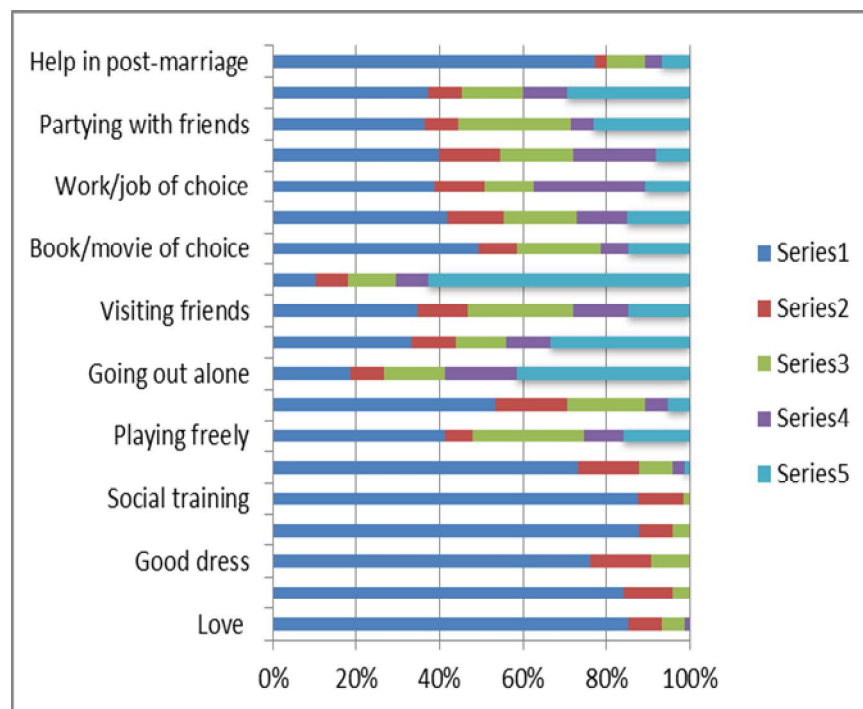
education. Rest of the aspects can be understood by comparison of data of Chart A, based on Table 1.

It is further confirmed that the most un-granted right is that of 'going out of city alone' followed by 'going out of home' and 'driving car or motorbike'. All this indicates the apprehensions of the parents, especially the mothers because threats inside the city or out there in distant places are real. Pakistan has become an insecure places for people, both men and women' moving alone even in the public places.

The most conditional permission is granted in the case of job and wage work, followed by favourite recreation and going out alone. Jobs are overwhelmingly conditioned on two most popular types like teaching or medicine. Other jobs are felt insecure, or unsuitable for females. The respondent mothers are found very much in favour of good education and training but due to unfavourable environment mothers had to struggle the most for this right. One third of mothers have allowed unconditional right of driving car or even motorbikes; the latter is in fact not popular in Pakistan at all for women. It is interesting that many mothers just mentioned that girls can drive bicycle in the lane or the courtyard, but not outside, whereas it is a good source of mobility and freedom in adult age. A majority, 67 per cent respondents, agree with right to job, only 8 have refused it. The right to play is also curtailed as small girls are allowed playing with boys under elders' supervision but as they reach near 10 years of age, they are mostly forbidden mixing with boys in playing, and their going out is checked. For such activities performed outside home, elders' presence or company is preferred. Girls can visit friends' houses only if the parents are satisfied about their families. Girls are usually allowed playing and partying at home with other girls as they can so spend time in safe zone. The data is shown in Chart H as well.

**Chart H:**  
**Composite Bar Graph Showing Extent of Daughters' Rights**  
**Approved by Mothers**





*Difference in mothers' and family members' level of approved rights for daughters:* It is crucial to know the difference in the level of rights approved for daughters by mothers and by rest of the family members, as this is the domain where mothers either have to fight or they have to compromise despite knowing that their own opinion is justified in their own judgment. An effort was made to get the opinion of survey participants on the indicators used in Table. 11. All respondents responded in grading and the also revealed the answers in qualitative terms.

