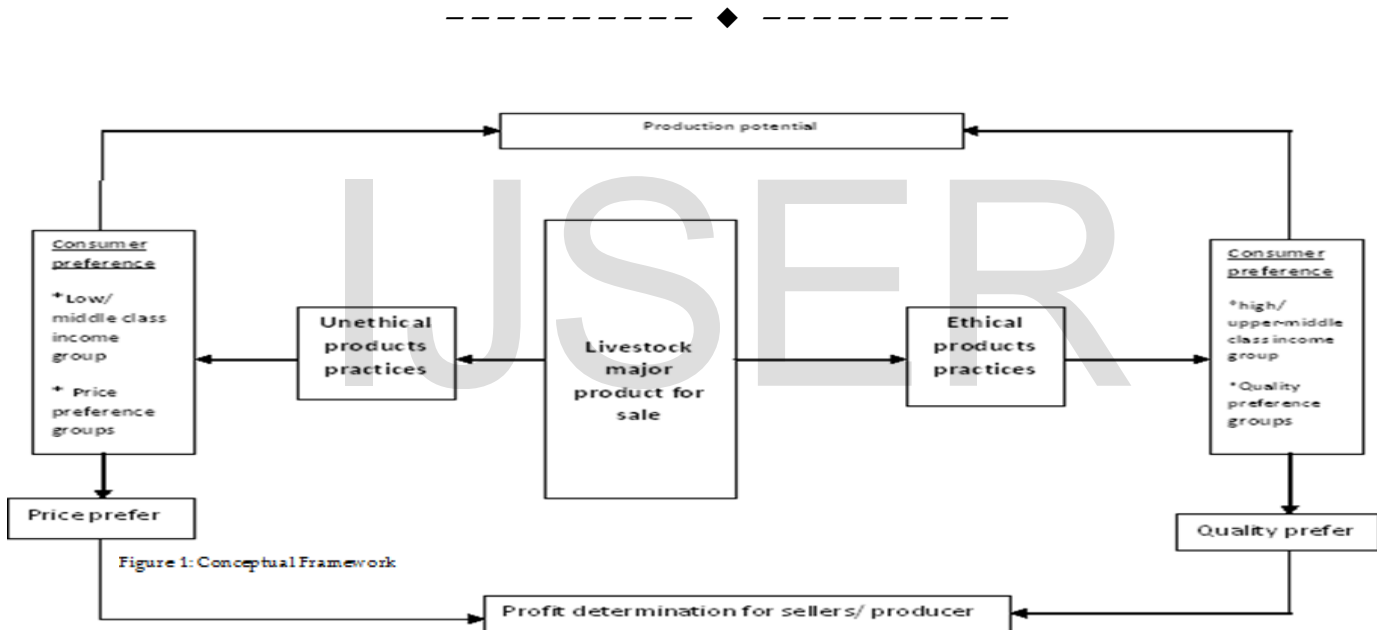


# Measuring the effects of perceived unethical practices by butchers in livestock red meat on consumer buying behavior in Balochistan-Pakistan

Muhammad Shafiq, Asma Azhar, Nosheen Rafiq, and Jan Muhammad

**ABSTRACT:** During the past two decade, it has been perceived by the consumers that sellers of meat and dairy products are engaged in unethical practices in Balochistan. The purpose of this study was to determine the unethical practices regarding red meat including beef and mutton by the butchers in Balochistan. Primary data collected from the Balochistan through the convenience sampling. On the basis of data, it was results found that issues related to unethical practices are prevalent, causing reduction in sales levels of red meat traders and ultimately rooted a downside impact on the livestock economy of Balochistan.

**Keywords:** Beef, consumer buying behavior, ethics, livestock, red meat, mutton.



## INTRODUCTION

In terms of area, Balochistan constitute the largest province of Pakistan: however, it has the lowest population density in the country (GoP, 1998). Quetta is the capital city of Balochistan situated at an average elevation of 1,680 meters (5,500 ft) above sea level, (Pakistan Paedia, 2012). The need of food for the province is fulfilled by multiple supply lines Punjab, Sindh and nearby provinces which incorporate the surrounding markets of Balochistan. Foremost produces of livestock of Balochistan are beef, mutton, poultry, eggs and open milk (Babcock, 2004). There is huge gap of demand and supply of major livestock products. Red meat demand is growing at almost 6% per annum while supply is

