

CHANGING ATTITUDE TOWARDS FEMALE EDUCATION

(A Case Study of Village Zandra in Balochistan)

Anwaar Mohyuddin

Lecturer, Department of Anthropology, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, Pakistan

Email: unwaar@gmail.com

Mail: PO Box 3060, GPO, Islamabad, Pakistan

Proff. Dr. Hafeez-ur-Rehman Chaudhry

Chairman, Department of Anthropology, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, Pakistan

Email: hafeez@qau.edu.pk

Mail: Department of Anthropology, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, Pakistan

Mamonah Ambreen

Lecturer, DNFCE, Faculty of Education, Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad, Pakistan

Email: mamonahambreen@yahoo.com

Mail: PO Box 3060, GPO, Islamabad, Pakistan

ABSTRACT: This research paper deals with the empirical data regarding changing attitudes of both male and female towards female education. Local perception of parents regarding their daughters' education has changed during last 3 decades. An awareness of the importance of education has been created. Attitude towards education has improved. More people these days support the female education. Majority of the people have started sending their daughters to schools but still some parents are relectant to provide education to their daughters. The reasons for not sending the daughters have been shifted from pardah to economic reasons which include nonparticipation in economic activities, investment on temporary family member and the inheritance. This study is an attempt to identify the changing parental attitude towards their daughters' education. This research was conducted in Villag Zandra District Ziarat. Qualitative anthropological techniques for data collection were used during the fieldwork.

KEY WORDS: attitude, barriers, neutrality, economy, education

INTRODUCTION

Calhoun and Light in their book "Sociology", say that from the moment a baby is born, it is classified as either a girl or a boy on the basis of physical appearance. They state that biological differences are basic to the destination of male and female. According to Calhoun and Light, (1994)¹ "Society establishes a set of cultural expectations for each gender; children are taught to conform to what their society expects of them as either a boy or a girl."

¹ Calhoun, C. & Light, D. (1994). *Sociology*, Susan Keller (Ed). USA: McGraw-Hill, Inc.

In Pakistan most of the parents have different attitudes for their sons and daughters. Generally the sons are preferred in almost every field specially the education as they are the breadwinner for the family. So all the expenditure on sons is considered as an investment whereas daughters are considered as liabilities and spending over them is treated as waste.

Low-income family cannot afford enough money to educate their children, so they choose their son for higher education. It is fact that the bringing up a child by an educated mother is superior to by an uneducated mother. Awareness about the importance of female education is not a new phenomenon. But there is gap present between male and female child in literacy. Literacy rate vary from region to region as well as in case of sex. For instance, literacy rate in rural areas are lower as compared to urban areas. Similarly, female literacy rates are lower as compared to those of male (Ghafoor, 1994)².

Girls are generally limited to the domestic activities like assisting their mothers in doing the household chores, looking after their younger siblings and sometimes working to earn income, in which case, it is usually embroidery, stitching clothes and crochet work which they have to do inside their own homes. As the girls grow up, especially when they reach the stage of puberty, they are discouraged from going outside the house unaccompanied and from mixing with male relatives. The “honor” of the family is the main reason for the segregation and differentiation between the two sexes. The daughters are isolated from the main society to a certain extent to protect the “izzat” (and repute) of the family. Their chastity has to be protected, and for this reason confining them to the house and keeping them under the watchful eyes of the family is considered to be an important. This is especially true for the girls who have reached the stage of puberty.

Boys, on the other hand, are allowed to play outside. Their work is mostly related to the outside world like bringing things of everyday needs for the family, working outside to earn money etc. They are not responsible for taking care of younger siblings and doing household chores. The food is served first to the male members of the family; they are given the best part of the serving, as they are considered to be worth great respect. The rest of the food is for the children and female members of the family. The girls are trained to be more self-sacrificial, helpful and considerate of their brothers, fathers, husbands and sons. They have to control their voice, behavior, emotions, whims and wishes.

² Ghafoor, A.(1994). *Quest for Adult Literacy*. Islamabad: National Book Foundation.

The process of child education is also aimed at fitting the boys and girls into gender roles as prescribed by their society. People believe that the girls are different from boys so they try to ensure that this difference is maintained through adopting some distinct patterns of social training for boys and girls. Commonly, it is assumed that strength, self-assertiveness, valour, confidence and interest in matters outside the house are exclusively male characteristics. On the contrary, a girl is kept in narrow bounds and is supposed to be docile, shy and sociable.

