**Barriers faced by Pashtu Tribe Girls in the social empowerment: A Study Gutalibagh Ganderbal Kashmir**

**Abstract**

Education is a fundamental driver of empowerment, serving as a crucial resource for both individuals and families. While male education contributes to personal growth, the education of women has a broader impact, affecting the entire family unit. Despite various government initiatives aimed at improving education and empowerment, especially for marginalized groups like tribal women, challenges persist. Low literacy rates and limited economic opportunities hinder their empowerment. The socio-economic status of tribal women is often influenced by societal norms, which can limit their autonomy and access to education. Research has been conducted on the empowerment of tribal communities, yet a gap remains in studies specifically focusing on tribal women, particularly in areas like Gutilabadgh. This research aims to identify the barriers faced by tribal females through survey-based methodologies. The findings suggest a pressing need for enhanced educational development and effective implementation of government schemes to support the empowerment of tribal women. Additionally, educating parents and community stakeholders about the importance of female education is essential for fostering a supportive environment. By addressing these issues, we can work towards improving literacy rates and creating more opportunities for tribal women, ultimately leading to their empowerment and the betterment of their communities.

**Introduction**

According to Maulana Azad “We must not for a moment forget, it is a birthright of every individual to receive at least the basic education without which he cannot fully discharge his duties as a citizen.” Education has empowered the nations and societies towards the progress and development. Effective education system make the good knowledgeable society also leads to the women development. In modern times men and women are working together and getting the higher and professionl education for their prosperity and betterment. Education and women empowerment are the synomymas terms to each other, even today when the education is easily available, we still we find there is the limited encouragement to the girls education especially for the pustu trible in Kashmir, they have been discourage by the various factor that is why there is the wider disparity in their female gross enrolment ratio.

The various aspects of the Pakhtun culture in Kashmir, including their history, language, religious beliefs, festivals, clothing, family systems, hospitality, and occupations. The authors note that despite having lived in Kashmir for over 150 years, Pakhtuns have retained their unique cultural identity, distinct from the mainstream Kashmiri society. The study aims to document and preserve this cultural heritage, particularly in the face of globalization and other external influences that may threaten its continuity.

The findings highlight the distinctiveness of the Pakhtun community in Kashmir, including their traditional practices, social structure, and adherence to Islamic values. The study concludes by emphasizing the need for further research to preserve the cultural and linguistic heritage of the Pakhtuns in the region. The Pathans of the Kashmir Valley exhibit a unique and vibrant way of life, characterized by distinct cultural patterns. Their cuisine includes a variety of dishes, with rice as a staple and specialties like mutton, pulao, and the traditional Wazwan served on special occasions. Clothing varies between genders, with specific hats denoting social status. Hospitality is paramount, viewed as a duty to honor guests regardless of their background. Marriages are typically arranged within the community, reflecting a patriarchal family structure where property and identity pass through the male line. The Pathans are predominantly Sunni Muslims, deeply adhering to Islamic practices. They celebrate major festivals such as Eid-ul-Fitr and Eid-ul-Adha, and local justice is often administered through traditional jirgas led by respected elders. Economically, most Pathans are farmers, while others engage in various trades or government employment.

**Problem Statement:**

Girls from the Pashtu tribe, of Jammu and Kashmir face significant challenges in accessing school and higher education. These challenges are rooted in a complex interplay of cultural, economic, and infrastructural factors. Understanding these barriers and identifying the enablers is crucial for developing strategies that can improve educational outcomes for these girls. For the smooth achieving the educational targets framed by the NEP 2020. Democratic, equal education and social empowerment has emerged as a potential solution to overcome some of these barriers. This research aims to explore the specific challenges faced by Pashtu tribe girls in pursuing education, identify the factors that facilitate their access to education, and to mitigating other empowerment related challenges.

**Research Questions:**

1. **What are the primary barriers faced by Pashtu tribe girls in accessing higher education?**
   * Cultural and societal attitudes
   * Economic constraints
   * Lack of infrastructure and resources
   * Limited access to educational institutions
2. **What enablers facilitate the access of Pashtu tribe girls to education?**
   * Community and familial support
   * Government and NGO initiatives
   * Scholarships and financial aid
   * Availability of educational resources and infrastructure
3. **How can Govt. schems of J&K will address the barriers to education for Pashtu tribe girls?**
   * Flexibility in learning schedules
   * Accessibility of educational materials
   * Reduction in geographical and infrastructural limitations
   * Potential for personalized learning experiences
4. **What are the suggestions for the empowerment of Pashtu tribe girls in Gutalibagh Ganderbal ?**
   * Technological barriers and digital divide
   * Language and curriculum challenges
   * Cultural acceptance and community support
   * Ensuring quality and accredited education through ODL