growing at 1.8% (MINFAL, 2013). Hence, there is a wide gap of 4.7% in demand and supply which is likely to increase (SMEDA, 2012). Thus, butchers and livestock suppliers are in position to manipulate the red meat market in Balochistan. Demand and supply gap tempting to the red meat suppliers and butcher to contrive unethical practices in all over the province. Part of any ethical lesson, is to understand that you do what you believe is right, but you also take responsibility for your actions (Johnson, 1995). As ill luck would have it, sellers take the undue advantage of it (Cock, 2005). They are involved in unethically practices with red meat products. Unconsciously, those sellers who are involved in profit making by any means, resulted an unethical practices which have aggravated the livestock sector in the province. Ethics is concerned with the

principles of right conduct, that is, the moral aspect of behavior (Levy, 2004), rarely practiced by red meat sellers in Balochistan. Overwhelmingly, the livestock sector has not achieved the real potentials and butchers do not get the enough profit through massive sale level (Fairbrother and Warn, 2002). Additionally, unhygienic food of major product of livestock has damaged the sector in the form of low returns, having no major impact on the regional neighboring countries that are the biggest opportunity for export. However, Balochistan remains miles away from this market primarily because of weaknesses in the supply chain management. The first step towards accessing the international market would be to introduce health and hygiene protocols in the domestic meat market (Jalil *et al.*, 2009). Unless the domestic market of meat is better developed it is not possible to exploit the export potential (SMEDA, 2009). Hence, consumer preferences are based on the price versus quality.

Most of the time middle or lower class consumers contended to get the major food items i-e beef and mutton at lowest price without considering the quality. In fact, ethics involves a set of behavior to regulate the code of conduct in accordance. However, upper class or upper middle class, get the major livestock consumptions on quality preference basis. Related and emerging issues include meat production and environmental effects from today's common livestock production methods (Demeyer, 1993; Den Ouden, 1996; Verbeke, Van Oeckel *et al.*, 1999). If Butchers provide major meat items hygienically healthy to the consumer, they definitely can grasp substantial profit, and also can export it to other countries of the region as Balochistan is situated on the border of two countries i-e Iran and Afghanistan (Hemsworth, 1986). Food suppliers and sellers are not much aware of the selling of healthy and hygienic food, however, business is a form of applied ethics, or professional ethics that examines ethical principles and moral or ethical problems that arise in a business environment (Berger *et al.*, 2010). Ethics is applied to all aspects of business conduct, relevant to the behavior of individuals and to entire organizations. Practical ethics is the study of specific moral problems, and moral theory is the attempt to answer all the specific moral questions raised in practical ethics (McNaughton, 1988). Ethical practice in livestock concerns to red meat products is doing the right thing. It is the difference between right and wrong which is not comprehended by the business community in Balochistan (Lawrence, 2006). It allows to building our character traits of caring, credibility, reverence, justice, accountability, and citizenship so as to helps to make doing the right thing (Pedersen *et al.*, 2003).

As a matter of fact, the world is used to considerate that having producers and sellers of livestock product must be concerned for ethical issues. Business ethics and the resulting behavior evolved as well and unethical business was involved in red meat selling in developing countries (Berger and Easterly 2010). Red meat is obtained from buffalos, cattle, goat and sheep. These injected buffalos and cows are used for increasing milk production by milk man and then injected meat of such buffalos and cows becomes injurious for humans: unfortunately, these exhausted buffalos and cows are then sold to butchers. Injected animals are harmful, whose age being cut shorted. As a matter of fact, these animals are frequently supplied in market. Buffalo beef is tastier than cow's beef. This is manipulated by the sellers as they die the cow beef with yellow-golden color. Price cautious consumers are easily cheated by them. Sick and injected-treated beef is supplied to market which constitutes 75% unofficially (Aslam, 2003). Suppliers' mal-practices become successful due to the gap in demand and supply (Merrill, 1983). When animals are transported to the markets, 10 per cent of them are died but they are unaccounted for (Aslam, 2003). Additionally, these died animals which are seemingly supplied to market valued to Rs. 1.5 million (Rizvi, 2002). Maximum supply of this meat is supplied to the different small restaurants, hotels, railway station shops. Price preference consumers are the easy trap. To increase the weight of animals, their carcass is pumped through water which makes it bloat and weight gain. In the government slaughter houses there are the gross irregularities e.g. ghost employees, shady record keeping and financial unaccountability are the common and frequent (Demeyer, 1993) in Quetta. Majority of labors consists of toiled workers, they love to work hard. Thus, in Balochistan, priority is given to the more fatty products. In order to fulfill such type of priority more advance nutritious food is required for which fairly not available (Nadeem and Marri, 2011). Healthy food will bring healthy minds and a prosper society. Importance of healthy eating can be judge from the technologically advanced countries, yielding a concept of well-being and happiness.

