



## AN INVESTIGATION OF THE SOCIO-CULTURAL CONSTRAINTS IN GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN FOOD SECURITY AT HOUSEHOLD LEVEL IN RURAL PUNJAB, PAKISTAN

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### ABSTRACT

This study was conducted in the department of Rural Sociology, University of Agriculture Faisalabad, Pakistan during the years 2017-2018. The objective of the study was 'to analyze the socio-cultural constraints in gender mainstreaming in food security at the household level and to evaluate their association with demographic characteristics of respondents. The study was conducted in 3 tehsils of district Vehari and district Pakpattan. Total 30 villages were selected randomly and about 16 women were selected from each village through convenient random sampling that makes a sample size of 480 respondents. Quantitative data technique was used in this study. Pre-testing was carried out to inspect the workability of the questionnaire. The data were analyzed by statistical techniques containing univariate, bivariate, and multivariate analysis. Findings revealed that 39.8% of the rural women were illiterate and 26.3% were primary pass. Nearly 75.9% of the women exposed that they have the least opportunities for training regarding food security that's why about 93.6% of the women had been following the old patterns of cooking and eating food. In addition almost 72.3% of the household members were concerned about the taste of the food rather than nutrition. About 67.5% of the women revealed that their access to the market is lesser than male members of the family. Over and above, nearly 70.7% of the respondents told that due to lack of acknowledgment for their services, they lose interest in household matters i.e. food security. Moreover, more than half of the selected women (57.7%) did not have purpose-built kitchen at their houses, that's why laborious work and a lots of time is required to cook healthfully and hygienically, because they cook their meals in courtyard, on the rooftop or living rooms, which cause the extra exertion for rural women. All the above mentioned socio-cultural constraints highly affected the core issue of food security. Research revealed that there is an association between age, education level of the women and socio-cultural constraints they face. Rural women were restricted by the socio-cultural constraints and cannot play an efficient role in food security at the household level.

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### INTRODUCTION

Food security is one of the major challenges of current age. Nearly more than half of the total population of Pakistan cannot reach to the balanced and nutritious diet that is why undernourishment prevails. Various writers and establishments have defined the term food security in several ways. Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) has described that when food is available, accessible to everybody and they can utilize it properly in given culture, then one can say that people of that area are food secured (FAO, 2004). It is clear from the description of food security that in order to make the food available in a particular area is an important element but not enough to ensure the food security. Skoet and Stamoulis (2006) reported that today the world has sufficient food to nourish everyone but according to an estimate, 854 million people on the

globe are still malnourished (FAO 2006). Food security not only needs sufficient supply of food but also involves proper utilization by all the men and women of all ages, traditions, religions, and socio-economic levels. Approximately one-third of the total families are below the food poverty line because of their lower consumption than the daily requirement. They remain unable to fulfill their daily diet necessities. The rate of food insecurity was high i.e. 35% in village zones, contrary to city zones (26%) (United Nations, 2001). There are several diverse meanings of gender mainstreaming and similarly significant differences practically. In the form of the concept, gender mainstreaming is a procedure of alteration of significant notions to hold more effectively a biosphere that is gendered, instead of the formation of an autonomist gender philosophy (Walby, 2005).

Gender inequality has been a major reason as well as the outcome of food shortage and undernourishment. It's an open secret that, if the level of gender inequality is higher, then the level of undernourishment would also be high. Mucha (2012) and UNDP (2011) described that nutrition and gender are not separate matters, farming, nourishment and health are interconnected and can be equally fortifying. Several specialists observed that females are the important part in the areas of farming, health and nourishment (IFPRI, 2011).

Paris (2000) stated that prolonged undernourishment destroys the health of females. It is very clear that female health has a direct impact on the health of newborns and young kids. Moreover, it is stressed that livelihood of the most of Southeast Asian countries in the village chiefly rests on farming. Pakistan originates most of the gross domestic production through farming. Females have important involvement in farming in Pakistan, which is almost 66% of the total population, who are activated to earn money through farming.