**Objectives:**

1. To identify and analyze the barriers that Pashtu tribe girls face in accessing education.
2. To explore the social-economic perspectives of the families/parents and attitude towards female education and their empowerment.
3. To evaluate how government schemes empower the female to make their education and empowerment possibility.
4. To seek the suggestions form the various stakeholder for the improvement of women empowerment

**Significance of the Study:**

This research is significant as it will provide insights into the multifaceted challenges and opportunities related to education for Pashtu tribe girls. By focusing on the role of Schooling and higher education, the study aims to offer practical recommendations for policymakers, educators, and community leaders to enhance educational access and equity. The findings could contribute to developing more inclusive and adaptable educational models that address the unique needs of marginalized communities.

**Methodology:**

This research will employ a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative methodologies to provide a comprehensive understanding of the educational experiences of Pashto tribe girls. Qualitative research will involve conducting interviews and focus groups with key stakeholders, including the girls themselves, their families, educators, and community leaders, to gain insights into their perspectives and experiences. Quantitative research will utilize surveys to collect data on educational access, barriers of women empowerment, especially the educational barriers and socio-economic related issues. Additionally, a thorough review of existing literature, including theses from Shodh Ganga, research papers from ResearchGate and Google Scholar, and relevant government data and policy documents like higher education survey of India, census and various national educational policies especially NEP 2020, will be conducted to contextualize the findings and identify gaps in the current knowledge base. This robust methodology will ensure a holistic exploration of the factors influencing the educational landscape for Pashto tribe girls.

**Review of literature**

The Pashtun represent a significant ethnic group straddling the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, with a historical predominance in Afghanistan, where they comprise approximately 40 percent of the population (Barfield, 2010). The term "Pashtun" encompasses various regional names and derivatives, including Pakhtun and Pathan, reflecting both local and external influences on identity (Caroe, 1965). Pashtun society is structured through a segmentary lineage system, a common organization in the Middle East and East Africa, characterized by hierarchical loyalties rooted in kinship and descent (Barfield, 2010). This loyalty, often encapsulated in the term qawm, dictates social dynamics and influences political and economic relations both within the community and with outsiders. Despite the rich diversity of ethnic groups within Afghanistan, kinship ties frequently overshadow broader national identities, complicating unified action unless prompted by external threats (Barfield, 2010). Understanding the segmentary lineage organization is crucial for effective interventions in areas such as economic development, as it shapes both intra- and inter-group competition and cooperation among the Pashtun.

Afghanistan has been unified under Pashtun rulers only since the mid-eighteenth century, with earlier dynasties predominantly of Turko-Mongolian origin (Barfield, 2010). This historical backdrop established a governance model that emulated Turko-Mongolian structures, emphasizing control over populous and agriculturally viable areas while neglecting marginal regions, leading to a “Swiss cheese” approach to territorial rule (Barfield, 2010). Since the unification by Ahmad Shah Durrani in 1747, Afghan governance has largely been maintained by elite Pashtun descent groups, who have not relied on popular support, thereby creating a persistent structural weakness (Barfield, 2010). Tensions have often arisen between the traditionally egalitarian nature of Pashtun tribes and the hierarchical systems imposed by their rulers, particularly as external aid has been necessary for governmental functioning (Barfield, 2010). The Durrani dynasty’s rule lasted until the late twentieth century, with ongoing instability in Afghanistan traced back to the 1978 Communist coup that overthrew the last Durrani king, Zahir Shah (Barfield, 2010).

The economic behavior of Pashtun society is intricately linked to its social structure and kinship systems, characterized by a strong emphasis on individualism and self-reliance (Lindholm, 1982, 1996). The ideal Pashtun man operates independently, engaging in economic exchanges that are often transactional and marked by mistrust. Barter is the predominant mode of exchange, with an emphasis on immediate reciprocity among equals, as seen in customs surrounding weddings and communal support (Lindholm, 1982). However, interactions with outsiders introduce complexities, often leading to attempts to gain unfair advantages, while internal exchanges are shaped by emotional ties and obligations. This dichotomy reflects a cultural tension between traditional values of honor and emerging market dynamics, as the Pashtun navigate relationships that simultaneously seek to maintain independence and establish dominance over peers (Lindholm, 1982). Thus, the economic framework serves as a manifestation of broader social principles, illustrating the unique interplay between culture and economic practice within Pashtun society.

