



## Time Poverty among Working Females in Pakistan: A Qualitative Study

**Fatima Iqbal<sup>1</sup>, Muhammad Bilal Ahmad<sup>1,2,\*</sup>, Rai Imtiaz Hussain<sup>3</sup>, Sohail Aslam<sup>1,3,4</sup>,  
Hafiz Fawad Ali<sup>5</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Hailey College of Commerce, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan, <sup>2</sup>University of Education, Dera Ghazi Khan Campus, Punjab, Pakistan, <sup>3</sup>Department of Management Sciences, University of Okara, Punjab, Pakistan, <sup>4</sup>University of Okara, Punjab, Pakistan, <sup>5</sup>Institute of Business Administration, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan. \*Email: bilalahmad@ue.edu.pk

Received: 15 May 2020

Accepted: 06 July 2020

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32479/ijefi.10251>

### ABSTRACT

Time is a scarce resource. Females in Pakistan are considered to be time poor since they are burdened with paid as well as non-paid work. Recent labor force statistics reveal female workforce participation is not increasing as it should be and “being time poor” is one of the many reasons. The current study sheds light on factors that make females time poor which has led to decreased labor force participation. The study is qualitative in nature 15 respondents were interviewed which lead to identification of 7 major themes which include job timings higher studies, lack of support, societal pressure, child care, domestic responsibilities and patriarchal beliefs. Government must assist females in provisions of day cares, flexible job timings, awareness programs and female job quotas so that their participation in the labor force can be increased.

**Keywords:** Time Poverty, Labor Force Participation, Patriarchal Society

**JEL Classification:** I32, J21

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Conventionally, the application and analysis of poverty has been primarily studied from the perspective of economics and is often used for describing the monetary related measures for instance consumption, income and capital. The policy makers use economic indicators and national household data to formulate better policies for poverty reduction and alleviation (Moser and Felton, 2006). The economic indicators evaluate the individual poverty level however they do not take into account the nonpaid or unremunerated work which also needs attention and in addition the resource factor of time is also often neglected in the analysis (Hamermesh and Pfann, 2005). Time is a scarce resource which refers to the concept that if an individual spends disproportionate amount of time on work; he or she is left with little time to spend on leisure activities which makes him time poor or time deficit. The time spent on performing work with no economic gain is also not

entailed in analyzing the total contribution of an individual. The inclusion of time poverty data in policy making and economics would allow better welfare policy decisions. The use of time poverty data also allows in particular better evaluation of intra-household issues, limitations individuals face in labor market and supply (Razavi, 2005). The societal gender roles are such that women are primarily responsible for carrying out the unpaid work such as household or domestic chores and responsibility of child care and elderly care. This unpaid work is unaccounted for in the economy which does not give a clear picture of total contribution of women in the society (Peters, 1998).

According to Vickery (1977) for the calculation of minimum level of consumption of an individual both money and household production must be taken in to consideration and the use of time is major constituent of the latter. Pitt and Rosenzweig (1986) proposed that the concept of analysis of time use and poverty is well grounded

in the field of economics; with the usage of household models for instance Becker's production model of household. The Becker's production model of household states that a household can maximize its utility function based upon its labor supply and consumption however the time is the constraining factor in doing so. This implies that the more time an individual allocates on working and carrying out productive activities; the lesser time they are left to spend on leisure. Discretionary time is a significant constituent for the wellbeing of an individual. Newman (2002) studied the concept of time poverty concept and suggested that there is a maximum limit of time or hours that could be used to work which includes paid work as well as other duties. Wodon and Beegle (2006) studied the time poverty concept for Malawi. The findings of the study supported this maximum limit of time and consequently time poverty. Bardasi and Wodon (2006) studied the ratio of time poor individuals by calculating the total amount of time an individual spends in labor market and in carrying out domestic chores.

