

Women Role and Status in Pukhtoon Society (A Case Study of Village Sufaid Dheri, Peshawar)

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Abstract

This study was undertaken on the topic, “Women role and status in Pukhtoon Society; A case study of village Sufaid Deri, Peshawar). For this study the researcher selected 70 respondents on purposive sampling basis from the fixed age group of 25-45 years of age.

Interview schedule was used as the tool of data collection due to illiterate respondents. The study indicates that the women role and status is determined in puktoon society by the male. Her general role is only home management; Cleaning, Washing, Cooking, Budget Making, Agriculture Activities (Livestock & Poultry etc), Sewing and Embroidery making, Socialization of Children, Participation in Ceremonial activities and female oriented Job/ Service. Her contribution in decision making includes; Socialization & Education, Home Management, Health Care, Family Planning, Budget Making, Time table of Work and Game / Play, Salary / Income Keeping and Spending, Participation in Ceremonial Activities, Sharing / Suggestion in Every matter. Her economic role includes; Job / Service, Selling daily used commodities, Live Stock / Milk Products, Poultry Products and Netting, Sewing and Embroidery making and selling. Her social role consists upon; Participation in Marriage ceremonies, Participation in Death Ceremonies, Participation in traditional and all types of ceremonies. Problems faced by women in their productive role-play; Women are less advantaged, lack of mobility, Limited education, no access to resources, invisible partners of development, low health, low levels of nutrition, high rates of mortality, male dominancy and patriarchy. To improve the role and status of puktoon women it was recommended that women education should be improved and they should be given equal participation in developmental activities of the society.

Key Words: Home management; Cleaning, Washing, Cooking, Budget Making, Agriculture Activities (Livestock & Poultry etc), Sewing and Embroidery making, Socialization of Children, Participation in Ceremonial activities and female oriented Job/ Service.

Introduction

In Pakistan, the legal status of women is drawn from their religious status. Islam enjoins equal status of women. And allowed female inheritance. Islam also allows female consent for marriage and permitted remarriage by widows and divorces (Rahman, 1987). Islam encourages education of women so they can teach their modesty by properly covering their bodies (Iqbal, 1988).

Although the Quran Sunnah and our history has shown that women can be equal to men provided women should be treated on a pedestal equal to men. From the inception of birth she was given to understand that her most important and fundamental qualities were her dependence and helplessness. She was only prepared for her role of marriage and subjugation to the will of man. This was regarded as the only successful career. She looked upon man as the only means for her subsistence and in majority of cases man became the only breadwinner of the family and hence flattered that woman could not survive without him. The error of our social system gave man dominating position and created false division between the two sexes, as a social scientist writes:

“Man is intended for the work, women for the home, man's strength is in the head, women is in the heart, man's functions is to protect, women to sooth and comfort men must work and women must weep”.

On the question of women's position in Pakistani society, there are two major opposing and conflicting schools of thought. The religious fundamentalists represent one school, the other by the modernists. According to the fundamentalists, there is a discrete division between men and women. God has entrusted both with unequal and differentiated responsibilities. Man is active and is a provider and an organizer of life in general, while woman is passive and is a caretaker of home and children. Acquisition of knowledge and education is derivable for both men and women; however, their nature and content are to be different from each other. According to the perception of a well known Islamic scholar, Abul Ala Maududi, “The right sort of education for women is that which prepares her to become a good house keeper.. (Maududi, 1979, p. 213). As a result of this difference, women are incapable of shouldering the heavy responsibilities of life. (Ali Asghar: 1992)

WOMEN ROLE AND STATUS IN THE KPK:

In order to comprehend and appreciate the woman's situation in the predominantly Pukhtun society of the North-West Frontier province (KPK) of Pakistan, it is important to understand some of the attribute of Puktoon culture. The origin of the Pathan's who are also known as the Pushtuns or Pukhtuns, goes back many centuries (Caroe, 1958).

Quaddus (1987) described the Pathan as “a strange warrior race of romantics. Puktoon are aggressive, colorfully attired, hospitable and considerable, fierce in enmity, kind in friendship, punctilious over religion yet fond of pleasure”.

