

## Causes and Consequences of Gender Discrimination against Women in Quetta City

Rukhshanda Zarar<sup>1</sup>, Muneera Moula Bukhsh<sup>2</sup> and Waheed Akbar Khaskheli<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Social Work Department, Sardar Bahadur Kahn Women's University, Quetta, Pakistan

<sup>2</sup>Social Work Department, Federal Urdu University, Karachi, Pakistan

<sup>3</sup>Department of Social Work, University of Sindh, Jamshoro, Pakistan

\*Corresponding author: Zarar R, Social Work Department, Sardar Bahadur Kahn Women's University, Quetta, Pakistan, Tel: +92819213303; E-mail: [rukshanda.jamil@yahoo.com](mailto:rukshanda.jamil@yahoo.com)

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### Abstract

Discrimination against women is a global issue as even in developed Western nations women experience biasness on the basis of their gender. In developing countries like Pakistan, gender discrimination is more rampant in both rural as well as urban areas. The study aim is to find out the causes of low education, poor socio-economic conditions, societal trends, religious influence, culture and participation in decision making that have led to gender discrimination in Quetta. A quantitative research approach has been taken to fulfill the objectives of this research. A mixed sample of illiterate and literate, male and female respondents was chosen at random and data was collected through questionnaires distributed among the literate population while the illiterate population was interviewed. The findings reveal that gender discrimination is rampant in Balochistan and girls are not allowed to pursue education, denied good healthcare and their social relationships and social behavior is also controlled by men. Illiteracy, rigid customs and traditions, patriarchal society and influence of religious personalities were the main causes of gender discrimination in Quetta. Discrimination is present at all levels and among all classes; however the type and level of discrimination varies with the educational background of the respondents. The illiterate respondents had more rigid views about gender discrimination and were more under the influence of religious personalities. In fact majority of the respondents desired an end to gender discrimination and considered it a cause of socio-economic deprivation in the province. Study explores the various issues women face in their daily lives in education, health care, social relationships and decision making in context of gender discrimination.

**Keywords:** Balochistan; Gender discrimination; Patriarchal; Purdah (Veil)

### Introduction

In the simplest terms discrimination is the unequal treatment of people on the basis of characteristics that differentiate those [1]. According to Quillian [2] factors such as stereotypes, prejudice and/or racism motivate a person to discriminate. Gender discrimination as the name suggests is the unfair treatment of women and denial of opportunities and violation of their rights. In the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) gender discrimination was defined as "any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field". Despite the numerous gender discrimination laws and court rulings, women are subjected to unequal treatment in all spheres of life all over the world [3]. Even in advanced countries that claim to be champions of women's rights gender discrimination is present in one form or the other especially in the field of economics. Women are not compensated fairly for their efforts and contributions at workplace and are often overlooked when it comes to promotions. The glass ceiling effect is more prevalent in developed countries as Baxter and Wright [4] observed that obstacles for women's promotion became intense at

higher levels of authority. In the social sphere discrimination against women is rampant in almost every field. In many developing and under developed countries of the world, women are not considered worthy of education and better medical treatment. They have no rights over property and although they may be more capable than men, they are not allowed to use their potentials and talents. Women are generally treated as second class citizens and their needs are fulfilled only after the men have had their fill. In Muslim countries particularly women are asked to observe purdah (veil) and are not allowed to step outside the house without the permission of a male member. In some societies it is mandatory for females to be accompanied by the male members when going out of the house. It has been observed that in Asian countries such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh and India, gender discrimination is particularly common [5]. According to Wadesango [6] gender discrimination in everyday experiences is common in the developing countries. Pakistan is one of such countries where gender discrimination is common, in fact when it has been ranked as the second worst country in the world (143 out of 144) by the World Economic Forum in the gender inequality index [7]. In the province of Balochistan male domination is quite strong and so is the oppression of women. Discrimination against women is the strongest in the patriarchal tribal areas and even in big cities like Quetta where women are deprived of their basic rights in every sphere of life and decisions regarding their lives are taken without their consent. One basic reason for gender discrimination is the rigid culture and strict customs of Balochistan that keeps the women suppressed and unaware