LOCALE OF STUDY

This research was conducted in Village Zandra, District Ziarat, in Baluchistan, area wise the largest province of Pakistan. The Village Zandra is situated 108 km southeast of Quetta just 12 km short of Ziarat town. The village is 8,000 ft. above sea level and is surrounded by grey hills, apple orchards and Juniper forest, which is considered to be the 2nd largest in the world. Total population of Zandra according to a census carried out in 1986-87 was 2,734 residing in 120. However, according to the survey conducted by the researcher in 2007 the total population had only increased marginally to 3,234 consisting of 295 houses.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Methodology of the current research was based upon qualitative anthropological research methods. Methodology means philosophy of the research process which includes the assumptions and values that serve as a rationale for research and the standards or criteria the research use for interpreting data and reaching conclusions. Whereas by “method” we simply mean the research technique or tool used to gather data. The methods used for this research include socio-economic survey, participant observation, key informant interviews, interviews, case studies and focus group discussions. For socio-economic survey 100 households were selected through simple random sample. We choose two key informants in the village on our personal judgment basis, which knew most of the people in the village and their socio-economic conditions. Participant observation was used in order to get first hand and accurate information about the respondents. We participated in the daily activities of the village. In-depth interviews were conducted with the elder members of society to get detailed information. Structured Interviews were used to collect information from the teachers and other working women because they take the interview more seriously and give reasonably accurate

answers. Case studies were conducted to get a detailed presentation of data related to different events. This research was a longitudinal study. First of all a 4 months visit was conducted in 1987, then a couple of month long visits in 1990s and finally in 2007.

ATTITUDES TOWARDS EDUCATION

The trend towards education among males and females has changed during last three decades. Now the educational levels are improved as the percentages at elementary, secondary and higher secondary levels have really gone up. Similarly their attitudes towards education have also changed. Now most of the people send their daughters to schools. The elderly women were more for religious education whereas the younger ones were for the formal school education. Among the males trend was similar but the percentage towards formal education was higher. During last two decades this opinion has changed remarkably. No doubt the sons are still preferred but their attitude towards neutrality has really increased.

When the females of different age groups were asked questions regarding their education, they responded differently. The elderly women were more for religious education whereas the younger ones were for the formal school education. Among the males trend was similar but the percentage towards formal education was higher. A sample of 450 females was taken from the village (150 each from three different age groups) belonging to three different classes i.e. lower, middle, and upper (50 females from each class) and same size of sample was taken from the males of the village to see the changing trends and attitudes towards the education. How do males/females of their families take it? Following is the educational level of the sample at different age groups.

Table 1: Educational level of the people aging above 60 years

LEVEL	LOWER CLASS				MIDDLE CLASS				UPPER CLASS			
	Male		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
H SSC	Nil	0%	Nil	0%	02	4%	Nil	0%	Nil	0%	Nil	0%
SSC	Nil	0%	Nil	0%	03	6%	Nil	0%	04	8%	Nil	0%
Elementary	10	20%	Nil	0%	08	16%	02	4%	09	18%	Nil	0%
Primary	13	26%	08	16%	12	24%	11	22%	12	24%	15	30%
Below Primary	27	54%	42	84%	25	50%	37	74%	25	50%	35	70%

TOTAL	50	100	50	100	50	100	50	100	50	100	50	100
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(Source: Field data)

Figure1: Educational level of male (60+)

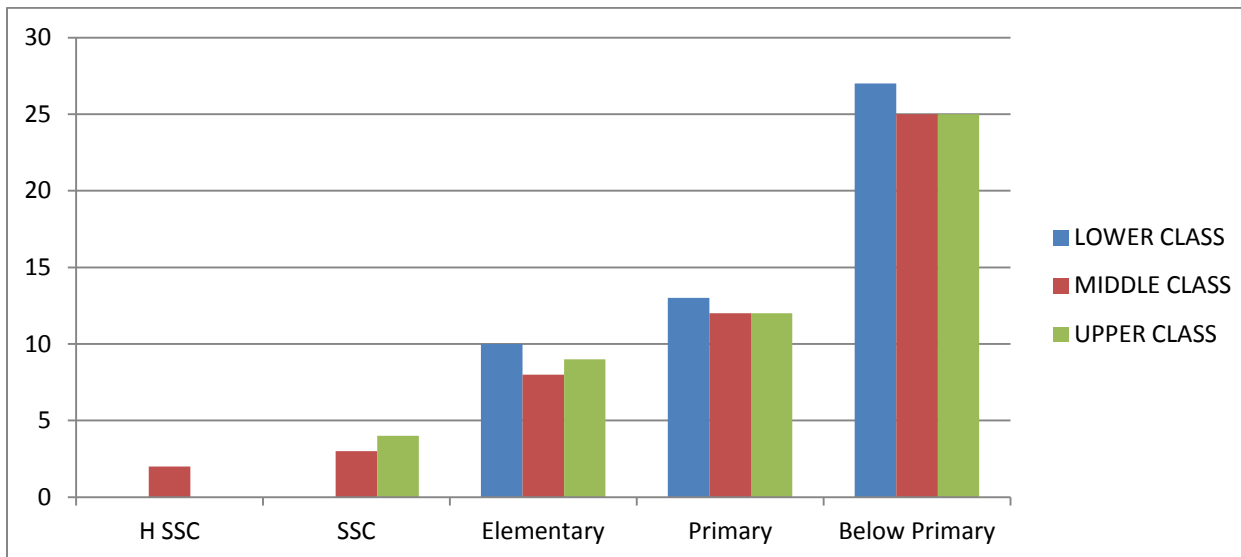


Figure 2: Educational level of female (60+)

