

## **Low Female Labour Participation in Pakistan: Causes and Consequences**

**Samina Isran**

Assistant Professor Dept. of Economics  
Shah Abdul Latif University, Khairpur

**Manzoor Ali Isran**

Senior Faculty Member  
Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto Institute of Science and Technology

### **Abstract:**

*Participation in labour market is an important strategy for enhancing women's empowerment and related bargaining power within and outside the household, Agarwal (1994, 2002), UNDP (2003). However, a favourable participation of women in Pakistan is constrained by their lack of skill, education, and training beside socio-cultural norms. Moreover, women also carry the double burden of unpaid household work and the paid workload. At the same time, it is also believed that women enjoy a sense of independence and self-confidence by working for an income. Sen (2001), and Agarwal (2001, 2002), argue that through employment and other income-generating activities women's economic position improves and their status strengthens within the household.*

### **I. Introduction**

This paper will examine the extent to which the participation of Pakistani women in labour market reduces inequalities in power relations thereby enhancing their empowerment and bargaining position within the household. The majority of women in Pakistan are facing a number of problems as a result of old and out-dated socio-cultural norms within the household and society which restrict their access to gainful employment and other productive assets, and as a result, their productive potential has remained untapped and unutilised. The female segment forms about 50 percent of the total population of the country, whereas its formal participation in economic activities is minimal (Pakistan Economic Survey: 2007-2008). The sixth labour policy was released in 2010 though it covers many aspects including important issues such as increased wages (up to 7,000 per month for unskilled workers), women empowerment and gender equality in labour market etc, female labour participation is still not very encouraging. Even if seen in the historical perspective, the situation with regard to the female segment's participation has not improved very much. Such low participation of women is therefore attributed to social and economic factors, which analysis is the focal point for the further discussion.

### **II. Literature Review**

The emergence of bargaining approach is relatively new phenomenon in the literature of gender relationship within household and family. The bargaining approach has gained wider currency after the writings of well-known economist Amartya Sen

(1990), who, in his writing presented the different kind of conceptualisation of the relationship between household members.

Gender relations within the household can be characterised as a relation of cooperative and conflict within a bargaining frame work of analysis (Sen 1990, Elson: 1995). According to Agarwal (1997), a person's fall-back position (which is explained by Agarwal as the outside options which determine how well off he or she would be if cooperation ceased), and associated bargaining strength within the household or family vis-à-vis subsistence needs depends on various factors including their access to ownership or control of physical resources like land, an access to employment or income earning activities or support from the state or NGOs. The greater a woman's ability to physically survive outside the family, the greater would be her bargaining power within the household. But as far as Pakistani women are concerned, they do not only suffer from intra-family inequalities in the distribution of resources but their access to outside resources like employment or other income generating activities is minimal and support from Government or non-governmental organisations is relatively not very strong.

According to Bargaining Model (Agarwal: 1997), intra-household interaction contains the elements of both cooperation and conflict, and cooperation continues in so far as cooperative arrangements make each of the household members better off. However, different cooperative outcomes are possible if there is discrepancy in the distribution of resources, especially in relation to who gets what and who does what.

The essence of the bargaining approach lies in the fact that the bargaining position of the each member of the household lies in what Agarwal (1997), calls a person's fall-back position (the access to outside resources determine how well off he or she would be if cooperation ceases). The person who has stronger fall-back position (better outside access to productive assets such as employment, ownership of land and etc) would emerge with favourable outcome.

A study by Sathar and Kazi (2000), on rural areas of Punjab province of Pakistan found that the bargaining power and economic autonomy is highest in *barani* (Rain-fed), areas and in Southern Punjab, where labour force participation of women is highest giving them the greater opportunities for cash income. The bargaining power and economic autonomy is the highest among those women who are paid, whether inside or outside the households. Similarly, the power of decision-making is higher among women who are paid even if they work from within their households. Whereas in northern Punjab the women have comparatively lower economic autonomy but greater mobility and decision-making power as compare to the women in southern Punjab. Mobility is low in south Punjab and in the northwest areas as a result of high prevalence of purdah in these regions (Sathar and Kazi: 2000). While women in rural Sindh province have relatively lower autonomy "as a result of tenacious feudal<sup>1</sup> traditions which inhibit their autonomy" (Sathar: 1996).

