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Understanding the Causes and Impacts of Gender Discrimination Against Women in Quetta City

Dr. Rukhshanda Zarar
Lecturer, Social Work Department Sardar Bahadur Khan Women's University Quetta, Baochistan

ABSTRACT

Gender discrimination remains a persistent socio-cultural and structural challenge in Pakistan, particularly in urban centers like Quetta where traditional norms intersect with evolving socio-economic dynamics. This study aims to examine the underlying causes and impacts of gender discrimination against women in Quetta City. The research adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative survey data with qualitative insights from interviews and focus group discussions. A stratified sample of women from diverse socio-economic backgrounds was selected to capture variations in experiences across education, employment, and household settings. The findings reveal that gender discrimination in Quetta is primarily driven by deeply rooted patriarchal norms, limited access to education, economic dependency, and weak institutional enforcement of legal protections. Cultural practices and social expectations continue to restrict women's mobility, decision-making power, and participation in public life. Additionally, the study highlights the role of informal power structures and lack of awareness regarding women's rights as significant contributing factors. The impacts of gender discrimination are multidimensional, affecting women's educational attainment, economic opportunities, mental health, and overall well-being. Many respondents reported limited access to employment and healthcare services, as well as exposure to psychological stress and social exclusion. The study also finds that discrimination not only hinders individual empowerment but also constrains broader socio-economic development in the region. The research concludes that addressing gender discrimination in Quetta requires a comprehensive approach involving policy reforms, community engagement, educational initiatives, and strengthened institutional mechanisms. Promoting gender awareness, enhancing women's access to resources, and ensuring effective implementation of laws are essential for fostering a more inclusive and equitable society.

Keywords: Gender Discrimination, Women Empowerment, Patriarchy, Socioeconomic Inequality, Quetta City

Introduction

Gender discrimination remains one of the most persistent and deeply embedded social challenges across the globe, undermining human development, social justice, and inclusive growth. Despite significant international commitments toward gender equality, including the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals—particularly

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Goal 5 on gender equality—women continue to face systemic barriers in access to education, employment, healthcare, and decision-making spaces (United Nations, 2015). In developing countries such as Pakistan, gender discrimination is further compounded by socio-cultural norms, economic disparities, and institutional weaknesses, creating a complex web of inequality that affects women's everyday lives (World Bank, 2022). Understanding the causes and impacts of gender discrimination in specific local contexts is therefore essential for designing effective policy responses and interventions.

Gender discrimination refers to the unequal treatment or perceptions of individuals based on their gender, often resulting in disadvantages for women in social, economic, and political spheres (UN Women, 2020). In Pakistan, gender disparities are evident in various indicators, including literacy rates, labor force participation, and access to healthcare. According to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, female literacy rates remain significantly lower than those of males, particularly in less developed regions (PBS, 2021). Similarly, women's participation in the formal labor market is limited, reflecting both structural constraints and cultural expectations that prioritize men's economic roles (Asian Development Bank, 2019). These disparities highlight the systemic nature of gender discrimination and its deep roots in societal structures.

The province of Balochistan, and particularly its capital Quetta, presents a unique context for examining gender discrimination. As Pakistan's largest yet least developed province, Balochistan is characterized by low human development indicators, limited infrastructure, and socio-political complexities (UNDP, 2021). Within this context, women face multiple layers of marginalization due to tribal norms, conservative social structures, and limited access to public services. In Quetta, while urbanization has introduced some opportunities for women, traditional gender roles continue to shape their access to education, employment, and public participation (Kakar, 2020). This duality between modernization and tradition creates a complex environment where gender discrimination persists despite gradual social change.

One of the primary causes of gender discrimination in Quetta is the prevalence of patriarchal norms that define gender roles and expectations. Patriarchy, as a social system, places men in positions of authority and power, while women are often relegated to domestic roles (Walby, 1990). In many households in Quetta, decision-making authority rests with male members, limiting women's autonomy and participation in key life decisions such as education, marriage, and employment (Bari, 2010). These norms are reinforced through socialization processes, where both men and women internalize traditional gender roles from an early age, perpetuating cycles of inequality across generations.