#### **Mothers' efforts to realize daughters' rights in cases of family opposition**

Details revealed diverse kinds of activities carried out by mothers. Two types of efforts are common: (a) open fight, argumentation, threats, etc., and (b) presenting daughter's case in a way to create favorable environment or trying to avoid conflict but adopting a compromising style. In the former case, the implications for asserting daughters' rights were very serious for mothers in certain cases. For instance one mother reported that she supported her daughter's choice for marrying her cousin, to which the father did not agree. Both the families were very

poor. Later the son-in-law, being nephew of bride's father, created troubles to get his share in the shared family house, and also subjected wife to multiple kinds of violence. At this stage the responding mother (bride's mother) was severely treated and beaten up by her husband as if it was all her fault because she supported that marriage.

In the latter situation, it was seen in one case that the mother proved so much convincing that the Pakhtun father even transferred a part of his property to his daughter so that she could meet her needs. Since the family did not have any tradition of giving property in inheritance to daughters, especially in father's life, her brothers became jealous and have since been trying to get that land back. The government official-in-charge of that village in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, is dutiful and is trying to implement the *Sharia* law honestly, a rare activity now being seen. All this has happened due to convincing tactics of a caring mother. Moreover, mother as confidants of daughters, try to provide them necessities and other things, and concessions that they demand secretly. Mothers give financial help to girls secretly if not allowed openly. They give out things as gifts or traditional items to daughters on certain occasions keeping in view the daughter's needs and also to maintain her status and respect in the in-laws family. Daughters mostly share their problems with their mothers and so they are the first to be concerned about helping daughters out.

It is important to note that mothers or in many cases fathers as well, are the change agents who create more space for daughters' rights and so the improvement goes on. Also noteworthy is the fact that both an educated mother or an illiterate one, knows how to play her role as house-making and maintaining social relations have been special fields of women since centuries.

**Table 12: Issues of Conflict with the Family and Mothers' Strategies for Securing Daughter's Rights**

(n= 75, multiple response)

Aspects of Permission & Issues	Frequency	Percentage
Education	37	49.3
Marriage	18	24
Modesty/good dress	9	12
Job	7	9.3
Pocket money	1	1.3
Mobility	5	6.7
Playing and outdoor recreation	4	5.3
Good Food	4	5.3

Job Training	1	1.3
Freedom of thought & expression	2	2.6
I am the decision-maker	6	7.8
Husband is cooperative	5	6.7
Family environment is supportive	5	6.7
Sometimes need argumentation	4	5.3
I stay silent and within limit	4	5.3
Miscellaneous responses*	2	2.6

*Source:* Survey data collected by the author.

\* This includes one case of 'not marrying daughter as objectionable', and another case of 'I threat to go to court for children's rights', as a strategy.

*Issues for which mothers had to fight:* The data showed in Table 12 shows that the conflict over daughters' rights involved multiple issues. Unsurprisingly the top-most issue was education, followed by marriage matters. The right to education was secured by convincing others including, sons and husbands. The level of education could be secured through assertion and this varied. Regarding marriage it was not generally the choice of daughter, but choice of mother or both mother and daughters. Noteworthy cases were observed in certain Sindhi families. In one case, the girl was about to be engaged with her cousin soon after her birth, which was resisted. The tradition of children-engagement and endogamy is now been resisted. One mother reported that her two daughters were married at the age of 13; one of them was sent back to her mother along with an infant daughter one year after marriage. The responding mother then pushed for continuing daughters' education and now she is determined not to let them be married in young age. The educated aware mother also gave threats of going to the court for rights, and it proved effective. In opposition to compulsory endogamy, one mother forcefully arranged daughters' marriage with out of family educated boys. In a conservative family, religious father was resisting daughter's education, supported by his mother and sister, but the respondent won over the issue. In joint families, such issues emerge more frequently, and mothers have to resist as much as they can. Many a time mothers have reported to face violence of various degrees, for such daring acts. This has to be kept in mind while interpreting the mothers' intention to support their daughters' right to marriage by choice. Another example is of a lawyer women of Balochistan, included in the study, who had fought for her and daughter's rights and failing in it, she opted for divorce. These two extremes, in a tribal and traditional society, also reflect the nature of change that the society is going through: with compromising-submissive