In order to decrease women's economic dependence on men and gain viable bargaining position within and outside the household, it is imperative that women should have free and unrestricted access to economic resources like job market, credit or other

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<sup>1</sup> A type of culture and society where land holding is the basis of political and economic power

income generating activities. Agarwal (1997, 2002, 2003), argues that a society in which women share relative equality with men in accessing economic assets and opportunities are in a better position to bargain for their rights within or outside the households.

Although women living in rural or in urban households of Pakistan are not a homogenous group, nor are their status and livelihood strategies same, yet, all of them are involved in common roles of production, reproduction and household maintenance. The degree and mode of involvement in unpaid and income earning activities and degree of changes in access to economic resources are different. Lack of independent access to and control over the economic and productive resources and resultant weaker fall-back position, make their position disadvantageous to bargain for their rightful shares within and outside the household.

### **III. Official Labour Statistics and Female Labour**

To understand the lower participation of women in a labour market, we have to understand the conceptual and methodological viewpoint. Such conceptual and methodological analysis is deemed necessary because it has been indicated that the official labour statistics under-estimate women's participation in economic activities. According to the Labour Force Survey (2007-2008), for instance, the female labour force participation rate in that year was about 21 percent. Which rose only 29 percent in 2011 (World Bank; 2012). This is even lower than in other Asian Muslim countries. The first explanation for this low participation rate relates to the under-reporting of women's activities in official statistics (UNDP: 2003).

Other reason of female low participation in labour market is believed to be socio-cultural constraints largely arising from patriarchal structures of society. These major constraints to women's employment in Pakistan will be analysed in detail.

Firstly, the main statistical sources that give information about the labour force are the Agriculture Census, the Population Census, the Labour Force Survey and the Pakistan Social and Living Standard Measurement Survey. Comparing the female labour force participation, it is noticed that the data from these statistical sources vary considerably. These all surveys differ from others, conceptually and methodologically, because different definitions are used for labour force and economically active persons. Nonetheless, they do provide a picture of the economically-active and non-active women's population. Although, in all the surveys, different concepts and research methodologies have been adopted, there are two main reasons cited for surveying the economically-active participation. The first reason relates to the measurement of the extent of available and unused labour time and human resources for the purpose of macro-economic monitoring and human resources development planning. The second reason, from a socio-political perceptive, relates to the measurement of the relationship between employment, income and other social and economic characteristics for the purpose of formulating and monitoring employment policies and programmes.

Another dimension of this is that these surveys provide some picture to enable the identification of target groups and the design and evaluation of overall and target group's specific government policies aimed at promoting and creating employment. These policies may include training programmes, schemes to help people start or return to work, community work programmes, assistance in setting up an enterprise, wage subsidies, tax

exemption and other positive incentives for employment promotion. But when sex, age and occupational groups are broken down, the statistics gathered provide essential material for analysing and assessing the social impact of the government policies on the vulnerable groups, especially women. Similarly, when we analyse the statistics of various surveys about the employment of women in Pakistan, they give a stark picture, and show how low is the participation of women in the labour market.

The Table 1 depicts that the estimated population of Pakistan was 161 million in the year 2008. Out of total population females constitutes 78 million. Annual growth rate of female population is 2.1 percent since 2000 and it has been increasing over the years (Economic Survey of Pakistan (2008-2009)).

Table 1: Total Population (Millions)

PAKISTAN(15+)	2000	2002	2004	2006	2007	2008	Change 2000 to 2008 millions	Average Annual Growth Rate
Total Population								
Both sexes	136.0	145.8	148.7	155.4	158.2	161	+25.0	+2.1
Males	69.8	75.2	76.2	79.5	81.3	82.7	+12.9	+2.1
Females	66.2	70.4	72.5	75.9	76.9	78.2	+12.0	+2.1
Population 15+								
Both sexes	74.3	81.2	84.3	88.7	90.5	93.1	+18.7	+2.8
Males	37.9	41.8	42.7	55.0	45.8	47.2	+9.2	+2.7
Females	36.4	39.4	41.7	43.7	44.7	45.9	+9.5	+2.1
Urban Population 15+								
Both sexes	24.6	28.3	30.6	32.0	32.5	33.4	+8.9	+3.8
Males	12.8	14.9	15.9	16.6	16.8	17.3	+4.5	+3.8
Females	11.8	13.4	14.7	15.4	15.7	16.1	+4.4	+3.9
Rural Population 15+								
Both sexes	49.7	52.8	53.8	56.7	58.0	59.6	+9.9	+2.3
Males	25.1	26.8	26.8	28.4	28.9	29.8	+4.7	+2.2
Female	24.6	26.0	26.0	28.3	29.1	29.8	+5.2	+2.4