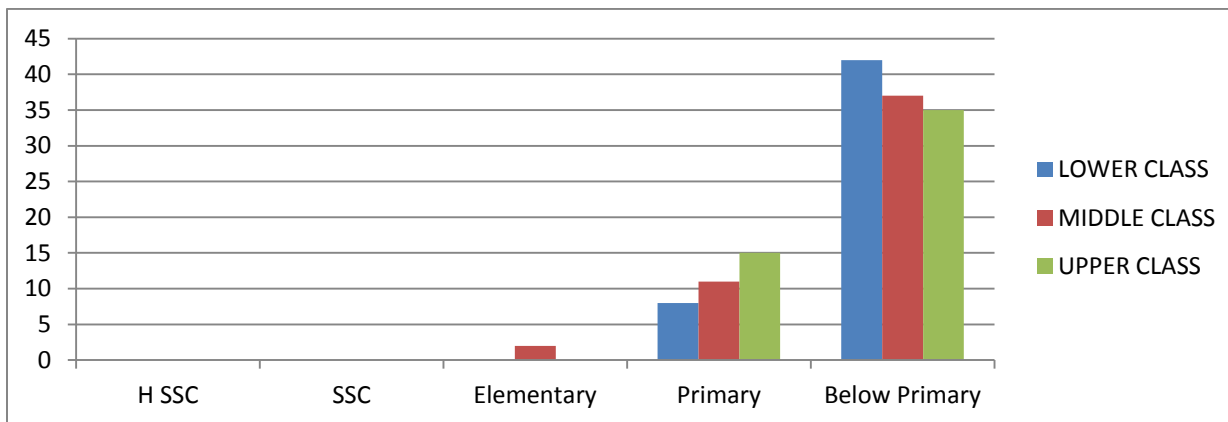


Table 2: Educational Level of the people aging between 41 – 60 years

LEVEL	LOWER CLASS				MIDDLE CLASS				UPPER CLASS			
	Male		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
H SSC	03	6%	Nil	0%	08	16%	Nil	0%	06	12%	02	4%
SSC	08	16%	05	10%	10	20%	09	18%	12	24%	13	26%
Elementary	15	30%	12	24%	12	24%	13	26%	19	38%	15	30%
Primary	13	26%	20	40%	12	24%	17	34%	07	14%	14	28%

Below Primary	11	22%	13	26%	08	16%	11	22%	06	12%	06	12%
TOTAL	50	100	50	100	50	100	50	100	50	100	50	100

(Source: Field data)