or silent protester women on one end and bold assertive ready to take destiny in their own hands, along with responsibility of raising children on the other end. Pakistan's reality can be explained within these two poles. The similar women are found in urban and rural societies, in all corners of Pakistan, with more submissiveness in culturally and economically backward areas. A mother, a college lecturer, very liberal in other aspects, said: 'I cannot allow my daughter moving out of house without being chaperoned, as the tribal setting does not permit this'. Those in Karachi are happy to allow more freely most of the time, but with care and caution. The level of maturity of the girls increases with age and they gradually take up most of the responsibilities alone. More facilitation to mothers' freedom to decide comes from husbands who are weak, disinterested, drug-addict, earning little or nil, and ignoring wife and children, or they are too busy with their own life, supplying finances and not caring about children's well-beings and careers. Wherever a strong and capable woman is mother of the house, she would fill in the gap, supply finances, social support and leadership. One sample woman told: 'My husband was lazy and disinterested in everything related to family, so I took bold and careful decisions to marry my daughters'. It is important to note that in Pakistan most of the marriages are arranged by the family and parents have a bigger say in it, whereas the joint family members also consult and sometimes make or mar the decisions, because cousin marriages are very popular in all parts of Pakistan. Sometimes just little effort to convince is sufficient, and as with urbanization, migration and modernization, family have been getting out of relatives' pressures, people have started not to interfere even in the matters of close relatives. This is because they mostly do not feel being at risk of any type due to loose bonding with the unitary family. Their objection does not go beyond verbal criticism or gossip. Another tactic was revealed as "wait and see". The family is left to take time to consider and take a position on the issue at hand, and mostly the quick response is softened and a way between is adopted. One respondent of upper Punjab sought permission for a teaching job of her daughter in a school close to their home, and after sometime the girl succeeded in convincing the family that there is no harm for females to work as teacher. In a similar case, the mother convinced the sons and husband by explaining job as a demand of the time. Mothers, who submit and compromise to family pressures, gave many excuses or statements of facts to explain their position. These include: 'as I have accepted my husband's principles, I do not mind what he decides'. Mothers living in nuclear families are found more at ease in general.

The women who reported no conflict were of two types: either very much compromising, submissive and fearful, or they were living in

comfortable environment regarding women's rights. As this feeling of 'comfort' is a product of their own socialization, sense of openness, space for asserting own rights, and the expected outcome of resistance to the prevalent norms, they become insensitive to the oppression, which might be observable for others outside that social set-up. Take an example of girls being married at the age of 15 or less in Pakhtun villages of Swat. They are not yet matured enough rather are flexible to be molded by the in-laws family according to its own traditions and values. Such young brides soon engage in motherhood business and they then try to secure their immediate rights, which usually include: getting more and more money from the husband, good clothes, jewelry and good items for the children. They develop competition and jealousy with fellow women and try to grab more and more status items. Such young women are usually not educated properly, so they cannot think of earning. They have to manipulate within the family relations to draw maximum benefits.

One poor woman, an urban domestic servant, reported asking her husband to get some food from outside, or take his daughters and sons outside for recreation. But, the poorest person, as he is could not do it; even his sons could not do that, so she said: 'I take care of every necessary item of my daughters'.

*Responding mother's advice to daughter for securing her rights:* Mothers were mostly in favour of advising daughters about their rights. It was mentioned mostly that a polite or convincing manner was advised. One poor mother explained: "I told my daughter, you do not have to be disrespectful to your mother-in-law or husband; problem are everywhere and bad time comes and goes, but be patient. Do not leave the husband's home, though conflict is inevitable. The same I was advised by my mother". Anyhow the same poor mother supported her daughter in love marriage and the following serious problems of marital violence, divorce, a fatal accident, expensive treatment and after the death of daughter, she is now taking care of her two children. It shows that certain poor families, despite an ideology of compromise do not leave their daughters in trouble un-attended.

*Advice of the responding mother's own mother for securing rights:* A pattern is discernible among three generations: strong compliance to traditional values in the older generations, then gradually weakening of old norms and freedom being asserted by younger mothers. A convenient distribution was seen as: a mother at the age of 60 or above, one with 40-60 years age, and one of 20-40 years. A clear positive trend of freedom is observable with decline in mother's age.

