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Munawar Sultana
Population Council

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Two Worlds Under the Same Roof

A brief on gender difference in transitions to adulthood

By Munawar Sultana

Introduction

Adolescence, a time of transition to adulthood, is different for young men and women in Pakistan. There is a persistent asymmetry between young men and women's experience of growing up in Pakistan. Therefore, brothers and sisters living under the same roof have different opportunities available to them in all aspects of life.

Education

Parents have a critical role in socialization of their children. Thus it is parents, particularly mothers, who play a crucial role in providing necessary information and skills to children that will help them enter adulthood. In this regard, parents' ability to read and write facilitates their ability to use resources and take advantage of opportunities that benefit the family as well as socializing young children. Uneducated mothers may especially hamper development of young females as they learn skills needed to face adulthood.

One-third of young people in Pakistan have literate fathers and less than 10 percent have literate mothers. The situation is worse in Balochistan where only 3 percent of young people have mothers who can read and write. This has important bearings on the lives of

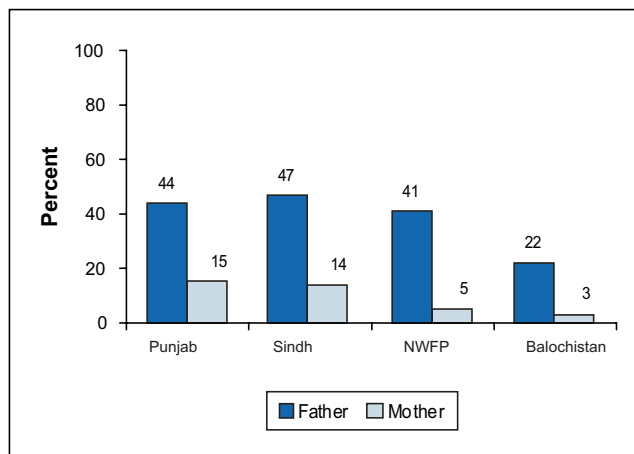
Adolescents and Youth in Pakistan

More young people aged 15-24 live in Pakistan now than at any other time in its history – an estimated 36 million in 2004. Recognizing the dearth of information on the situation of this large group of young people in Pakistan, the Population Council undertook a nationally representative survey from October 2001 to March 2002.

The analysis presented here comes from *Adolescents and Youth in Pakistan 2001-02: A Nationally Representative Survey* – the largest such survey focusing on young people. The survey sought information from youth aged 15-24, responsible adults (parents, where possible) in the household where young interviewees lived, and other community members in each of the 254 communities where the survey took place. A total of 6,585 households were visited and 8,074 young people were interviewed.

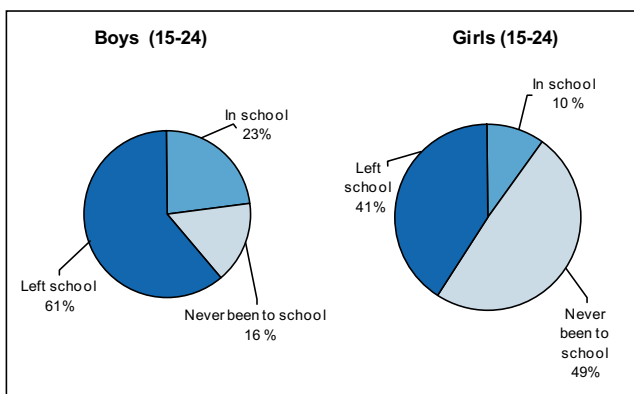
young people particularly young females who mainly rely on their mothers for information. The challenge for the majority of illiterate parents is how they respond to the needs of young persons today.

Percent of literate parents by province and gender



Education is an essential tool for human development for a variety of reasons. Data demonstrate enormous variations in educational attainment by gender. Slightly more than half of all young females have never been to school. Of those who were enrolled in school, females were more likely than males to drop out of school at an earlier class. Males and females aged 15-24 had completed an average of 6.2 classes, and 3.5 classes, respectively.