of their rights. Insecurity, illiteracy and misinterpretation of Islamic values are other reasons behind injustice and discrimination against women [8]. By land mass Balochistan is the largest province in Pakistan and is richest in natural resources too but it is also the least developed and most backward province in Pakistan with the lowest literacy rate as well [9]. Low education, poverty and low development have affected every aspect of people's lives and its strong influence on people's mindset is evident by the manner in which women are treated. Women make 44.2% of the population of Balochistan [10]. Illiteracy is one of the prime causes of gender discrimination in Quetta city, although being a metropolis it has a higher literacy rate as compared to the rest of the province still a bigger population of people especially women are illiterate. Parents especially the illiterate ones and those belonging to the low socio-economic group are not in favor of getting their daughters educated because it brings them no returns [11]. Women are considered inferior to men both physically and mentally and their lives are totally controlled by men. The birth of a son is considered a blessing and is celebrated while a daughter is burden. Wife beating is common and is considered a method of keeping women under control. Daughters are married off at an early age to men much older than them. The family honor is associated with women and their actions and movements are monitored so that they do not bring shame to the family. Women are confined to their houses and can only go out when escorted by a male member of the family. They are also supposed to observe purdah; covering of entire body except eyes when they go out [12] Women in Quetta city are fortunate as they are taken to hospitals for childbirth, in the rest of the province babies are delivered at home or taken to the hospital only if the condition becomes too serious [13]. Women are generally considered weak not only physically but also mentally. They are never included in decision making and often the consent of the girl is not sought when her marriage is arranged. Women are considered naïve and their approaches to problems immature and therefore their opinions are disregarded. Positive attributes such as intelligence, smartness and strength are associated with men [14]. Gender discrimination is largely responsible for poverty and backwardness in Balochistan [15]. In today's world economic progress is only possible when men and women work side by side. Women constitute approximately half of the population of Balochistan and by denying them education the possibility of progress is reduced by half. As half of the population is not allowed to make use of its talents, Balochistan has not been able to progress as compared to other provinces of Pakistan. The people usually claim that girls' education does not bring in returns but they are wrong. Educating a woman is beneficial for the whole generation; an educated woman can bring up her children better and also contribute towards the family income if needed. Denial of healthcare facilities has resulted in greater maternal deaths and psychological diseases; it also negatively affects the health of children [13]. The researchers pointed out gender differences to be the major hurdle for low literacy rate in Baluchistan which aligns with the findings of this study. However in the cities the mindset towards female education has changed. Quetta city has a better literacy rate and better access to education for females as indicated in this study, 60% of the respondents were found to be in favor of female education. Another discriminatory factor which as per Ashraf, Akram and Shurgeel [16] contributed to low literacy rate restriction of movement of girls. According to the authors girls are not allowed to go out of their houses without a male member of the family and this restriction becomes severe when the girls reach puberty. When carrying out research for this thesis, the issue of restriction of movement was also raised and 57% of the participants were not in favor of women going out of the house

alone while 43% favored it. However the respondents (97%) wanted the females to observe purdah (veil) when leaving the house.

## Research Methodology

The previous researches on gender discrimination illustrate that women face a variety of discrimination in their lives. The main aim of this research is to know the causes and consequences of gender discrimination against women with different aspects nutrition, education, health, decision making, and behavior of men towards women in Quetta city. In the given research a quantitative approach was used. Data was collected from 200 respondents. 50 literate male, 50 literate female, 50 illiterate male and 50 illiterate female have been selected to participate in the research. The stratified sampling has been used in this research. This research carried out by method using description survey and interview schedule. In this research both questionnaires and interviews have been used. The primary data collected through the survey and schedule interviews is calculated and analyzed through different computer software of SPSS and Excel whereas descriptive techniques like regression analysis, correlation and Chi Square formula has been used for data analysis and interpretation.

## Hypotheses testing

Ho There is no relationship between educational qualification and girls should study beyond matric H1: Educational Qualification is related with allowing girls to study beyond matric the Degree of Freedom (DF) was calculated to be 8. The significance was taken at 0.05, Value of Chi Square ( $\chi^2$ )=42.48, Value of  $p=0.0001$ .

The value of  $p$  is very small which means that there exists an association between the variables, therefore the null hypothesis is rejected and it is proved that educational qualification of the respondents is associated with allowing girls to study beyond matric (secondary school).

