Confronting social inequality through fertility change in Punjab, Pakistan

Citation for published version:
https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429293467-10

Digital Object Identifier (DOI):
10.4324/9780429293467-10

Link:
Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer

Document Version:
Peer reviewed version

Published in:
Reforming Education and Challenging Inequalities in Southern Contexts

Publisher Rights Statement:
This is an Accepted Manuscript of a book chapter published by Routledge in Reforming Education and Challenging Inequalities in Southern Contexts on 25 March 2021, available online:

General rights
Copyright for the publications made accessible via the Edinburgh Research Explorer is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy
The University of Edinburgh has made every reasonable effort to ensure that Edinburgh Research Explorer content complies with UK legislation. If you believe that the public display of this file breaches copyright please contact openaccess@ed.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.
CHAPTER 8

CONFRONTING SOCIAL INEQUALITY THROUGH FERTILITY CHANGE IN PUNJAB, PAKISTAN: THE ROLE OF GIRLS’ SCHOOLING

Feyza Bhatti and Roger Jeffery

Less well understood are the mechanisms by which the educational attainments of women effect improvements to the health and nutrition of their children, to their fertility behaviour, and to their personal efficacy and autonomy within the household. (Colclough 2012, p.3)

Education plays a central role in the poverty reduction targets of the Sustainable Development Goals with its transformational capacity in improving opportunities and outcomes particularly for the marginalised groups. Within this context, girls’ schooling has been promoted as a key policy tool to reduce fertility rates and improve mother and child health in Southern contexts as well as to reduce poverty and improve social and economic equality between and within nations.

Despite a well-established relationship between women’s schooling and a reduction in fertility rates, the pathways through which this relationship operates remain unclear. This chapter aims to clarify (a) how women’s schooling influences fertility attitudes and behaviour in Punjab, Pakistan, and (b) the pathways through which female schooling might act as a means to reduce social inequalities within and beyond the existing gender and family systems. We address the questions of how, and how far, the expansion of female schooling has transformed gender and family relationships that bear on reproductive decisions, with particular attention to relationships with processes of marginalisation and inequality.

In order to address these questions, it is important to investigate women’s fertility attitudes and behaviour in detail capturing, if possible, the more complex and dynamic nature of the fertility attitudes and behaviour within the existing gender and family systems. By focusing on one country Pakistan, and its contemporary demographic transitions, and one
province - the Punjab - we aim to contribute new insights in the fields of gender and development, social change and demography. Insufficient attention has been paid to how changing socio-economic environments and the increasing schooling of children inflect these dynamics of intergenerational contracts and how they influence social inequality. Using the findings of our empirical research, we tease out how this is happening by analysing the interactions of fertility and reproductive decision-making with family and gender systems. We explore in-depth the role of female schooling in transforming gender roles and family relationships in rural and urban areas during these demographic processes. We begin by considering prevailing knowledge of what affects maternal schooling and fertility behaviour of women.

LINKING MATERNAL SCHOOLING TO FERTILITY BEHAVIOUR AND ATTITUDES

Mothers’ literacy or years of schooling completed have been included in almost every study exploring the determinants of fertility attitudes and behaviour since the 1970s. Current understandings are that a woman’s schooling (for more than a few years) is needed for the number of her children to decline, especially where patriarchal kinship structures and son preference are significant contextual influences. Intra-family relationships, particularly between genders, have also received attention since the 1990s (Agarwal 1997; Mason 2001; McDonald 2000). Family systems, and their intertwined relationships with gender, are beliefs, norms, practices and sanctions that shape kin relationships, and the expectations held of men and women of different ages, including divisions of labour (Mason 2001). Family and gender systems influence fertility through their impact on demand for and supply of children, on the cost of fertility regulation, child survival, the use of postnatal fertility control, and on the ideal or acceptable number of children.