The existing literature shows a gap and not much evidence is provided on significant policy issues as to how lack of support has led to time poverty amongst women. For instance the inadequate and expensive support facilities and services particularly for low income groups have resulted in more time poverty amongst them which has negative consequences attached (Antonopoulos, 2008).

Since 1960's, a significant amount of research has been carried out in order to study the disparities in economic and social status. The pattern of division of labor amongst men and women exhibit inherent prejudices well as deep rooted discriminations (Kucera and Milberg, 2000). Females perform most of the unpaid work, whereas men usually devote more time to carry out paid work. While the female participation in labor force is higher in today's time than it was couple of decades ago (Morgan, 2005) the paid work women do is still deemed to be low level skill and insignificant and is therefore less paid and undervalued as compared to the sectors that have men domination in terms of economic payout (Kabeer, 2004).

Siddiqui (2005) reiterated that in Pakistan the trade liberalization and better opportunities for growth has overburdened women and it does reduced the economic and income poverty in women. However regardless of this change in societal and gender structure of increased labor market participation of females in Pakistan; the intrinsic gender division of responsibilities and labor has still remained unequal within the household. According to Labor Force of Pakistan (2015) the women participation in labor market has increased to 22% which was 20% in 2007 which is still fairly low.

The main aim of this research study is to identify the main hindrance that prevents women in Pakistan from working outside the house whether it is because of time poverty that female participation in labor force is low. This paper attempts to study the concept of time poverty which also needs an equal attention like economic poverty as it is of equal importance for the wellbeing of an individual. The paper attempts to focus on the time poverty in context to the gender disparity and differentiation. In our study, we propose that women are more time burdened as with the increase of women participation in workforce they are

now doing both monetarily gaining and unpaid domestic work. Molyneux (2006) said that the provision of better opportunities of growth such as education and employment is also limited due to the fact that women have to give more time on fulfilling their domestic responsibilities.

In our research we attempt to evaluate the phenomenon of time poverty in Pakistani women and how it varies among the females belonging to varied income classes or groups and whether there is any improvement over the time regarding the sharing of conventional household duties such as domestic chores and child caring responsibilities that women are expected to perform. The study would be significant in identifying the time use problems that women of Pakistan face in today's job market so that policies and measures for facilitating women for encouraging them to participate in labor force could be formulated. This can improve the overall productivity of the economy of Pakistan.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The term "time poverty" was first introduced by Vickery (1977) for the families who could not achieve the minimum well-being level of US because of the long working hours and thereby left with little or no time to spend on leisure activities. Many researchers such as Newman (2002) and Apps and Rees (2004) have studied the working hours of an individual and time poverty. The findings of the studies revealed that the wellbeing of an individual is not merely contingent upon the income and consumption pattern but other factors also play a significant role. Bardasi and Wodon (2006) carried out a research to study the significance of time as a resource. According to Sagrario and Miles (2003), time is a scarce resource and allocation of disproportionate amount of time in work results in time poverty or time deficit. While gauging the national poverty countries ignore the work carried within a household that is essential for its functionality as a family unit. In conventional household setup women perform most of the domestic work (Wade, 2004).

Women face more time poverty than men because they dedicate more time to household work. Traditionally, the role of women in society was confined within the four walls of the house where they were to carry out household and domestic chores along with child rearing; which is often not considered to be any work since it does not contribute economically (Zacharias et al., 2014). According to İlkkaracan (2012) the biggest challenge in women facing more time poverty than men is the perpetuating inequality within our society which is prevalent in many forms and is inherently more directed towards females. Seguino (2000) emphasized that the gender differentiated use of time is also one form of such inequality. Women allocate more time to carry out household chores than the income generating work whereas men spend more time on monetarily paid work. In patriarchal societies, there are still very distinct gender roles and men control women's work and time. Women are not given their due status in decision making and opportunities for growth.