Consumer concerns about meat, especially mutton, food safety risks, and the impact of food consumption on human health have continuously increased during the last decade (Kramer, 1990; Sparks and Shepherd, 1994; Hughes, 1997; Kafka and Von Alvensleben, 1998). This study is significant for the consumers, government, sellers and equally to every stakeholder living in Balochistan as well as in Pakistan. The question whether or not red meat products should have moral standing is still debated among researchers (Narveson, 1983; Midgley, 1983; Singer, 1990). If the answer is positive, then two new queries: foundation for our responsibilities to livestock foodstuffs, and duties does the

society be indebted to them (Rizvi, 2002). In this regard, society has to be responsible regarding its duties to make accountable those who undermine the ethical values. Research would attempt to persuade the investors to invest in livestock of Balochistan by following the ethical values set by the society (Afzal, 2011). The moral problems traditionally studied in ethics are always about humans:

**Table 1 Means, Standard Deviation, Variance and Correlations**

how we morally should relate to each other and, sometimes, to society (Bentham, 1996). Beef and mutton selling are nowadays characterized by a complex set of intrinsic and extrinsic quality attributes (Luning, Marcelis and Jongen, 2002). This can lead to a sizeable improvement in the quantity and quality of livestock and its products. In any event, this research is an endeavor to purport the impact of livestock red meat products for consumers, butchers, regulatory authorities and other stakeholder all over the province as these products has their magnitude role in the economy of Balochistan.

Variable	Mean	SD	Variance	1	2	3	4	5	6	b
1. Edu	5.74	1.7	0.46	1						0.87
2. UEP	3.13	0.56	0.55	0.851	1					0.9
3. QC	3.09	0.73	0.44	0.896	0.845	1				0.88
4. PC	2.71	0.81	0.73	0.892	0.675	0.892	1			0.88
5. MI	4.13	.17	0.39	0.731	0.725	0.796	0.812	1		0.82
6. PP	4.6	1.1	0.21	0.794	-0.302	0.892	0.675	0.852	1	0.8

Education effect (Edu), Unethical practices and butchers profit (UEP), Quality Conscious Consumer (QC), Price Conscious Consumer (PC), Monthly Income (MI) and producer profit (PP)

\*\* All items are Correlated significantly at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

b = Cronbach Alpha (Cronbach, 1951).

**Hypotheses**

H<sub>1</sub>-The more unethical practices involved, the low would be the profit for sellers.

H<sub>2</sub>- The low and middle income group would be more price conscious.

H<sub>3</sub>- The high income group would be more quality conscious.

H<sub>4</sub>- Higher the educational qualification of consumers, more they would be quality conscious.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The primary data were collected from the twenty out of thirty districts of Balochistan through self-administered questionnaire survey. Study was further validated by pilot study of 25 respondents including male and female equally who frequently purchase red meat and its by-products. Through the pilot study, numbers of errors regarding language, structure, flow and scale options were removed from the questionnaire. The research has the practical implication and classified as casual and descriptive research pertaining to measure the unethical practices