Women’s status is a key component of patriarchal family systems that have been widely discussed in the literature on South Asia. Women’s status (Basu 1992; Hakim 2000), autonomy (Acharya et al. 2010; Dyson & Moore 1983; Jeffery & Jeffery 1996; Jeffery & Jeffery 1994; Sathar 1996) and reproductive autonomy (Saleem & Pasha 2008) have been key variables to help explain fertility change in the region. Most of these studies indicate that women’s age at marriage, schooling and earning opportunities or income, or access to assets
(such as land) can empower women through increasing their relative bargaining power or status and their relative contributions to fertility decision-making. But qualitative studies have questioned the utility of the notion of autonomy (Mumtaz & Salway 2009) – it is a moral concept and expressing, possessing, or exercising individual autonomy is not always seen as desirable for those South Asian women who are socialised into a culture that emphasises the embeddedness of individuals in larger groups, rather than the rights of individuals. (Jeffery & Jeffery 1994; Kabeer 2011). The presumed linear link between female schooling and women’s autonomy or empowerment has also been widely criticised (e.g. Khurshid & Saba 2018) since schooling might even reinforce existing gender inequalities, particularly in South Asia where the content of schooling supports prevailing gendered values and norms (Islam & Asadullah 2018; Jeffery & Basu 1996). Similarly, women’s autonomy does not always lead to lower fertility, particularly in patriarchal settings where son preference is high and female labour force participation is low (Samari 2017).

Following Kabeer (2018), we suggest that issues of autonomy and empowerment can be better conceptualised as aspects of women’s agency. As Kabeer (2018, 7) argues, agency is ‘the ability to define one’s goals and act upon them’ and argues that agency connotes more than just ‘decision-making’. Young women in South Asia use covert, rather than overt, strategies to bargain for agency (Kandiyoti 1988; Kabeer 1999; Gram et al. 2018).

Women’s schooling might improve women’s agency by providing greater knowledge of, and exposure to, the outside world: it can enable women to play greater roles in decision-making at home, greater opportunities for interacting with the outside world, greater space for emotional choice and closer bonds with their husbands and children, and greater social and economic self-reliance (Jejeebhoy 1995). However, the extent of the impact of schooling on female agency and thus on their fertility behaviour depends on the culture and levels of gender stratification. In highly patriarchal South Asian societies, the impact of schooling on women’s agency is usually minimal and visible only when a moderate level of schooling is reached, (Jeffery & Basu 1996; Sathar 1996). Recent studies, however, indicate firstly that the negative relationship between female schooling and fertility behaviour is not as strong as it was before (Brahmanandam & Arokiasamy 2017; Guilmoto 2016), and secondly, that greater female agency does not always lead to lower fertility (Prata et al. 2017; Samari 2017).
In sum, women’s schooling, work and other aspects of their status do not necessarily impact on their reproductive agency. Rather, female agency is generally shaped by traditional and cultural factors, including the number of living sons (Hakim, Salway, & Mumtaz 2003; Jejeebhoy & Sathar 2001; Samari 2017). Despite recent studies indicating that having daughters also increases women’s agency in South Asia by increasing their say in household decisions and mobility (Heath & Tan 2018), their parents continue to value sons more highly, for economic and cultural reasons. In Pakistan, where filial (and to a great extent fraternal) piety is the norm and social security systems are non-existent, sons bring a wife with dowry, whilst daughters need a dowry on marriage (Winkvist & Akhtar 2000). Although daughters can contribute economically to their households before marriage or improve the social standing of their families through marriage, their expected returns to their parents’ old age are low, which leads to a strong son preference - particularly after fertility declines (Das Gupta & Bhat 1997; Guilmoto 2009). Mobility aspirations, which can be intra- and inter-generational (Zuanna 2007) or nuptial (Kasarda & Billy 1985; Sharma & Wotipka 2019), can therefore be strongly affected by parental fertility decisions as well as parents’ investments in children’s schooling. In Pakistan, son preference remains a major obstacle to accepting the norm of having a small family and to increasing contraceptive use (Hussain, Fikree, and Berendes 2000). Although being lower among Punjabis, son preference patterns persist across the country for women with higher levels of schooling and in middle and higher income households (Sathar et al. 2015).While some recent studies suggest an increase in son preference (Saeed 2012), others identify signs of declining son preference (Ahmed & Bould 2004) particularly for mothers with high levels of schooling and in higher income families (Sathar et al. 2015). Son preference also influences the treatment and status of women in the household according to their ability to produce sons (Mumtaz et al. 2013; Winkvist & Akhtar 2000).