In traditional African households, women are responsible for various tasks such as cooking, collection of water and firewood,

cleaning, child care, care of elderly etc. The tasks that these women perform are considered to be low in status, unremunerated and are neither given inclusion in national statistics. Women carrying out these mundane household chores are therefore not considered to be working at all (Blackden and Wodon, 2006) (Sung, 2003). Human Development Report (1995) studied the data from 31 countries in order to highlight the status of women's around the globe and their economic contribution. The work women perform is often unacknowledged and as a result women are not given their due status in the society as given to men. Human Development Report (2006) also suggested that women are burdened with heavier share of work if both paid and unpaid work is accounted for. Therefore true contribution of women in a society is not evaluated in real terms.

Zilanawala (2014) carried out a study to determine whether family structure effect time poverty in women. It was found that the family structure could also be a factor influencing discretionary time or leisure time deficits. Women in combined family system could get economic and time support from other adults in the family. Other adults in the family can share the responsibility of managing household and caring for the child while the female is working. On the other hand, changing family structure has put more burden on women who now have two roles to fulfill i.e. of a parent as well as of a worker. This added responsibility has left women more time deficient than before. Furthermore, unmarried women are more time rich than married women as they have less domestic responsibilities.

According to Abdurrahman (2010), the contribution of women was approx. Double in comparison to men in South Africa's non-market production on ratio to the national economy. Therefore, women were left with 30-40% less time for leisure and personal care in comparison to the men at a household. Men on average spent 84 min on unremunerated work whereas women spent 215 min. This indicates that in South Africa women are more time poor than men. For females, accessibility to good education and allocation of time to productive and monetarily gaining activities is usually limited due to their responsibilities to carry out every day unpaid household. Skinner (2005) pointed out that facilitating and assisting females in household activities can save time which can be allocated on other productive and remunerated work. This could bring benefits at the societal level. Increased growth opportunities for women would result in poverty reduction, better education and more empowerment of women.

According to data collected by Pakistan Time Use Survey (2007), in Pakistan men in comparison to women spend four times more hours in a day on productive activities that would yield monetarily gain. On the contrary, women spend 10 times more hours in comparison to men on household chores, elderly and child care. Women in Pakistan are believed to be entirely responsible for performing household chores. Previously, in Pakistan the participation of women in labor force was very low. Though, in the past few years a surge has been seen in women participation in work force. Majid (2018) studied the phenomenon of time poverty in Pakistani women. The lower tier working women earn nominal incomes and are burdened

with heavy time poverty. They have long working hours averaging from 12 to 16 h in addition to their own household responsibilities. On the other hand, women working in high tier income bracket can afford a domestic help but are still considered to be responsible for managing household related activities. In Pakistan, women are more time poor as compared to men because household and domestic chores are still considered to be the primary responsibility of women.

Ribeiro and Marinho (2012) carried out a research to study the phenomenon of time poverty in Brazil. The findings of the study revealed a huge gap between average working hours of men and women. Similarly young girls in Brazil work more as compared to boys. This is primarily because the societal norms are such that women since childhood are expected to do household chores. The results also revealed that women work 4 times more than men in Brazil. Kes and Swaminathan (2006) carried out a study on time poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa. The results of study revealed the ratio of time poverty among adults. Ratio of 19.7% is considered to be the lower limit of time poverty; the study showed that 12% of the men in Brazil are time deficit whereas the time poverty ratio for women in Brazil was 30.1%. The study revealed that both urban and rural women are more time poor in comparison to men.

According to Bittman and Wajcman (2002) and Sullivan (2000), as the society in general has undergone a drastic shift, more and more women are now participating in labor force particularly in developed and developing countries. Turner and Grieco (2000) also in their study suggested that women are now making careers and doing professional work. However, they are still looked upon for carrying out major share of household related work and child care. As a result of large amount of time allocated in carrying out both work related as well as household responsibilities; the time burden on women has increased in recent times. Time poverty is also one of the biggest problems for single mothers who have to constantly manage and juggle between both work and domestic responsibilities without much of a support. Since single mothers are more time poor they have less time for leisure which also has the negative impact on health.