**Table 13: Personal Qualities of Daughters and Sons of Responding Mothers (n=75)**

Personality Traits Among Children	Degree of Qualities Found in Sons or Daughters			
	More among Daughters	More among Sons	Both having Similar Quality	None
Showing bravery	14	40	19	0
Demonstrating perseverance	35	15	20	1
Showing patience in difficulty	36	15	22	1
Giving economic resources to needy	23	17	24	0
Fighting for own rights	13	22	29	3
Steadfastness in difficulty	20	11	36	0
Knowing own human rights	14	14	35	3
Knowing own religious rights	12	5	48	7
Selfless devotion for others' benefit	19	12	28	4
Helping others by physical work	13	17	28	5

*Source:* Survey data collected by the author.

*Not Applicable cases:* 2, including one disabled and one very young son's case.  
*Comparison of respondents' daughters' and sons personalities:* Table 13 is helpful in eliciting mothers' perceptions about the personalities of their daughters and sons on certain important aspects regarding one's awareness, spirit and strength to assert own rights and to be a good social fellow. Responses showed that certain qualities are more found, nurtured, appreciated, and encouraged among the sons and certain others among the daughters. For instance bravery is predominantly a male's quality, but daughters are nurtured to have more perseverance, patience, steadfastness and selfless devotion. Though daughters cannot support others through hard physical labour but they support more emotionally by offering prolonged psychological help and thus investing psychological energy in the relationships, even if they are not getting proper recognition and reward. Other qualities taught more to the boys include fighting for own rights, and girls are taught more than the boys, to give away money to the needy, thus altruism is instilled more in females than in males. Certain social environmental factors constrain developing certain qualities among girls, such as going out boldly and fearlessly in day and night times as well as cultural notions about need of women to go out. It is a common practice that women in urban and rural areas go out mostly out of necessity and therefore, their visibility in public space is very little.

This study is based on perception of mothers, which is very much conditioned by social environment. One can find difference among various ethnic groups in particular between the tribal and feudal settings, and traditional rural and modern urban settings. This perception has also a connection with the degree of 'care and protectiveness of parents', which is influenced by family norms and perceived threats to 'honour' in the surrounding. Inculcating balanced personality traits among both men and women is essential for social development and peaceful family life. It is found that boys are made strong, sturdy and assertive and girls are made weak, flexible, altruistic, and adjusting to pressures. This solution to strike a balance in a marital life is still working.

**Table 14: Generation that Actively Support(ed) Women's Rights**  
(n=75)

Supporting Person	Bigger Supporter of Women's Rights in Successive Generation			
	Female		Male	
	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
Maternal grandparents	30	40	17*	22.7
Respondent's parents	46	61.3	25**	33.3
Respondent and her husband	60	80	15	20
Respondents' children	56	74.7	19	25.3

Source: Survey data collected by the author.

\* Besides this, there were responses indicating 'both by 2, and 'No idea' or 'traditional culture' by 19 respondents.

\*\* There were 4 no response.

Table 14 shows that among the older generation (grandparents of today's mothers), as well as in the successive generation, more females reportedly supported women's rights. The same trend continues in the

present day mothers (respondents) and their daughter's generations. However, egalitarianism is now on the rise and more males in the present young generation are supporting feminism. It is a healthy sign, since men have to be socialized and sensitized by their mothers and other socializing agents, to become more open towards women's rights. Mostly this job is done by present day generation of mothers. With this trend a better future is expected for daughters' right in Pakistan.

### Discussion

Major findings of the study show that gender of parents is critical in determining feelings about daughters' freedom. It is though a general impression that fathers love daughters more than the sons, but the sample mothers expressed that they love daughters more than the fathers. Another important aspect of the matter is that fathers love and mostly hide it, whereas mothers do express openly and particularly in strategic matters where they have to assert or fight for daughters really hard. Variations across the sample families reveal that in "the only one daughter" cases girls are really much loved and cared. More reasons for caring daughters include: their being "delicate and sensitive", or "a gift and blessing of God". It is very natural that mostly parents do not want to see their daughters in trouble, so most parents give freedom to them in pre-marital life.

