

Discrimination in the Pakistan Labour Market: Myth and Reality

YASMEEN MOHIUDDIN

I

A general concern with equity in the economic development process and the focus on issues of poverty, population growth, and environmental degradation in recent years have both created an upsurge in the interest in women's role in economic development. The women in development (WID) issue is closely related to the issue of sex discrimination. In economic terms, discrimination occurs whenever market allocations are affected not by the criterion of productivity, but by non-pecuniary or extraneous factors such as sex. Operationally, the most common forms of discrimination in the labour market are *wage discrimination*, whereby women are paid lower wages relative to men in all industries and occupations for work that is recognisably equal,¹ and *occupational or job discrimination*, whereby women are segregated into certain 'female' occupations which are generally low-paying. Both these types of discrimination are fairly common and extensive in Europe and North America, especially in the U. S. In Pakistan, as in some other Third World countries, there is another aspect of discrimination which is even more fundamental than the other two. This refers to the divergence between myth and reality about women's participation in the labour force, which is the most visible indicator of their contribution to economic activity, and hence to development. The reality is that women's labour force participation is high, measured either in terms of the percentage of adult women who work, or the proportion of the labour force that is female, or the hours of work. The myth within Pakistan (especially among the middle class, urbanites, government officials including planners and administrators, and even academicians) as well as outside is that women do not work. The result is that they are left out of the calculations of administrators, planners, decision-makers, and sometimes even academicians.

Yasmeen Mohiuddin is Associate Professor at the University of the South, Sewanee, Tennessee, USA, and a Consultant to the Women in Development (PHRWD) and the Agriculture (EMIAG) Divisions of the World Bank.

¹It is even more common to find different job descriptions and titles for women's jobs, so that the equivalent nature of similar jobs for women and men is masked and the lower pay for women rationalized.

This places them outside the *purview* of institutions which could have provided essential inputs and services to them and thereby enhanced their productivity. Thus they are in the mainstream of economic activity in reality, but on the periphery in the perception of planners since their work is not fully recognized. This paper looks at discrimination in this perspective. The paper is divided into five sections. Section II explores the myth about women's labour force participation, and the reasons underlying it. Section III analysis the extent of their participation in the rural and urban sectors. Section IV discusses the nature and extent of wage and occupational discrimination. Section V concludes with policy implications.

II

Women are integral to the Pakistan economy and are engaged extensively in the rural sector, the urban informal sector, and the urban formal sector. They are in the mainstream of economic activity as far as their labour input is concerned, but not in terms of access to productive resources or support service—because their economic activities go unnoticed, are disregarded or are invisible. Thus, official statistics such as the decennial Population Censuses and the Annual Labour Force Surveys severely under-report female labour force participation or activity rate representing the percentage of adult women in the labour force. For example, the 1981 Pakistan Population Census and the 1984-85 Labour Force Survey report these rates to be 3 percent and 10.7 percent respectively in rural areas, and the corresponding urban rates to be 3.5 percent and 4.7 percent – whereas in reality the rural rate is 55 percent² and the urban 25 percent.³ Moreover, there is no official data, whatsoever, on the labour input of women in the informal urban sector. As a consequence, the myth is that women do not work. There are several reasons why this myth holds despite evidence to the contrary: The physical invisibility of women outside the home, the middle class ideal of a non-working wife, the perception of work only as paid labour, and failure of statistics to capture the true extent of women's participation.

Women are physically and psychologically hidden from view because of the implications of the ideal of female seclusion, institutionalized in the

²See Government of Pakistan (1983). According to the 1980 females over 10 years in agricultural households are engaged in agricultural work on their own farms, while 16 percent are engaged in non-agricultural activities within their own households. Only 3 percent of economically active women work in other households, for which they receive payment in cash or kind. Similarly, the Pakistan Census of Agriculture shows that women constitute 42.6 percent of all (male and female) family workers. 25.1 percent of full time workers and 75.9 percent of part time workers.