Figure 3: Educational Level of male aging 41 – 60 years

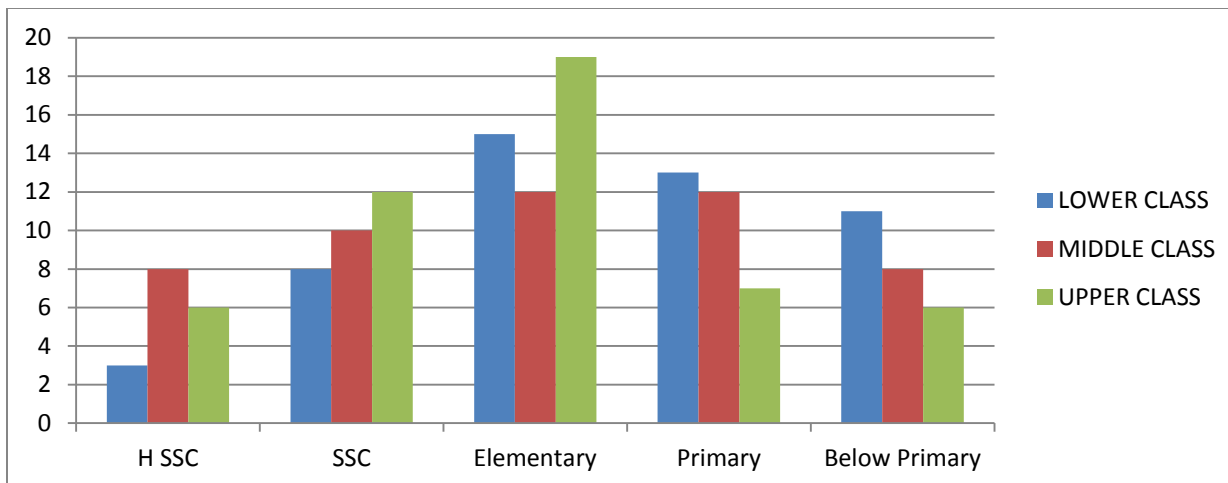


Figure 4: Educational Level of female aging 41 – 60 years

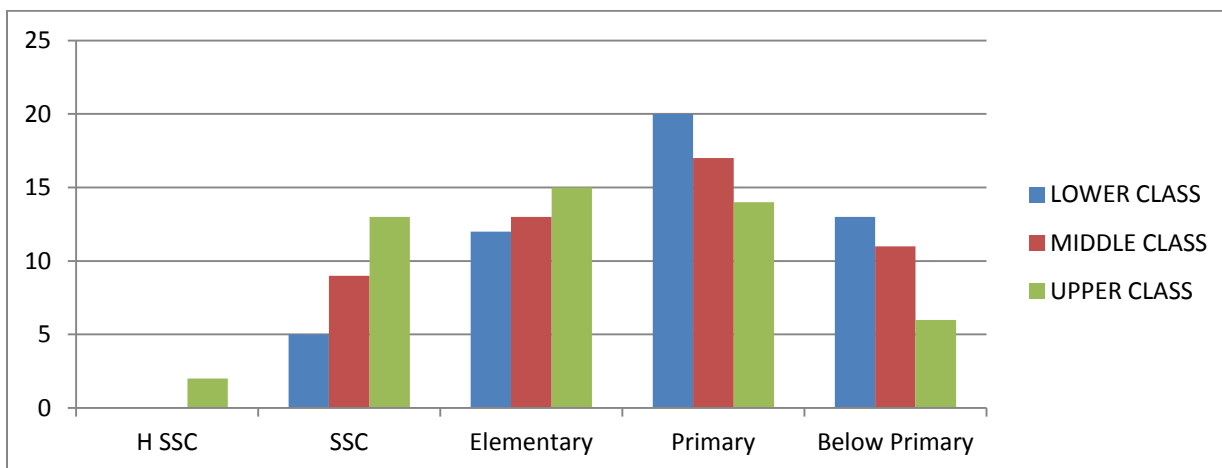


Table 3: Educational Level of the people aging between 21 – 40 years

LEVEL	LOWER CLASS				MIDDLE CLASS				UPPER CLASS			
	Male		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
H SSC	04	16%	Nil	0%	13	26%	03	6%	16	32%	10	20%
SSC	10	20%	09	18%	17	34%	15	30%	17	34%	18	36%

Elementary	18	36%	15	30%	12	24%	19	38%	10	20%	16	32%
Primary	14	28%	18	36%	08	16%	10	20%	07	14%	04	8%
Below Primary	04	8%	08	16%	Nil	0%	03	6%	Nil	0%	02	4%
TOTAL	50	100	50	100	50	100	50	100	50	100	50	100

(Source: Field data)

Figure 5: Educational Level of male aging 21 – 40 years

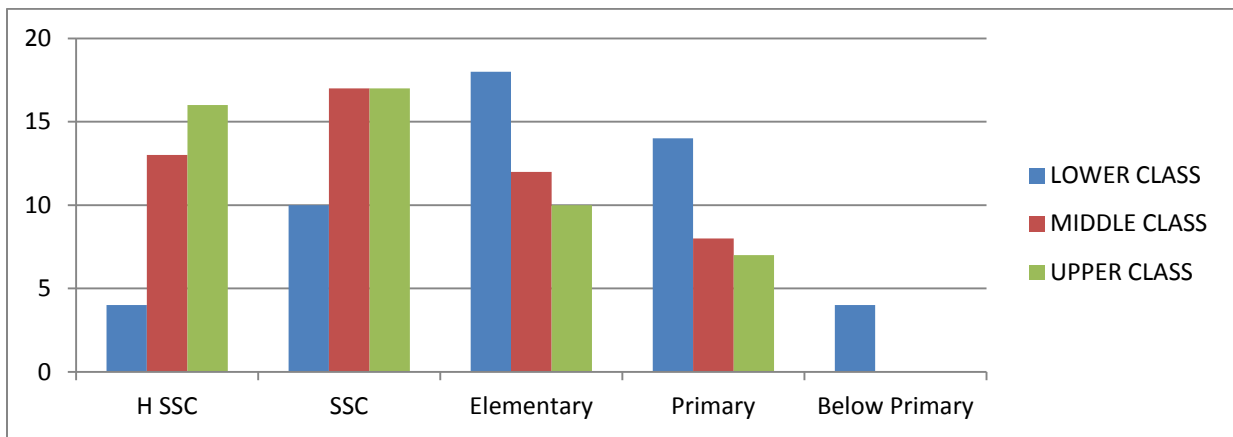
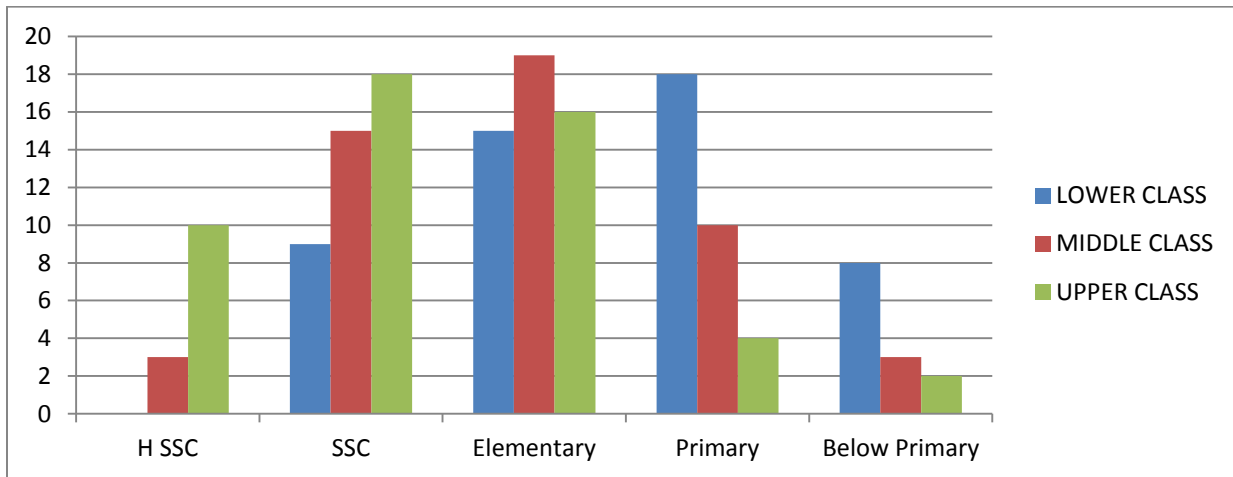