H<sub>0</sub> No relationship between women are inferior to men and cannot take part in decision making.

H<sub>1</sub> Women are considered inferior to men and cannot take part in decision making.

Degree of Freedom=(Row-1)x(Column-1)=(3-1)x(3-1)=4  
Significance taken at=0.05,

Chi square Value=9.94, Value of  $p=0.0001$ .

Again the value of  $p$  is very small which proves that the null hypothesis is wrong and women are considered inferior and cannot take part in decision making.

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no relationship between Influence of religious personalities and women should observe purdah.

H<sub>3</sub>: Significant relationship exists between influence of religious personalities and women should observe purdah.

The Degree of Freedom=4, Significance level=0.05, Value of Chi square=20.26, Value of  $p=0.004$ .

As value of  $p$  is less than the significance level hence the null hypothesis is rejected and an association exists between influence of religious personalities and women should observe purdah.

Hypothesis H<sub>0</sub>: There is no relationship between daughters are a burden and sons are given preference for food.

H<sub>4</sub>: There is no relationship between daughters are a burden and sons are given preference for food, Degree of Freedom=4, Significance Value=0.05, Value of chi square=64.007, Value of p=0.0001.

On the basis of lower value of p, the null hypothesis is rejected and an association exists between daughters being considered a burden and sons given better food.

H<sub>6</sub>: There is no relationship between educational qualification and women's entitlement to better healthcare.

H<sub>5</sub>: Relationship exists between educational qualification and women's entitlement to better healthcare. The Degree of Freedom=8, Significance Level=0.05, Value of Chi square=74.55, Value of p=0.0001.

The null hypothesis is rejected on the basis of low value of p, hence it is proved that educational qualification affects the decision to provide quality healthcare to women.

## Results and Discussions

This study was conducted with the aim of determining the causes and consequences of gender discrimination in Quetta city. The response to the questionnaire and interviews confirms the presence of gender discrimination is present in every walk of life be it social, economic, health or education. Another fact that the response highlighted was that there are variations in discrimination for instance discrimination against women was at its peak in the social behavior sphere whereas it was considerably low in health and education.

Questions	Yes	No	Maybe
Should girls be educated?	60%	30%	10%
Should girls be given education beyond Matric	45%	50%	5%
Female education leads to betterment of socio-economic conditions	70%	30%	0
Women should pursue education of their choice	40%	52.5%	7.5%
Culture is the reason for illiteracy among women	72.50%	15%	12.5%

**Table 1:** The participants are in favour of women's education.

Table 1 shows that the participants are in favour of women's education and admit that women's education brings betterment in socio-economic conditions. However some of the respondents believe that girls should not be educated beyond matric and they should not be given the right to choose subjects. The respondents also blamed the culture for low education among women.

## Social behavior discrimination

According to Wadesango [6] gender discrimination in everyday experiences is common in the developing countries. Pakistan is one of such countries where gender discrimination is common, in fact when it has been ranked as the second worst country in the world (143 out of 144) by the World Economic Forum in the gender inequality index [7]. According to participants' rigid mentality, narrow views and adherence to age old customs and traditions are the main reasons of discrimination against women in Balochistan. People develop the same narrow minded view of the religion and mistreat women by not giving them their basic rights and giving the away in marriage at a very young age to a man much older than them. Families also marry off their girls

## Discrimination in education

Gender discrimination is not uniform in the urban Pakistani society and generally people from higher educational background and higher socio-economic class did not discriminate against women. Gender discrimination exists mostly in lower socio-economic classes and among those with poor educational background [17]. According to respondents those who belong to educated background and those with sound financial background were strongly in favor of education for women and also considered that women should be given equal educational rights. This is because education brings enlightenment and makes people realize its importance. Educated families support female education because they know that educating a woman actually means educating a generation. Another factor that has contributed towards the rising awareness of the importance of female education is that educating girls has become a norm of the society and by providing them education; the family actually increases their chances of finding a good husband.. Educating girls is also considered a bad investment because they are not permitted to go out and work. In families where literacy rate is low or where educational background is weak, girls are considered a burden and a strain on the resources of the family. Ashraf, Akram and Shurgeel [16] in their research on education of women in rural areas of Pakistan found a yawning gap in access of education between male and female. The researchers specifically gave the example of Baluchistan province where the illiteracy rate was found to be the worst as 90% of the women were found to be illiterate [16].