Tribal customs and traditions form an inseparable part of the Pathan culture. The present day pathans have undergone many changes as a result of modern influences, but their centuries old traditions and customs have not changed considerably. The Pathan's life is governed by his Pukhtunwali or Pashtunwali, which is an unwritten code of honour. Ahmed

(1976, p.75) describes Pashtunwali as a value orientation, which emphasizes “male autonomy, self-expression and aggressiveness for honour (“Izzat”). Pashtunwali, or the code of honour, contains values which are dear to pathan and which regulate all facts of his life. Some cardinal features of the pashtunwali tradition are: Melmastia (hospitality), Teaga (truce). Badal (revenge), Jirga (Deputation) Tarburwali (agnatic rivalry) Nang (honour), and Nanwati (forgiveness) (Caroe, 1958, Taper, 1983, Quddus 1987).

The structure of Pathan society is based on tribal and kinship system. Pathans are broadly divided into three kinds of grouping, the tribe, the lineage and the extended family (Quddus, 1987). Status is divided by the ownership of land and wealth. The Malik or the headman, is normatively the wealthiest and most powerful person, and thus has the highest status in tribal culture. Based on the distribution of land, pathans are divided into groups of indeed and landless families.

The small landholders and the landless poor are mostly engaged in farming and farm related activities. This distinction between the wealthy and the poor is carried over to their women as well. Women of the pathan families with high social status are invisible from the public eye, as well as from most forms of economic activities.

In contrast, women from poor householders are seen working beside their men in the fields. They also perform household chores in the homes of the rich Pathan families (Quddus, 1987).

Pathan women in the rural areas of NWFP are predominately illiterate, tradition-bound and unskilled and they live under highly traditional and conservative social structure, which is marked by its patriarchal male dominance, and religious control. As this society has its own special rules and code of honor women is considered as the symbol of that honor for a Pathan who can reach to an extent in order to save his honor for dies.

But under the rules of this society, a woman has her self-respect and identity as a mother, daughter, sister and wife. Beyond these barriers, there is so place for her. As a daughter, as a wife and sister, who serve her male relatives throughout her life but her major power, reflects in her role as a mother. She is the person responsible for the building up of a nation. She can change the destiny of the society because she has the power as a mother to mould the character of the rising generation. (Quddus, 1987).

SOCIAL LIFE OF WOMEN:

Women play very little part in the social life. House is the main center of all her activities. Very few women in villages are educated. Even educated girls of cities cannot utilize their abilities. The main reason is that they cannot come out of their houses because of their restriction of purdah.

The position of women in Pathan society is not very good in the social life and they do not have even their religious and legal rights. But we must blame only the Pathans for this, as the position of women is more or less the same in other societies? Education can change it to some extent, but on the other hand, very few societies have given such respect as pathans give to their women.

The Pathan society is a traditional and the pathans are known as brave, warriors, hospitable and good Muslims. This is all due to the lap of that brave and honorable mother in which they grow

like other brave and free nations of the world; the Pathans have their own ideology and unique way of life. Their women folk have an important role in the society. (Quddus, 1987).

HONOR OF WOMEN:

One of the most important features of the pathans society is how to behave towards their women folk. Pathans will do any thing to save the honor of women. Honor of a woman is the most sensitive issue in pathans society. In Pathans society women are the ultimate repositories of Nang. The term that embodies the totality of a groups honor women therefore help to launch feuds. To end a feud over women, honor must be satisfied. Either the group that has gained a women must agree to seen one in exchange to the deprived husband or father, or amount of money and property, mutually agreed upon in a jirga, must be paid.

A woman in Pathans Society is identified by the name of her father or husband. Most of the women have a great aversion to telling their own names because it is considered a very bad thing for women to mention her name. She usually mentions the name of her male relatives. (Quddus, 1987).