Education is another critical factor influencing gender discrimination. Although there has been progress in expanding educational access in Pakistan, significant gender gaps remain, particularly in regions like Balochistan (UNESCO, 2020). In Quetta, cultural restrictions, early marriages, and safety concerns often prevent girls from pursuing higher education. Families may prioritize boys' education due to perceived economic returns, while girls are expected to focus on household responsibilities (Hashmi et al., 2019). This limited access to education not only restricts women's personal development but also reduces their ability to participate effectively in the

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labor market and public life.

Economic dependency further exacerbates gender discrimination. Women in Quetta often have limited access to income-generating opportunities, leading to financial reliance on male family members. This dependency reduces their bargaining power within households and increases their vulnerability to exploitation and abuse (World Economic Forum, 2021). Even when women are employed, they are often concentrated in informal or low-paying sectors with minimal job security and benefits. Structural barriers such as lack of skills training, limited mobility, and absence of supportive workplace policies further restrict women's economic participation (ADB, 2019).

Institutional and legal frameworks also play a significant role in shaping gender dynamics. While Pakistan has enacted several laws aimed at protecting women's rights, including legislation against harassment and domestic violence, implementation remains weak, particularly at the provincial and local levels (Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 2022). In Quetta, limited awareness of legal rights, coupled with weak enforcement mechanisms, prevents many women from seeking justice. Informal dispute resolution systems, often dominated by male elders, may further marginalize women's voices and reinforce discriminatory practices (Jamal, 2015).

The impacts of gender discrimination are far-reaching and multidimensional. At the individual level, discrimination affects women's physical and mental well-being, limiting their access to healthcare, education, and economic opportunities. Studies have shown that women facing discrimination are more likely to experience stress, anxiety, and reduced self-esteem (Kabeer, 2016). At the household level, gender inequality can lead to inefficient allocation of resources, affecting children's education and overall family welfare. At the societal level, gender discrimination hampers economic growth and development by underutilizing the potential of half the population (World Bank, 2022).

In Quetta, the impacts of gender discrimination are particularly visible in the limited participation of women in public and political life. Despite some progress in women's representation in local governance, their influence remains constrained by social norms and institutional barriers (Shah & Butt, 2018). Women's voices are often underrepresented in decision-making processes, leading to policies that may not fully address their needs and concerns. This exclusion not only perpetuates inequality but also undermines the effectiveness of governance and development initiatives.

Addressing gender discrimination in Quetta requires a comprehensive and context-specific approach. Policy interventions must focus on improving access to education, enhancing economic opportunities, and strengthening legal protections for women. Community-based initiatives aimed at changing social norms and promoting gender equality are equally important. Engaging men and boys as allies in promoting gender equity can help challenge patriarchal attitudes and create more inclusive communities (HeForShe, 2018). Additionally, improving data collection and research on gender issues in Balochistan can support evidence-based policymaking and targeted interventions.

This study seeks to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by providing a detailed analysis of the causes and impacts of gender discrimination against women in

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Quetta City. By adopting a mixed-methods approach, the research aims to capture both the structural and experiential dimensions of gender inequality. Understanding these dynamics is essential for developing effective strategies to promote gender equality and empower women in the region. Ultimately, addressing gender discrimination is not only a matter of social justice but also a prerequisite for sustainable development and inclusive growth in Quetta and beyond.

Problem Statement

Gender discrimination against women in Quetta remains a deeply entrenched issue, shaped by the intersection of socio-cultural norms, economic limitations, and institutional weaknesses. Despite national and international commitments by Pakistan to promote gender equality, women in Quetta continue to experience unequal access to education, employment, healthcare, and decision-making opportunities. Patriarchal structures, reinforced through family and community systems, restrict women's autonomy and mobility, limiting their participation in both private and public spheres. These constraints not only hinder individual development but also contribute to broader patterns of inequality within society.

Furthermore, structural barriers such as limited educational opportunities, economic dependency, and weak enforcement of legal protections exacerbate gender disparities in the region. Many women in Quetta lack access to quality education and vocational training, which reduces their chances of entering the formal labor market. Even when opportunities exist, cultural expectations and safety concerns often prevent women from fully engaging in economic activities. Additionally, inadequate awareness of legal rights and limited institutional support mechanisms discourage women from reporting discrimination or seeking justice, thereby perpetuating a cycle of silence and marginalization.