The political organization among Pashtun communities is shaped by two distinct cultural traditions: an egalitarian model prevalent among eastern Pashtun groups, such as the Ghilzai, and a hierarchical model adopted by western Pashtun groups like the Durrani. The former rejects hereditary authority, relying on consensus and viewing leaders as first among equals (Lindholm, 1982; Barfield, 2010). In contrast, the hierarchical structure, rooted in Turko-Mongolian influences, supports hereditary leadership within ranked lineages, allowing for larger and more stable political entities. This fundamental distinction informs contemporary conflicts and power dynamics within Afghanistan, where Ghilzai resistance to hierarchical rule often clashes with the Durrani's historical governance (Barfield, 2010). Furthermore, the effectiveness of external interventions in Pashtun society hinges on understanding these cultural perspectives, as development projects perceived through differing lenses can lead to unintended consequences and exacerbate existing tensions (Barfield, 2010).

Segmentary lineage organization is characterized by a hierarchical arrangement of groups based on kinship and cultural relatedness, wherein the basic unit consists of closely related individuals living in proximity (Evans-Pritchard, 1940; Sahlins, 1961). At its core, a lineage is a localized descent group, which can unite to form larger segments such as clans and tribes, each with decreasing degrees of relatedness but increasing inclusiveness. Notably, higher levels of organization in segmentary lineage societies function primarily in opposition to rival groups; cooperation among lineages occurs only during conflicts, which can lead to temporary unifications at the clan or tribal level. Once conflicts resolve, these groups revert to a state of disunity, highlighting the fluidity of segmentary structures (Evans-Pritchard, 1940; Sahlins, 1961). Furthermore, this organization lacks institutionalized leadership, relying instead on charismatic individuals whose authority diminishes post-conflict, except in the case of some religious leaders who may exert lasting influence beyond their segments (Barfield, 2010). Understanding these dynamics is crucial for engaging with Pashtun society, particularly in contexts involving negotiation and conflict resolution. Pashtun society is fundamentally structured around principles of descent and genealogy, characterized as an “acephalous patrilineal segmentary system” (Lindholm 1982). This structure lacks institutionalized hierarchy, with social organization emerging primarily during conflict, where lineages unite against external threats while competing internally. Genealogical ties define both cooperation and rivalry among segments, with the Pashtunwali code governing behavior and ensuring a system of honor and personal autonomy (Ahmed 1980; Lindholm 1982). The cultural framework emphasizes the significance of land ownership as central to identity and social status, while emphasizing democratic ideals within the tribal charter. Additionally, urban Pashtun often align more with neighbors from different ethnicities than with rural kin, highlighting a tension between traditional values and modern influences, which has implications for the rise of groups like the Taliban (Barfield 2010). This duality between kinship and economic relations underscores the complexities of Pashtun social dynamics.

According to Tainter & MacGregor (2011) The Pashtun are the largest ethnic group in Afghanistan, with a significant presence in Pakistan as well. Historically, Afghanistan has often been united under Pashtun leadership, particularly from the Durrani Pashtun, who developed their governance skills under Turko-Mongolian dynasties. Pashtun society is characterized by a segmentary lineage system, where social organization is based on kinship and competition among individual men, fostering a sense of independence. This atomized structure makes cooperation challenging, as men prioritize self-sufficiency and rivalry. While they may engage in economic relations with non-Pashtuns—whom they consider inferior—they still prefer to form alliances with outsiders to bolster their status within their own community.

According to Khan (2017) The Pakhtoon community in the Gutlibagh area of Ganderbal, Jammu and Kashmir, reflects a rich tapestry of cultural and social traditions deeply rooted in their historical lineage. Despite their migration centuries ago, the Pakhtoons in this region have preserved their distinct identity through their language, Pashto, and their societal structures. The community remains largely organized along tribal lines, with a strong sense of honor and adherence to traditional codes of conduct. Their societal organization is marked by a clear division of labor, robust family structures, and unique housing patterns that resonate with their ancestral customs. Additionally, the Pakhtoon judicial system, based on customary laws and tribal governance, continues to play a vital role in maintaining social order within the community. The study highlights how these traditions are intricately woven into the fabric of their daily lives and encoded in their language, ensuring the survival of their cultural identity amidst changing times.

According to SYAM, S. (2022) Pashto is the national language of Afghanistan, primarily spoken by the ethnic community known as Pakhtuns or Pathans. Due to various socio-economic and political circumstances, many Afghan Pashto speakers have immigrated to different parts of the world, leading to the global spread of the language. In addition to Afghanistan, Pashto is also spoken in certain regions of Pakistan and is found in the Kashmir Valley, particularly in the districts of Ganderbal, Kupwara, Baramulla, and Anantnag.