at a young age to lessen the burden and also to secure their future. When it came to decision making, majority of the participants including women considered it the field of men. This could be because of the strong male dominated society of Balochistan and also because of the customs and traditions where a woman's opinion even in matters related to her is not considered important. There is a general assumption that women are weak psychologically and therefore. The limited role of women in decision making in family matters was also studied by Zafar, et al. [18] who found the Pakistani society too male dominated with women having a very small say in family matters and their advice generally not sought in such matters. Understand the complexities of problems and hence incapable of taking right decisions. The respondents were also against women venturing out alone because in their opinion women were helpless and incapable of taking care of themselves. This is one of the main reasons why girls are not allowed to attend schools. A study conducted by Kakeopoto [19] on discrimination faced by the women in rural Sindh province of Pakistan revealed some similarities. For instance the birth of a boy is celebrated more in both places as shown by the response to the questionnaire 78% of the participants considered daughters a burden.

One of the findings of the study that influence of culture is quite strong in the society also aligned with the response of the questionnaire in

which 72.50% of the respondents agreed that cultural influence was strong.

Question	Yes	No	Maybe
Daughters are considered a burden	78%	22%	0
Sons are given better food to eat	79%	21%	0
Females are considered inferior to males	82.50%	17.5%	0
Women can go outside unaccompanied	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%	03%	0
Influence of religious personalities is behind discrimination	77%	11.5%	11.5%
Influence of media on gender discrimination	72%	13%	16%
Govt. can play an important role in eliminating gender discrimination	82.5%	17.5%	0

**Table 2:** Women face more discrimination in social sphere as a girl child.

The above Table 2 shows that women face more discrimination in social sphere as a girl child is considered a burden and treated as a second class citizen with boys being given preference in every daily routine. Women are not allowed to participate in decision making even in important matters such as marriage. They cannot go out alone and without a veil. The respondents believe that media and the religious personalities promote gender discrimination. The respondents are also of the view that the government can play an important role in reducing gender discrimination.

### Discrimination in healthcare

Healthcare is another field where women face discrimination and has been researched upon extensively the world over. In his study Ali

[20] noted that women faced discrimination in Pakistan in all walks of life including healthcare provision. Healthcare is another field where variations in response occur with educated respondents in favor of advanced healthcare for the women while the illiterate and poor respondents were of the opinion that women did not deserve good healthcare. Women eat after men have eaten and so there is not much left as a result of which they are malnourished. Marriage at an early age and child bearing too takes toll on their health. Maternal mortality is highest in Balochistan and among major cities; Quetta has the highest maternal deaths (Table 3).

Questions	Yes	No	Maybe
Females are entitled to good health	60.5%	33.5%	6%
Sons are given preference when providing medical facilities	55%	45%	0

**Table 3:** Respondents believed that girls are entitled to good healthcare.

The response shows that although respondents believed that girls are entitled to good healthcare, they give preference to sons when availing medical facilities.

### Causes of gender discrimination

Illiteracy is one of the prime causes of gender discrimination in Quetta city, although being a metropolis it has a higher literacy rate as compared to the rest of the province still a bigger population of people especially women are illiterate. Parents especially the illiterate ones and those belonging to the low socio-economic group are not in favor of getting their daughters educated because it brings them no returns [11]. Girls get married and leave the parents' house whereas boys are future bread earners; in such cases investing in the education of girls is considered a waste of resources whereas investing in boys' education

brings fruitful outcomes in the form of money that he earns in future. The girls are also not educated because they are supposed to do household chores and get married and have children; in the view of a majority of people these tasks hardly require special skills or formal education to be accomplished [11]. Rigid culture and traditions are other major contributors towards gender discrimination in the Baloch society [12]. Women are considered inferior to men both physically and mentally and their lives are totally controlled by men. The birth of a son is considered a blessing and is celebrated while a daughter is burden. Wife beating is common and is considered a method of keeping women under control. Daughters are married off at an early age to men much older than them. The family honor is associated with women and their actions and movements are monitored so that they do not bring shame to the family. Women are confined to their houses

