

# Women's Nutritional Value System and Their Participation in Economic Development

RABIA SAFDAR<sup>1</sup>, SAIF-UR-REHMAN AND NEELAM SHEZADI

*Department of Rural Sociology, University of Agriculture, Faisalabad–38040, Pakistan*

<sup>1</sup>Corresponding author's e-mail: rabia7004@yahoo.com

## ABSTRACT

The Nutritional status of women in Pakistan is not homogenous, because of the interconnection of gender with other forms of exclusion in the society. There is considerable diversity in the nutritional status of women across classes, regions in the rural/urban divide due to un-even socioeconomic development in the impact of nutritional status on income generating activities. Socio-economic and cultural factors simultaneously influence both women's nutritional status and their nutritional related roles. The main objectives of the present study were: to investigate the socioeconomic and cultural characteristics of rural women, to find out the women's nutritional status and their role/participation in income generating activities. Most of the respondents were illiterate and a few had graduate level of education. Majority of the respondents received their income by themselves. Most of the respondents took vegetables daily, fruits weekly and milk daily. Multistage sampling technique was applied for the selection of 160 females in the selected area.

**Key Words:** Nutritional status; Income generating activities

## INTRODUCTION

A discussion of women's nutritional status can deal with it both in terms of absolute levels and in relation to that of men. This approach would include issues of discrimination between males and females in nutrition-related matters such as feeding, health care and consequent gender differences in nutritional status.

Women are an equally important part of our society. Their points, their ideas and work all are important for our country. Women possess numerous skills that can help them in bridging in much needed extra income for their families. The need is to steer them in the right direction (Yunas, 2000).

Women are active participants in economic production. However, their participation has been concentrated primarily in family and domestic production. Women economic activities are related with agriculture (a) farm activities (b) livestock and (c) poultry activities. According to available data 4% of the total labor input is being contributed by women and their contribution to total income from crop production is between 25 to 40%. Women's roles in housing, the nature of activities are the factors that influence their participation. Women's participation could involve in decision making contribution of assets or savings and physical labor or supervision of physical construction of housing (Mukhtar & Hassan, 1992).

Female education in Pakistan continues to lag behind the level of education attained by boys. Primary school enrollment rate for girls in 1996 - 97 was estimated to be 66% of total female population compared to 90.7% of boys.

In middle the rate was 37% for girls and 64% for boys.

Women in developing countries are the neglected human resources. Pakistan unfortunately is one of such countries, where low literacy levels and restriction on economic activities of women have acted as major constraint towards full utilization of their human potential (Frey & Ghyur, 1992).

In past women were considered as second class citizen. They were considered only a wife, a mother, who works in houses etc. Economic crises in the less developed countries enhanced the women sense of taking part along with men in income generating activities (Zia, 2000).

The preference of sons due to their productive role indicates the allocation of household resources in their favor. About 12.5% of women were malnourished with a figure jumping to 16.1% for lactating mother 21.2% in case of mother (visible goiter) and 36.5% of mothers were found to be iodine deficient. In Pakistan social and cultural norms are generally activities (Zia, 2000).

The preference of sons due to their productive role indicates the allocation of household resources in their favor. About 12.5% of women were malnourished, with a figure jumping to 16.1% for lactating mother 21.2% in case of mother (visible goiter) and 36.5% of mothers were found to be iodine deficient. In Pakistan social and cultural norms are generally considered a hinder for participation of women in activities outside home. But changing social and economic condition throughout the world required an appraisal for the role, which women can play in the environment. Women generally participate in income generating activities and constitutes to the economy of country (Sultan & Nazli, 1994).

## METHODOLOGY

The substrate of present studies comprised of rural population of Tehsil Faisalabad. In the first stage, two union councils were selected by using simple random method from the list of U.C. i.e. union councils 153 J.B. and 154 J.B. In the second stage, two villages were selected from selected union council by using the same method. In the next stage, 40 respondents were selected from each village by applying systematic random sampling technique. Then a sample of 160 respondents was selected. After selecting the respondents, a pre-planned questionnaire was used for interviewing the respondents. The information so gathered was put to statistical analyses.

### Statistical Techniques and Methods

a) **Percentage.** To analyze and compare data related to personal traits of the respondents, simple percentage was calculated as under:

$$P = F/N \times 100$$

Where

P is percentage, F is frequency and N is total population.

b) **Chi-square.** Chi-square was applied to ascertain the significance of relationship between certain independent and dependent variables. Chi-Square was collected with the following formula.

$$\chi^2 = \frac{\sum (O-E)^2}{E}$$

Where

O, E and  $\Sigma$  are observed, expected and total values, respectively.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results (Table I) revealed that 78.1% of the respondents had taken vegetables daily. 1.9% takes fruits daily, while majority 62.5% take fruits weekly. A huge majority 83.8% of the respondents used milk for tea purpose daily, while 15% and 1.3% used milk weekly and occasionally, respectively. Respondents did not use meat daily, while 40% of the respondents used pulses daily and more than half 59.4% of the respondents used pulses weekly. Data (Table II) showed that one fifth 19.6% of the respondents were engaged in hand and machine embroidery, while 7.8% were in sewing. More than one tenth 14.96% work as a teacher and less than one tenth 8.66% engaged in brick making. About one tenth (9.44%) work as a shopkeeper and sell clothes. Data (Table III) showed the relationship between nutritional status by monthly income, household responsibilities, education, regulation between meal timings were significant, while the relationship of nutritional status by total number of children, type of family, number of members engaged in earning activities and conflict due to work were non-significant.

**Table I. Distribution of the respondents regarding their Dietary intake**

Food	Daily	Weekly	Occasionally
Vegetable	125	35	---
%	78.1	21.9	---
Fruits	3	100	57
%	1.9	62.5	35.6
Milk	134	24	2
%	83.8	15.0	1.3
Meat	---	59	101
%	---	36.9	63.1
Pulses	64	45	1
%	40.0	59.4	0.6

**Table II. Distribution of the respondents according to the nature of their work**

Non-Agriculture	Frequency	percentage
Embroidery	25	19.6
Sewing	10	7.8
Household work	2	1.57
Envelop making	4	3.14
Parandah making	3	2.36
Teaching	19	14.96
Brick making	11	8.66
Business	12	9.44
Midwife	6	4.72
Any other	35	27.55
Total	127	100.0

**Table III. Nutritional status and different socio-economic characteristics of the respondent**

Socio-economic Characteristics	$\chi^2$	d.f.	$\alpha$	$\gamma$
Monthly income	11.101	1	.001**	-.662
Total number of children	3.394	2	.183	-.297
Type of family	.784	2	.676	.120
No. of members engaged in earning activity	.784	2	.676	.120
Household responsibilities	3.900	2	.005**	.142
Education	5.935	2	.051*	.456
Conflict due to work	.870	1	.351	-.268
Regulation between meal timing	6.979	1	.008**	-.490

\*= significant

\*\*= highly significant

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