Labour Force surveys FBS from 2000-2009

Table 1 further documents that the female working age population (15 years and above) is 45.9 million compared to 47.2 million males. About 29.8 millions of working age females (nearly two thirds of total working age women) belongs to rural areas and just 16.1 percent live in urban areas.

**Table 2**

Employment to Population Ratio and Age % of Pakistan in comparison to South Asia and East Asia

Pakistan	1999- 2000	2001- 2002	2003- 2004	2005- 2006	2006- 2007	2007- 2008	2008- 2009	2009- 2010	*2010- 2011
<b>15 years &amp; above</b>									
Both sexes	46.8	46.5	47.0	49.7	49.8	49.9	50.3	50.7	50.4
Males	78.6	77.6	77.6	79.6	79.6	79.1	78.5	78.3	78.0
Females	13.7	13.6	15.6	19.0	19.4	19.9	21.0	21.9	22.2
<b>15-24 years</b>									
Both sexes	35.1	37.6	38.5	41.9	40.9	40.3	40.6	41.1	39.6
Males	61.6	61.8	62.7	66.1	64.2	62.3	61.4	61.3	59.5
Females	7.2	11.8	13.7	16.8	16.8	17.1	18.3	18.8	18.8
<b>South Asia (15+)</b>									
Both sexes	2000	2001	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Males	57.5		58.4	58.6	58.7	58.8	59.0	59.0	59.1
Females	79.6		79.8	79.8	79.5	79.5	79.6	79.2	79.1
<b>East Asia (15+)</b>									
Both sexes	33.9		35.7	36.0	36.9	36.9	37.3	37.6	38.0
Males	73.5		72.9	79.9	71.4	71.0	70.4	70.0	65.9
Females	79.2		78.4	77.8	77.2	76.8	76.1	75.7	75.6
	67.6		66.5	65.9	65.3	65.0	64.4	64.1	64.0

\*2010 are preliminary estimates.

Sources: PBS Various Years, Pakistan Labour Force Surveys, and ILO Global Employment Trends 2011

The Table 2 shows female labour participation rate of Pakistan 22.2 percent in comparison to South Asian 38.0 percent, and East Asian countries 64.0 percent confirming low access of Pakistani women to job market in comparison to South Asian and South East Asian countries. ILO (2009), in its report entitled "Global Employment Trends for Women" documents that worldwide, 52.6 percent of women in working age were economically active in 2007. The average global female labour participation rate was 35.6 percent, much higher than the female labour participation rates in Pakistan. A recent UNDP Report (2010), indicates that in South Asian countries (including India and Pakistan), lesser than 35 percent women are engaged in paid work.