Food shortage is on the rise and hurting the poor all over the world, hitting the landless and women the hardest. Rising food prices aggravated people's access to food. Those who were already food insecure find themselves in worsening conditions. They are joined by millions more of newly food-insecure people. Misguided agricultural and trade policies have contributed to the current food crisis. Women have crucial role in agricultural production and household food security. Women farmers went out on the streets to demand their access to land in Johi, Pakistan (Karl, 2009).

Begum and Yasmeen (2011) argued that due to low access to learning facilities, most of the women in villages of Pakistan were uneducated. Most of them depend upon the outdated and casual form of knowledge from their old family members. Old-fashioned traditional puzzles and weddings at a premature age leave them without basic schooling. Arif and Khalid (2007) stated that utilization of nutritious food can be improved through educating the females about nutrition. Begum and Yasmeen (2011) reported that Pakistan and other developing nations have define the duties of male and females that had been traditionally indicated with low access to advance technology.

Arif and Khalid (2007) argued that females play an important role in the provision of food for their family. They actively participate in food production; cooking and they work as merchants to trade the food to earn money. However, they have a subordinate position in our society, that's why they possess very limited access to schooling and learning and least right to make decisions for the household. In the same way, they have least right to intake nutritious food. Utilization of

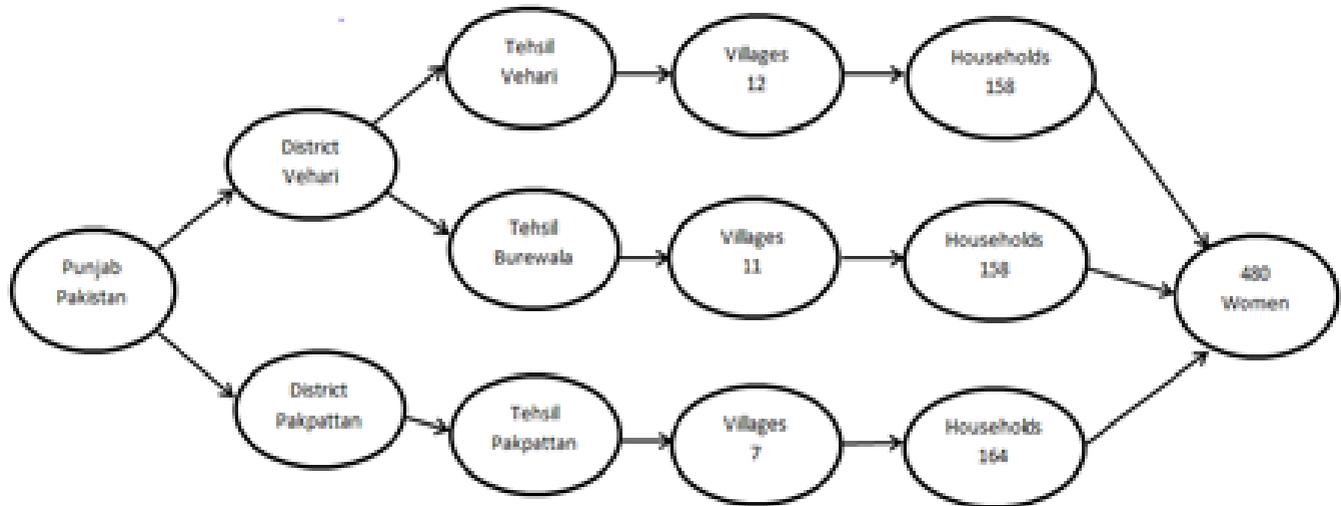
nutritious food can be improved through educating the females about nourishment and diet care, which can ultimately help us all to save ourselves from diseases. Women participation in agriculture is not less than males but unfortunately, in spite of their high role in food security, most of the women remain undernourished. There are numerous socio-cultural reasons for this undernourishment including lack of awareness, set old patterns and customs etc. In this study the third element of food security which is utilization has been keenly evaluated. Issue of gender mainstreaming in food security has several research and implementation dimensions which should be addressed.