³See Mohiuddin (1989).

practice of *purdah* (the veil). In fact, cities in Pakistan are very much like what Boserup⁴ calls male towns where most outdoor activities are taken care of by men, while women live in some seclusion within the family dwelling. With women mostly confined to the homes, the streets, market places, shops, factories, offices, restaurants and cinemas become mostly a male world with a surplus of men over women. Women are not only totally absent from the sellers in the markets, they are in a minority even among the customers, since men do the shopping of both food and other items of daily use, as well as women's clothing. As a direct consequence of the above, most women and their families prefer for women to work at jobs which guarantee segregation such as those that can be conducted within the privacy of the home or in a sexually segregated environment (e.g. all female schools, colleges, dispensaries, bank branches, departments in private organizations like computer department in banks, packing in pharmaceutical industries, agricultural work within the compound, home based work, domestic service, etc.). Thus low skilled and poor women may become domestic servants (who work in people's home at a time when the master of the house is away at work and have dealings only with the mistress) or home-based workers, who work at home stitching clothes, making lace, weaving baskets, embroidering and crocheting, making food products for sale by male relatives or middlemen; and high skilled and richer women may become teachers and doctors (mostly gynaecologists), etc.

Secondly, the middle class ideal of a non-working wife perpetuates the illusion that women do not work. The income-participation and the education-participation profile of Pakistani women is *U*-shaped, implying that participation rates are higher both at the lower and higher levels of income and education. In other words, middle class women without higher education are less likely to work. Based on their experience, this group assumes that almost all women do not work, and their view influences public opinion, and perpetuates the myth. However, the reality is that almost all poor women work, have worked in all cultures and in all times. They even cannot fulfil the ideal of *purdah*. For example, women who plant and weed and harvest cannot keep themselves covered from head to toe. They must forego the *veil* (although they usually keep their heads covered) and even tuck their clothing up around their legs to permit greater freedom of movement.

Thirdly, many of these women, especially in agriculture and some types of

⁴[Boserup (1970), p. 86].

home-based production, work in cooperative activities usually shared between husbands and wives, mostly as unpaid family helpers. Since work is conceived as paid labour or earning a livelihood, and men alone are the recipients of income even when their wives share the work, the unpaid work of women is often excluded from labour force statistics. Rather, society perceives their work more as wifely duties than as economic contribution. This perception is found not only among the men whose wives do such work, but also the women themselves. Thus, in one instance, on observing a woman transplanting rice in the Sindh Province, and on repeatedly asking her *hari* (landless agricultural labourer) husband what work she did, the answer was 'nothing'. When he was confronted by pointing to her work, he said, "oh, only this"⁵.

Lastly, the work of most women done within the confines of the home or in a sexually segregated environment (whether it is agricultural work, or home-based production, or domestic service), however, fails to be captured in official statistics, partly because the enumerators, who are mostly males, do not see these women nor are they trained to do so. The physical invisibility thus leads to statistical invisibility. The reasons given for unreliable estimation are, first, that there may be underreporting of women's work since both the enumerators and respondents are usually male and there may be a loss in social prestige in admitting that women in the household are working both because a nonworking wife is a status symbol, as outlined earlier, and because it violates the ideal of female seclusion. Second, the underreporting may also be due to lack of knowledge on the part of male proxy respondents who are answering to male enumerators, on behalf of their women, regarding women's work. Third, the questionnaires may be poorly constructed, having been designed by male experts who may not have enough insight into women's issues to be able to extract information from unwilling male respondents and untrained male enumerators. Thus, in one instance, male enumerators or statisticians could not detect an error when female handicraft workers in Sindh declared their dead husbands to be the heads of households rather than themselves, since these women did not conceive of themselves in authority, which is how they interpreted the question.⁶ Fourth, women's "visible" productive work overlaps with household chores. In such cases women are often counted out of the labour force and categorized as "housewives", even though

⁵[See Mohiuddin (1989), *op. cit.*].

⁶See Mohiuddin, (1985).

they make a significant contribution to productive activities.

III

Despite the physical, statistical, and economic invisibility of women due to the above reasons, the results of their work are readily visible to those who choose to look. Women are major contributors to the economy of the country in the rural sector, the urban informal sector, and the urban formal sector. District level sample village studies document the extent of women's contribution by way of labour input, both in terms of time allocation and nature of work. Within the agricultural sector, women participate extensively in both crop production and livestock activities, both of which are reported in the Agriculture Census. Thus, several studies show that rural women work about 12 to 15 hours per day on average. Often, this work is physically demanding e.g. carrying loads (of fuel, water and fodder), getting water from the well or canal, transplanting rice, husking maize. Some of this work is mentally troublesome (e.g. searching for firewood in the rainy season) and dirty (e.g. cleaning the cowshed, making cowdung). Within the non-agricultural rural sector, they are engaged mainly in crafts like embroidery, tailoring, crocheting, flower making (silk and glass), carpet and duree weaving, mat making, basketry, handloom production, miscellaneous handicrafts (doll making, jewellery, papier mache, etc.), leather work, pottery and ceramics, as well as construction, fisheries and food processing, none of which are included in any official statistics.