Table 3: Selected Key Indicators of the Labour Market in Pakistan

Pakistan(15+)	1999/ 2000	2001/ 2002	2003/ 2004	2005/ 2006	2006/ 2007	2007/ 2008	2008/ 2009	2009/ 2010	2010/ 2011
<b>Labour Force Participation Rate</b>									
<b>Both Sexes</b>	50.4	50.5	50.7	53	52.5	52.5	53.1	53.5	53.4
<b>Males</b>	83.2	82.7	82.7	84	83.1	82.4	82.0	81.7	81.9
<b>Females</b>	16.3	16.2	18	21.1	21.3	21.8	73.1	24.1	24.4
<b>Employment to Population Ratio</b>									
<b>Both Sexes</b>	46.8	46.5	47	49.7	49.8	49.1	50.3	50.7	50.4
<b>Males</b>	78.6	77.6	77.6	79.6	79.6	79.1	78.5	78.3	78.0
<b>Females</b>	13.7	13.6	15.6	19	19.4	19.9	21.0	21.9	22.2
<b>Unemployment rate</b>									
<b>Both sexes</b>	7.2	7.8	7.4	6.1	5.1	5.0	5.2	5.3	5.7
<b>Males</b>	5.5	6.2	6.2	5.2	4.2	4.0	4.2	4.1	4.8
<b>Females</b>	15.8	16.4	12.9	9.6	8.6	8.7	9.0	9.2	9.0
<b>Share of industrial sector</b>									
<b>Both sexes</b>	18.2	21	20.6	21.2	21.4	20.6	21.0	21.4	21.8
<b>Male</b>	19.8	22	21.7	22.7	23.5	22.6	23.1	24.1	24.6
<b>Female</b>	8.4	14.8	14.9	15.1	12.6	12.2	12.7	11.6	11.5
<b>Share of agriculture and total employment</b>									
<b>Both Sexes</b>	47.8	41.1	41.8	41.6	42	42.8	43.3	43.4	43.5
<b>Males</b>	43.4	37.2	37	35.6	35	35.2	35.7	35.2	34.9
<b>Females</b>	73.7	64.5	66.6	67.7	71.4	73.8	72.7	73.9	74.2
<b>Share of services in total employment</b>									
<b>Both Sexes</b>	34.0	38.0	37.6	37.1	36.6	36.6	35.7	35.2	34.7
<b>Males</b>	36.8	40.8	41.3	41.8	41.5	42.2	41.2	40.7	40.5
<b>Females</b>	17.8	20.7	18.4	17.3	16	13.9	14.6	14.5	14.2
<b>Share of wages and salaries in total employees</b>									
<b>Both sexes</b>	35.9	40.4	38.5	38.4	38.3	37.1	36.8	36.5	36.9
<b>Males</b>	36.4	40.9	39.8	41.2	41.5	40.6	40.5	40.7	41.2
<b>Females</b>	33.1	37.1	31.5	26.6	25.1	22.9	22.6	20.8	21.6
<b>Share of employment in the informal sector</b>									
<b>Both sexes</b>	65	63.8	69.4	72.3	71.5	72.4	73.0	72.9	73.5
<b>Males</b>	65	64.1	69.9	72.2	71.6	72.4	73.1	73.0	73.9
<b>Females</b>	63.9	60.8	64.5	73	69.9	71.7	71.6	72.7	70.6

Source Labour Force Surveys FBS from 2000 to 2010

The Tables 3 provides the percentage of labour participation rate for males and females in agriculture, industrial, and services sectors of the economy of Pakistan from year 2000 to 2010. In Table 3 it can be seen that the proportion of women employed in agriculture sector has increased by just about 1 percent from 73.7 to 74.2 from 2000 to 2010, while their proportion in industry grows more rapidly by 3.1 percent, from 8.4 to 11.5 percent compared to a about 5 percent growth for males which is quite high for men than women. Unemployment rate for female is 9 percent almost double than for male (4.8 percent). Undoubtedly, women in Pakistan are playing a vital role in economic production. By and large, they are engaged in various productive activities in agriculture, industry, formal and informal sectors of the economy. Their work is considered as valued as man's. The low value of women's labour is affected by their ability and has opened the avenues of the exploitation of their labour.

Table 4: Employment Status by gender

Year 2006-2007	Gender-wise Employment Status (Percentage)		
	Total	Male	Female
Employers	65.2	40.6	24.6
Self employed	53.2	39.8	13.4
Unpaid family labourer	80.5	18.6	61.9
Employees	1.10	1.00	0.1