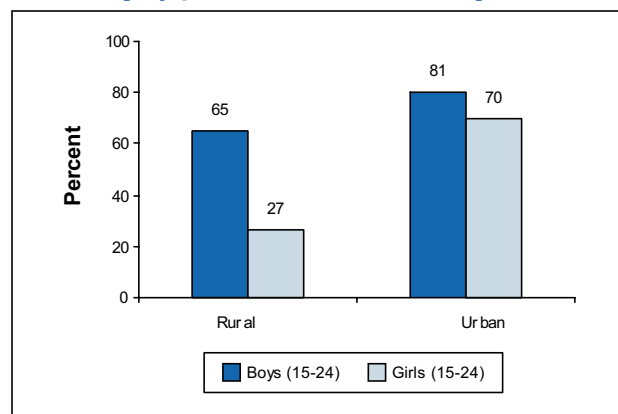
Schooling status of young people by gender



The completion of primary school is an important marker in young people's lives. Primary school completion rates are much higher for boys than for girls. The gender difference in primary school completion rates is considerably larger in rural areas compared

with urban areas. Only 27 percent of females in rural areas have completed primary education. Females in rural areas also drop out at a far greater rate and much earlier than their male peers.

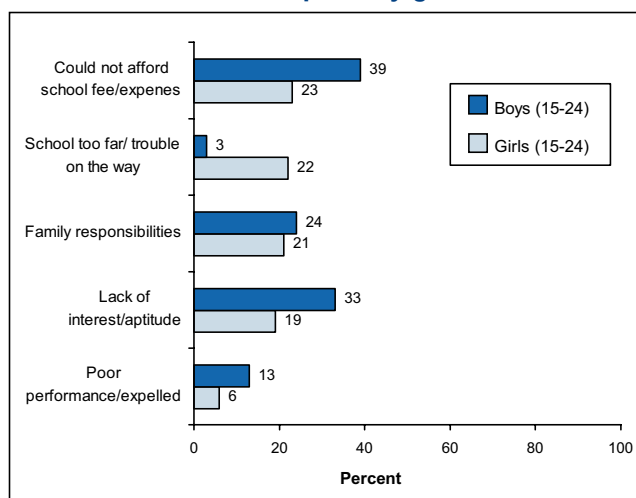
Percent of young people who completed primary schooling by place of residence and gender



The reasons for school dropout differ for males and females. The inability to afford school fees (including tuition fees, books, stationery, uniform, transportation expenses, pocket money) emerged as the most important reason for school drop out both for males and females.

A considerable proportion of boys (33 percent) discontinued schooling because of a lack of interest or aptitude in studies. This may be due to the poor quality of education, lack of a challenging curriculum, non-friendly school environment and attitude of teachers. This is exacerbated by increasing unemployment. Many young boys see no benefit of education in finding suitable jobs. In focus group discussions carried out prior to the survey, a boy said, "*Parhey likhey kailey baich rahai hain*" (Implied: Young educated boys are selling fruit, as they are unable to find a job).

Reasons for school drop out by gender



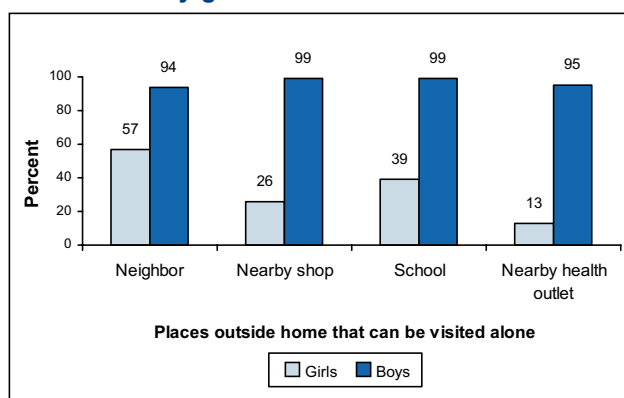
For girls, however, “School too far/trouble on the way” (which includes, inadequate transport, physical and verbal sexual harassment by males on the way to school) emerged as major reasons for school dropout.

Limited mobility for girls

Mobility is severely constrained for young girls. Family reputation and honor are closely linked with female rather than male members of the family. The majority of parents have grave concerns about the family's reputation and honor and do not give permission to girls to work outside the home as a result of fear of sexual and physical harassment.

There is no such restriction for the young males. Once young males get permission from parents they are able to move outside the home. In contrast girls need to be accompanied almost everywhere outside the home except for visits to neighbors. Almost all boys can visit places (neighbors, nearby shop, school, nearby health outlet) alone, but hardly any of their sisters can do the same.