Figure 6: Educational Level of female aging 21 – 40 years



The above figures show that the trend towards education especially among the females has changed during last three decades. Now the educational levels are improved as the percentages at elementary, secondary and higher secondary levels have really gone up. Similarly their attitudes towards education have also changed. Now most of the people send their daughters to schools.

Men’s Attitude towards Female Education

The male attitude towards female education varies from class to class. Same size of sample was taken to find out the male’s attitude towards female education. People from different age groups have different opinions as shown in the following table.

Table 4: Attitude of Men (age group 60 plus)

ATTITUDE	LOWER	MIDDLE	UPPER
Apposed female education	33	32	25
Up to primary	12	10	12
Up to elementary	05	08	13
Up to secondary	Nil	Nil	Nil
Up to higher secondary	Nil	Nil	Nil
TOTAL	50	50	50

(Source: Field data)

Figure 7: Attitude of Men (age group 60 plus)

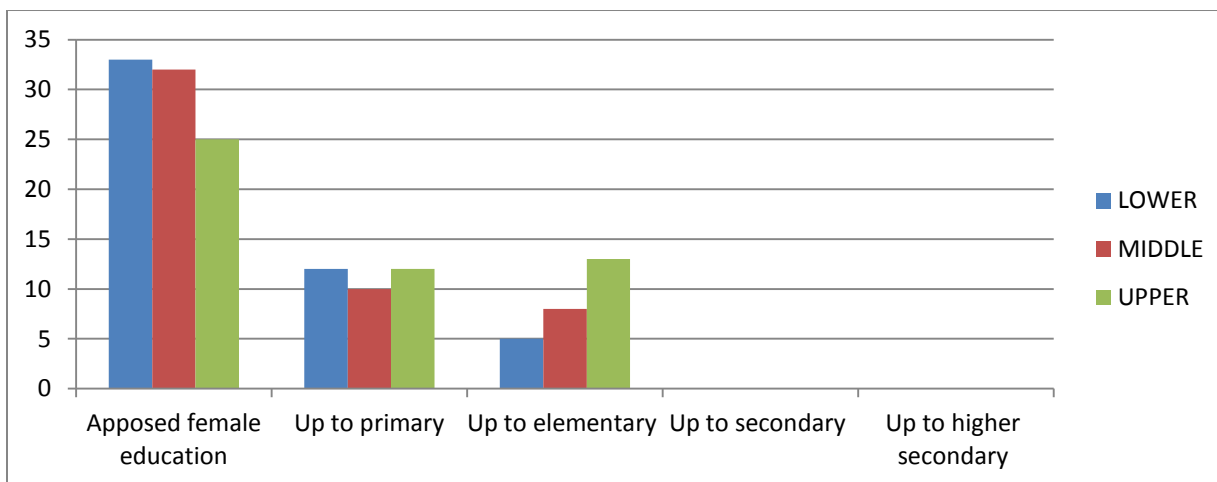


Table 5: Attitude of Men (age group 41 – 60)

ATTITUDE	LOWER	MIDDLE	UPPER
Apposed female education	15	02	06
Up to primary	20	20	11
Up to elementary	12	18	20
Up to secondary	03	05	09

Up to higher secondary	Nil	05	04
TOTAL	50	50	50

(Source: Field data)

Figure 8: Attitude of Men (age group 41 – 60)