The rise in divorce rate and single parenting has put a lot of pressure on women. Single mothers lack the economic and care giving support that could have been possible with a spouse. Working women who have children are more time burdened than married women who are also working but do not have kids. Furthermore, families belonging to the middle class suffer the most from time deficit (Bianchi et al., 2006).

The review of existing literature reveals that time is a scarce resource and in today's era, like consumption and income time has also become a factor in determining the wellbeing of an individual. With the shift in society and active participation of women in labor force women are now more time burdened than ever. Women spend more time as compared to men in activities that do not generate any monetary or economic gain. However, with the increased employment of women in workforce, they now face time poverty as they have to perform household chores and

child care also. This has led to more time poverty in females as compared to males. This time deficit has resulted in lesser leisure time for women which may have negative effects on health as well. In addition, review of the literature suggests that married women are more time poor than unmarried women. Single mothers also face added time burden because of lack of economic or child care giving assistance. Rising time poverty is a serious concern particularly in women and therefore must be taken into account in national statistics.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is qualitative in nature. Since qualitative techniques are multifaceted they focus on the dynamic nature of respondents and the researcher is able to probe maximum insights for the problem under study. There are many tools for conducting a qualitative study for instance participatory observations, case studies, focus groups and many more. This study specifically employed face to face interview technique based on the research questions.

#### 3.1. Population

Primary data was collected through semi structured interviews from working females in Lahore and Islamabad. Through purposive sampling 15 working females were contacted, through their consent interviews were conducted and observations were recorded. Later the responses were transcribed verbatim.

#### 3.2. Data Analysis

Content analysis technique is used for the analysis of data. Multiple themes regarding time management among working females will be identified. Below mentioned figure reflects the themes that are identified through content analysis of interviews done on NVivo software. The analysis reveal separate themes with respect to marital status of working women in Lahore and Islamabad (Figure 1).

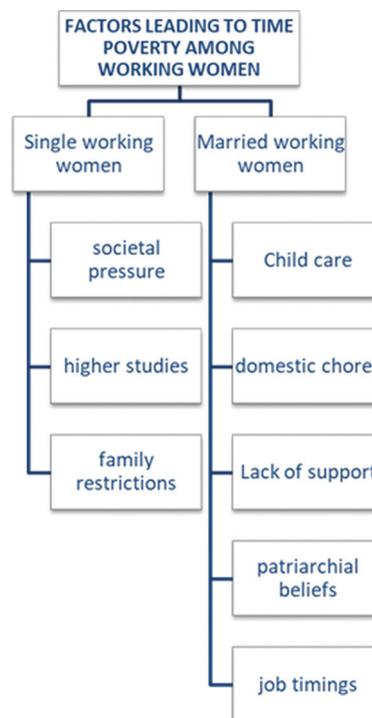
From the analysis it was identified single working women have different issues compared to married working women.

##### 3.2.1. Single working women

Upon interviewing working women of different fields out of 15 there were 6 females who were single and working. According to them factors leading to time poverty and they being unable to contribute to the labor market are as follows. (i) Since they are unmarried they do not want to be a burden on their families so they try to manage both home chores and their finances, (ii) also families don't allow to study further they are working to save money for their higher studies and studying privately for exams and (iii) there is constant pressure from society to get married and leave job that also discourage their productivity.



Figure 1: Themes identified through interviews



##### 3.2.2. Married working women

Compared to single females married working females are facing a lot of issues regarding their time management and continuation of jobs. It was revealed that married females are extreme time poor due to multiple factors. (i) Lack of support from in laws and husband which brings constant pressure from parents also to keep in laws happy and leave job, (ii) child care and domestic chores are believed to be females responsibility only therefore she must fulfill them first, (iii) since most of the good jobs in have 9-5 timings it is difficult to manage with home and kids, and (iv) after marriage especially perception of relatives and family changes and it is time and again reminded that husband is the sole bread earner.