Percent of youth who can visit places outside home alone by gender

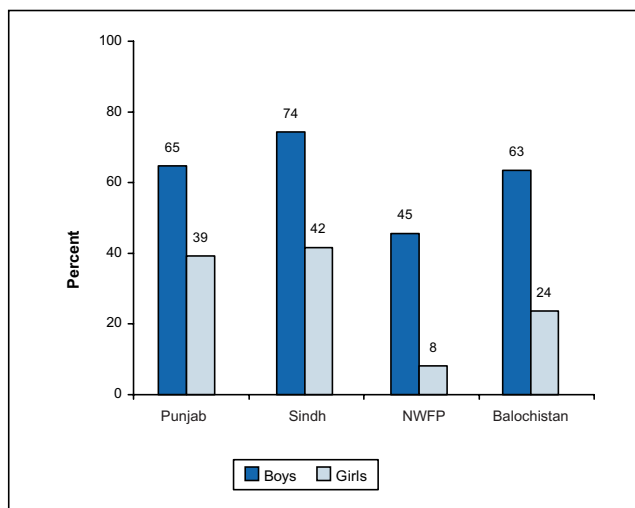


Restricted mobility has direct implications for the attainment of education, access to health care, opportunities for work, skill building, and social networks for young females. In other words, these restrictions hamper their access to resources and services and lead to limited options. In particular, girls' inability to go outside the home makes it imperative that schools be available at shorter distances.

Livelihood

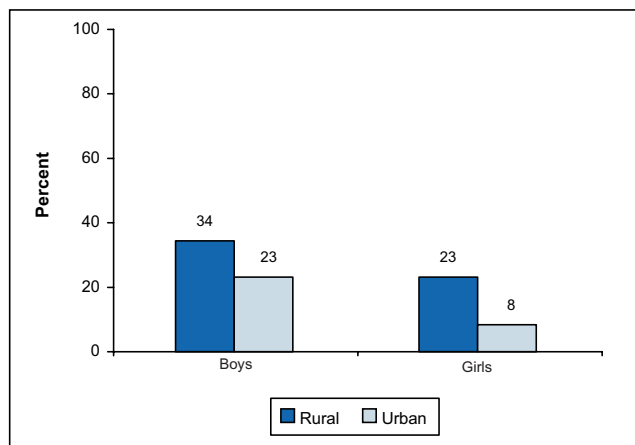
The likelihood of having ever been engaged in some sort of activity for pay, profit or family gain, varies dramatically by province and gender. These proportions are considerably higher for males than for females. NWFP has the lowest percentage of young boys and girls participating in the labor force.

Percent ever worked by province and gender



Young boys and girls in rural areas are twice as likely as their urban counterparts to start working before the age of 15. The proportion of adolescents who started working before the age of 15 is higher in rural than urban areas (28 percent and 15 percent, respectively).

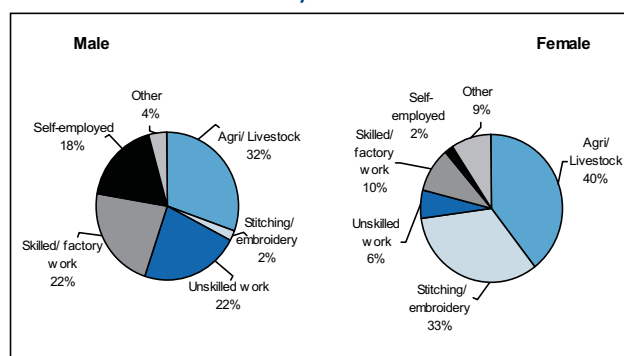
Percent started work before age 15 by place of residence and gender



The distribution of most common economic activities undertaken by youth varies by gender. About three-fourths of females have ever been engaged in informal farm labor (40 percent), stitching and embroidery (33 percent) and the majority remain unpaid. In most cases it is the

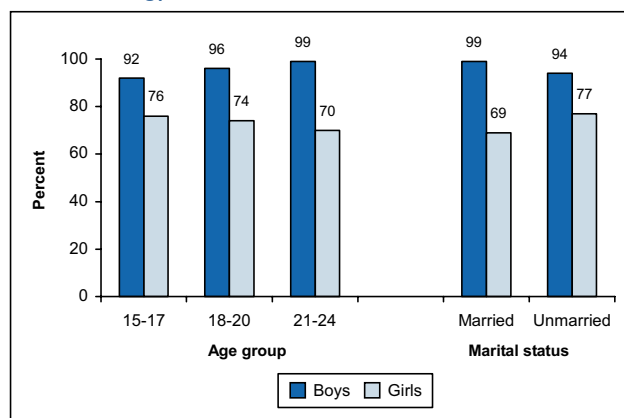
family that gains profit from their labor, and if paid a girl's income is meager. Also a larger proportion of males (82 percent) worked throughout the year, compared to 55 percent of young females. Young females have limited livelihood opportunities of a temporary nature. This reflects the limited range of skills that further limit their prospects of entering the labor force.