Source: Labour Force Survey FBS 2007-2008 p 205

Figure 1: Employment Status by Gender

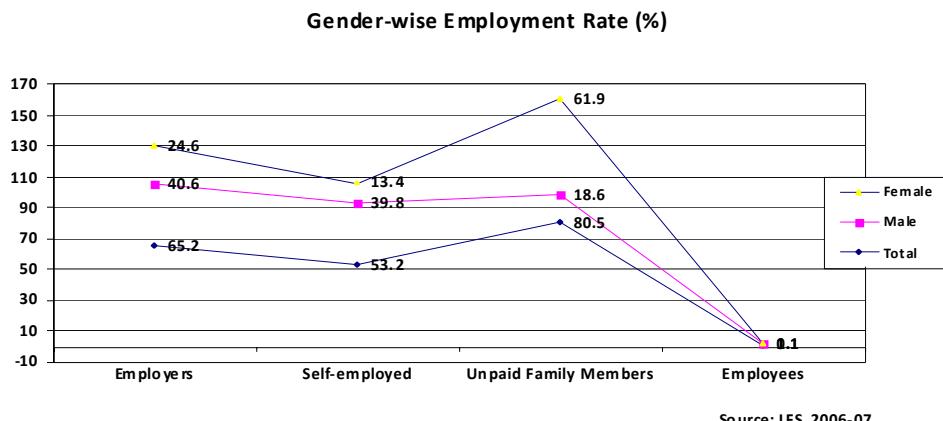


Table 4 and Figure 1 reveal that according to the Labour Force Survey 2007/2008, in the employment status in 2006-2007 female unpaid family labourer 61.9 percent forms the majority followed by employers 24.6 percent, self-employed 13.4 percent and 0.1 percent of female employees. . There is quite an opposite trend for male whose majority are employers 40.6 percent followed by self-employed 39.8 percent and then unpaid family helpers 18.6 percent. This meagre figure of 0.1 percent for female employees indicates the still prevalent traditional patriarchal norms of the society where women are still restricted to actively join the labour force. Women's participation in all categories remained small except for unpaid family helpers their share in unpaid family labourer is rising even in absolute terms there they are heavily involved as family labourer especially in the agro-based rural families.

#### **IV. Female Workers in Informal sector**

Informal sector means that part of economy which falls outside the formal, regulated sector. The informal sector can be classified into seven aspects; ease of entry, reliance on indigenous resources, family ownership of enterprise, and small scale of operation, labour intensive and competitive market (Bromley: 1978). However, the dichotomy of formal and informal sector cannot be sharp and definite (*Ibid*). In practice, informal sector is comprised those workers working in enterprises less than ten and those workers who are employed as contract labour, or short-term employees in the larger enterprises i-e those who are not formally registered as employees, like unregistered family and small establishments employing less than ten workers.

Majority of people including women working in the informal sector, relative to the formal sector are poor. The number of women and their contribution to the informal sector in official statistics are likely to be underestimated because they are engaged in home-based work and street vending activities, which are the most difficult to be documented. Very little information is available on the socio-economic aspect and the working conditions and opportunities in the informal sector. Moreover, no macro level data is available on female home-based workers and the official statistics are erroneous and misleading. There are discrepancies in labour statistics particularly in data on informal sector, which are evident from various surveys and Census. However, Pakistan Labour Force Surveys published by Federal Bureau of Statistics every year provide some relevant information and data regarding the labour force participation by gender in informal economy of the country, which is given below.

**Table 6: Proportion of Home-based Workers in Employment Sector  
(Gender wise Employment by Various Sectors)**

PAKISTAN(15+)	2000	2002	2004	2006	2007	2008	Change 2000-2008 % points
<b>Agriculture</b>							
Both sexes	47.8	41.1	41.8	41.6	42.0	42.8	-5.0
Males	43.4	37.2	37.0	35.6	35.0	35.2	-8.2
Females	73.7	64.5	66.6	67.7	71.4	73.8	0.1
<b>Industrial Sector</b>							
Both sexes	18.2	21.0	20.6	21.2	21.4	20.6	2.4
Males	19.8	22.0	21.7	22.7	23.5	22.6	2.8
Females	8.4	14.8	14.9	15.1	12.6	12.2	3.8
<b>Services Sector</b>							
Both sexes	34.0	38.0	37.6	37.1	36.6	36.6	2.6
Males	36.8	40.8	41.3	41.8	41.5	42.2	5.4
Females	17.8	20.7	18.4	17.3	16.0	13.9	3.9
<b>Informal Sector</b>							
Both sexes	65.0	63.8	69.4	72.3	71.5	72.4	7.4
Males	65.0	64.1	69.9	72.2	71.6	72.4	7.4
Female	63.9	60.8	64.5	73.0	69.9	71.7	7.7