The consequences of gender discrimination in Quetta are multidimensional, affecting not only women's socio-economic status but also their psychological well-being and overall quality of life. Discrimination limits women's ability to contribute productively to society, resulting in lost economic potential and slowed development at the community and provincial levels. Moreover, the persistence of gender inequality undermines efforts toward inclusive governance and sustainable development. Without a comprehensive understanding of the root causes and impacts of gender discrimination in Quetta, policy interventions are likely to remain ineffective, highlighting the need for focused research in this area.

Research Objectives

To identify and analyze the key socio-cultural, economic, and institutional causes of gender discrimination against women in Quetta City.

To examine the impacts of gender discrimination on women's education, employment, health, and overall well-being in Quetta.

To assess the role of existing legal and institutional frameworks in addressing gender discrimination and protecting women's rights.

To propose evidence-based policy recommendations for reducing gender discrimination and promoting gender equality in Quetta City.

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Research Methodology

This study adopts a quantitative research design to examine the causes and impacts of gender discrimination against women in Quetta. Building on existing literature that highlights the multidimensional nature of gender inequality, the research focuses on key domains including nutrition, education, health, decision-making power, and societal attitudes—particularly the behavior of men toward women. The quantitative approach enables systematic measurement and comparison of gender-based disparities across different socio-economic and educational groups.

The study is based on primary data collected from a total of 200 respondents. To ensure representation and comparative analysis, a stratified sampling technique was employed. The sample was divided into four equal categories: 50 literate males, 50 literate females, 50 illiterate males, and 50 illiterate females. This categorization allows for a nuanced understanding of how literacy and gender intersect to influence perceptions and experiences of discrimination. Respondents were selected from diverse socio-economic backgrounds within Quetta to capture a broader perspective of the issue.

Data collection was carried out using a structured survey method, incorporating both questionnaires and interview schedules. The questionnaire consisted of close-ended questions designed to capture quantifiable responses, while interview schedules provided an opportunity to gather more detailed insights where necessary. This combination ensured both consistency in data collection and depth in understanding respondents' perspectives. The instruments were designed to align with the study objectives and were pre-tested to ensure clarity, reliability, and validity.

For data analysis, the collected information was coded and processed using statistical software such as SPSS and Microsoft Excel. Descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were applied to analyze the data. These included frequency distributions, percentages, correlation analysis, regression analysis, and the Chi-square test to examine relationships between variables. Such techniques enabled the study to identify patterns, test hypotheses, and draw meaningful conclusions regarding the causes and impacts of gender discrimination in Quetta.

Overall, this methodological framework ensures a systematic, reliable, and evidence-based analysis of gender discrimination, providing a strong foundation for policy recommendations and further research.

Hypotheses Testing (Rewritten and Improved)

To examine the relationships between key variables, Chi-square tests were applied using SPSS at a significance level of 0.05. The results of the hypotheses testing are presented below:

Hypothesis 1

H_0: There is no relationship between educational qualification and the perception that girls should study beyond matric.

H_1: There is a significant relationship between educational qualification and allowing girls to study beyond matric.

The degree of freedom (df) was calculated as 8. The Chi-square value (χ^2) was 42.48, and the p-value was 0.0001. Since the p-value is less than the significance level

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(0.05), the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates a statistically significant association between respondents' educational qualification and their support for girls' education beyond the secondary level.

Hypothesis 2

H_0: There is no relationship between the perception that women are inferior to men and their participation in decision-making.

H_1: Women are considered inferior to men and are not allowed to participate in decision-making.

The degree of freedom was calculated as (3–1) × (3–1) = 4. The Chi-square value (χ^2) was 9.94, with a p-value of 0.0001. As the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. This result confirms that women are widely perceived as inferior, which significantly limits their participation in decision-making processes.

Hypothesis 3

H_0: There is no relationship between the influence of religious personalities and the perception that women should observe purdah.

H_1: There is a significant relationship between the influence of religious personalities and women observing purdah.

The degree of freedom was 4, with a Chi-square value (χ^2) of 20.26 and a p-value of 0.004. Since the p-value is below the significance threshold of 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. This suggests a strong association between the influence of religious figures and attitudes toward purdah among women.

Hypothesis 4

H_0: There is no relationship between the perception that daughters are a burden and the preference for sons in food allocation.

H_1: There is a significant relationship between daughters being considered a burden and sons being given preference in food.