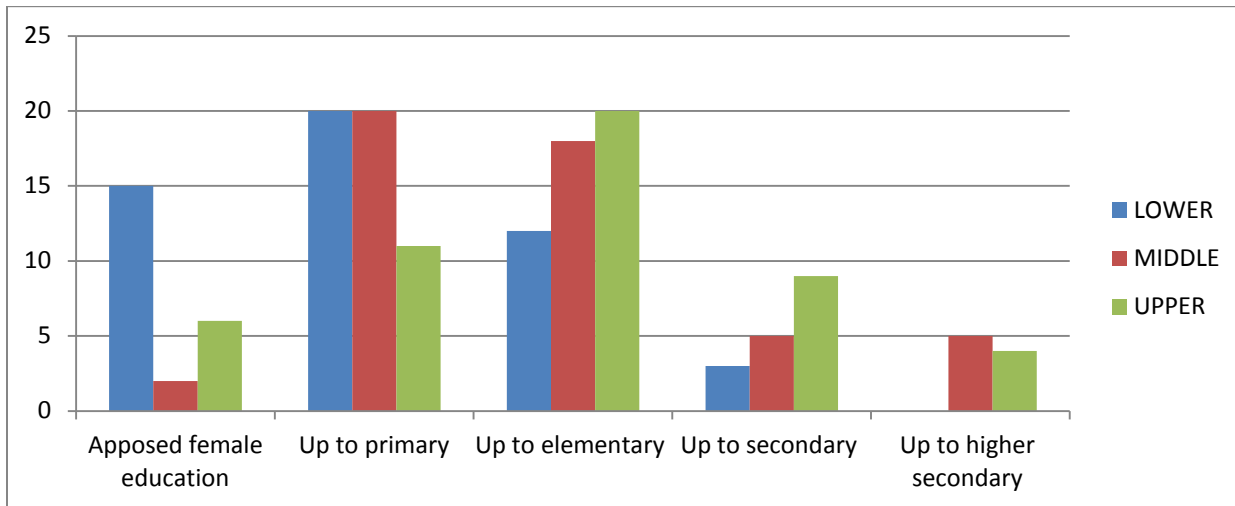
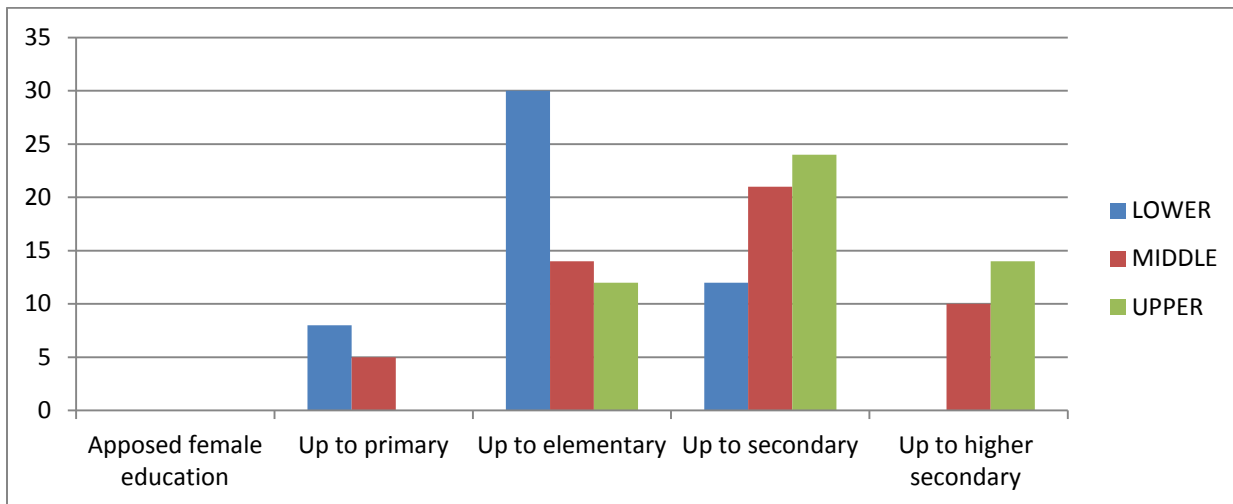


Table 6: Attitude of Men (age group 21 – 40)

ATTITUDE	LOWER	MIDDLE	UPPER
Opposed female education	Nil	Nil	Nil
Up to primary	08	05	Nil
Up to elementary	30	14	12
Up to secondary	12	21	24
Up to higher secondary	Nil	10	14
TOTAL	50	50	50

(Source: Field data)

Figure 9: Attitude of Men (age group 21 – 40)



The above data show a very clear change in the male's attitude towards female education. The percentage of the people above 50 year of age who opposed female education was very high, whereas nobody below 30 opposed it.

In 1980s the lower class families did not send their daughters to school after class 5. They did not take it necessary to educate them even up to primary level. They were not able to guide them in their studies because most of the elders were illiterate. Whenever the elders were asked about their trend, they had a simple answer, "we do not have to get them employed, so why should we educate them?" Now majority of the younger generation of lower class is in favour of education up to elementary level. For further education they have to send their daughters out of village and have to arrange for tuition as they cannot guide them in studies at home which they cannot afford. So there is a shift in the attitudes from primary to the elementary level.

The men belonging to the middle class were found slightly reluctant to send their daughters to school. They allow their daughters to go up to the higher secondary level provided the girls have potential for it. Majority of the girls belonging to this class have at least primary level education. They however do not allow their daughters to go out of the village for studies.