Labour Force Survey FBS 2000- 2008

The Table 6 portrays an increase from 63.9 to 71.7 percent in proportion of female home-based worker in between 2000 to 2008, indicating women's lack of access to formal jobs in formal sector of the country. Objectively speaking, in urban areas, informal sector accommodate more than 70 percent of labour and about two million women (World Bank 2002). Still, women's choice of activities in this sector is restricted by the patriarchal norms of female seclusion. Women workers in the informal sector are by and large confined to being either home-based workers (stitching clothes, weaving baskets, embroidery, food products for sale by male members or middlemen), or engaged in family owned or trade micro enterprises (e.g. leather workers, laundresses and vendors, or domestic servant in other household or outside home workers employed as brick makers, construction workers, or being self-employed as vendors selling bangles etc.). This informal sector with middleman, who provides women work and pays her for it, isolate her in household and consequently and meagre wage paid on the basis of the quality of work regardless of time and labour spent on it.

In informal sector, women workers are not only concentrated into low-paying jobs but their pay is also lower than that of men working in equal categories. Because informal sector mainly rests on manual work, therefore, women face pay discrimination. In this sector, average earning of men and women of actual qualifications and equal job widely differs. Even after adjustment for differences in hours of work, age and schooling, the earning of women does not equal those of men.

According to a study, in Pakistan urban informal sector, women's wage were less than half of those of men, and they also had limited access to economic and social resources like credit and human development facilities, (Pakistan Labour Force Survey: 2007-2008)

### **V. Female Workers in Rural Sector**

According to many evidences and micro studies, rural women in Pakistan spend 16 to 18 hours daily on domestic chores and livestock related activities (FAO; 2001). However, these activities are unrecognised in monetary terms. The one-third of rural employed women earns meagre income as piece rate workers. Most of the women in rural areas are working on countryside or on their own dwellings. Having a long working day, women's contribution towards household income and to the national economy is considered as significant.

Basically, rural women form 29.8 percent of total labour force in rural areas (Economic Survey: 2008-2009). The largest share of the female labour force in rural areas consists of women who are economically active within the household only. The available data indicated a gradual decline in the female labour participation rates after the adaptation of mechanisation and commercialisation of agriculture at optimal level. A decline has been observed in female labour participation rates in two Agricultural Census (1980-1990), and two labour Force Surveys (1987- 1988) and (1997-1998) with an interval of decade.

Lower rates of female participation in waged employment in rural areas not only have statistical but also have cultural biases, coupled with the changes introduced to the mode of production in rural economy which further aggregated already adverse conditions of rural women with the commercialisation of agriculture. In fact, the commercialisation of agriculture has widened the gap between male and female. Many evidences reveal that male-female earning differentials in rural areas are very low in rural areas. Rural women used to earn quite a bit of income from poultry keeping, sale of dairy industries like ghee, milk and butter. With the growth of modern poultry and dairy industries sale of village poultry or eggs has declined sharply and now men replaces women to sell milk and ghee to dairy processors. Village poultry and ghee sale, a women's preserve has declined. Therefore, their personal income has declined as well.

Moreover, in rural areas, the contribution of women in the family income is also extremely low, i.e., rural women contributed only 5.8 % to household income. This appears to be inversely proportional to the participation rates of women in the labour force which are much higher for rural women (35.9%) than for urban women (10.7%). This is largely due to the occupational structure and employment status of rural women. An overwhelming majority of rural women (80%) work in the agriculture sector. However, a major portion of these rural women (72%) are not paid for their work and merely termed as unpaid family workers. These rural unpaid family labourers are involved in a variety of agricultural activities such as cutting, binding sheaves, thrashing, cotton picking, hoeing, sowing seeds, transplanting seedlings, cleaning and storing grain, caring and feeding animals, ginning and spinning etc. It is in addition to their routine domestic task. But unfortunately their work is neither counted in monetary terms nor are their contributions to economic production recognised and reflected in any statistics.