In the urban informal sector, the myth, for reasons outlined earlier, is that women do not work, the reality again is that they do. However, women, unlike men, do not have ease of entry into any urban informal activity; their choice is primarily determined by the ideal of female seclusion, more so than for rural women. Thus the workers, street vendors, market sellers, carpenters, mechanics, barbers are almost exclusively males, whereas females are confined to home-based production, or other production and service activities where sex seclusion can be assured such as family occupations and domestics (maids, washerwomen, sweepers, etc.).

Home-based production is done more or less along the lines of the putting out system. The main characteristic of the putting out system is that in most cases, the raw materials are supplied to the producers, who are all women and who remain in their homes, by agents (middlemen or shopkeepers) who later collect the finished product and pay the producers on a piece rate basis. They largely remain at the mercy of male contractors and middlemen, and obtain less

than the minimum wage. As a matter of fact, certain elements of monopsony power exist in the labour market for female home producers, mostly handicraft workers. That is, the employer (middleman or shopkeeper) has monopoly power in the labour market which leads to a situation in which workers are paid less than the value of their marginal product and equally productive workers may be paid unequally. More specifically, in small urban areas, there are very few middlemen who purchase these products (and thereby the services of these workers).⁷ The statistical invisibility of the women producers perpetuates the illusion that such work is done in leisure time as a hobby when, in fact, these women have long working hours.

In addition to home-based production, there is also subcontracting or workshop production. This is an intermediate level between factory work and home-based work, namely, the workshop which is a small subcontracted unit of production bearing more similarities to home work than factory in terms of methods of recruitment, amount of functional segregation, proportion of women workers and their marital status. There is a linear progression from home work to workshop to factory in terms of income, percentage contribution to family income and women's autonomy. Subcontracting is fairly common in the garment industry in Pakistan. Depending on the size of the company and its past performance, various parts of production are subcontracted. There is not only the vertical putting out of part of the production process, but also horizontal putting out of the same type of work to several workshops and home-based workers. The growth of these garment workshops in big urban cities has been quite phenomenal during the last few years. Located either in homes of middle class entrepreneurs throughout the city or on the periphery of the city (the so-called industrial belt), these workshops largely draw in poor and lower middle class women workers of all ages, but prefer younger women. The small workshops promote a sexual division of labour and jobs are segregated into those suitable for men and women. The latter are mostly employed in low-skilled, low-paying jobs. More specifically, operators are usually women, whereas supervisors, cutters and master tailors are mostly men. Women carry out the manual work of embroidery, thread cutting, and button stitching. There are some workshops that will hire men only, but will not hire any women at all. On the whole, there is a high degree of occupational segregation by sex either because men and women do not tend to work together in the same workshop, or if they do, they are segregated by functions or job titles.

⁷[See Mohiuddin (1985), *op. cit.*].

Generally speaking, women's wages are lower than those of men, either in the same workshop for different functions, or for the same function in a different workshop.

Moreover, domestic service has recently emerged as the single largest source of employment for poor women in the urban informal sector especially in Karachi. The female domestics, popularly known as "*Masees*" (meaning aunts) typically work in three or four houses part-time on a regular basis at one or more of the following chores: washing dishes, washing clothes, cleaning and sweeping, and cooking. They charge Rs 60–100 per activity per month (which is about one-sixth to one-eighth of the salary of a full-time male domestic servant) which has made it possible for most middle-income households to afford them, at least for the most arduous tasks.⁸ In fact, middle-class households prefer to hire only female (rather than male) domestics partly because the rules of seclusion are more strict in middle-class families (whereby it is not appropriate to expose women in the family to the constant presence of a male domestic). The recent surge in demand for female domestic servants has been brought about in part by increasing home remittances of middle-class Pakistanis working in Gulf States and in part by a rise in the labour force participation and college enrollment rates for middle-class females in Karachi. At the same time, there has also been a significant increase in the number of *masees* as a result of migration of thousands of poor families from Bangladesh in the 1970s and rural to urban migration from within the country. As a matter of fact, the *masee* market resembles a perfect market with a large number of buyers and sellers, a "homogeneous" service (house chores), and perfect knowledge (by *masees* and hiring households) about charges per activity in different locations. Consequently we find that wages of those women are highly competitive and uniform in a neighbourhood.