In contrast to the extensive literature on son preference, far less attention has been paid to how the changing socio-economic environment, particularly increasing schooling of girls and labour market participation of women, inflect these dynamics of intergenerational contracts in a rapidly transiting patriarchal society. A few studies focus on children’s schooling opportunities as a stimulus for fertility transition through increasing the cost of children (Sathar et al. 2003; Zaidi, Sathar, and Haque 2012). Some studies from India indicate that increased access to schooling creates mental models for parents in which they
perceive schooling, particularly private schooling, as a pathway to upward social mobility through better marriage prospects and gainful employment for their children (Sharma & Wotipka 2019; Srivastava 2006). Those families who want to have socially and economically able children who are respected in their communities and have better lives than their parents (Sharma & Wotipka 2019) are therefore less concerned with whether they are boys or girls (Ahmed & Bould 2004) which, in turn, can reduce son preference and its upward pressure on total fertility rates. This can reduce gender inequalities within and beyond households, and in the long run, based on the level that intergenerational mobility aspirations are realised, can also contribute to declining socio-economic inequalities between households.

Below we focus on the patterns of education and fertility in the Pakistani context. We start by describing the research strategy and the evidence we collected on the impact of girls’ schooling on fertility attitudes in relation to the desired number and sex of children, and on female behaviour including contraceptive use broadly in the Punjab. Drawing on our qualitative data, we then explore the role of schooling in transforming family relationships, revealing a deeper set of changes in young wives’ lives, as a result of their education. In the final sections, we focus on young wives’ aspirations as parents for their own children despite the increasing costs of schooling.

**RESEARCHING EDUCATION AND FERTILITY IN PUNJAB, PAKISTAN**

Pakistan is characterised by low levels of women’s literacy, educational attainment and labour force participation. According to World Bank data, in 2017, adult female literacy was 48%, but only 27% of women aged 25 and above completed upper secondary schooling. These data also showed that the female labour force participation rate was just 22%, and only one-quarter of women with university degree participated in the labour market. National evidence also shows that women’s labour force participation is greater where there are fewer children in the household, particularly fewer young children aged 0-5 (Azid, Aslam, & Chaudhary 2001, Faridi, Chaudhry & Anwar 2009, Naqvi, Shahnaz, & Arif 2002).

In Pakistan, major changes in fertility and contraceptive use since the 1990s have been driven by women with no schooling (Bashir & Guzzo 2018). While significant overall declines in fertility rates and increases in contraceptive prevalence rates have been observed
among all women, the rate of these improvements is faster among women without schooling as compared to women with schooling. Women without schooling are predominantly from poor households in Pakistan: according to the 2012/13 Pakistan Demographic and Health survey (PDHS) data, the percentage of women who did not receive schooling was 92.4% for women from poorest households and 17.6% for women from richest households (Pakistan National Institute of Population Studies 2012/13).

Our research explored the PDHS for the years 1990/1991, 2006/2007 and 2012/2013. The PDHS collects nationally representative cross-sectional data from ever-married women aged 15-49 on women’s and households’ background characteristics, marriage, reproductive history - including knowledge and use of family planning, fertility preferences, antenatal and delivery care, pregnancy complications and maternal mortality, children’s health and other health issues. Here we focus on the data specifically for Punjabi women aged 25-34. Our sample characteristics are provided in Table 8.1.