Elder generation of the upper class was reluctant but the attitude of the younger men belonging to the same class towards female education is quite positive. Most of the girls of this class are educated at least up to secondary level. The males allow them and arrange for higher studies. They send them to

Quetta for the purpose. Some of the girls are graduates in the village. They take female education as a matter of prestige.

Women’s Attitude towards Female Education

The women’s response towards female education is slightly different to that of men. The women in the village lag behind the men but the trends are almost similar. The following table shows the real position.

Table 7: Attitude of Women (age group 60 plus)

ATTITUDE	LOWER	MIDDLE	UPPER
Apposed female education	42	37	30
Up to primary	08	09	12
Up to elementary	Nil	04	08
Up to secondary	Nil	Nil	Nil
Up to higher secondary	Nil	Nil	Nil
TOTAL	50	50	50

(Source: Field data)

Figure 10: Attitude of Women (age group 60 plus)

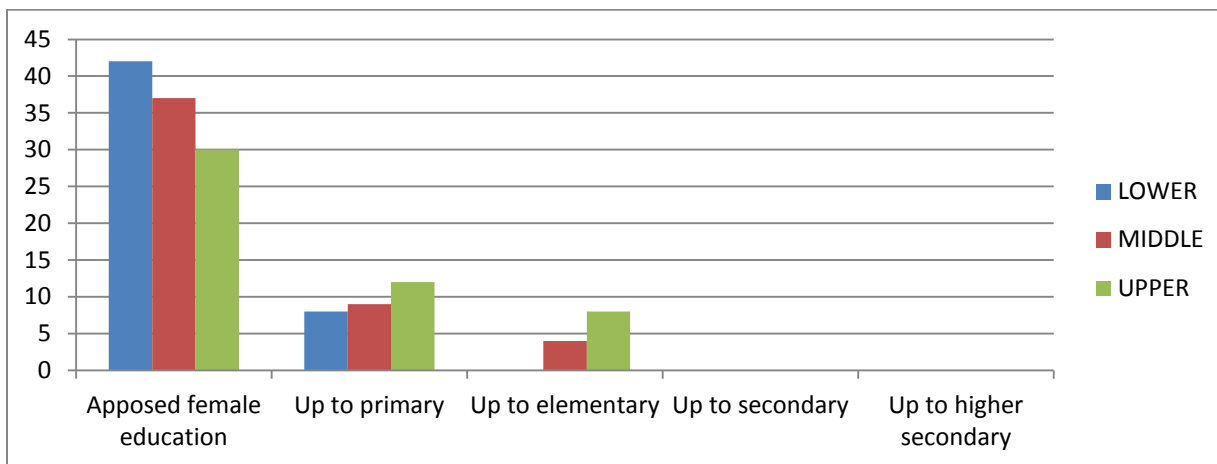


Table 8: Attitude of Women (age group 41 – 60)

ATTITUDE	LOWER	MIDDLE	UPPER
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Apposed female education	20	12	09
Up to primary	17	14	11
Up to elementary	10	14	20
Up to secondary	03	05	06
Up to higher secondary	Nil	05	04
TOTAL	50	50	50

(Source: Field data)

Figure 11: Attitude of Women (age group 41 – 60)