DOMESTIC LIFE OF THE PATHAN WOMEN

The Pathan women are had working. There lives, like most of Pakistani women, are not indeed the bed of roses. They rise earlier than man and have to tight schedule of daily works to perform. As the men are distinctly the breadwinners of the family the women are expected to care for the children, maintain the house, cook the mean etc. along with their domestic activities, they often have to work outside the house. For example the fetching of water is often no sinecure. If the well is in the village precincts, it may be pleasant enough, but in some places, the nearest water is six or seven, or even ten miles away, and the journey there and back has to be made at least every other day. In the tribal areas, in the time of war, they help their men by supplying them food, water and weapons. They work in the fields when their men are busy in the wars-Pathans women specially the village women work like animals. They work in the fields, chopping into the rough earth to plant along side their husbands and brothers. (Quddus, 1987).

ECONOMIC STATUS OF WOMEN

The economic situation of women exactly portrays the functional theory of gender inequality. It states that: "Female is largely dependent on the male for protection and security". Economically women are projected as very poor and dependent upon men but this is highly a subjective matter. Those who understand the culture and religion, they know it is not the religion which has isolated women from economic activities rather it is the culture which secluded women from earning family life. She is not excluded totally as has been happening in some Asian countries Islam does impose some restriction on women participation in such activities but under certain condition while Pakistan culture is more sever in this regard. (Mahbub-ul-Haq Human Development Center:2000)

OBJECTIVES:

1. To know general role of women in family/home affairs
2. To see the right of decision making by married women in different affairs
3. To study the economic role and status of married women
4. To know the social role and status of married women
5. To identify the problems to married women in their role playing

LITERATURE REVIEW

The question of women status probably had been the concern of almost every civilization since recorded history. The Greeks, the Romans, Athens and Spartans, like civilizations gave different socio-political status to women. But none of these statuses remained for a long time and change occurred in the outlook towards the matter with a change in the socio-economic and political philosophies of those societies. The fact is that women have been kept in subjugation in all patriarchal societies and it has happened so because no matriarchal society has ever existed in history.(Ali: 1992: p.1)

Women is an important source of the perpetuation of human race and without her it is not possible, if all the women of the global die simultaneously leaving behind them men only; the human race will not continue to survive. But on the other hand, if all the men die simultaneously leaving behind women, the human race will not come to an end. It would still survive. Because some of the women would have got conceived by the time of the death of all men and they will give birth to male and female children thereby ensuring the continuity of human being.(Sharif: 1991: XIII)

Today, the world over, there is a hue and cry to give women her rights. She is thought to be a better half but still she is treated as an inferior being. The west, who is the harbinger of women rights and equality, present the worst possible exploitation of her. She is considered economically independent and allowed her to work like man but is not given wages as those of man. “a women in the west gives 60-70% of men’s salaries from the same position. She is a victim of violence irrespective of cultural and geographical boundaries. Even in eighteen seconds, every three and half-minutes women is victim of rape or attempted rape.(US Bureau of justice: 1989:11)

Constitutional and thus the people suffer a lot, our legal institutions are the legacy of the colonial masters who did not come for the masses of this corner of world. (Sharif: 1991: p.60) They came as conqueror and made laws which suited their design, consequently, the legal, economic and other institutions are still in a state of disarray and we, as a nation could not evolve a uniform system of social justice women. The east and other backward part of the world still treats here as inferior being both physically and socially. She is considered more emotional and least rational. She is deprived of her basic human rights to education, health maintenance, inheritance, and rights. And Pakistan is no exception. In this regard, status of women in the west may be better because of the resource full ness of these countries that can provide the basic needs to her. “in the third world countries where overall population of a states or country do not have resources to get education, health facilities, food, clothing etc talks of her rights and plight could be an exaggeration of the facts. (Robertson:1999:p.82)

The inducements they offer are economic, social, political, health, education, maternity needs etc. but the fact is, in many causes the reports over react to the situation or an exaggeration of the facts.

WOMEN STATUS IN PAKISTAN

Pakistan is one of the third world countries where literacy rate is the lowest possible-25-30%. This inversely means 70-75% of the population is still not getting opportunities for education, which is the responsibility of the state. Official statistics are on a very high side and some officials claim literacy rate to be 50+% in Pakistan the ground reality is that as reported by some authentic sources, is 41% out of this female literacy is 25% and that of males is 55%. (Mahbub ul Haq Human Development Center:2000:p.105). Even if these figures are accepted, Pakistan will still be in the last few bottom countries of such a list of literacy rate. Female education in N.W.F.P. is very rare and ranges between 8-11% of the total population. Female literacy rate as a % of total female population by 1997 was 25%. (Mahbub ul Haq Human Development Center:2000:p.195).