Women, who allow more freedom to their daughters than their husbands, have reported its reasons as: "Girls must know the world outside, to gain confidence, to lead their life alone in future, to be able to grapple with challenges and to be independent". Such mothers had favoured and initiated driving practice for girls as well. Less educated mothers of KP, not allowing more freedom than their husbands, explained the reasons as: "if anything goes wrong then we have to seek help of the husband, so why to transgress the limits he has set for us". Strangely, few educated mothers did not support freedom for daughters and they motivated daughters to fight for their rights only to a limited extent. One obvious reason is that both sons and daughters are equally loved, and are accepted to be equal in rights, yet the mother controls the children more than the father. Such cases indicate the 'impending danger' where participants expected severe consequences both for mothers and daughters, rather more for mothers because of failure in training the daughter. Mothers approved more love and freedom given to daughters by fathers due to 'tenderness' of women as the reason. As these mothers accept physical and psychological fragility of women, they do not feel need for much freedom, but they try disciplining their

daughters to balance and foreclose any trespassing or mishap due to external factors.

Degree of freedom for daughters is nowhere unlimited, but conditional to the morality, religious norms, and security conditions prevailing in the social environment outside home. The most restricted right is of love marriage, since it is perceived to be full of risk, unless the family also joins in evaluating the proposal. The family only after its approval would help the daughter in married life issues. Availability of communication technological gadgets has also facilitated mothers' awareness of the world and women's freedom. This is truer for the young mothers, so the older mothers lag in openness.

Another important factor is poverty and economic tensions in the family. Such families mostly favour old values of submission to patriarchy (husband and in-laws), except in the cases where their daughters get a chance to earn for the family's survival. Poor-earning fathers, when fail to provide sufficiently, then mothers take charge of household matters and supplement income by hard labour. One such mother having three daughters, is struggling hard to get them education, basic necessities, as well as picnics. She has been saving wisely to make her own house and also to provide dowry for girls' marriage. Despite being diabetic, she is devoting all her energies to get the best possible to her daughters. This case represents many such other cases where fathers are insensitive or incapable and mothers fulfill the full range of needs. Her high school education, good level of awareness, confidence and motivation all pushed her to raise status of the children, comprising daughters only. One of her daughters has started job. In a similar case of deserted father, mother is working hard for survival of family and she has been training the daughter to face all odds in life with confidence and courage. No doubt, if even the mothers become indifferent towards daughters, they would perish in destitution.

Traditional mothers of the past used to advise daughters to stay with in-laws and husband even in worst conditions as was reported: "problems are inevitable part of life, do not desert your husband in such conditions". Yet a mother having same belief, when realized that her son-in law is totally insensitive and unwilling to maintain his wife and children, she advised the daughter to desert him, lest he would suck all her income, and continue lazing out. She advised this when she realized that he had brought home food for his own mother but not for his hungry children, who were waiting for their mother to return from job and bring some food, too. When she came and served food to all, her mother told that 'your husband is so much insensitive to your children's need, and

you are still caring for him. Leave this man'. So she saved her daughter from future exploitation by the husband.

Migration and globalization are two intertwined factors resulting in complex form of consequences. A family migrating from feudal-cum-tribal area of KP settled in megacity of Karachi, and lived on a lower-middle class income. It allowed education, mobility and job to the daughter but on the condition of observing strict purdah. She developed a liberal and critical outlook, which was not tolerable by the family back in the village. Now the daughters of two families are at opposite poles; KP village women have been getting remitted money from their brothers, fathers, husbands, and sons working abroad. The daughter in Karachi is earning her own money, has gained confidence and is supporting two orphan nieces, left here by their widow mother belonging to the same feudal village family. The village women, having luxurious life, have developed jealousy and comparison within the close relatives but so not allow girls doing jobs. They do not observe strict purdah and so enjoy freedom. The family in megacity is still observing purdah to undo the objections from the family of orientation back in village.

Diverse reasons behind mothers loving daughters more than fathers were pronounced, such as: "she is gift of God"; "mother-daughter bond is naturally stronger (4)"<sup>8</sup>; "she is the first born"; "I have only daughters" (2); "she being the only daughter", "I was only one daughter and have got only one daughter"; "they spend more time with me"; "they are guests, would soon leave (7)"; "I was deprived so I do not want to see her deprived"; "for being disabled she needs help"; "I did not receive mother's company in childhood"; "girls are tender and a trust to take care of"; "I know more about their issues"; "father stays out of home or city very often (3)"; and the last but crucial consideration was: "she is human after all".