Although a majority of women in Pakistan do work, very few are regularly employed in the formal sector. The seclusion ethic as applied to the formal sector, dictates that educated middle-class women be employed as professionals (in private or government service as doctors, teachers, etc.), and uneducated poorer women be employed as factory workers. In both work environments, segregation is maintained. For example, for female professionals, there are all female schools, colleges, bank branches, wards in hospitals, etc. For factory workers, such an environment is created by confining women to particular departments or activities, which then become all female, e.g., packing, sorting, spinning, etc. This division of labour appears to have been sanctified in the Pakistan industrial

⁸The upper income households generally have full-time male domestic servants but are now shifting to "*masees*" because of greater protection for their females.

sector. However, the official statistics, such as the CMI (Census of Manufacturing Industries) does not indicate the total number of full-time women workers in factories, since it includes only permanent workers, whereas women are mostly temporary. The phenomenon of temporary workers is widespread wherever women are employed and actually owes as much to loopholes in the Labour Laws as to so-called cultural factors. According to the law a worker after working a continuous six months, is considered a permanent worker, eligible for all labour benefits including maternity leave and other maternity benefits for women. The norm also prevails in the industrial sector that women seldom handle machines, and are confined generally to unskilled jobs. This trend or norm, however, can also be reversed as in the poultry industry, where more women are employed in the automated units than men who tend to dominate the manually operated units. The reason for this reverse pattern appear to be that women are considered more hygienic and a 'clean environment' is essential to prevent poultry disease.

In the services and as professionals, women work in the Government (3 percent of all employees), in banks, the media, and health and education services. Among the female work force in both rural and urban areas, professional workers among occupational groups⁹ are the third highest category (15.9 percent) according to 1981 census, preceded only by agricultural workers (35.7 percent) and production workers (24.6 percent), and followed by service workers (7.95 percent), sales workers (4.52 percent) and clerical workers (3.49 percent). However, according to the 1973 Housing, Economic and Demographic Survey, professional work is the most important occupation for urban women, accounting for 30 percent of all employed females, followed by service workers (27 percent) and production workers (19 percent), the rest of the occupational categories being less than two digit. About 60 percent of all professionals are teachers. Moreover, the ratio of females to males is quite high in the professions. Thus, in the case of doctors the overall ratio is one female for every four males.

As far as women in the formal sector are concerned, there is no myth regarding their labour force participation. Accordingly, they are represented in the official labour force statistics, such as Labour Force Surveys, Population Censuses, and so on. There is, however, an entirely different type of myth, not within but outside Pakistan, about one of the sub-groups in this sector, i.e., the professionals. This is that women are underrepresented in the professions, and that,

⁹The occupational groups include seven categories, i.e. administrative and managerial, professional (including teachers, doctors, lawyers, engineers, etc.), clerical, sales, service workers (including cooks, maids, etc.), agricultural workers, and production workers.

without doubt, are paid less than their male colleagues. The reality is otherwise. Women are actually over-represented in the professions. If we measure the proportion of women in the professions *vis-a-vis* their proportion in the labour force, the index is about 4, which means that, in percentage terms, their share in professional labour force is four times their share in the total labour force. This might appear strange at first. On closer examination, however, we find that, in fact, the demand for professional women does not violate the rules of seclusion, but indeed is a necessary result of those rules. More specifically, there is demand for professional women because the seclusion ethic requires that women be educated by female teachers, in special schools for women; that women be taken care of by female health personnel, female social workers, etc. In a way, women professionals benefit from the seclusion ethics in terms of job opportunities and future prospects. Similarly, there is no wage discrimination in case of professionals, which never ceases to surprise western observers. This may partly be due to the high demand for female professionals, the importance of government as an employer, and the low overall female participation rates even in the formal sector.

IV

Wage Discrimination

There is no conclusive evidence on wage discrimination by gender in Pakistan for several reasons. First, most women work as unpaid family helpers, or are self-employed, rather than being employees receiving wages. Secondly, even those who qualify as employees are mostly home-based workers who are generally paid on a piece-rate basis for work that is often not done by men. Thirdly, even where both men and women are employed as in factories, they are segregated into separate departments or activities involving different work, and as such comparison of their differentials may be meaningless. Lastly, in all government jobs, men and women receive the same pay for similar work. The same is true for the occupational category classified as 'professional, technical, and related workers', e.g., teachers, doctors, engineers, etc. It should, however, also be noted that in the rural sector, female hired labour receives half the male wage.