Table 8.1 Sample characteristics for Punjabi women aged 25-34, 1990-91, 2006-07 and 2012-13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1990/91</th>
<th>2006/07</th>
<th>2012/13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Residence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>463</td>
<td>734</td>
<td>591</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>1,142</td>
<td>1,462</td>
<td>876</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational attainment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No education</td>
<td>1,176</td>
<td>1,135</td>
<td>610</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incomplete primary</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed primary</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incomplete secondary</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed secondary</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,606</td>
<td>2,196</td>
<td>1,467</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *=Frequency
We analysed these statistical data to show the differences and changes in fertility attitudes (desires) and behaviour (contraceptive prevalence rates) for young Punjabi women with different educational attainment levels. We also drew on the findings of two qualitative studies in Sargodha, Punjab. The first study was conducted in January-April 2008 as a part of the Research Consortium on Educational Outcomes and Poverty (RECOUP) Health and Fertility study, while the second was conducted by the first author in September 2010 to June 2011 as part of the first author’s PhD. The aim of these qualitative studies was to provide insights into changes in gender and family systems that might have resulted from increased schooling of women. In order to maximise the chances of understanding contemporary processes, our selection of the district was based on an extreme case: i.e. where the fertility transition was most advanced and female secondary school enrolments were high. Sargodha, the sixth most populous district in Punjab, has had the fastest declines in total fertility rates among the other central Punjab districts and high female literacy and school enrolment rates. The data were collected in one rural and one urban community, with selection based on the long-term availability of girls’ high schools to enhance the chances of attaining the desired number of young women with high schooling levels.

Using a purposive sampling strategy, we selected maximum variation cases based on young women’s educational attainment and having at least one child under the age of 6, because in this age group women are actively considering (and possibly acting on) their completed family size and composition. This enabled the acquisition of information about how education influence women’s reproductive agency and fertility outcomes through comparison of extreme cases. Most participants of the study were from low to middle income households. In the two qualitative studies, semi-structured interviews with young married women collected information about their schooling and family, marriage processes, and their experiences of childbearing, including decisions on fertility regulation. The interviews, conducted in Punjabi or Urdu in the conjugal homes of the participants, lasted for about an hour. They were recorded and transcribed in Urdu, and later translated into English coded in Atlas.ti using a coding framework based on emergent themes and the observations of the researchers. In this paper we use 59 interviews with young married women (see Table 8.2 for details).
Table 8.2: Sample characteristics for qualitative studies, by education levels and location

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational attainment</th>
<th>Rural 2008 RECOUP</th>
<th>2011 PhD study</th>
<th>Urban 2008 RECOUP</th>
<th>2011 PhD study</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No/incomplete primary</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle school (grade 8 completed)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High (grade 9 or above completed)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Both samples were mainly identified through the khandán [family] registers of Lady Health Workers, who also helped in accessing the households for initial permissions to interview young women. Consent was taken both from the family and from the young women in order to prevent any negative consequences of accessing young women directly. Young women and members of her conjugal family were informed about the aims of the study, confidentiality and anonymity of the research, and the management and use of data, before a date and time was set for the interview. Most study participants were from low to middle income households.

Although the ideal was to have individual interviews, this was not always possible due to extended family structures and lack of private spaces, so we adapted to local conditions, and documented who was present, alongside any evidence of the possible effects of co-presence on interview responses. These interviews provided insights into complex decision making and negotiation processes regarding fertility-related decisions as well as providing insights into how schooling influences these decisions. All names in this chapter are pseudonyms.4

**THE IMPACT OF PUNJABI GIRLS’ SCHOOLING ON THEIR FERTILITY**

Our investigation into the role of schooling in changing fertility attitudes and behaviour was highly relevant to the women we interviewed about their and their children’s education.
Schooling clearly had a significant impact on young Punjabi women’s attitudes to fertility and to their behaviour in relation to pregnancy/childbearing. The three different PDHS surveys had indicated how young Punjabi women’s fertility attitudes (family size ideals) and behaviour (contraceptive prevalence) vary by their schooling levels. Since the 1990s, Punjab has experienced a 30% decline in the total fertility rate from 5.4 in 1990/91 to 3.8 by 2013 (Pakistan National Institute of Population Studies 2013).