Distribution of type of work by gender (among those who ever worked)



Young females are more willing to work if opportunities are available. As many as 70 percent would like to work if opportunities are available. This is much higher than the actual participation of young females in paid work.

Percent intending to work if opportunities provided by age, marital status and gender (those currently not working)

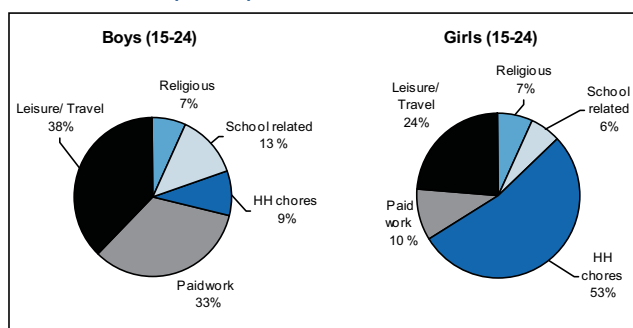


Allocation of daily time

Girls aged 15-24 are more likely than boys to be out of school, not working and not married. It is, therefore, important to see how adolescents allocate their time during the day. There are dramatic variations in the way young males and females spend their time. *Young females spend almost half of their time in household chores, while males tend to be involved in paid work.* The burden of household chores for females increases by age.

More boys tend to get involved in work as they grow older. Young boys spend very little time in household chores; instead they spend considerable time in leisure activities. In contrast, young girls participate in domestic work and have less time for leisure. Boys spend double the time at school as compared to girls. It clearly indicates that girls are overburdened with household chores, which hamper them from attending school.

Percent time spent in daily activities for males and females (15-24)

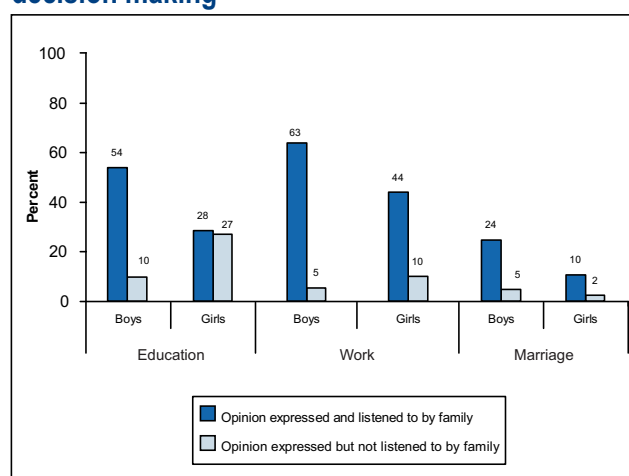


Decision Making Ability

Participation in major life events differs for boys and girls. Young people in Pakistan have limited autonomy to take decisions affecting their lives. Generally, males are more likely to express their opinion in all spheres. Females

are constrained especially in the case of marriage decisions. Only 10 percent of young females could express an opinion about their marriage and be listened to by their family. The same applied to schooling, where less than one-third of the females could voice opinions that were listened to by their family. The majority of girls cannot participate in major decisions affecting their lives.

Percent of young people who participated in decision making



Conclusions

There are clear differences in the circumstances of boys and girls in Pakistan. Under prevalent value systems girls face disadvantages, especially in rural areas. Girls, as compared to their brothers, are more likely to either have no schooling or to drop out early from school. Availability and access to schools for girls needs to be improved. Parents and communities need to recognize and value girls' education and understand its potential benefits. Incentives are needed for parents to ensure that once girls are in school they stay in school, during and beyond primary level.

Young girls also have limited options for non-traditional work opportunities despite their own

and their parents' aspirations for such work. A large proportion experience an early transition to motherhood with minimal life skills. Boys have relatively higher chances to go to school, achieve a higher educational level, obtain paid work of their choice and marry later. However, both boys and girls have limited agency and are dependent on parents for important decisions in their lives.

Restricted mobility for girls hampers their access to resources and services and subsequently leads to limited options. Parents, community and policymakers need to work together to ensure that girls, like their brothers, are able to make a successful transition to adulthood, as they are the part of one world under the same roof.

Acknowledgments

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Population Council
#7, St. 62, F-6/3
Islamabad, Pakistan
Ph: (92-51) 2277439
Fax: (92-51) 2821401
Email: info@pcpak.org
www.popcouncil.org