and how people prefer to purchase type of meat: e.g. cattle beef or buffalo meat and goat mutton or sheep mutton. Sample of study consisted of general public including all folk of middle to upper lower class people purchasing red meat and its by-products whose monthly income ranging from Rs.15, 000 to above Rs.75, 000 per month, including both male and female residing in Balochistan. Variables were purchasing frequency, price consciousness, quality consciousness, unethical practices by butchers and profit, education and monthly income. Due to peculiar nature and heavily scattered population of the province, convenience sampling was used. Distributed samples were 462 for main study. According to the possibility of unreturned questionnaires, 10 per cent extra of sample size distributed which finally 416 questionnaires received. The questions were checked to be simple, plan and clear. Consumer perception was scaled according to 4-point-Likert scale standard from never to always (1= never, 2= rarely, 3=sometimes and 4= always).The control variables consist of age, gender, education, marital status, occupation, purchasing of meat time span, and monthly income. The alpha was calculated for each of the question groups which ranged from 0.80 to 0.92 in the analysis. Most of the respondents were male, consisting 277 (60%) of sample. The demography's for employees in this sample had an average age of 35.79 years (S.D. = 9.85), a mean of 2.0 (S.D. =1.9) years of experience in the organization. To test the hypothesis, first applied the Pearson correlation test to measure whether and how much the variables (purchasing frequency, price consciousness, quality consciousness, unethical practices by butchers and profit, education and monthly income) are correlated. The test was performed by IBM's SPSS 16.0 version.

**Table 2: Summary of hypotheses testing**

Hypotheses	Results
H <sub>1</sub> : The more unethical practices involved, the low would be the profit for sellers.	Supported
H <sub>2</sub> : The low and middle income group would be more price conscious.	Not Supported
H <sub>3</sub> : The high income group would be more quality conscious.	Supported
H <sub>4</sub> : Higher the educational qualification of consumers, more they would be quality conscious.	Supported

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Result of the study shows that people living in Balochistan, sometimes, like to purchase for their family members. Quality purchase is the first preference of 68% of people which comprise of well-educated and high income group whereas 32% people are more conscious about the price issues, having no much concern about the unethical practices by the butchers in Balochistan. However, they are

looking for more quality product on the lowest possible prices. 62% people like to purchase goat meat in the city of Quetta and a town called: Mustung. Additionally, reverse case is in the kuchlack area which is not far away from main city of Quetta. Study also indicates that 63% people in Balochistan prefer to purchase cattle beef as compare to buffalo.

In the correlation table, there are number of relationship among the different variables. Unethical Practices and producer profit ( $r=-.302, p<.01$ ) proved the  $H_1$  that more the unethical practices, the less will be the profit. Another variable was the Education and unethical practices, when it was tested ( $r=.851, p<.05$ ), it showed the relationship significantly positive which did not support the  $H_2$  whereas it proved that on low level of education or illiterate even do conscious about the ethical issues. There is positive correlation between monthly income and Quality conscious ( $r=.796; r=.246, p<.05$ ) which means that the higher the monthly income the more the consumer quality conscious. It displayed strong correlation that ( $H_3$ ) high income group people are more conscious about the quality of livestock products especially red meat. In the same way, if, examined the different variable such as; Education and Price conscious ( $r=0.892; p<.05$ ), illustrated the higher is the educational qualification of consumers, more they would be Price and quality conscious. Ethical livestock practices are fairly associated to education and Income they earn (Fairbrother and Warn, 2002). These correlations showed that the unethical practices reduce the profit of the livestock red meat products which ultimately negatively impact on the economy.

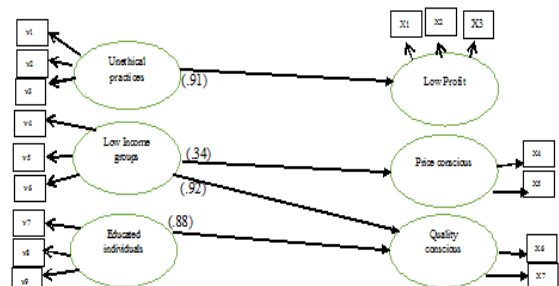
When simple regression was calculated for  $H_1$ ,  $R= .739, R^2 = .62, \text{Beta}= -.045, \text{sig level } .000, p<.05 (F 50.8) = p< 0.05$ , it suggests that the more unethical practices involved the low profit will be the result. Lower and middle income group were found more price conscious as  $H_2$  depicts that  $R= .852, R^2 = .68, \text{Beta}=-.53, \text{sig level } .000, p<.05: (F= 7.465), \text{Beta}=.52, p< 0.01$ .  $H_3$  results show that  $R= .95, R^2 = .75, \text{Beta}=.5; \text{sig level } .000, p<.05; (F= 7.5) = p< 0.01$ .  $H_4$  suggests that higher educational qualification of consumer impact on purchasing pattern as more price conscious, however results are not very strong,  $R= .297, R^2 = .088, \text{Beta}=.52, \text{sig level } .000, p<.05(F 2.9) = p< 0.01$ . Statistically, variables were significant, and percentage of variance explained by these factors would have 10.9% practical implication