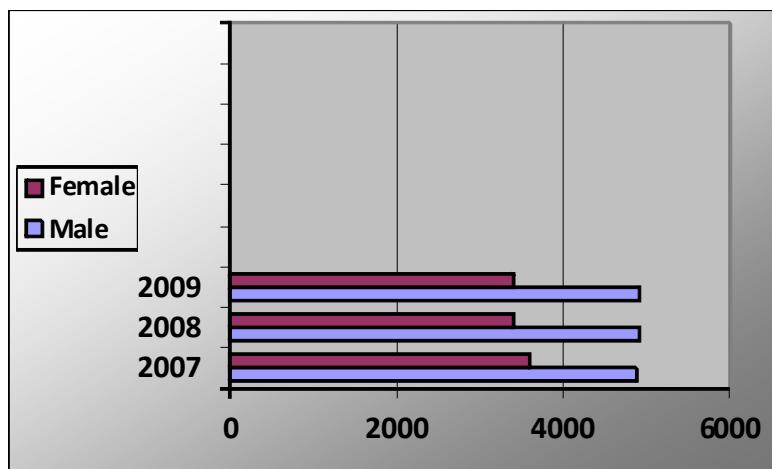
Furthermore, an increase in population, the unemployment and under-employment rates for the rural female are enormously high putting depressed impact on women's economic strength. Rural women's economic activities and contributions to the household as well as in the national economy are mostly invisible. The invisibility of their efforts, which are not translated into monetary resources, is considered as the major

reason for the low rates of rural women's labour participation. Women's invisibility in economic activities, reported low rates of participation in labour force and powerlessness in economic decision making process nearly at all levels, from household to society are also due to the socio-cultural constraints based on patriarchal attitudes. Consequently, this situation has created gender gaps and weaker bargaining power of rural women within and outside the household.

## VI. Wage Discrepancies in Job Market

Beside limited access to job market women also suffer from enormous wage discrepancies in job market in Pakistan. For example the review of wage data available in the Labour Force Survey (2008-2009) exposes enormous wage discrepancies for male and female employees in average real wages. The report depicts that in 2008, women generally earned almost one third less than their male counterparts. In addition, the wage gap significantly widened since the beginning of the decade, in particular during the most recent survey years. Between 2007 and 2008, real wages for female employees decreased from 3,607 to 3,419 Pakistani rupees in average per month, whereby they increased from 4,878 to 4,917 Pakistani Rupees for male employees during same period (See figure 2).

Figure 2: Wage gap in average real wages of employees (PKR)



Source: Data obtained from Pakistan Labour Force Survey 2008-2009

## VII. Socio-economic constraints of female labour participation

Women in Pakistan face a number of problems and constraints while they seek for employment, which can be broadly seen as the socio-cultural constraints and problems relating to the workplace. The socio-cultural problems hinder the access of women to employment since they stem from the traditional patriarchal norms of the society which support the sex- stereotyping and gender bias. These constraints also cause problems for working women in both the formal and informal sectors. A majority of women can be found working in the informal sector is due to the fact that such constraints have a great weightage against employment of women in the formal sector.

Pakistani society can be characterised as one which is underpinned by the traditional patriarchal setting, which has always dominated women and has created a spell of uncertainties on them by constraining their participation in the process of development and empowerment. In most of the cases women are only permitted to acquire education and training if it conforms to the socially accepted roles of women and train them as housewives or other household related activities. Because man is considered as breadwinner thus, female employment is accorded less social acceptance as it lower the status of the family, unless women are engaged in relatively well paid jobs receive higher professional qualifications like in certain areas of education and health fields.

But this concept cannot be applied universally in Pakistan as there are regional, social and class differences. For example, in relatively wealthier or middle class communities of the province of Baluchistan and Khyber Pukhtoon Khawah, the mobility of women is less than in the province of Sindh and Punjab. Punjab shows more tolerance for the working women in rural, as well as in urban areas. The presence of a large number of cities and industrial developments has contributed to the change in attitudes towards working women.

Lower rate of female participation in waged employment is also a consequence of lack of education and training available to majority of women in Pakistan. According to many studies education has firm positive relation with women's gainful employment in Pakistan and primary education for girls and enrolment rates are found to reduce gender inequality in education and job (Chaudhry: 2007, Chaudhry et al: 2009).

Economic literature also frequently supports the positive impact of education on economic performance, with higher returns to primary education then to secondary and/or tertiary education. Education results in the highest economic benefits where there are pro-poor growth policies and effective demand for educated manpower are in progress.

Education for all (EFA), global monitoring reports (2005), ESCAP (2003), Gupta et.al (2002) highlights that better education contributes to higher life-time earnings and more healthy national economic growth.