### 4. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Currently the labor force statistics reveal female participation to be low. Although females face issue in every field on job and off job. This research studied the factors before job mainly "Time." Time is a precious resource which is ignored with regards to females. In Pakistani culture female is expected to do paid and non paid tasks vigilantly and even if she is doing a good job outside she is not appreciated if she is not good at managing her home. Literature fails to identify factors that make females time poor and affects female productivity

in the job market. The current study aims to propose a qualitative research plan that identifies, verifies and provide recommendations for the issues faced by working females in Pakistan. The study was conducted in four phases with identification of issues, interview conduction, transcription of interviews and lastly content analysis through NVivo software. Results revealed that females are time poor and hence their productivity is affected. Not only this, different type of issues identified with respect to marital status of women. Common issues were societal judgment and lack of support from family. Respondents revealed domestic chores and child care responsibilities to be taking a major chunk of their time which make them exhausted and time burdened. If family shares half of the responsibility of domestic chores it would be easier for females to work. In addition to this they identified societal beliefs to be a hurdle in changing mindset of males for their wives or daughters to work or share burden with them. It was identified that husband's lack of support after marriage is common and this mind set needs to be changed.

#### 4.1. Recommendations

In Pakistan more than 50% of the population are females the results of this study are helpful in identifying issues that has led to decrease female labor force. Governments can assist females in terms of providing day cares at every institute so that child care arrangements are taken care of. Moreover for females a flexible working hour system should be devised so that they can manage household as well without being burdened. Lastly awareness programs must be launched for educating grooming females in Pakistan and providing them jobs with benefits.

#### 4.2. Limitation of the Study

The results of study significantly contribute to the existing literature. However, there were some limitation observed in the study. First and foremost, limitation is the number of respondents from whom interview were conducted. Finally, no significant literature and statistics were found regarding the issue. Therefore, investigation was conducted from scratch and lots of problem face during this phase.