Objective of this study was to determine the socio-cultural constraints in gender mainstreaming in food security (utilization of food) at household level, and to analyze the association between demographic characteristics and socio-cultural constraints in gender mainstreaming in food security. It was envisaged that this study would help to pin point the major factors behind the poor performance of women regarding food security and highlights the major constraints of poor utilization of food among masses especially women.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study was conducted in the department of Rural Sociology, University of Agriculture Faisalabad, Pakistan during the year 2017-2018. Rural area of district Vehari and district Pakpattan was selected as the universe for this study. Multistage sampling technique (Agresti and Finlay, 2008) was used for data collection. At first stage, total three Tehsils were selected randomly from two districts. From district Vehari out of three tehsils only two were selected (Burewala and Vehari). Moreover, from district Pakpattan, out of two tehsils just one was selected, namely Pakpattan Sharif. On second stage, about 30 villages were selected randomly from three tehsils through proportionate sampling. From tehsil Burewala and Vehari 158 households were selected randomly and from tehsil Pakpattan 164, thus making a sample of 480 households. From each household a woman was selected through purposive sampling, who was highly engaged in cooking or other tasks related to food security. Diagrammatic presentation of the entire procedure of sampling is presented in given figure:-

A well designed pre-tested interviewing schedule was prepared according to research objectives. To describe the socio-cultural dimensions of the selected women, descriptive analysis such as frequency distribution, measure of central tendency and measure of dispersion was used. To inspect the association between dependent and independent variables Bi-variate analysis was carried out. To discover the strength of association Chi-square test was used.



Total number of villages from each tehsil, total rural population and total number of households has been mentioned in Table 1:-

**Table 1. Selection of villages by using proportionate random sampling technique**

| Name of tehsil | No. of total villages | Total rural population | No. of HH in rural area | No. of selected villages | No. of selected women            | Sample |
|----------------|-----------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|--------|
| Burewala       | 201                   | 783588                 | 123737                  | 12                       | $783588 \times 100 / 33 = 158.4$ | 158    |
| Vehari         | 167                   | 782702                 | 122,696                 | 11                       | $782702 \times 100 / 33 = 158.4$ | 158    |
| Pakpattan      | 134                   | 792532                 | 130240                  | 7                        | $792532 \times 100 / 34 = 163.2$ | 164    |
| Total          | 502                   | 2358813                | 376673                  | 30                       |                                  | 480    |

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this study, respondents were all those women who were above 18 years, who had active participation in cooking and some set patterns of food behavior. Table 2 shows that majority of the selected women (36.7 %) were under the age group of 26-33 years old, and 25.6 % were from the age group of 34-41 years. 19% selected women fell in the age group of 18-25 years.

**Table 2. Distribution of the selected women according to their age group**

| Age          | Frequency  | Percentage |
|--------------|------------|------------|
| 18-25        | 91         | 19.0       |
| 26-33        | 176        | 36.7       |
| 34-41        | 123        | 25.6       |
| 42-49        | 55         | 11.5       |
| 50 or above  | 35         | 7.3        |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>480</b> | <b>100</b> |

Age has been very important variable to be discussed under this topic of socio-cultural constraints because in cultural context of Pakistan women of all age have been treated differently as they get more authority

and freedom after 40 years. Over and above it is very clear that women go through many important phases in their lives i.e. puberty, menstrual periods, pregnancy, lactating periods, menopause, and during all these phases nutrition requirement is different, but unfortunately, women were neglected mostly during early and old age. WHO (2005) stated that some age groups, for instance, old ladies have particular nutritional requirements, in addition, diet requirements of teenagers are different from other age groups, but all these age groups as ,older people and teenager got very minute care regarding food, this undernourishment can be a cause of suspension of physical and mental growth. In current study, 11.5% and 7.3% of the selected women fell under the age group of 42-49 and 50 or above, respectively. Age has been very important dimension, which cannot be ignored while discussing about food security, because at household level different age groups have different roles and different physical requirements of food intake. International goals for 2025 of the World Health Organization’s (WHO) emphasizes on kids’ healthiness and females of generative age (WHO 2005). Additionally, Mehmood et al. (2017) argued that children of low age parents

are more food secure.