Desired family size and the behaviour of young women have also changed significantly since 1990/91 and have affected their view of the ideal number of children. Although the ideal family size among young Punjabi women remains around four children (Table 8.3), there has been a significant decline in non-numeric responses to survey questions (for example, it was ‘up to God’) about the desired family size, irrespective of schooling levels, from more than half in 1990/1 to four percent by 2012/13 (PDHS 1990/91 & 2012/13). This change has affected all women, irrespective of education. But in most other respects, attitudes continue to vary by schooling levels. The increases in the proportion of women who wanted to have two children, for example, can be considered as declining family size desires, a change more visible among women who completed grades 12 and above.

Table 8.3: Percentage distributions of desired family size of Punjabi women aged 25-34 by schooling grade completed, 1990/1, 2006/7 & 2012/3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>1990/1</th>
<th>2006/7</th>
<th>2012/13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0-5</td>
<td>8-11</td>
<td>12+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numeric</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>responses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-1</td>
<td>42.2</td>
<td>81.6</td>
<td>85.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>34.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 and above</td>
<td>54.7</td>
<td>52.3</td>
<td>45.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>518</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-numeric</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>responses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-1</td>
<td>57.8</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>14.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>709</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


These findings are corroborated by our interviews. The number of children that were considered to constitute a čhöffi (small) family varied between two and four depending on the
educational levels of the women we interviewed in both studies. For each quote in the rest of this chapter, the speaker is identified by pseudonym; R=rural, U=urban; the age of the woman; and the grade completed. Almost all the young women with higher schooling levels, irrespective of location, desired a *choṭī* family of two or three children, or ‘definitely one should not have more than four’ as Hafza suggested (U27-Grade16). However, the most commonly stated desired number of children was still four among the uneducated young women, irrespective of their rural or urban location. The following quotes give a sense of the range of answers of this kind:

Now I ask for four as I wish to have a daughter as well, otherwise three children are ideally a good number (Maryam, U25-No Schooling).

Yes, I did think about it [number of children one should have], that’s why everything was *on time* [in English]. First I had a son and he died. After two years I had another son, now he is 13 *Mā shā’ Allāh*. Then I had my daughter who is nine… then I had my younger daughter. She is six now. Then I had this son [showing her two-year-old son on her lap]. Two sons and two daughters and we are doing *waqfa* (pause) for future (Ghazala, R30-Grade1).

Everyone wants to have two daughters and two sons... I have three daughters. Now I pray to God that he gives me a son. [Only] then it will be over (Adeela, U32-Grade8).

I think two kids are good but we have three and it is okay (Sadia, R26-Grade12).

I want to have two children. No matter whether [I have] two daughters or one daughter and one son (Meena, U33-Grade14).

However, schooling levels also affected the responses from young women about the desired sex composition of children. Indeed, young women who wanted to limit their family size to a ‘small’ one also wished to have a *mukammal* (complete) or *pūrā* (complete) family that would have *kāfī* (sufficient) children. A family was ‘complete’ only after achieving enough boys, and at least one daughter, which was becoming more difficult with the
decreasing total number of children that the younger women wanted to have. The desired sex composition of children mainly varied according to the educational levels of the young women, the sex of the children the couple already had, and cultural and familial pressures, particularly for sons. Among the young women interviewed, the desire for a second son was uncommon but having at least one daughter to complete their family was universal. The right sex composition for a complete family was neither static nor the same for all young women. All the young women readjusted their family sizes upwards if they could not attain their desired sex composition; none of them readjusted their desires to a smaller number.