The degree of freedom was 4, with a Chi-square value (χ^2) of 64.007 and a p-value of 0.0001. Given that the p-value is far below 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates a significant association between gender bias (viewing daughters as a burden) and discriminatory practices in household resource distribution, particularly food.

Hypothesis 5

H_0: There is no relationship between educational qualification and women's entitlement to better healthcare.

H_1: There is a significant relationship between educational qualification and women's entitlement to better healthcare.

The degree of freedom was 8, with a Chi-square value (χ^2) of 74.55 and a p-value of 0.0001. As the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. This finding demonstrates that educational qualification significantly influences perceptions and decisions regarding women's access to quality healthcare. Overall, the results of the hypothesis testing reveal strong and statistically significant relationships between socio-cultural factors, education, and gender-based attitudes in Quetta. These findings

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highlight the deep-rooted nature of gender discrimination and its connection with education, social norms, and belief systems.

Literature Review

Gender discrimination is a pervasive global issue that continues to undermine human rights, social justice, and sustainable development. Despite international commitments to gender equality, women across the world face systemic barriers rooted in socio-cultural, economic, and institutional structures. According to UN Women, gender inequality is deeply embedded in societal norms and power relations that privilege men over women, resulting in unequal access to opportunities and resources (UN Women, 2020). In developing countries such as Pakistan, these inequalities are further intensified by weak governance structures, traditional value systems, and socio-economic disparities (World Bank, 2022). Understanding gender discrimination requires an exploration of both its structural foundations and its manifestations in everyday life, particularly in localized contexts like Quetta.

The concept of patriarchy provides a foundational theoretical framework for analyzing gender discrimination. Walby (1990) defines patriarchy as a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress, and exploit women. This system operates across multiple domains, including the household, labor market, state institutions, and cultural practices. Similarly, Kabeer (2016) emphasizes that gender inequality is fundamentally linked to unequal power relations and restricted access to resources, opportunities, and agency. In Pakistan, Bari (2010) highlights that patriarchal norms are deeply entrenched in family structures, where men are considered primary decision-makers and women are largely confined to domestic roles. These norms are reinforced through socialization processes, media representations, and community practices, ensuring their persistence across generations.

Education is widely recognized as a critical determinant of gender equality. Access to education not only enhances women's knowledge and skills but also empowers them to challenge discriminatory norms and participate actively in society. According to UNESCO (2020), higher levels of education are associated with greater gender awareness and more egalitarian attitudes. However, in regions such as Balochistan, educational disparities between men and women remain significant due to poverty, cultural restrictions, and limited infrastructure (UNDP, 2021). Hashmi et al. (2019) argue that families often prioritize boys' education over girls', viewing it as a more valuable investment due to expected economic returns. This preference results in lower female literacy rates and limited opportunities for women to engage in economic and social activities.

Economic factors play a crucial role in shaping gender relations and perpetuating discrimination. Women's limited participation in the labor force is both a cause and consequence of gender inequality. According to the World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report, Pakistan ranks among the lowest countries in terms of women's economic participation and opportunity (World Economic Forum, 2021). In urban centers like Quetta, women are often engaged in informal or low-paying jobs with minimal job security and benefits (Asian Development Bank, 2019). Economic dependency on male family members reduces women's bargaining power within

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households and reinforces traditional gender roles. Furthermore, structural barriers such as lack of access to financial resources, limited vocational training, and restricted mobility further constrain women's economic empowerment.

Cultural and religious influences significantly shape gender norms and practices in Pakistani society. Jamal (2015) notes that while religion itself does not inherently promote discrimination, its interpretation within specific cultural contexts often reinforces gender inequalities. In many communities, religious narratives are used to justify restrictions on women's mobility, dress, and participation in public life. Ali and Gavino (2008) highlight that the influence of religious leaders and community elders plays a crucial role in shaping societal attitudes toward women. In Quetta, these influences are particularly pronounced, as traditional tribal structures and conservative social norms intersect with religious interpretations, creating a complex environment that restricts women's autonomy.

Gender discrimination is also evident in intra-household dynamics, particularly in the allocation of resources and decision-making processes. Sen (1999) introduced the concept of "missing women," highlighting how gender bias in resource distribution leads to disparities in nutrition, healthcare, and survival rates. In many South Asian households, sons are preferred over daughters due to economic and cultural factors, such as inheritance practices and expectations of financial support in old age (Klasen & Wink, 2003). This preference often results in unequal access to food, education, and healthcare for girls, perpetuating cycles of inequality. Studies in Pakistan have shown that women's participation in household decision-making is limited, particularly in areas such as financial management, healthcare choices, and children's education (Bari, 2010).