### Distribution of respondents according to their education

Table 3 depicts that majority of the respondents as (39.8%) were illiterate, followed by 26.3% primary passed (26.3%). Furthermore, 11.3% and 16.7% of the selected women were middle and matric pass, respectively. Only 6.0% of selected women's education was above matric. In rural areas of Pakistan, it has been assumed that women have least financial responsibility and their main duty is to perform household chores, so, mostly parents prefer to train their girls to take up household chores responsibility mainly cooking and they ignore their schooling. That's why they possess lack of awareness regarding utilization of food and ignore micro-nutrients in food consumption. Rashid *et al.* (2017) discovered that education play a pivotal role in food security and it can be considered as a single policy tool for food security.

**Table 3. Distribution of the selected women according to their education**

| Educational level of the respondent | Frequency  | Percentage |
|-------------------------------------|------------|------------|
| Illiterate                          | 191        | 39.8       |
| Primary                             | 126        | 26.3       |
| Middle                              | 54         | 11.3       |
| Matric                              | 80         | 16.7       |
| Above matric                        | 29         | 6.0        |
| <b>Total</b>                        | <b>480</b> | <b>100</b> |

For better cooking and achieving the better level of food security, purpose built kitchen help a lot, but study explains that 57.5% of the selected women had no purpose built kitchen at their houses while on the other hand 42.5% of the selected women had purpose built kitchen at their homes. In rural areas of Pakistan, people do not value the work of women in household, so, they show less willingness to facilitate their women, that's why there is fewer trend to construct a kitchen in household. Another reason is poverty. Set patterns of cooking in open air and tough lifestyle have been prevailed, which exhaust the women leaving lesser capacity to focus on nutritional factor of food.

**Table 4. Distribution of the selected women according to the existence of purpose built kitchen at home**

| Having purpose built kitchen at home | Frequency  | Percentage |
|--------------------------------------|------------|------------|
| Yes                                  | 204        | 42.5       |
| No                                   | 276        | 57.5       |
| <b>Total</b>                         | <b>480</b> | <b>100</b> |

Table 5 describes that the selected women who have no purpose built kitchen at their houses, out of them 72.9% cooked their food in the courtyard. Moreover 19.5% cooked their food in living rooms. Rest of selected women (7.6%) fell under the category of any others as they cook their food on the roof etc. It is very hard practice to bring all the necessary things for cooking in courtyard or rooftop at all three meal times, but women in rural areas are very hard working. Moreover, during rain they face too much difficulty and mostly they wait for stopping the rain to cook the meal.

**Table 5. Distribution of the selected women according to the place of cooking in the case of not having purpose built kitchen at home**

| If no, where do you cook food | Frequency  | Percentage |
|-------------------------------|------------|------------|
| In courtyard                  | 201        | 72.9       |
| In living room                | 54         | 19.5       |
| Any other                     | 21         | 7.6        |
| <b>Total</b>                  | <b>276</b> | <b>100</b> |

### Socio-cultural constraints

The issue of food security has been questioned for ages. It is a multidimensional occurrence. There are no worldwide similar reasons of food insecurity. It is described that reasons of food insecurity include long dated scarceness of suitable useful assets (Barrett, 2010) i.e. education of the family, size family, cattle ownership and accessibility to marketplace (Mango *et al.*, 2014).

Lal and Khorana (2011) found that females in village areas not only in Pakistan but in all developing nations are facing numerous obstacles in working on farms. These obstacles are social and economic, i.e. gender biasness and low education. Females do all the work on farms alongwith their household chores. They do all the work of household and agriculture efficiently but without proper reward and remuneration.