There are many causes of this. Female education/literacy rate can be low due to either lack of opportunity structure in the rural areas where no school buildings are available for female or due to cultural reasons parents do not send daughters to co-education or for schooling. There is a religious and people have been voicing for this since along and it can be a reason of not sending girls for such schooling.

Another obvious reason is the concept of “aimlessness” of education. It is a common observation that unemployment and underdevelopment among literate even highly educated people is rampant. If male educated cannot get jobs, how the women would get them. A very common faith among the masses is that education in Pakistan is “soulless” or without any objective or “aimless” as education could not create the sense of good citizen among masses. Rather public suffers with the handoff educated class who are the corrupt and plunderers of the national resources.

Health services Pakistan are scarce and can not meet the growing demands due paucity of budgetary allocations, trained man power, mismanagement, inefficiency of the health department, inter-provincial and intra-provincial (urban-rural) disparities etc. according to budgetary provision, per head annual input in Pakistan is Rs. 40 and the cost of single aspirin tablet is Rs. 0.50. The resources and demand do not commensurate to any way and hence; the existing practice is a mere wastage of national resources.

Women health problems are of specific nature. Morbidity rate among women is too high. Maternal mortality rate at birth is 340 per 100,000 lives birth. (Mahbub ul Haq Human Development Center:2000: p.195). Female health facilities are either non-available in rural areas If the province where 80-90% of the population reside or due to some anti-cultural practices, are not availed by women for example in most of rural health centers (HRC's, BHU's etc) medical staff consist of male doctors and paramedical staff. In such circumstances even in emergency, hardly women can be in a position to explain her health/gyne problems with a male doctor.

Poverty also deteriorates the health conditions of women. Overwork, low quality food, large number of children, all contributes to her health problems.

This study is focused on the existing of health institutions, availability of basic sources there are modern operandi in these institutions, attitude of the staff towards public, etc.

ECONOMIC POSITION OF WOMEN IN FAMILY:

In Pakistan female population is 46% of the total population in 2000 and constitutes 29% of the total labor force. (Mahbub ul Haq Human Development Center: 2000:p.105).

It is understood that 5.4% women enjoy earning form government jobs that are educated. The rest work for their families without any cash rewards earning of the males the only source. In some cases the low quality land owned by a very few families, help supplement their incomes. Mahbub-ul-Haq Human Development Center (2000)

METHOD AND PROCEDURE:

Sampling method was used to select the respondents from the targeted village 70 respondents were selected on purposive sampling basis from the fixed age group of 25-45 years of age. Interview schedule was used as the tool of data collection due to illiterate respondents.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY:

Figure-1 indicates the general role of women in family / home affairs. All of the women (100%) were participating in cleaning, washing, cooking and socialization of children. 15% specified for decision making, 72% for agriculture activities (Live stock & poultry etc), 60% for sewing and embroidery making, 45% for participation in ceremonial activities and 45% for job/ service.

Figure-2 highlights the rights of decision-making by married women in different affairs. Out of the total respondents, 45% specified for socialization & education, 60% for home management, 45% for health care, 35% for family planning, 60% for Budget making, 60% for Timetable making for work and games / play of children, 45% for salary / income keeping and spending, 45% for participation in ceremonial activities and 15% specified for sharing / suggestion in every matter in the family affairs.

Figure-3 indicates the Economic role and status of married women. Out of total respondents, 20% Specified for job/ service, 20% for selling daily used commodities, 70% for live stock / milk products, 65% for poultry products and 35% specified for netting, sewing and embroidery making and selling.

Figure-4 depicts the social role and status of married women. All of the total i.e. 100% respondents specified for participation in marriage ceremonies, death ceremonies and traditional ceremonies and 60% specified for all types of ceremonies.