and can only go out when escorted by a male member of the family. They are also supposed to observe purdah; covering of entire body except eyes when they go out [12]. Women in Quetta city are fortunate as they are taken to hospitals for childbirth, in the rest of the province babies are delivered at home or taken to the hospital only if the condition becomes too serious [13]. In the tribal areas of Balochistan, girls are not allowed to go alone anywhere and are accompanied by a male member of their family if they do so [12]. Although this practice is not followed in Quetta city but parents prefer to send their daughters to nearby schools and colleges. Girls are forced to take subjects available in colleges near their homes and can therefore not study the subjects they like; boys on the other hand can go to other cities or even abroad for higher education. Women are generally considered weak not only physically but also mentally. They are never included in decision making and often the consent of the girl is not sought when her marriage is arranged. Women are considered naïve and their approaches to problems immature and therefore their opinions are disregarded. Positive attributes such as intelligence, smartness and strength are associated with men [14]. Although Baloch men claim that women are treated with respect and equality and quote various instances from history to strengthen their claim but in reality this is not the case, in this strongly patriarchal society women take the backseat in every aspect of life; their fates are decided by the men of their family [14]. Women are also partially responsible for the discrimination against them, though they are aware that Islam gives them equal rights but still they do not protest when their rights are usurped. From the very beginning girls see priority being given to brothers and so they not only learn to make sacrifices for men but later on also treat their daughters the same way. Women accept discrimination as a norm of the society and a part of their lives.

### Consequences of gender discrimination

Gender discrimination is largely responsible for poverty and backwardness in Balochistan [15]. In today's world economic progress is only possible when men and women work side by side. Women constitute approximately half of the population of Balochistan and by denying them education the possibility of progress is reduced by half. As half of the population is not allowed to make use of its talents, Balochistan has not been able to progress as compared to other provinces of Pakistan. The people usually claim that girls' education does not bring in returns but they are wrong. Educating a woman is beneficial for the whole generation; an educated woman can bring up her children better and also contribute towards the family income if needed. Denial of healthcare facilities has resulted in greater maternal deaths and psychological diseases; it also negatively affects the health of children [13]. Although gender discrimination has been the subject of numerous studies but the problems of the women from Balochistan specifically Quetta were never discussed in any previous study. A study conducted by Kakeopoto [19] on discrimination faced by the women in rural Sindh province of Pakistan revealed some similarities. For instance the birth of a boy is celebrated more in both places as shown by the response to the questionnaire 78% of the participants considered daughters a burden. One of the findings of the study that influence of culture is quite strong in the society also aligned with the response of the questionnaire in which 72.50% of the respondents agreed that cultural influence was strong. The study by Kakeopoto [19] also proved that men were considered superior in the Sindhi society; a view shared by 82.50% of the respondents of this study which thereby proves the superiority of men in the Baloch society. Another similarity was that the education of the girls in family relied upon the education

of the guardian; in families where the head was educated, girls could pursue education. Ashraf, Akram and Shurgeel [16] in their research on education of women in rural areas of Pakistan found a yawning gap in access of education between male and female. The researchers specifically gave the example of Baluchistan province where the illiteracy rate was found to be the worst as 90% of the women were found to be illiterate [16]. The researchers pointed out gender differences to be the major hurdle for low literacy rate in Baluchistan which aligns with the findings of this study. When carrying out research for this thesis, the issue of restriction of movement was also raised and 57% of the participants were not in favor of women going out of the house alone while 43% favored it. However the respondents (97%) wanted the females to observe purdah (veil) when leaving the house. Alam [15] made the impact of gender discrimination on gender development and poverty alleviation as the subject of their study and found that women were discriminated in all spheres of life. Alam [15] also noticed that a traditional division between the roles assigned to men and women still existed and women were mostly expected to become teachers. This restriction of availing opportunities and gender discrimination are in Alam [15] opinion the primary reasons behind poverty in Pakistan. An interesting observation made by Alam [15] was that socio-economic conditions of the area in particular and the country in general could be improved through education of women. This observation was also made when carrying out research for this article as 70% of the respondents shared their view that their socio-economic conditions can become better if women receive education. Alam [15] also observed that most of the decisions were taken by men in the family.