As a contrast, in the U. S., for example, earnings of full-time women workers are only 68–70 percent of comparable male earnings. Or, women with 3 years of college earn less than men high school dropouts. In fact, in every single occupation, women earn less than men: the average weekly earnings of male general office clerks are \$ 323, of female clerks \$ 255; of male bakers \$ 301, of females

202; of male sales workers (apparel) \$ 281, of females \$ 168; of male bus drivers \$ 404, of females \$ 255; and so on. [Bergmann (1986)].

Occupational Discrimination

The distribution of women across occupations is quite different from men's. In both rural and urban areas, slightly more than three-fourths of all employed women, but only half of the men, are concentrated in three of the eight occupational categories. For women these categories are agricultural, production, and professional workers. For urban areas taken separately, the three categories are professional, service, and production workers in that order for women; and production, sales, and clerical workers in that order for men.

The extent of job segregation by gender is not unique to Pakistan: but the pattern of concentration of women in certain occupations, and the reasons underlying it are, to a certain extent. In the West, women are concentrated in the low-paying occupations, and receive, on average, about 70 percent of the male wage for similar work. This discrimination is explained either in the context of a utility-maximizing framework, where it is seen as a matter of taste (Gary Backer); or in terms of the human capital theory (Polachek); or as a manifestation of male power (Gordan; Hartman); or employer's ignorance (Arrow; Schelting); or the presence of dual labour markets (Bergmann); or in the context of a profit-maximizing framework where the employer has monopsony power (Madden; Blau). In Pakistan, on the other hand, women are concentrated in both high-paying occupations (professionals) and low-paying (service workers), which shows that the reason for sex segregation is not earnings. In fact, socio-cultural factors can better explain the pattern of occupational distribution for women in Pakistan.

As mentioned earlier, women are secluded by the *purdah* system (visible or invisible), and even non-secluded women are greatly affected in their decision-making, especially in the choice of occupation, by the general attitude in favour of seclusion. It has been shown elsewhere¹⁰ that the underlying reason for sex segregation, even in jobs, is religion in the sense that intermingling of sexes, though not employment *per se*, is not encouraged by Islam. Accordingly, occupations which guarantee segregation are considered respectable, such as agricultural work within the compound, home-based work, and domestic service for poorer women; and jobs in all female schools, colleges, dispensaries, bank branches, departments in private organizations like computer department in banks,

¹⁰[See Mohiuddin (1981), p. 26].

etc. for not so poor women. Conversely, occupations in which contact with male strangers cannot be avoided are associated with promiscuity, loss of respect and diminished marriage prospects for single girls. Thus women account for only one to eight percent of total labour force in "Trade and Commerce" (where women cannot avoid male contact) in Muslim countries of Africa and Asia (and 2 percent in Pakistan) compared with 9 to 65 percent in Latin America, 6 to 56 percent in South and East Asia, and 8 to 80 percent in Africa South of the Sahara. Moreover, the association of respectability with seclusion possibilities cuts across economic classes so that it is a binding constraint, overtly or covertly, on women of all classes. The association of respectability with seclusion possibilities thus explains the choice of occupations by females. Moreover, their supply of labour in general, and in the less favoured occupations in particular, is less wage-elastic than that of men because of the additional psychological costs associated with deviating from a widely accepted norm. Thus women are concentrated in occupations where seclusion and hence respectability is assured: lower-skilled women in low-paid service and production jobs, and high-skilled women in high-paid professional jobs. Conversely, only a very small percentage of women is involved in either the high-paid occupational category of administrators and managers, or the relatively low-paid category of sales and clerical workers, both of which do not guarantee seclusion.

V

The divergence between myth and reality regarding female labour force participation points to the need to reduce the statistical invisibility of women in farm and off-farm work in the rural and urban sectors and to increase awareness of women's economic contribution at all levels. As a matter of fact, women have to be integrated into the perceptions and consciousness of planners and decision-makers even before they can be integrated into development. One of the greatest challenges facing planners is the need to overcome deeply ingrained assumptions about women's roles, such as beliefs that women do not work, or contribute only marginally to household income, or that programmes of benefit to men will automatically benefit women through shared household resources, etc. Assumptions such as these obscure the critical importance of women's economic needs and contribution, especially in low-income households. At the same time, the underenumeration of women in official statistics renders the aggregate labour force data useless for planning purposes, and leads to a distorted perception of the country's human resources, and a misuse of its female resources. These

problems can be overcome by changing the structure of the data collecting mechanism through, for example, the hiring of female enumerators and statisticians; by replacing the household approach to data collection and analysis by a gender approach in national statistics, since the former tends to obscure women's activities; and by providing adequate investment for research on women in development. The time has come when policy-makers will have to go much further in their efforts to mainstream women in economic development if they hope to make faster progress in improving economic performance, reducing poverty, slowing down population growth, and stopping environmental degradation.