## REFERENCES

- Abdurrahman, O.I. (2010), Time poverty: A contributor to women's poverty? *The African Statistical Journal*, 11, 16-36.
- Antonopoulos, R. (2008), *The Unpaid Care Work Paid Work Connection*. The Levy Economics Institute, Working Paper No. 541.
- Apps, P., Rees, R. (2004), The household, time use and tax policy. *CESifo Economic Studies*, 50, 479-500.
- Bardasi, E., Wodon, Q. (2006), *Measuring Time Poverty and Analyzing its Determinants: Concepts and Application to Guinea*. Washington, DC: World Bank.
- Bianchi, S.M., Milkie, M.A., Sayer, L.C., Robinson, J.P. (2000), Is anyone doing the housework? Trends in the gender division of household labor. *Social Forces*, 79, 191-228.
- Bittman, M., Wajcman, J. (2000), The rush hour: The character of leisure time and gender equity. *Social Forces*, 79, 165-189.
- Blackden, M., Wodon, Q. (2006), *Gender, Time Use, and Poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa*. World Bank Working Paper, No. 73.
- Hamermesh, D.S., Pfann, G.A. (2005), *The Economics of Time Use; Contributions to Economic Analysis*. Amsterdam, San Diego, Oxford: Elsevier.
- İlkkaracan, İ. (2012), Why so few women in the labor market in Turkey? *Feminist Economics*, 18, 1-37.
- Kabeer, N. (2004), Globalisation, Labor standards, and women's rights: Dilemmas of collective inaction in an interdependent world. *Feminist Economics*, 10(1), 3-35.
- Kucera, D., Milberg, W. (2000), Gender segregation and gender bias in manufacturing trade expansion: Revisiting the "wood asymmetry". *World Development*, 28(7), 1211-1230.
- Kes, A., Swaminathan, H. (2006), *Gender and time poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Washington, DC: The World Bank.
- Majid, H. (2018), *Women's Work and Time Poverty*, Dawn News. Available from: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1410468>.
- Molyneux, M. (2006), Mothers at the service of the new poverty Agenda: *Progres/a/oportunidades, Mexico's conditional transfer programme*. *Social Policy and Administration*, 40(4), 425-449.
- Morgan, K. (2005), The "production" of child care: How labor markets shape social policy and vice versa. *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State, and Society*, 12(2), 243-263.
- Moser, C., Felton, A. (2006), *The Construction of an Asset Index Measuring Asset Accumulation in Ecuador*. India: Chronic Poverty Research Centre.
- Newman, C. (2002), Gender, time use, and change: The impact of the cut flower industry in Ecuador. *World Bank Economic Review*, 16, 375-395.
- PBS. (2007), *Time Use Survey 2007*. Federal Bureau of Statistics Statistics Division, Government of Pakistan. Available from: <http://www.pbs.gov.pk/content/time-use-survey-2007>.
- PBS. (2015), *Labor Force Survey Trends*. Federal Bureau of Statistics Statistics Division, Government of Pakistan. Available from: <http://www.pbs.gov.pk/sites/default/files//other/Presentation%202%20FS%20Price%20and%20Trade%20Graphs%20%2830-3-2018%29.pdf>.
- Peters, D. (1998), Breadwinners, homemakers, beasts of burden. *Habitat Debate*, 4, 93-97.
- Pitt, M., Rosenzweig, M.R. (1986), *Agricultural Prices, Food Consumption, and the Health of Indonesian Farmers; Agricultural Household Models: Extensions, Applications and Policy*. Washington, DC: World Bank.
- Razavi, S. (2005), The relevance of unpaid work for social policy. *The Levy Institute of Bard College*, 3-5.
- Ribeiro, L.L., Marinho, E. (2012), Time poverty in Brazil: Measurement and analysis of its determinants. *Estudos Economia*, 42, 285-306.
- Sagrario, F.M., Miles, M. (2003), Time use, work and overlapping activities: Evidence from Australia. *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 27, 881-904.
- Seguino, S. (2000), Gender inequality and economic growth: A cross-country analysis. *World Development*, 28, 1211-1230.
- Siddiqui, R. (2005), Modeling gender dimensions of the impact of economic reforms on time allocation among market, household, and leisure activities in Pakistan. *The Pakistan Development Review*, 4, 615-639.
- Skinner, C. (2005), Coordination points: A hidden factor in reconciling work and family life. *Journal of Social Policy*, 34(1), 99-119.
- Sullivan, O. (2000), The division of domestic labor: 20 Years of change? *Sociology*, 34(3), 437-456.
- Sung, S. (2003), Women reconciling paid and unpaid work in a Confucian welfare state: The case of South Korea. *Social Policy and Administration*, 37(4), 342-360.
- Turner, J., Grieco, M. (2000), Gender and time poverty: The neglected social policy implications of gendered time, transport and travel. *Time and Society*, 9(1), 129-136.

- UNDP. (2006), Human Development Report. New York: UNDP.
- Vickery, C. (1977), The time-poor: A new look at poverty. *Journal of Human Resources*, 12, 27-48.
- Wade, R.H. (2004), Is globalisation reducing poverty and inequality? *World Development* 32(4), 567-589.
- Wodon, Q., Beegle, K. (2006), Labor shortages despite underemployment? Seasonality in Time Use in Malawi. World Bank Working Paper, No. 73.
- Zacharias, A., Masterson, T., Memis, E. (2014), Time Deficits and Poverty. The Levy Institute Measure of Time and Consumption Poverty for Turkey. Available from: [http://www.tr.undp.org/content/dam/turkey/docs/povreddoc/rpr\\_5\\_14.pdf](http://www.tr.undp.org/content/dam/turkey/docs/povreddoc/rpr_5_14.pdf).
- Zilanawala, A. (2014), Women's time poverty and family structure: Differences by parenthood and employment. *Journal of Family Issues*, 93, 37-45.