Table 6, depicted that, majority of the respondents (57.5%) were agreed on the statement that "women are not fully aware about the food and nutrition". In contrary to it, 33.9% of the respondents showed their disagreement and they were convinced that women are aware about the food and nutrition. On the other hand, about 8.5% of respondents could not decide their agreement or disagreement on above mentioned statement. The fluctuating requirements of women through their life cycle for particular nutrition and supplementary calories during infancy and puberty, gestation and period of breastfeeding, and during menopause, are most of times unnoticed. Where nourishment packages are provided they mostly incline

**Table 6. Responses of respondents' about socio-cultural constraints faced by women in food security at household level**

| Statement  | Agree |      | Undecided |     | Disagree |      |
|--|-------|------|-----------|-----|----------|------|
|  | F     | %    | f         | %   | f        | %    |
| Women are not fully aware about the food and nutrition   | 276   | 57.5 | 41        | 8.5 | 163      | 33.9 |
| There are least opportunities for training of women regarding food security  | 364   | 75.9 | 11        | 2.3 | 105      | 22.5 |
| In your household food practices of cooking and eating are always followed with already learned(traditional) methods which may be harmful for health | 449   | 93.6 | 15        | 3.1 | 16       | 3.3  |
| Family members are not concerned whether food is nutritious, they just want taste  | 347   | 72.3 | 16        | 3.3 | 117      | 24.4 |
| Socio-economic barriers in introducing kitchen gardening at domestic level   | 317   | 66   | 0         | 0   | 163      | 34   |
| Women lose interest in quality food preparation, serving, and storage due to lack of acknowledgement for her services                                | 339   | 70.7 | 28        | 5.8 | 113      | 23.5 |
| Son preference during the distribution of food by timing and variety   | 47    | 9.8  | 7         | 1.5 | 426      | 88.7 |
| Women are not able to go to the market and get things done as fast as men.   | 324   | 67.5 | 3         | 0.6 | 153      | 31.9 |
| Innovation like new technology for cooking and professionally manufactured utensils for the food are least acceptable                                | 304   | 63.3 | 42        | 8.8 | 134      | 27.9 |

to main concern females who are expecting or breastfeeding and kids under the period of two years, because these categories of people has been indicated as the most exposed to danger. The meaning of these constricted prescriptions is that particular groups such as older females, pubertal lassies and susceptible males and sons may not be getting the required nutrition. (Ramachandran 2012; Dercon and Singh 2013). The results further depicted that a high majority of the respondents (75.9 %) were agreed on the statement that “there are least opportunities for training of women regarding food security”. In contrary to it, 22.5 % of respondents showed their disagreement. On the other hand about 2.3% of the respondents could not decide their agreement or disagreement on above mentioned statement. Begum and Yasmeen (2011) argued that due to low access to learning facilities, most of the women in villages of Pakistan were uneducated. Most of the ladies depend upon the outdated and casual form of knowledge from their old family members. Old-fashioned traditional puzzles and weddings at a premature age leave them without basic schooling.

Moreover, a high majority of the respondents (93.6 %) were agreed on the statement that “in their household food practices of cooking and eating are always followed with already learned methods which may be

harmful for health”. In contrary to it, about 3.3 % of respondents showed their disagreement. On the other hand, about 3.1% of could not decide their agreement or disagreement on above mentioned statement.

In addition, majority of the respondents' (72.3 %) were agreed on the statement that “their family members are not concerned whether food is nutritious, they just want taste”. In contrary to it, 24.4 % of respondents were disagreed on it. Moreover, about 3.3 % of respondents could not decide their agreement or disagreement on above mentioned statement. Over and above 66 % of the respondents were agreeing that they were facing socio-economic barriers in introducing kitchen gardening at domestic level. In contrary to it 34% of the respondents showed their disagreement. On the other hand, about zero % of the respondents could not decide their agreement or disagreement on above mentioned statement. Nearly, 70.7 % of the respondents were agreed on the statement that “women lose interest in quality food preparation, serving, and storage due to lack of acknowledgement for their services”. In contrary to it, 23.5 % of respondents showed their disagreement on it. About 5.8% of respondents were not able to decide their agreement or disagreement on described statement.

