

WILLINGNESS TO PAY FOR FEMALE EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY OF PAKHARIBAS VDC OF DHANKUTA DISTRICT

Pashupati Nepal*

INTRODUCTION

Education is almost universally recognized as an avenue for raising living standard. Thus the factors that influence educational decisions have an important impact on individual and social welfare. In developing countries, one factor that plays a vital role in educational decisions is gender, females usually attain lower levels of education and have lower school enrollment rates than do males (Gertler 1992: 171). Nepal has made a considerable efforts to provide school education to all. Although, there is no legal discrimination between boys and girls with regard to access to education, there is a substantial male female disparity. In Nepal, males are given preference over females for socio-economic and cultural reasons (HMG/NPC 1994 : 17).

According to 1991 census, national literacy rate of Nepal is about 40 percent while female literacy rate is only about 25 percent and their enrollment in formal education in primary, lower secondary and secondary is about 37.0, 31.0 and 29.0 percent respectively. This reveals very low female enrollment compared to that of males. (HMG/NPC 1994:17).

Although, the government of Nepal has shouldered the burden of providing free education up to secondary level, it has not been able to attract both male and female students equally. Even in this venture of free education system not all costs of education are borne by government. Only a portion of direct costs are borne by the government, leaving aside the remaining part of direct costs and the whole amount of indirect costs to bear by guardians. A lot of efforts have been made by the government in the past to eliminate disparity between male and female education but the result has not been satisfactory. For this reason, present study attempt to analyze the factor that affect willingness to pay for female's education.

* *Mr. Nepal is Associated with Geography Instruction Committee, Gorkha Campus, Gorkha.*

Village Background

Pakhribas VDC of Dhankuta district is located at about 1500 meter altitude from the sea level and at about 19 Km North from Dhankutta Municipality, the district and Eastern Regional headquarter. It takes about 3 hours walk from Dhankutta and has a total cultivated area of 1040.4 hectares with 796 households. It has about 4485 population which is divided into 2224 males and 2261 females.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The main objective of the study is to find out the level of willingness to pay for female education in Pakhribas VDC. In this process, an attempt has been made to analyze the socio-cultural and economic reasons for low willingness to pay for female education relative to male education and recommend some measures to narrow down the difference.

METHODOLOGY

The study is entirely based on primary data obtained from Pakhribas VDC through household survey. To collect the primary data sample size was determined based on the total number households in Pakhribas VDC. The reasons for selecting this particular VDC for the present study is it's short distance from district headquarter Dhankutta and its small area. To determine the sample size (N) in the study, following method was used :

$$N = 796, \quad Z = 1.960 \text{ (at 95 percent confidence level)}$$

$$e = 0.5 \quad \text{and } \delta^2 = 5$$

where Z, e and δ^2 are assumed:

$$\text{Formula : } n = \frac{N \cdot Z^2 \cdot \delta^2}{N \cdot e^2 + Z^2 \cdot \delta^2}$$

where, n = Sample size, N = Total number of households

Z = Confidence level, e = error that can be tolerated and

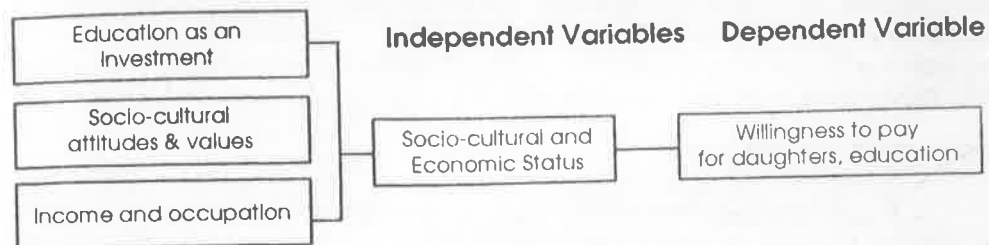
δ = Variance.

$$\text{Therefore, } n = \frac{796 \times (1.960)^2 \times 5}{796 \times (0.5)^2 + (1.960)^2 \times 5} = \frac{1528.2}{218.2} = 70.40 = 70$$

Thus 70 households were to be taken as sample for the present study. But for uniformity, 72 households, 8 households from each ward, were interviewed. To select the individual household, method of random sampling, was applied. In the present study, the techniques employed for the interpretation of the available data and information are mostly descriptive. Statistical tools have been used wherever possible.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Intervening Variable