Reasons of allowing freedom to daughters were also diverse, justified by prudence, love, care, social exigencies, and the logic of control—providing her when she is in parents' home, otherwise they would not be able to help if she faces odd conditions at in-laws' house. Freedom, according to participants, is subjective matter, "it depends on our family norms as well, beyond which I cannot allow". But again it is a subjective matter, people interpret religion according to own understanding. A more precise opinion was that one must follow the religious limits. Mostly both or one parent favoured freedom to daughters, to make them confident, self-sufficient, aware, educated,

<sup>8</sup> Number in such parentheses indicates 'number of respondents' to that category of answer.

perfectly mature, and capable to face untowards condition. Daughters should be guided on good and bad things thoroughly and then parents must rely on daughters' judgment. It was also mentioned that harmony between two parents' views is essential to raise children properly. Two cautious and restrictive mothers were of the view that limits to freedom must be set according to the prevalent social conditions; no unnecessary freedom be allowed, to save them from degraded moral conditions out on the street, otherwise they would suffer. Another view was that middle path is better, for too much restriction is also counter-productive. One mother said: "Allow daughters as they are humans, but mothers in particular must keep watchful eye on them. Give them confidence so that they could share personal issues"; and, "even fathers must be aware of daughters' issues".

Mothers fight for basic rights of daughters; the most basic being the survival, followed by education and the highest being the right to marry the man of their own choice (called: 'love marriage'). The study found cases of at least 60 per cent mothers who favoured daughters' choice in marriage; though their daughters had to face violence, threats, insult, etc. Only 10 percent mothers allowed it conditionally. The age of mothers is found inversely related to allowing daughter's freedom and control over life matters. Moreover, educational level of parents is positively related with freedom for daughters.

Father's judgment about the proper limit of freedom for daughters is crucial in a patriarchal society. It is observed in many families that fathers allow daughters disregarding their family norms, and such men are the pioneers of women's freedom in their own circles. One sample mother reported: "My husband is very religious so he does not allow watching TV drama and films, but in such case the children might do the same secretly", and another view was: "in this age of information children get to know information at very early age, and they might go astray".

The cases of disabled daughters and divorced, widowed and separated mothers are special in that they put extra pressure on mothers who mostly have to manage finances to run the family. In such cases, mostly daughters take more responsibilities of household management; or of earning at an early age, especially if elder son(s) are not there. If mothers are poor, daughters join them to bring income home, under 'sheer necessity'. In this sense '*majboori*' (desperation) creates more reasons for freedom. These reasons match those listed in the previous subsections.

## Conclusion

In Pakistan, where patriarchal norms are strong, this study has tried to explore as to what extent the traditional statuses of women—wives and mothers—can be corrosive for patriarchy. This is true in both urban and very rustic, rural or 'culturally backward' settings. The same trends prevail across the class hierarchy where patriarchy operates glaringly. However, in the families who have to earn for survival, even the poor illiterate mothers can fight for daughters' rights to go out and earn for living. The reasons for daughters' right are found operating variably in more enlightened, middle, upper-middle and upper classes, where rights are conditioned more by family honour and traditions rather than by exigencies of survival. There, at least, the mothers have some concept of gender equality but the poor mothers mostly have not even heard of it.

The study finds that daughters rights' are negotiated within a complex frame of rules, which can be identified as follows:

Three sets of factors are significant in defining the daughters' rights:

- a. *Internal*: These are related to the personalities of mother, father, daughter(s) and her siblings. Psychologically a mother can be subdued and may teach the same to her daughter, or tell her struggling for rights but not in a forceful manner. Contrarily, mother can be forceful and teaching the same. However, this is not so simple, as in many examples, young girls hardly eighteen, are married off even in families of educated and better-off parents. This they justify in the name of 'not to miss good match, as compared to raising professional mature girls who are career-oriented, and who are assertive in many cases about their marriage proposals. This reversal of consciousness-raising and an anti-feminist practice, if is observed in middle or upper class, then the lower class cannot be criticized for its exigencies of marrying off young girls to shed-off the economic burden. On the other hand, there are a good number of parents who wait for completion of education (university, graduation or professional) and soon after they marry their daughters. For sons, this is not followed rather sons' income and financial soundness is awaited, or marriage cost is borne by someone else and then the new couple is expected to maintain life with their own sources. Fathers' choices are also determined by their socialization and aspirations about children. As fathers have more unhindered choices and decision-making powers regarding daughters' futures, it is critical to focus on mother-father relations, as to what extent mothers can persuade the fathers.
- b. *Familial*: This set of factors is of social-psychological nature. Normative environment of the immediate family and significant others together determine the daughters' freedom. For instance,