Figure-5 shows the problems faced to women in pukhtoon society. 50% respondents specified for Women are less advantaged, 60% for lack of mobility, 45% for limited education, 50% no access to resources, 60% for invisible partners of development, 40% for low health, 50% for low levels of nutrition, 70% for high rates of mortality, 70% for male dominance and 70% for patriarchy.

CONCLUSION:

During the study we conclude that woman play very little part in their social life. They spend most of time in household activities and having less contribution in out door activities. It is an observed fact that Pakhtoon's sustain their patterns of norms and values as the most valuable property in the course of life. These values have developed the unique concept of shame and honour, which is inevitably necessary to keep an approved mode of status and role in the pakhtoon social order. Gender patterns are followed strictly with no choice of getting out of them. The women role and status is determined in puktoon society by the male. Her general role is only home management; Cleaning, Washing, Cooking, Budget Making, Agriculture Activities (Livestock & Poultry etc), Sewing and Embroidery making, Socialization of Children, Participation in Ceremonial activities and female oriented Job/ Service. Her contribution in decision making includes; Socialization & Education, Home Management, Health Care, Family Planning, Budget Making, Time table of Work and Game / Play, Salary / Income Keeping and Spending, Participation in Ceremonial Activities, Sharing / Suggestion in Every matter. Her economic role includes; Job / Service, Selling daily used commodities, Live Stock / Milk Products, Poultry Products and Netting, Sewing and Embroidery making and selling. Her social role consists upon; Participation in Marriage ceremonies, Participation in Death Ceremonies, Participation in traditional and all types of ceremonies. Problems faced by women in their productive role-play; Women are less advantaged, lack of mobility, Limited education, no access to resources, invisible partners of development, low health, low levels of nutrition, high rates of mortality, male dominancy and patriarchy.

SUGGESTIONS:

The following suggestions are extended to improve the role and status of women in the target area.

1. Provision of Education

As it is clear form this study that the literacy ratio of the people living in Pakistan is the lowest globally. And with in Pakistan especially the Pukhtoos are very behind from the other parts of the country, as here rules the traditional system of Pukhtoon Wali, "home or grave". Due to his system most of the female are never allowed to get education. For the improvement of female status in the rural areas steps should be taken to give women the freedom of getting education.

2. Involvement in Decision Making

Family means a group, for which it is essential that both male and female have the right of making decision. If she would get the power of decision making in her family, she can manage a lot of things which the male can not. Especially in the socialization of the hildren and for the bright future of them.

3. Job Opportunities

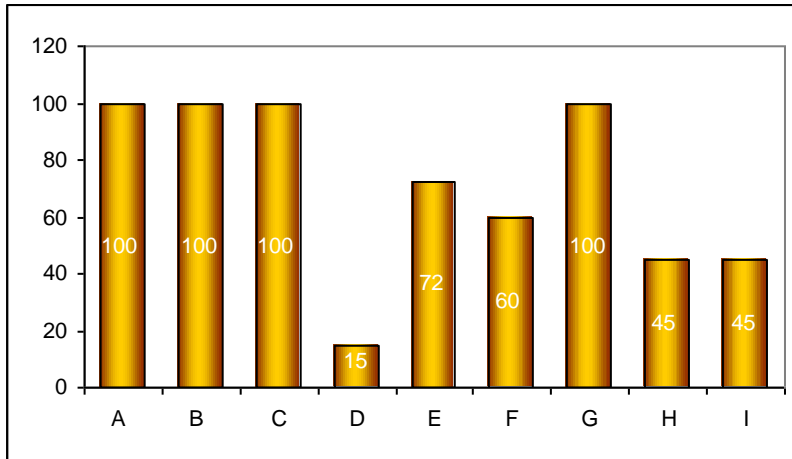
Female should be given the oppportunity of having a job, which will make the family economy strengthen and will divide the financial burden on the male. In this way they can live in a healthy atmosphere.

As a woman is a potential mother of tomorrow, therefore she should be treated well, physical, moral or psychological. In this way we can make our home/ family safe and sound.