LOW LEVEL OF EDUCATION AMONG FEMALES: THEORY AND PRACTICE

The consumption aspect and the investment aspect are the two main aspects which influence the decision of parents to send their children to school. Consumption aspect is reflected when parents prefer educated children regardless of the financial benefits of education while the second aspect i. e. investment aspect proposes that education may be valued because it brings financial (or other) returns to parents. Thus, difference in school enrollment for females and males must occur because of differences in the direct value placed by parents on educated children or because the economy and the society may be such that from the parents perspective, the net return to educating males is higher than that to educating females. The difference in the net return to education to different individuals can be found out by the differences in the costs of and the gross returns to education to them and can be divided into the returns to parents and the returns to children. The net return to education is the gross return minus the cost (both in terms of discounted value). If the net gains are lower for females either their costs are higher or their gross financial gains are lower relative to males or both. Furthermore, parents may not benefit equally from financially successful males and females. If social customs place more responsibility on males than on females to support their parents, the parents may have a stronger incentive to educate their males, even if the net returns to education are the same for females and males.

Socio-Cultural Attitude and Willingness to Pay for Female's Education in the Sample Area

In the study area, it was found that majority of the respondents have preferential attitudes towards males and discriminatory towards females (Table 1 and 2). Most of the parents are of the view that daughters need only a basic education to perform their social roles whereas boys require

higher level of education. Many families of the lower and middle classes prefer to send their males to school and give their daughters a bare minimum education and then keep them at home as in charge of domestic tasks.

Table 1
Percentage Share by Gender Not Attending Schools
(<16 years age-group)

Gender	Number	Percent
Females	105	59.3
Males	72	40.7
Total	177	100.0

Source: Field Survey by the Author 2052.

Table 1 depicts the fact that majority of the females of school going age remain at home (59.3 percent) relative to males (40.7 percent) in sampled households.

Table- 2
Education Attainment by Gender in sample Households

Sex/Attainment	Primary (1-5 class)	Lower Secondary (6-8 class)	Secondary (9-10 class)	Higher Education	Total
Females	120 (48.2)	47 (44.8)	20 (35.0)	5 (38.5)	192 (45.3)
Males	129 (51.8)	58 (55.2)	37 (65.0)	8 (61.5)	232 (54.7)
Total	249 (100.0)	105 (100.0)	57 (100.0)	13 (100.0)	424 (100.0)

Note : Figures in parentheses indicate column percentages.

Source: Field Survey by the Author 2052.

If we give a cursory glance to Table 2, it is evident that the percentage of males' attainment is very high in each and every level than that of females. This table also indicates the fact that the educational attainment of females decreases with increasing level of education. This is also an evidence of the people's low willingness towards female's education.

According to the respondents, the cost of sending daughters to school is higher than that of males. For this reason, males go farther for schooling than do females. The direct cost is likely to be the same for females and males but a more important cost like hours of work lost to the households due to girls school attendance is different (Table 3)

Respondents of this VDC expressed less desire to educate girls. Few people were found willing to send girls to school but even among them only very few desired to provide equal level of education for their girls and boys.

Table 3
Respondents' Reasons for Keeping Females Out Of School in Sampled Households

S. N.	Reasons	Respondents	Percentage
1	They are needed for farm work	11	16.9
2	They will come into touch with boys at school	4	6.2
3	They get married off and leave the family	11	16.9
4	It is difficult to get marry off girls with higher education	9	13.8
5	They are needed for housework	18	27.7
6	To educate both girls and son costs too much	5	7.7
7	Their husband will take care of them	3	4.6
8	Others	4	6.2
	Total	65	100.0

Source: Field Survey by the Author 2052.

Table 3 lists a number of reasons for not sending females to school. The highest proportion of respondents (27.7 percent) said that females are needed for housework so they can not be sent to school. Next to this, a majority of respondents are not interested to send their girls to school because there is a need of female labour for farm work (16.9 percent); The same percentage of respondents (16.9 percent) opine that they get married off. Out of the 72 sample households, only 7 households have shown their interest for equal schooling for females and males.

The ethnic composition of the sample households has also revealed differences in willingness to pay for females' education. Present study shows that *Brahmin* and *Kshetri* castes have expressed their relatively higher desire for sending females to school while remaining castes *Magar*, *Katwal* and *Tharu*, have expressed their less desire to send girls to school (Table 4).