According to SYAM, S. (2022) While there is considerable literature on the culture of Pakhtuns and Pashto speakers in Afghanistan and Pakistan, studies specifically focusing on the educational empowerment, Pashto speakers of the Kashmir Valley are scarce. Notable works, such as Neelofar's survey and Khan's ethnolinguistic study, explore sociological and linguistic aspects of the Pathans in Jammu and Kashmir, touching on their cultural elements. However, a comprehensive study that encapsulates all educational empowerment, socio-economic empowerment and other cultural facets of Pashto speakers in the Kashmir Valley is still lacking. This research aims to the empowerment of girls of and empowerment of socio-economic status and preserve the cultural heritage of the Pashto-speaking community in the region.

**Conclusion**

Understanding that perception shapes reality is crucial. Pashtun perceptions must be acknowledged and respected by Western interveners. Success in Afghanistan hinges on the willingness of Western personnel to grasp how Pashtuns think and behave, making cultural understanding essential for effective engagement. The Pashtun social structure significantly shapes individual behavior, particularly in interactions with Western representatives. When cultures collide, both parties often believe their perspectives are universal. When they realize this isn’t the case, they may assume the other side can be taught to adopt their way of reasoning. However, reasoning and perception are culturally specific, leading to misunderstandings between Westerners from ISAF and NGOs and the Pashtun. This misalignment fosters frustration and hostility. Despite these challenges, Pashtun beliefs and actions are logical within their cultural context. Understanding that perception shapes reality is crucial. Pashtun perceptions must be acknowledged and respected by Western interveners. Success in Afghanistan hinges on the willingness of Western personnel to grasp how Pashtuns think and behave, making cultural understanding essential for effective engagement.

**Implications of the studies**

Implementing development projects in Pashtun regions requires careful consideration of cultural beliefs and social structures:

Independence and Equality: Pashtun men value independence and equality, making partnerships and cooperative projects challenging to establish and maintain.

Payment Dynamics: Accepting payment from another Pashtun can imply servitude, undermining self-sufficiency ideals. Therefore, payments should ideally come from non-Pashtuns, who are viewed as inferior.

Conflict from Favoritism: Development initiatives that benefit specific groups can lead to conflict. Favoring one man, lineage, clan, or village fosters resentment, as all segments strive for equal recognition. Successful projects should aim for equitable benefits across all levels.

Cooperation Issues: Cooperative projects often devolve into suspicion and blame, as men present themselves as self-sufficient while competing for personal honor. Non-Pashtun oversight may enhance project stability.

Balanced Economic Exchanges: Pashtuns prefer balanced exchanges to avoid feelings of inferiority. Loans between Pashtuns are often avoided, while loans from non-Pashtuns are acceptable. Pashtuns may view debts to outsiders as tribute and aim to place them in a position of dependency.

Different Perspectives on Development: Westerners and Pashtuns have divergent views on economic development. Western evaluations focus on outcomes and efficiency, while Pashtuns are concerned with social implications, authority structures, and notions of honor. Development projects that disrupt traditional social norms may be viewed negatively, even if they have economic benefits. In summary, successful development in Pashtun areas hinges on understanding and respecting their social dynamics and cultural values, rather than imposing external models.

**References**

Khan, H. (2017) Social Structure As Encoded In Language: A Study Among The Pakhtoons Of Jammu And Kashmir. *Literary Herald* vol. 3 (4) pp. 206-2012

K. S. SYAM (2022). Tribal Culture, Language and Literature *Cultural Heritage of Pakhtuns: A Case Study of Pashto Speakers Living in the Valley of Kashmir* University of Kerala

Tainter, J. A., & MacGregor, D. G. (2011). Pashtun social structure: Cultural perceptions and segmentary lineage organization. *Macgregor Bates: Cottage Grove, OR, USA*.

Barfield, Thomas. (2010). *Afghanistan:* *A* *Cultural* *and* *Political* *History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Caroe, Olaf. (1965). *The* *Pathans,* *550* *B.C.–A.D.* *1957*. London: MacMillan.

Evans--‐Pritchard, E. E. 1940. The Nuer of the Southern Sudan. In *African* *Political* *Systems*, edited by M. Fortes and E. E. Evans--‐Pritchard, pp. 272--‐296. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sahlins, Marshall D. 1961. The Segmentary Lineage: An Organization of Predatory Expansion. American Anthropologist 63: 322-­‐345.