Further, research depicts that only 9.8% of the respondents were agreed that mostly people prefer

their sons during the distribution of food by timing and variety". In contrary to it a high majority 88.7 % of respondents showed their disagreement and they were convinced that this does not happen. On the other hand about 1.5% of respondents remained silent on this issue. A few decades ago in rural areas of Pakistan majority of the women preferred their sons at the time of distribution of food but now due to media sensitization and awareness among people, trend has been changed, but they don't care about the particular dietary requirements of daughters even now. Women by themselves ignore their own food as wives, daughters and sisters, they prefer to offer food first of all to their husbands, fathers and brothers due to set patterns of culture. Moreover, it was measured that foodstuff supply and its intake in the families of countryside Bangladesh was uneven. Children under-five were preferred mainly who get an unequal portion of meat. Fully-grown females get lesser than their portion of desired foodstuffs. Though fully-grown females eat considerably more quantities of energy in the form of foodstuff than playschool kids but their intake of meat unevenly matches the quantity playschool sons. But fully grown ladies' body requirement of iron and many other micro-nutrients is far more than playschool boys. Males do not suffer from the unequal distribution of food (Bouis *et al.*, 1998). Females are affected differently according to their age, stage of their lives and other different traditional aspects. After the increase in rates of foodstuff, expecting ladies and post-delivery females have been mostly recorded in danger (Holmes and Marsden 2009). The results further depicted that a high majority of the respondents as (67.5%) reported that "women are not able to go to the market and get things done as fast as men". In contrary to it 31.9 % of the respondents were disagreed with this. On the other hand, about 0.6 % of respondents were neutral. Almost 63.3% of respondents told that "innovation like new technology for cooking and professionally manufactured utensils for the food is least acceptable at their homes. While 27.9 % of the respondents were did not agree with this. On the other hand about 8.8 % of the respondents were neutral.

### Bi-variate analysis

#### Hypothesis 1: Age of the women has been associated with social cultural constraints in food security

Table 1, represents the relationship between age of the selected women and their Socio-cultural constraints in food security. Chi-square value ( $\chi^2 = 46.79$ ) a highly significant ( $p = .000$ ) association between age of the selected women and their Socio-cultural constraints in food security. While Gamma statistics demonstrating a negative and non-significant relationship between

under discussion variables. It means, lower age women faced more Socio-cultural constraints in food security as compared to higher age women. So, the hypothesis "Age of the women will be associated with social cultural constraints in food security" is partially accepted.

**Table 7. Relationship between age of the selected women and their Socio-cultural constraints in food security**

| Age         | Socio-cultural constraints |        |       | Total  |
|-------------|----------------------------|--------|-------|--------|
|             | Low                        | Medium | High  |        |
| 18-25       | 23                         | 58     | 10    | 91     |
|             | 25.3%                      | 63.7%  | 11.0% | 100.0% |
| 26-33       | 15                         | 113    | 48    | 176    |
|             | 8.5%                       | 64.2%  | 27.3% | 100.0% |
| 34-41       | 10                         | 93     | 20    | 123    |
|             | 8.1%                       | 75.6%  | 16.3% | 100.0% |
| 42-49       | 13                         | 35     | 7     | 55     |
|             | 23.6%                      | 63.6%  | 12.7% | 100.0% |
| 50 or above | 14                         | 16     | 5     | 35     |
|             | 40.0%                      | 45.7%  | 14.3% | 100.0% |
| Total       | 75                         | 315    | 90    | 480    |
|             | 15.6%                      | 65.6%  | 18.8% | 100.0% |