Table 4
Respondents' Reasons for Keeping Females out of School by Cases in Sampled Households

S. N.	Reasons/Caste	Brahmin	Kshetri	Magar	Katwal	Tamru	Total
1.	They are needed for farm work	3	2	4	1	1	11 (16.9)
2.	They will come into touch with boys at school	1	1	-	1	1	4 (6.2)
3.	They get married off and leave the family	2	2	4	2	1	11 (16.9)
4.	It is difficult to get marry off girls with higher education	2	2	2	1	2	9 (13.8)
5.	They are need for housework	6	4	5	2	1	18 (27.7)
6.	To educate both girls and son costs too much	1	1	3	-	-	5 (7.7)
7.	Their husband will take care of them	1	-	1	1	-	3 (4.6)
8.	Other	1	1	1	-	1	4 (6.2)
	Total	17 (26.2)	13 (20.0)	20 (20.7)	8 (12.3)	7 (10.8)	65 (100.0)

Note: Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage, and 7 indeterminate households are not included.

Source: Field Survey by the Author 2052.

Table 4 reveals that the highest proportion of respondents (20.7 percent) of Magar caste have not sent their females to school for different reasons. Likewise about 26 percent respondents of Brahmin caste, 20 percent of Kshetri caste, 12 percent of Katwal caste and 7 percent of Tamru caste respondents have different reasons for keeping their girls out of school.

ECONOMIC STRATA AND WILLINGNESS TO PAY FOR FEMALES' EDUCATION IN SAMPLE HOUSEHOLDS

The income level of a particular household is determined by the sort of occupation it holds. A majority of the households in this study area have been involved in subsistence farm production for which more child labour is needed. In such a economy, the role of women is limited to the boundary of farm household for which the need for their education is hardly perceived.

During the period of field survey, the sample households were classified mainly into three groups according to their annual incomes – upper, middle and lower. Those who have more than NRs. 20,000 annual income (including food grains, livestock etc. in terms of money at the current price) were classified under the upper class while those households who have NRs. 10,000 - 20,000 annual income were classified under middle class and those having less than NRs. 10,000 annual income under the lower class for the convenience of the study.

Economic strata of the households have played vital role in making decision about willingness to pay for females' education. Present study depicted the fact that higher the income strata greater the willingness to pay for higher female education and vice versa. The respondents of upper classes have shown their relatively higher interest for females' education while middle classes and lower classes respondents have shown their more interest for males' education in contrast to females' education. The study also showed that the structure of economy also affects the willingness to pay for females' and males' education. From the study, it is found that those households who are engaged in only subsistence farm production, they are less willing for females' education.

CONCLUSION

Although Government has made great effort for greater access for females to education, there is still a need to change the parents' attitude towards females' education. The study revealed following factors causing low willingness for females' education as compared to that of males:

- Socio-cultural attitudes towards females' education is the cause for lower level of willingness to pay for females' education.
- The need for female child in the farm and households is the main hindrance for equal willingness to pay for females' education in comparison to males. The study showed that willingness to pay for education is gender-selective. More than 40 percent of the sample households expressed the need for female child in the farm and housework as the reason for keeping females out of school.
- In the study area, education is still regarded as a luxury to females

than as a potential economic asset to them.

- Subsistence agrarian economy of the study area is another vital cause for less willingness to pay for females' education.
- The gap between the economic status of the people has also played vital role for discrimination between females' and males' education.

On the basis of these conclusions, it becomes obvious that socio-cultural background and economic status of households have combinly played decisive role for lower level of willingness of the parents to pay for females' education. The following recommendations can be made based on the outcome of the study:

- A great endeavour should be made to change the attitude of the people regarding their willingness to pay for females' education.
- The attitudes of the parents towards low-level of females' education can be changed providing them informal and non formal education.
- Allowances should be provided to the old-age people for their support which would help to change people's perception regarding the necessity of males' education for their security in old age.
- Poverty is the root cause for lower level of willingness to pay for females' education. Since, there is a great variation in the economic status of the people, there is corresponding variation regarding the attitudes towards females' education. The poor people are compelled to take males as the economic assets for their future. Therefore, poverty elimination programmes should be launched in an effective way with full commitment.

SELECTED REFERENCES

- Acharya, Meena (1995) "Twenty Years of Women in Development in Nepal: An Overview", *The Economic Journal of Nepal*, Vol. 18, No. 4. Central Department of Economics Kirtipur, Kathmandu.
- Gertler, Paul and Glewwe Paul, (1992) "The Willingness to Pay for Education for Females in Contrast to Males : Evidence from Rural Peru," *The World Bank Economic Review*, Vol. 6, No. 1 January.
- MOI (1975) *Mechi to Mahakali (In Nepal) Part I: Eastern Development Region*, Information Department, HMG. Ministry of Information,
- NPC/HMG, (1994) *Country Report Nepal*. The United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, September 4-15, 1995, Beijing, China, NPC/HMG/N.