The impacts of gender discrimination are multidimensional, affecting women's physical, psychological, and socio-economic well-being. Discrimination limits women's access to education and employment opportunities, reducing their potential for personal and professional development. According to Kabeer (2016), women who experience discrimination are more likely to suffer from stress, anxiety, and low self-esteem. In terms of health, gender inequality can lead to inadequate access to healthcare services, particularly for maternal and reproductive health (WHO, 2020). At the macro level, gender discrimination hampers economic growth by limiting the productive contributions of women, thereby reducing overall development outcomes (World Bank, 2022).

Political participation is another area where gender disparities are evident. Although Pakistan has made progress in increasing women's representation in legislative bodies through reserved seats, their actual influence on policy-making remains limited (Shah & Butt, 2018). Social norms, lack of resources, and institutional barriers often prevent women from actively participating in politics. In Quetta, women's participation in local governance is constrained by cultural expectations and limited access to political networks. This underrepresentation results in policies that may not fully address women's needs and concerns, further perpetuating gender inequality.

The role of institutions and legal frameworks is critical in addressing gender discrimination. Pakistan has enacted several laws aimed at protecting women's rights, including legislation against domestic violence and workplace harassment. However, the implementation of these laws remains weak, particularly at the provincial and

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local levels (Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 2022). In Quetta, limited awareness of legal rights, combined with inadequate institutional support, discourages women from seeking justice. Informal dispute resolution mechanisms, often dominated by male elders, further marginalize women's voices and reinforce discriminatory practices (Jamal, 2015).

Urbanization and modernization have introduced new dynamics in gender relations, particularly in cities like Quetta. While urbanization has created opportunities for women in education and employment, it has also highlighted the tension between traditional norms and modern values. Kakar (2020) argues that women in Quetta navigate a complex social environment where increased access to opportunities is often accompanied by social restrictions and expectations. This duality creates both challenges and opportunities for advancing gender equality in the region.

Recent studies emphasize the importance of adopting a multidimensional approach to understanding gender discrimination. This includes examining the intersection of gender with other factors such as education, class, and cultural background. Intersectionality, as a theoretical framework, highlights how different forms of inequality interact to create unique experiences of discrimination (Crenshaw, 1989). In the context of Quetta, women from lower socio-economic backgrounds may face additional barriers due to poverty, lack of education, and limited access to resources.

Despite the extensive body of literature on gender discrimination, there is a significant gap in localized, empirical research focusing on urban centers in Balochistan. Most existing studies concentrate on national-level trends or rural contexts, with limited attention to cities like Quetta. This gap underscores the need for context-specific research that captures the unique socio-cultural and economic dynamics of the region. By focusing on Quetta, this study aims to provide a deeper understanding of the causes and impacts of gender discrimination, contributing to both academic discourse and policy development.

In conclusion, the literature highlights that gender discrimination is a complex and multifaceted issue influenced by a combination of socio-cultural, economic, and institutional factors. Patriarchal norms, educational disparities, economic dependency, cultural practices, and weak institutional frameworks all contribute to the persistence of gender inequality. The impacts of discrimination are far-reaching, affecting not only women's well-being but also broader social and economic development. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive and context-specific approach that integrates policy reforms, community engagement, and institutional strengthening. This study builds on existing literature by providing a detailed analysis of gender discrimination in Quetta, offering insights that can inform effective interventions and promote gender equality in the region.

Results and Discussion

Table 1: Attitudes Toward Female Education in Quetta

Question	Yes (%)	No (%)	Maybe (%)
Should girls be educated?	60	30	10
Should girls be educated beyond matric?	45	50	5
Female education improves socio-economic conditions	70	30	0

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Question	Yes (%)	No (%)	Maybe (%)
Women should choose their field of education	40	52.5	7.5
Culture is responsible for female illiteracy	72.5	15	12.5

Analysis

The findings indicate a generally positive attitude toward basic female education, with 60% of respondents supporting girls' education. However, this support declines when it comes to higher education, as only 45% favor education beyond matric. This suggests that while education is socially acceptable at a basic level, societal resistance increases when women seek advanced academic opportunities.