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Comments on
“Discrimination in the Pakistan Labour Market:
Myth and Reality”

The paper addresses the very important issue of labour market discrimination. Although much has been written on various aspects of the labour markets in Pakistan there have been very few attempts to explore the gender dimensions of this question. Unfortunately the paper does not do justice to its subject and concentrates mainly on problems of underenumeration of women's work. The main thesis of the paper is that inadequate coverage of women's employment in official statistics has created or contributed to the myth that women do not work and the author goes on to list areas of women's involvement in productive activity to substantiate the reality that women are actively involved in all sectors of the economy.

However, women's contribution to the economy is now widely acknowledged while the problems of underreporting of women's work have been the subject of considerable debate at various academic and policy-making forums. As such the discussion in this paper has little to add to the existing literature on the subject.

Further it is not clear how underreporting of women's work can be classified as discrimination in the labour market? It reflects instead the inefficiencies of relevant government agencies in rigidly adhering to inappropriate methods of data collection and questions which have been shown to understate women's work participation. It ultimately reflects the low priority assigned by policy-makers and planners to collecting accurate data on women's employment possibly because they already have enough problems projecting job opportunities for the greatly underenumerated labour force. So if there is a bias here it is that of policy-makers and not of the labour market.

Labour market discrimination refers mainly to wage discrimination or occupational segregation where women are concentrated in low-paying jobs. In the author's view these forms of discrimination are seen as more typical of Western countries rather than of Pakistan. In the context of Pakistan the view that women receive lower wages than men is dismissed as a myth. Also segregation of women into certain occupations is almost entirely attributed to cultural constraints.

These conclusions may probably hold true in the case of public sector employees, however they certainly do not reflect the reality of women's working

condition in industry in Pakistan. Empirical evidence on female employment in industry provided in studies by Sabiha Hafeez and Nighat Saeed Khan which the present paper does not refer to at all, indicates not only the prevalence of gender differences in wages for similar work but also widespread discrimination in the form of job segregation whereby women workers in industry are relegated to the lowest paid, least skilled, casual jobs. The findings of these studies indicate a managerial bias whereby women are denied access to supervisory positions and relatively more sophisticated operations on the excuse that this is heavy work. Although it has been pointed out that often the menial jobs done by women in factories are heavier than mechanized operations.

The paper explains occupational segregation in Pakistan particularly the concentration of women in home-based income earning activities only in terms of cultural restrictions to work outside the home and totally neglects demand-side factors which restrict expansion of regular factory employment for women. In the context of Pakistan women are underrepresented in regular factory employment not only because in a number of cases work outside the house is a source of social disapproval but also because employers prefer to keep women out of the regular workforce and hire them as temporary or contract workers who undertake contract work from their home. This system enables the employers to circumvent labour legislation but also offers overhead cost advantages and enables them to capture a cheap source of labour supply.

The tendency of keeping women off the regular rolls of organized industry, referred to as the informalization of women's labour has been noted not only in Pakistan but in other South Asian and Latin American countries. The main motivation behind this trend is to exploit women as a cheap source of labour.

In any case it should be mentioned that cultural restrictions to women's work are changing in Pakistan under the influence of economic pressures. Seclusion is increasingly becoming a luxury that the poorer strata cannot afford. Further, a growing number of women are entering previously unprescribed occupations such as factory work, secretarial and clerical work.

Finally, it would have been useful to incorporate pre-market discrimination into the analysis. Pre-market discrimination exists when one group does not have access to factors such as education and skill training which enhance human capital. This aspect of discrimination is particularly relevant to Pakistan where male female disparities in enrollment at both the primary and secondary level are possibly the highest in South Asia. These disparities are visible not only in the duration but also the field of study. For instance the content of vocational training imparted

to males and females is entirely different. While training to males caters to their employment needs women are mainly taught traditional skills of sewing, embroidery and knitting which have little relation to market demand or employment prospects. Pre-market discrimination in the form of unequal access to skills and education needs to be emphasized particularly since it is an area where effective policy intervention can make a significant impact on strengthening women's position in the labour market.

Shahnaz Kazi

Pakistan Institute of
Development Economics,
Islamabad.