DATA PRESENTATION

The data was presented in diagram form as under:

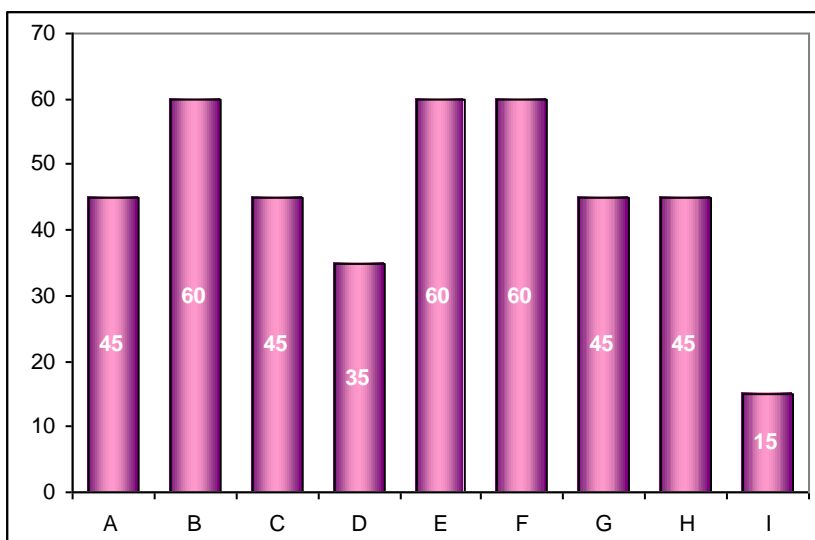
Figure-1 General Role of Women in Family/Home Affairs



Denotations: A: Cleaning, B: Washing, C: Cooking, D: Budget Making, E: Agriculture Activities (Livestock & Poultry etc), F: Sewing and Embroidery making, G: Socialization of Children, H: Participation in Ceremonial activities, I: Job/ Service.

DESCRIPTION: Diagram-1 indicates the general role of women in family / home affairs. 100% of the respondents replied for cleaning, washing, cooking, and socialization of children, 15% for budget making, 72% for agriculture activities, 60% for sewing and embroidery making, 45% for Participation in Ceremonial activities and 45% for job/ service as the general role of women in family.

Figure-2 Right Of Decision Making By Married Women In Different Affairs

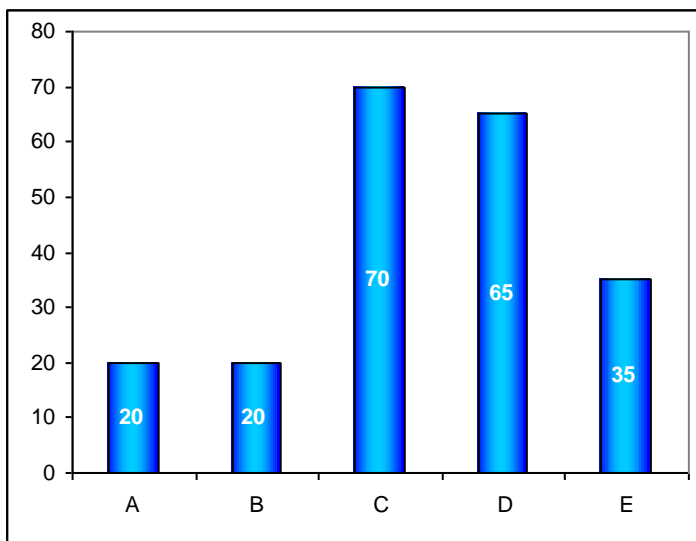


Denotation: A. Socialization & Education, B. Home Management, C. Health Care,

D. Family Planning E. Budget Making, F. Time table of Work and Game / Play, G. Salary / Income Keeping and Spending, H. Participation in Ceremonial Activities, I. Sharing / Suggestion in Every matter.

DESCRIPTION: Diagram-2 indicates the right of decision-making by married women in different affairs. 45% specified for Socialization & Education, 60% for Home Management, 45% for Health Care, 35% for Family Planning, 60% for Budget Making, 60% for Time table of Work and Game / Play, 45% for Salary / Income Keeping and Spending, 45% for Participation in Ceremonial Activities and 15% for Sharing / Suggestion in Every matter.