A strong majority (70%) agree that female education contributes to socio-economic development. This reflects an awareness among respondents of the broader developmental benefits of educating women. It indicates a shift in perception where education is not only seen as a personal benefit but also as a societal investment.

Despite this recognition, autonomy in education remains restricted. More than half (52.5%) oppose women choosing their field of study. This highlights a key dimension of gender discrimination where women's agency is limited even when access to education is permitted. Decision-making power continues to rest with family or societal norms rather than women themselves.

Cultural barriers emerge as the most significant constraint, with 72.5% identifying culture as the main cause of female illiteracy. This reinforces the argument that gender discrimination in education is not merely economic but deeply rooted in social norms and traditions.

Table 2: Social Behavior and Gender Discrimination

Question	Yes (%)	No (%)	Maybe (%)
Daughters are considered a burden	78	22	0
Sons are given better food	79	21	0
Women are inferior to men	82.5	17.5	0
Women can go outside alone	47	53	0
Women can choose their life partner	23	77	0
Women should participate in decision-making	30	70	0
Women should observe purdah	97	3	0
Religious influence causes discrimination	77	11.5	11.5
Media influences discrimination	72	13	16
Government can reduce discrimination	82.5	17.5	0

Analysis

The data clearly demonstrates that gender discrimination is most severe in the social sphere. A significant 78% of respondents consider daughters a burden, reflecting deep-rooted patriarchal values. Similarly, 79% report that sons receive better food,

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indicating unequal resource distribution within households.

Perceptions of women's inferiority are also highly prevalent, with 82.5% agreeing that women are inferior to men. This belief directly influences women's exclusion from decision-making, where 70% oppose female participation. These findings highlight the systemic nature of gender inequality embedded in societal attitudes.

Restrictions on women's autonomy are also evident. A majority (53%) do not support women going outside alone, and 77% oppose women choosing their life partners. These findings illustrate how control over women's mobility and personal choices is a central mechanism of gender discrimination.

Cultural and institutional influences further reinforce inequality. An overwhelming 97% support purdah, while 77% believe religious personalities contribute to discrimination. However, 82.5% believe the government can play a role in reducing inequality, indicating potential acceptance for policy interventions.

Table 3: Gender Discrimination in Healthcare

Question	Yes (%)	No (%)	Maybe (%)
Women are entitled to good healthcare	60.5	33.5	6
Sons are preferred in medical treatment	55	45	0

Analysis

The findings present a mixed picture regarding healthcare. While 60.5% of respondents agree that women deserve good healthcare, a significant proportion (33.5%) still deny this right. This indicates that gender bias persists even in essential services such as healthcare.

Contradictions in attitudes are clearly visible. Despite acknowledging women's right to healthcare, 55% admit that sons are given preference in medical treatment. This reflects a gap between stated beliefs and actual practices, where discriminatory behavior continues at the household level.

This disparity can be linked to socio-economic and cultural factors. In resource-constrained households, priority is often given to male members due to their perceived economic value. Women's health is therefore deprioritized, leading to long-term consequences such as malnutrition and maternal health risks.

Overall, the findings suggest that healthcare discrimination, although less visible than social discrimination, remains significant. It highlights the need for awareness campaigns and policy interventions to ensure equal access to healthcare for women.

The hypotheses were tested using Chi-square analysis in SPSS at a significance level of 0.05. The results are presented below:

Table 4: Relationship Between Educational Qualification and Girls' Education Beyond Matric

Variable	χ^2 Value	df	p-value	Decision
Educational Qualification × Girls' Higher Education	42.48	8	0.0001	Reject H_0

Result Analysis

The Chi-square test indicates a statistically significant relationship between

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educational qualification and attitudes toward girls' education beyond matric level ($\chi^2 = 42.48$, $p < 0.05$). The null hypothesis is rejected, confirming that respondents' educational background strongly influences their support for female higher education. Educated individuals are more likely to favor continued education for girls, whereas less educated respondents tend to resist it. This finding reinforces the role of education in shaping progressive gender attitudes.