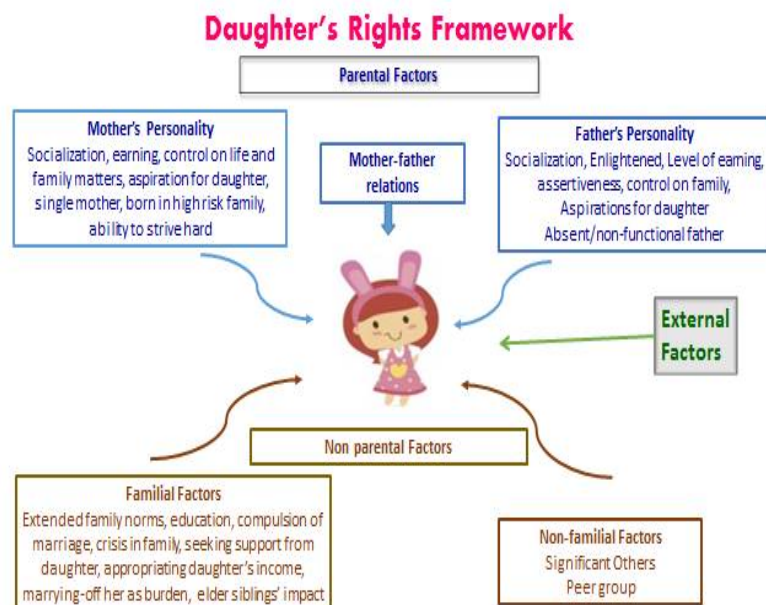


regarding riding a bicycle, it is not her choice but of parents and the family. In cases of absent or dysfunctional fathers, mothers do take charge and may take bold decisions, too, yet they try to play safe, or they might expose their daughters to risks. Such cases selected in the study reveal that mothers aspiring for daughters' successful life have to strive hard, if mothers have to earn as well. Moreover, in the absence of men they have to be politically strong, to sustain social pressures. One such sample mother with high school education, now member of residents' association, is one example. Comparing her, with a similar mother having poor health and soft personality, shows that as their approaches to life are different, so is their impact on daughters' socialization.

- c. *External:* This refers to the overall sociopolitical conditions allowing or deterring girls' success and safety of life and honour outside family environment. Perceived threats to daughters' safety are countered by either stopping them not to enter the public domain which entails risk, or equipping them with awareness, preparedness and boldness, to play safe.

These factors are related to each other in a complex manner, as shown in a model displayed in Chart G.

**Chart G: Factors Determining Daughters' Rights in the Family**



So the major factors identified include: socialization, moral standards, orientation of the family, socioeconomic class, and quest for peace and reasonableness in husband-wife relations. A class-specific standard of morality defines limits of daughters' freedom, but parents are the actual functionaries ensuring upkeep of that moral system. It is confirmed that daughters' earning supports their economic empowerment, but in poor families especially women's income is appropriated by the parents/husband, to limit their freedom. Violation of moral standards on coming to public eye is highly detested and severe punishment is also given or recommended.

In Pakistan, feminist activists have articulated women's concerns and researchers have documented women's lives on a noticeable scale yet certain aspects of female existence, such as that of 'domestic activism' is rarely highlighted. This study is an attempt to fill the void, and it has found a variable degree of domestic activism among women, who as mothers, even if not been treated in their own girlhood as equal to their brothers, now are trying to provide more rights to their daughters. It is the right of education for which they are especially concerned and engaged, so one can imagine that the power of knowledge in this age of information revolution is being allowed to young daughters as a matter of right through mothers' efforts. The society must appreciate this silent service of mothers, which is ultimately going to benefit the society through its multiplier effect.

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