Livestock red meat products are important part of the livestock economy of Balochistan. Research study measured them for their effects relating to perceived unethical practices to red meat products on consumer buying behavior. It was not discovered in the present study

that where dead animals are buried or disposed of. The impact of unethical practices reduces the profit of seller of livestock. Butchers spoil the major efforts of livestock holder, who reared them in the rangeland of Balochistan (SMEDA, 2009). Beef and mutton are liked everywhere in the world: However, butchers have their own issues to enhance more profit (Demeyer, 1993; Den Ouden, 1996; Verbeke, Van Oeckel *et al.*, 1999). They do not consider the ethical issues. Red meat is the major food item and used throughout the Balochistan. Mutton and beef are the major livestock products sold by the butchers. People are more eager to purchase meat themselves for their families. Education and monthly income are the two variables which have the impact on the purchasing habit. More educated people are fewer prices conscious and more quality conscious. Illiterate or less-educated people are not much bother about the quality of red meat product rather ambitious to purchase on the lowest price. Income of consumer has an impact on quality issue. People earn more are quality conscious. Results of the study show that married people are also tending to be more quality conscious than single ones (90% married are quality conscious). Study also indicates that those sellers involve in unethical practices, lose their major part of seller and then ultimately its impact influence on the economy of Balochistan negatively. 85% People cannot distinguish between dead animal meat and alive, since, it is generally observed that no animal is buried or dispose off or lying at the litters. Diseased animal are slaughter immediately by the butcher is considered an unethical practice and it is not appreciated by the consumer. There is a need that the butcher must follow ethical practices and sanitary inspector or official should work in true sprit to overcome the unethical issue. The study has an attempt to verify the unethical practices of butchers which was perceived by the consumers purchasing the red meat and its by-products. By following the ethical practices, butchers can increase their profit and it will be a positive impact on the economy of Balochistan. Results are well-justified with the study, conduct by the author, having a long standing implication to conduct further study.

**Structural equations modeling**

Figure 2: Theoretical structural model



Degree of freedom resulted as  $df = 6$ , hence, model is testable. Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) is smaller than 5, so, there is evidence of unethical practices by butchers (Kramer, 1990). Therefore it can be concluded variables mentioned above have the influence on red meat products. When SEM is calculated unethical practices with profit provides the beta of (.91), low income to price conscious is (.92), and educational individual to quality conscious is .88. However low income to price conscious is (.34) which shows the unsupported analysis for ( $H_3$ ) hypothesis for the model.

## CONCLUSION

The study provides considerable insight into the livestock unethical practices perceived by the consumer. Hence, it indicates that there are unethical practices prevalent in the province. This study also reveals that People are well aware of unethical practices followed by the butchers in the province. Different unethical practices are frequently opted by the butchers and red meat supplier in order to increase their profit: such as, coloring of cow's meat to pretend it buffalo beef, calf meat is used in mixing with the mince of mutton, there is no examination of sanitary inspector which provide the opportunity to butchers to manipulate the stamps on the slaughtered animal in his own shop and give bribe to the officials responsible for regulations etc. Empirical evidence was found in the study of unethical practices in the province. This means that the livestock holders' efforts to produce hygienic red meat have spoiled by the butchers and suppliers. Thus, the study provides guidelines to help decision makers to better understand how to improve the livestock red meat for the consumers. This study may provide better understanding in decision making about the outcomes and end results.

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<sup>1</sup>Muhammad Shafiq, <sup>2</sup>Asma Azhar, <sup>3</sup>Nosheen Rafiq, and Jan Muhammad<sup>4</sup>  
<sup>1</sup>Department of Commerce, University of Balochistan, Quetta; <sup>2</sup> Department of Commerce, SBK Women University; <sup>3</sup>Department of Zoology, SBK, Women University, Quetta, <sup>4</sup>Assistant Professor, Institute of Management Sciences, University of Balochistan, Quetta-Pakistan  
Corresponding address: 348-N, Block 4, Satellite Town, Quetta, Pakistan  
**Cell No: 00923337871206,**  
**corresponding email: [forshaf@gmail.com](mailto:forshaf@gmail.com)**

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