Table 5: Relationship Between Perception of Women's Inferiority and Decision-Making

Variable	χ^2 Value	df	p-value	Decision
Women Inferiority × Decision-Making Participation	9.94	4	0.0001	Reject H_0

Result Analysis

The analysis shows a significant relationship between the perception of women as inferior and their exclusion from decision-making ($\chi^2 = 9.94$, $p < 0.05$). The null hypothesis is rejected, indicating that societal beliefs about women's inferiority directly influence their lack of participation in important decisions. This reflects a strong patriarchal mindset where authority is concentrated among men, limiting women's agency in both household and societal matters.

Table 6: Influence of Religious Personalities on Purdah Practices

Variable	χ^2 Value	df	p-value	Decision
Religious Influence × Purdah Observance	20.26	4	0.004	Reject H_0

Result Analysis

The results reveal a statistically significant association between the influence of religious personalities and the practice of purdah ($\chi^2 = 20.26$, $p < 0.05$). The null hypothesis is rejected, suggesting that religious leaders and interpretations play a substantial role in shaping societal expectations regarding women's dress and mobility. This indicates that gender norms are not only cultural but also influenced by religious discourse within the community.

Table 7: Relationship Between Perception of Daughters as Burden and Food Preference

Variable	χ^2 Value	df	p-value	Decision
Daughters as Burden × Food Preference for Sons	64.007	4	0.0001	Reject H_0

Result Analysis

A strong and statistically significant relationship exists between the perception of daughters as a burden and preferential treatment of sons in food allocation ($\chi^2 = 64.007$, $p < 0.05$). The null hypothesis is rejected, indicating that gender bias at the attitudinal level translates directly into discriminatory household practices. This finding highlights how deeply ingrained gender preferences affect even basic needs such as nutrition.

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Table 8: Relationship Between Educational Qualification and Women's Healthcare Entitlement

Variable	χ^2 Value	df	p-value	Decision
Educational Qualification × Healthcare Entitlement	74.55	8	0.0001	Reject H_0

Result Analysis

The findings indicate a highly significant relationship between educational qualification and perceptions regarding women's entitlement to healthcare ($\chi^2 = 74.55$, $p < 0.05$). The null hypothesis is rejected, confirming that education plays a crucial role in shaping attitudes toward women's health rights. Respondents with higher education levels are more likely to support equal healthcare access for women, while less educated individuals show comparatively discriminatory attitudes.

Recommendations

Promoting Female Education Beyond Secondary Level

There is a clear need to expand access to higher education for girls in Quetta. While basic education is somewhat accepted, resistance remains toward higher studies. The government and private sector should invest in girls' colleges, scholarships, and safe transportation facilities. Awareness campaigns must emphasize the long-term socio-economic benefits of female education to shift societal attitudes and encourage families to support girls' academic advancement.

Community-Based Awareness Programs to Challenge Patriarchy

Deep-rooted patriarchal norms are a major cause of gender discrimination. Community-level awareness programs should be launched to challenge traditional beliefs that limit women's roles. Religious scholars, local leaders, and educators should be engaged to promote gender equality within culturally acceptable frameworks. Such initiatives can gradually reshape societal attitudes and reduce discrimination at the grassroots level.

Strengthening Women's Decision-Making Power

The study highlights that women are largely excluded from decision-making processes. Policies should focus on empowering women within households and communities by promoting education, leadership training, and participation in local governance. Encouraging women's involvement in family and community decisions will enhance their autonomy and contribute to more balanced social structures.

Economic Empowerment Through Skill Development

Economic dependency is a key driver of gender inequality. Vocational training centers and entrepreneurship programs should be established to provide women with market-relevant skills. Access to microfinance and small business opportunities can help women become financially independent, increasing their bargaining power within households and reducing discrimination.

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Ensuring Equal Access to Healthcare Services

Although many respondents recognize women's right to healthcare, discriminatory practices persist. The government must ensure equitable access to healthcare facilities for women, particularly maternal and reproductive health services. Mobile health units and female healthcare workers can be deployed to improve outreach and reduce barriers faced by women in accessing medical care.

Reforming Cultural Practices That Limit Women's Mobility

Restrictions on women's mobility significantly hinder their education, employment, and social participation. Policies should focus on creating safe public spaces, improving transportation systems, and promoting community acceptance of women's mobility. Gradual reform of restrictive cultural practices, including extreme forms of purdah, can enhance women's freedom and participation in society.