Most uneducated young women, like Ghazala (R30-NoSchooling) or Abida (R28-NoSchooling), who already had two sons and two daughters, considered that this combination would make a family complete. In contrast, more educated women, such as Gulsum (R33-Grade14), saw a complete family as one daughter and one son, like the one she had. Only one woman, Meena (U33-Grade14) who had a daughter, had no specific desires about the sex of her children and said she would be happy with two children of any sex. Those young women who did not have at least one son and one daughter amongst their initial two or three children usually readjusted their desires and tried again to complete their family. Safia (U28-Grade10) wanted one son and one daughter but tried again for a daughter after having two sons. When interviewed, she had recently given birth to a girl and now considered her family complete:

When I got married, I wanted to have a small family. I had a son first and I asked god to give me a daughter and two were enough. Then god gave me another son. [I thought] now only one daughter would be bahut (plentiful). Thanks to God, he gave me a daughter as well. I have two sons and a daughter, and I think the family is pūrī (Safia U28-Grade10).

Having an ‘inadequate’ family because of not having a daughter, even if the total desired number of children had been reached (which was not more than four children), generally meant ‘trying again’ once or twice, as in Safia’s case. However, when the inadequacy was due to not having a son, couples could not define a limit and would try until they had a son. For others, particularly uneducated or less educated women who had one son and at least one daughter like Malika (R27-Grade9), Tania (U25-Grade5), one son was not considered to be enough to achieve a ‘complete’ family. While sons continue to be preferred to daughters in general, there are some initial signs that, as Vlassoff (1990, p.19) predicted, having one son is
becoming ‘sufficient to fulfil the necessary cultural obligations’ particularly among highly educated women. It is also evident that a family without a son and a daughter was ‘inadequate’ for almost all young women in Punjab.

**Contraceptive prevalence rate**

Linked to the decision of how many children to have, and the desire for sons, was the contraceptive prevalence rate (CPR) which was also affected by the level of schooling achieved by these wives in the 25-34 age-group. The CPR has major implications for the reduction of social inequality since, if fewer children are conceived, the children in smaller families potentially have more access to the family’s resources and there are also more opportunities for young wives to enter the labour market. The CPR rate among married women (aged 15-49) in Pakistan remained below ten percent until the end of the 1980s, reaching only 12% in 1990/1 (Pakistan National Institute of Population Studies 2013). However, surveys conducted after 1990 indicated that between 1990/1 and 2001 (ibid), CPR more than doubled to 28% and then gradually increased to 33% in 2006/7 and 35.4% in 2012/13 (ibid). The Punjab has the highest CPR of all provinces with 40.7% (ibid).

Table 8.4 shows the current use of contraception by grades completed for young women in Punjab, indicating that the differences between women by level of schooling are closing. Women with up to the completion of primary schooling had very similar contraceptive use (or even higher levels in urban areas) to those of women who had spent more time in school. Significantly, the change in contraceptive behaviour was most prominent among uneducated young women in rural areas. While only 9.3% of young uneducated Punjabi women were using contraception in 1990/1, this increased to 35.1% in 2006/7 and 41.0% in 2012/13 (Table 8.4) at a time when the CPR among the highly educated young women was around 40-45%, and might have declined over the same period.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grades 0-5</th>
<th>Grades 8-11</th>
<th>Grades 12+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Table 8.4: Percentage of reported current use of contraception by married, non-pregnant Punjabi women aged 25-24 by schooling, 1990/1, 2006/7 & 2012/13


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1990/91</th>
<th>2006/07</th>
<th>2012/13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>41.4</td>
<td>46.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>42.5</td>
<td>56.5</td>
<td>42.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>44.0</td>
<td>45.3</td>
<td>40.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>39.0</td>
<td>37.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>33.1</td>
<td>50.4</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>39.9</td>
<td>32.2</td>
<td>42.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>40.5</td>
<td>45.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35.1</td>
<td>49.5</td>
<td>41.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>41.0</td>
<td>39.7</td>
<td>42.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Our interviews with young wives in 2011-12 uncovered similar educational patterns in contraceptive use. There were almost no differences in use of contraception among young women by educational level or by rural/urban location. The question to answer, then, is why do those with less schooling increasingly resemble their more educated peers when it comes to the use of contraception? Our starting point is to consider the impacts of girls’ schooling on intrahousehold gender and family relationships and inequalities.