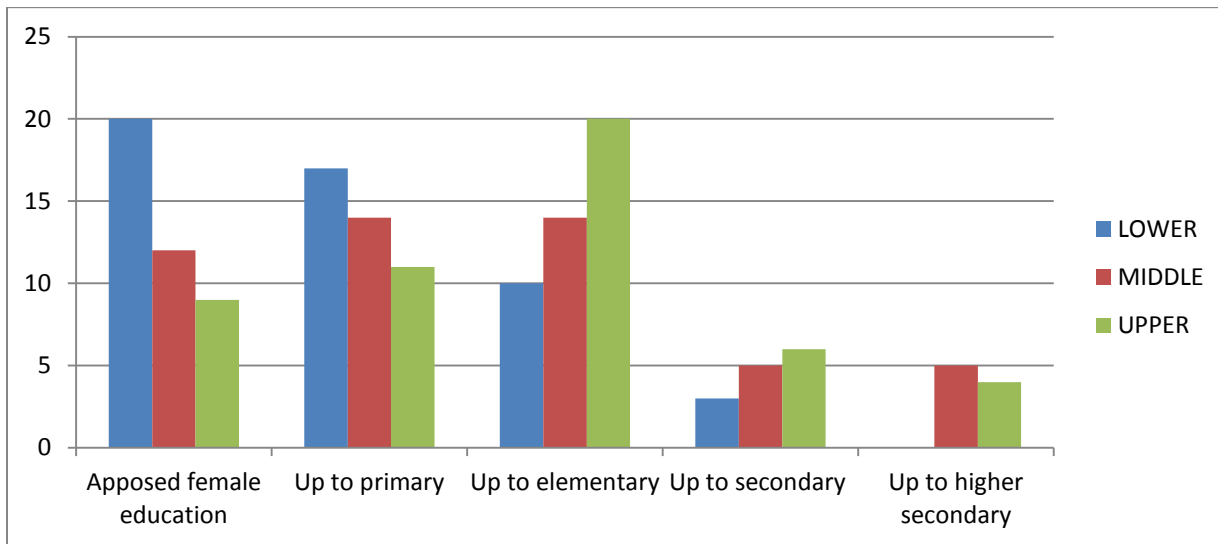
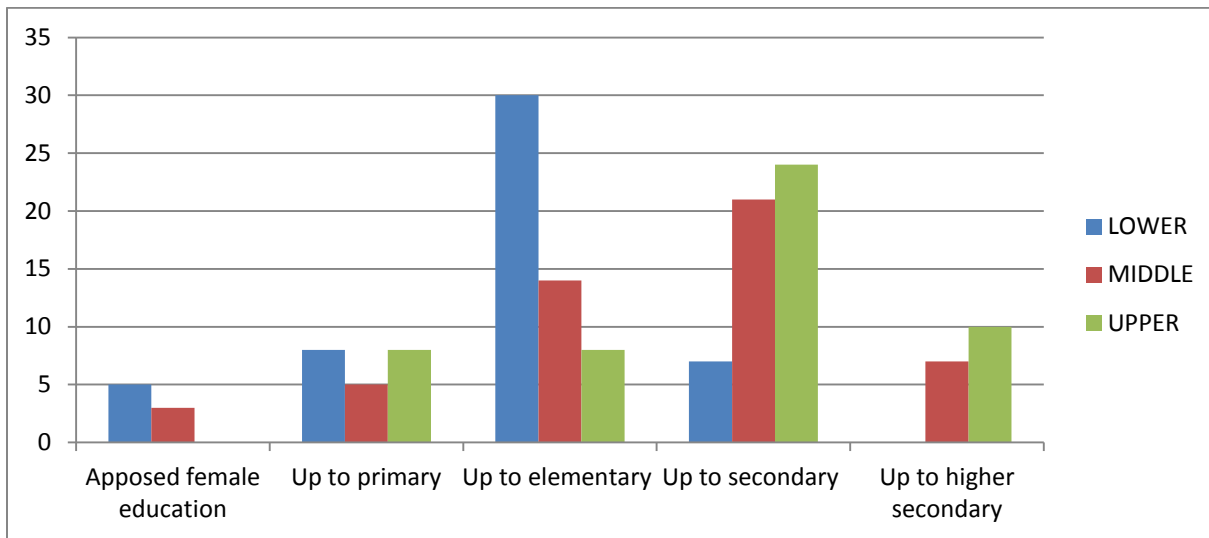


Table 9: Attitude of Women (age group 21 – 40)

ATTITUDE	LOWER	MIDDLE	UPPER
Apposed female education	05	03	Nil
Up to primary	08	05	08
Up to elementary	30	14	08
Up to secondary	07	21	24
Up to higher secondary	Nil	07	10
TOTAL	50	50	50

(Source: Field data)

Figure 12: Attitude of Women (age group 21 – 40)



Above figures show a visible difference between the attitudes of elder and the younger women. Most of the ladies of younger group have started encouraging the daughters to go to school and get education. Some of them were even willing to send them out of the village for education. Most of the women from elder group opposed the girl's education, saying that they have to become mothers and wives and thus no need to get any education to play these roles.

CONCLUSION

The attitudes regarding the gender discrimination in the field of education has changed. Number of both fathers and mothers has increased who support their daughters education. Most of the parents have started sending them to schools. The people who still do not send the girls to schools have different reasons for that which show a shift in the barriers to female education. Initially the main reason for not sending their daughters to schools was *pardah* but now more of the economic reasons were reported. Some people are still reluctant to invest on their daughters because they are not permanent members of the family and mostly they do not contribute in the household economy even if they are working. Most of the parents say that we do not have to send them for jobs so why to educate them because the males who send their females for jobs face a bad reputation in the society. Economic dependence on females was considered as shamelessness (*baygharity*). This concept was and still is a barrier for the girls in access to education but there is a notable change in it. The people who educate and allow their daughters to work have a different argument. They say that there is nothing wrong in depending economically on females because the people have been doing it

since a long time. The ladies have always been working in the fields with the males which is an indirect economic contribution and the male has been enjoying it since forever. So there is no harm in sending the female to work.

Above discussion makes it clear that economy is the main feature behind all types of gender discrimination including education, food, preference, inheritance etc. More investment is made on sons believing them as permanent members of the families as well as the earning hands. As girls have to go to the other family. Delayed marriages of some educated working women were also observed, as the parents do not want to lose an earning member of the family so early as the investor wants the maximum benefit of his investment for himself not for the others.

As education enables a person to put a question, people do not give education to their daughters fearing that they would demand their right of inheritance. Here, thus, again economy plays a role in keeping the girls away from the school. Better food is served to the boys to build them stronger for working hard and earning money. So the sons are preferred in giving food for economic benefits. Economy, thus, becomes the major player in gender discrimination. The today's materialistic life has created more demand for money, increasing discrimination against women.