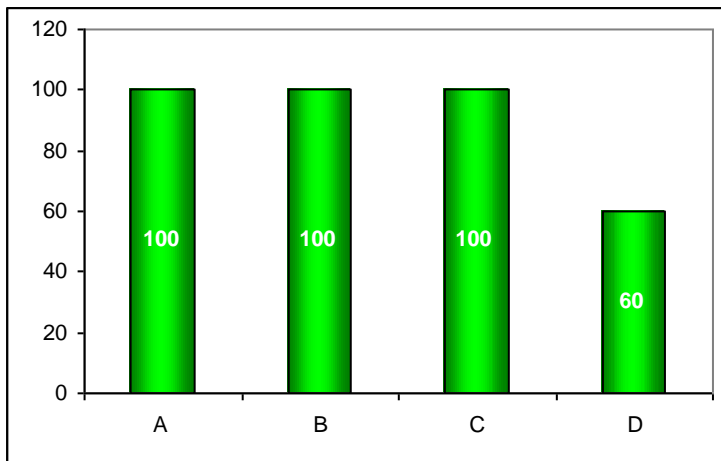
Figure-3 Economic Role And Status Of Married Women



Denotation: A. Job / Service, B. Selling daily used commodities, C. Live Stock / Milk Products, D. Poultry Products and E. Netting, Sewing and Embroidery making and selling.

DESCRIPTION: Digram-3 indicates Economic Role And Status Of Married Women. 20% specified for. Job / Service, 20% for Selling daily used commodities, 70% for Live Stock / Milk Products, 65% for Poultry Products and 35% for Netting, Sewing and Embroidery making and selling.

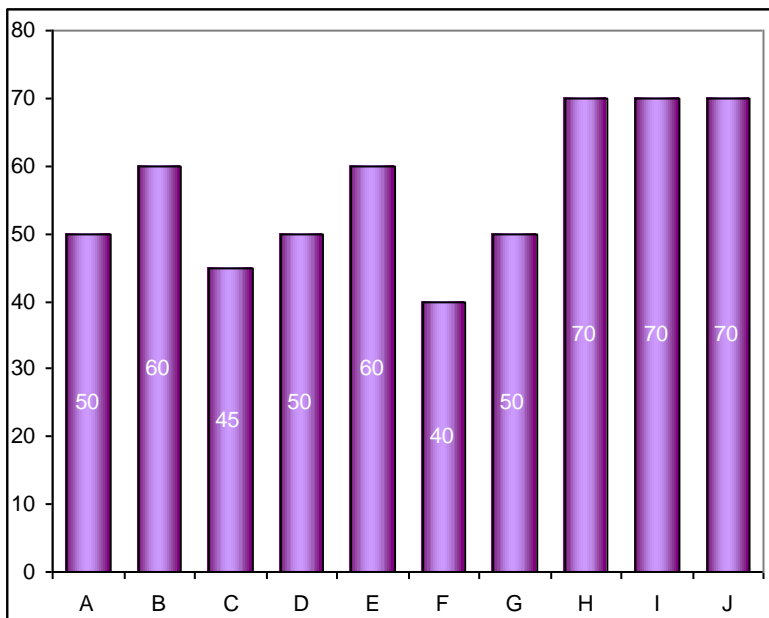
Figure-4 Social Role And Status Of Married Women



Denotation: A. Participation in Marriage ceremonies, B. Participation in Death Ceremonies, C. Participation in traditional ceremonies, D. Participation in all types of ceremonies.

Description: Diagram-4 indicates Social Role And Status Of Married Women. 100% respondents replied for Participation in Marriage ceremonies, 100% for Participation in Death Ceremonies, 100% for Participation in traditional ceremonies, 60% for Participation in all types of ceremonies as the major social roles of women in Puktoon society.

Figure-5 Problems To Married Women In Their Role Playing



Denotation: A. Women are less advantaged, B. Lack of mobility, C. Limited education, D. No access to resources, E. Invisible partners of development, F. Low health, G. Low levels of nutrition, H. High rates of mortality, I. Male dominancy and J. Patriarchy.

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