Chi-square = 46.79 d.f. = 8 P-value = .000\*\* Gamma = -0.065

P-value = .349<sup>NS</sup>

\*\* Highly significant

Age has been very important dimension, which cannot be ignored while discussing the food security, because at household level different age groups have different roles and different physical requirement of food intake. International goals for 2025 of the World Health Organization's (WHO) emphasizes on kids' healthiness and females of generative age, while main emphasis is on the nutritive requirements of pregnant and breast feeding and their kids breast feeding period. This philosophy flops in the provision and exploration of the uneven influence associations that add to the undernourishment of females and lassies, and stops short of being transformative (WHO, 2005). In addition, other age groups got very minute care, for instance, old ladies and males with particular nutritional necessities, or teenagers, for whom undernourishment can be a cause of suspension of bodily and intellectual growth (WHO, 2005).

#### Hypothesis 2: Education level of the women has been associated with Socio-cultural constraints in food security

Table 8 represents the relationship between education of the selected women and their Socio-cultural constraints in food security. Chi-square value ( $\chi^2 = 99.64$ ) a highly significant ( $p = .000$ ) association between education of the selected women and their socio-cultural constraints in food security. Gamma statistics are demonstrating a strong negative and highly-significant relationship between under discussion variables. It means that illiterate women faced more socio-cultural constraints in food security as compared to educated women.

So, the hypothesis “education level of the women will be associated with social cultural constraints in food security” is accepted. Research exposed that with the enhancement in female literacy rate, 43 percent of total decrease in child undernourishment, by far the major impact (Smith and Haddad, 2000).

**Table 8. Association between education level of the selected women and their Socio-cultural constraints in food security**

| Education    | Socio-cultural constraints |        |       | Total  |
|--------------|----------------------------|--------|-------|--------|
|              | Low                        | Medium | High  |        |
| Illiterate   | 10                         | 150    | 31    | 191    |
|              | 5.2%                       | 78.5%  | 16.2% | 100.0% |
| Primary      | 10                         | 90     | 26    | 126    |
|              | 7.9%                       | 71.4%  | 20.6% | 100.0% |
| Middle       | 17                         | 18     | 19    | 54     |
|              | 31.5%                      | 33.3%  | 35.2% | 100.0% |
| Matric       | 21                         | 50     | 9     | 80     |
|              | 26.3%                      | 62.5%  | 11.3% | 100.0% |
| Above matric | 17                         | 7      | 5     | 29     |
|              | 58.6%                      | 24.1%  | 17.2% | 100.0% |
| Total        | 75                         | 315    | 90    | 480    |
|              | 15.6%                      | 65.6%  | 18.8% | 100.0% |

Chi-square = 99.64 d.f. = 8 P-value = .000\*\* Gamma = -0.254

P-value = .000\*\*

\*\* Highly significant

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It was found that women have been suffering more nutritional deficiency as compared to men. Nutritional deficiency among women is mostly driven by socio-cultural constraints. Lack of awareness about female’s different nutritional requirement in different phases of life and already rigid set patterns of food intake were found as most compelling constraints. While low education, discouragement for innovations in cooking patterns, low opportunities for proper training of women regarding healthful cooking methods, least trend for kitchen gardening and barriers in free mobility for women were found as some other crucial socio-cultural constraints. Effective policies for this burning issue are lack in Pakistan .Although it is not possible to stop the gender discrimination in food security but proper management and planning may lead to a desirable and sustainable way for establishing favorable environment to mitigate the socio-cultural constraints in this regard.

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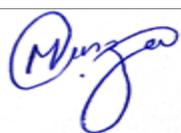
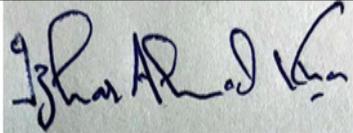
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**CONTRIBUTION OF AUTHORS**

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|--------|-------------------|---|---|
| 1.     | Munazzah Manzoor  | Planned and prepared complete research layout and manuscript                            |    |
| 2.     | Izhar Ahmed Khan  | Provided guidance during whole process of research and proof read manuscript            |   |
| 3.     | Ashfaq Ahmad Mann | Provided guidance in the construction of research instrument and finalizing methodology |  |