The limited role of women in decision making in family matters was also studied by Zafar, et al. [18] who found the Pakistani society too male dominated with women having a very small say in family matters and their advice generally not sought in such matters. The authors observed that although women could participate in taking decisions in matters related to the household for instance home décor, cooking meals and decorating the house etc. they were not included in decision making in matters outside the home. According to these authors in tribal societies women were considered the property of men and were given a status inferior to men; the activities of women in social and economic domains were also restricted. The findings of Zafar, et al. [18] match with the findings of this article as well as from the response to the questionnaire it is clear that 82.5% of the respondents stated that men were superior to women and 70% of the respondents were of the opinion that women should not participate in decision making. Even in important matters such as marriages, the opinion of girls is not sought as indicated by 77% response from the participants who claimed that girls should not be allowed to choose their life partners. This means that all important matters such as education of children, their healthcare and marriage are solely decided by the men of the family. Healthcare is another field where women face discrimination and has been researched upon extensively the world over. In his study Ali [20] noted that women faced discrimination in Pakistan in all walks of life including healthcare provision. This discrimination was prevalent in rural areas of Pakistan especially Baluchistan where mostly male children were given medical treatment than female children [20]. Ali [20] also noted that in patriarchal societies, decisions are usually carried out by men hence decision whether the child receives medical attention or not is also determined by the elders usually the male members. Ali et al. [21] made gender discrimination in Karachi an urban city the subject of their study and found that religious misconceptions related to women also contributed towards

discrimination. Most men even women support the traditional thinking that woman has to submit to the will of man. According to Ali et al. [21], discrimination on the basis of religion was more common in the lower socio-economic group and low educational background. People with educated background had a more tolerant view and a better understanding of religion and therefore gender discrimination was low if not non-existent. Finally the study conducted by Delavande and Zafar [17] shows that gender discrimination is not uniform in the urban Pakistani society and generally people from higher educational background and higher socio-economic class did not discriminate against women. Gender discrimination exists mostly in lower socio-economic classes and among those with poor educational background. The observation by Delavande and Zafar [17] aligns with the findings of this research that intensity of discrimination against women varies across educational background and socio-economic conditions. One finding of this research was that 71.5% of the participants believed that media influences people and that media can play a vital role in addressing gender discrimination. In previous studies such as by Khan [22] the role of media in fostering gender discrimination in Pakistan has been discussed. Very few studies have researched the impact of media in lowering gender discrimination while no study in Pakistan has been carried out to specifically explore the role of media in addressing gender discrimination [23].

## Conclusion

The paper "Causes and Consequences of Gender Discrimination in Quetta City" was carried out to determine the reasons behind gender discrimination in Quetta and its negative effects on the lives of women in particular and Quetta city in general. Women face discrimination in almost all aspects of life but it is the least in education and healthcare whereas it is at peak in social behavior. As the sample population was diverse, variations in views and opinions exist. According to findings basically there are two mindsets in Quetta city, the literate and the illiterate. The illiterate group believes that only boys should pursue education as they are they will grow up to be bread earners. People still believe that investing in the education of girls is a waste of resources. The literate believe that girls should be educated and that they are entitled to better healthcare facilities. However when it comes to decision making, both groups are of the opinion that women are incapable of making decisions and therefore the men in their families fathers or husbands take decisions on their behalf. This shows that education has not completely changed the patriarchal mindset of the people in Quetta because not only men think that deciding the fate of the women in their family is their right but women also support this notion. They still believe in the age old tradition that sons are a blessing while daughter is a burden. Male members of the family are given more importance in every aspect, even in basic things like food. Both boys and girls need approximately the same amount of nutrition but boys get to eat better food than girls. From the very beginning girls are taught that the needs of the men are more important and must be fulfilled. They are also raised in an environment where men are considered superior and control lives of women. Hence the feeling of inferiority and low self-esteem is deeply etched in the minds of women who then accept discrimination and abuse as a part of their lives and a norm of the society. Both literate and illiterate male respondents

believe that women should observe purdah and should not go out alone. Very few people are in favor of women pursuing a career. According to the data the narrow minded views of people who claim to be an authority on religion are largely responsible for this discrimination; in the media too educated and modern women are portrayed as women with weak morals who later on suffer. These negative projections further reinforce restrictions on women and are used by me to justify discrimination.

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