However, Pakistan features considerably poorly in terms of its literacy and education achievements, and the schooling of females has tended to lag far behind that of males (World Bank: 2002, UNDP: 2003). Pakistani women remain disadvantaged and discriminated in various programmes initiated in the field of education and training, as they face unequal power relationship within the state structures and institutions. The State believes that by directing development resources to the male head of the family, they will be optimally allocated between all members of the household including women. But there are evidences that women have disproportionately benefited from such programmes and policies extended by the State for female education.

Many programmes or projects designed for promoting female education, health or employment suffered from a serious setback as a result of insufficient allocation of funds, bureaucratic top down nature or lack of any serious political commitment. Ultimately it has drastic consequences for Pakistani women who remained uneducated, subordinate and dependent on men within the household and society.

### **VIII. Conclusion**

Participation in labour market is an efficient strategy (Agarwal, 2002), for strengthening women's empowerment and also bargaining power within and outside the household. At present, the majority of working women are the destitute women and it is their economic condition which pushes them in the labour market. Further, female employment is also constrained either due to the non-availability of self-employment opportunities or the existence of culture inhibitions in seeking lower status, and low-waged employment outside the household. Sen (2001), and Agarwal (2001, 2002), argue that through employment and other income-generating activities women's economic position improves and this leads to a better treatment they receive from their household. Moreover the central message of many Development agencies that are facilitating economic empowerment of women is also that the credit, employment and other income generating means as well as social development are prerequisite for empowerment of women (Azid et al :2001). Sen: 2001), Agarwal: (2001), (World Bank; 2005).

Nonetheless, women are economically invisible. By gaining economic empowerment, they will get both visibility and a voice in decision-making process within the household, workplace and in society. By giving equal economic opportunities, they not only would contribute to the earnings of household but also become major contributors or equal to men to nation economy. As women gain economic strength, the attitudes of their family members and society, as a whole towards them would change. Therefore, this structural transformation would lead to economic equality which forces men to involve women in decision-making processes and provide a hierarchy on which both women and men have a place on same ladder. This is the true empowerment of women in Pakistan.

#### **Recommendation for Enhancing the Employment Opportunities for Women**

- i. To encourage female employment, effective policies and programmes should be devised and implemented.
- ii. Appropriate laws and legislation should be enforced to improve the working conditions and provision of support facilities for those women who are already in labour market.
- iii. Furthermore, discrimination in the labour market in terms of wages and occupation segregation should be eliminated through the strict enforcement of such laws.
- iv. It has been observed that in the existing database the concepts underlying the definitions of employment or unemployment are not entirely neutral. Rather they are gender-biased, as they do not consider women's work inside the household and domestic work is not considered inside the labour force. In order to capture fully the role performed by women it is necessary to refine the present definitions. It is also recommended that different approaches to data collection and the access to employment opportunities to special groups, region and socio-economic strata should also used.
- v. To increase female labour participation it is necessary that a long-term strategy be developed to encourage the desired changes in the society and attitudes through mass media.

- vi. The Ministry of Women's Development should play its role in devising and implementing various comprehensive programmes for enhancing women's employment.
- vii. For the women who are already in the job market the provision of support facilities like, childcare centres, working women's hostels should be provided.
- viii. The laws and legislations should be enforced strictly to improve the working conditions of women, but also to provide them with the benefits to which they are entitled such as maternity and sick leave etc.
- ix. There is also a need to create awareness among women of their rights and the legislation protecting them. For this purpose, effective trade unions for women should be formed.
- x. Women should be provided with facilities for self-employment in the short term, and increased opportunities in the formal sectors in the long term. Moreover, as the informal sector in Pakistan is providing employment to two thirds of the total urban labour force including 70 percent of the total female workers.
- xi. Social protection should be provided to women working in the informal sector by increasing their wages, improving their working conditions and reducing exploitation by, and dependence on, middlemen.
- xii. Rural women which form the majority of total female labour force in the country must be provided appropriate agriculture technology and agriculture extension training programmes.
- xiii. However, these agricultural and rural development programmes should focus on lessening the workload of already-overworked rural women before introducing any improved agricultural technologies which require additional time and energy to learn, and ultimately use.

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