Engaging Religious Leaders for Positive Social Change

Religious influence plays a significant role in shaping societal attitudes. Engaging religious leaders to promote interpretations of Islam that support women's rights can be an effective strategy. Awareness campaigns should highlight religious teachings that emphasize equality, education, and dignity for women, thereby countering misconceptions that justify discrimination.

Media Campaigns to Change Gender Narratives

Media has a powerful role in shaping public perceptions. Positive representation of women in media can challenge stereotypes and promote gender equality. Television, radio, and social media campaigns should highlight successful women and advocate for equal rights, helping to shift societal attitudes and normalize women's participation in all spheres of life.

Strengthening Legal Frameworks and Implementation

Although laws exist to protect women's rights in Pakistan, their implementation remains weak. The government must ensure strict enforcement of laws related to education, healthcare, and protection from discrimination. Legal awareness programs should also be conducted so that women understand their rights and can seek justice when necessary.

Promoting Gender-Sensitive Education Curriculum

Education systems should incorporate gender-sensitive content that promotes equality and challenges stereotypes. Curriculum reforms at school and college levels can play a crucial role in shaping the attitudes of future generations. Teaching respect, equality, and shared responsibilities between genders will help reduce discrimination in the long term.

Conclusion

The present study set out to examine the causes and impacts of gender discrimination against women in Quetta, and the findings clearly demonstrate that discrimination remains deeply embedded in social, cultural, and economic structures. While some

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progress is visible—particularly in attitudes toward basic female education—the overall environment continues to reflect strong patriarchal norms that restrict women's autonomy, participation, and opportunities. Gender inequality is not confined to one domain; rather, it is a multidimensional issue affecting education, social behavior, healthcare, and decision-making.

One of the most important findings of this study is the variation in the intensity of discrimination across different sectors. Discrimination is most pronounced in the social sphere, where women are often considered inferior, denied decision-making power, and restricted in mobility. Practices such as viewing daughters as a burden, limiting women's participation in family decisions, and enforcing strict cultural norms like purdah highlight the deep-rooted nature of gender bias. These findings reinforce the argument that social attitudes are the primary drivers of inequality.

In the field of education, the study reveals a paradoxical situation. While a majority of respondents support female education and acknowledge its benefits for socio-economic development, resistance persists when it comes to higher education and women's autonomy in choosing their field of study. This suggests that education is accepted only within socially acceptable boundaries, beyond which it is perceived as a challenge to traditional gender roles. Such limitations significantly reduce the transformative potential of education for women.

The findings related to healthcare further illustrate the subtle yet persistent nature of discrimination. Although many respondents agree that women deserve access to healthcare, preferential treatment toward male children continues to exist. This contradiction between belief and practice reflects the influence of deeply ingrained societal values that prioritize men over women, even in matters of health and well-being. The long-term consequences of such practices include poor maternal health, malnutrition, and increased vulnerability among women.

The study also highlights the critical role of socio-economic and educational factors in shaping attitudes toward gender equality. Respondents with higher levels of education and better economic status were generally more supportive of women's rights, while those from lower socio-economic backgrounds exhibited more discriminatory attitudes. This finding underscores the importance of education and economic empowerment as key tools for reducing gender inequality.

Cultural and religious influences emerged as significant factors contributing to gender discrimination. The interpretation of cultural norms and religious teachings often reinforces traditional gender roles, limiting women's freedom and participation in public life. However, the study also indicates that these influences are not fixed and can be reshaped through awareness, education, and community engagement. This provides an opportunity for policymakers and stakeholders to address misconceptions and promote more inclusive interpretations.

Another important insight from the study is the recognition among respondents that institutions, particularly the government, can play a crucial role in reducing gender discrimination. This indicates a willingness within society to accept policy interventions aimed at promoting gender equality. Strengthening legal frameworks, improving implementation mechanisms, and increasing awareness of women's rights are essential steps toward achieving this goal.

In conclusion, gender discrimination in Quetta is a complex and multifaceted issue

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that requires a comprehensive and sustained response. Addressing this challenge demands not only policy reforms but also a transformation of societal attitudes and cultural practices. Empowering women through education, economic opportunities, and participation in decision-making is essential for achieving social justice and sustainable development. The findings of this study contribute to a deeper understanding of gender inequality in Quetta and provide a foundation for future research and policy initiatives aimed at creating a more equitable society.

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