**FEMALE SCHOOLING AND SUBTLE TRANSFORMATIONS IN INTRAHOUSEHOLD INEQUALITIES**

Schooling of girls has, it seems, contributed to subtle but cumulatively significant transformations in micro-level gendered inequalities and family dynamics, irrespective of the schooling levels achieved by their mothers. Girls in Punjab learn strong values that define how to ‘be a good woman’, such as being a homemaker, sustaining the honour of the family, and being obedient to men and elders, even in decisions related to their fertility. Within the existing gender and family systems, socialising girls in their roles as good women continues, but families have adjusted to the changing socio-economic environments such as increasing levels of girls’ schooling, rising employment opportunities for women along with rising perceptions of economic distress as aspirations grow faster than incomes. Firstly, the increased importance given to the schooling of girls partially changed expectations about women’s roles in their natal and affinal homes by altering the division of labour among women within the household. The expectations of contributions by daughters and daughters-in-law to regular household chores have declined compared with previous generations.
Mothers of school-going children are increasingly expected to ensure their children are clean and well-dressed, arrive safely at school and undertake after-school tuition, and complete their homework. Secondly, despite continuity in the desire of parents to maintain the honour of the family through restricting the mobility of girls, parental flexibility in girls’ mobility for schooling (and employment, to some extent) has been increasing. Thirdly, the requirement of completing schooling before getting married has led to increases in the age at marriage for young women, although it has also created dilemmas for families about protecting the honour of the family.

Schooling of young women has also affected to whom they were married as compatibility also included schooling. For young women, *rishta* (marriage alliance) was a decision taken by their families, even when the marriage was between first cousins, which is more common among less educated brides (Pakistan National Institute of Population Studies 2013). Finding a *rishta* from a respectable family was important, but having similar educational attainment levels, a good job or some similarity in lifestyles (economic, religious or social) were prerequisites for a good *rishta*. The likelihood that parents would seek the consent of their daughters also corresponded to the girls’ schooling levels, the family’s place of residence and the type of marriage. In the interviews undertaken in 2011-12, none of the uneducated young women from the rural area, and only two of the four uneducated women from urban area were asked for their consent. Almost all educated young women from the urban area were asked for their consent, but in the rural area only a highly educated, affluent young woman had a say in spouse selection (Bhatti & Jeffery 2012; Jeffery et al. 2012).

Such boundaries of gender and family systems however are not absolute, static or non-negotiable. Irrespective of their schooling levels, most of the young women also showed forms of agency, varying from direct submission to resistance on decisions, for example, the choice of timing of marriage and the marriage partner which are major decisions in a woman’s reproductive life (Bhatti & Jeffery 2012; Ghimire & Axinn 2013).

To sum up, our findings suggest that female schooling has a role in reducing household gender inequalities through bringing subtle transformations in gender and family systems that allow women to have higher mobility and a say in decisions that are central to their reproductive lives. Given these changes, although female schooling does not fully tackle
the intra-household gender inequalities, it weakens the effect of gendered inequalities for women with schooling. The distribution of labour within households, constraints on women’s mobility or consent in marriage can enlarge the gap between women with and without education and create new forms of inequalities.

Our interviews also suggest that young women’s reasons for preferring smaller families and their increasing use of family planning methods reflect how schooling was altering the costs and values of having and raising children. This in turn is significant for the patterns of social inequality. We now turn to analyse these changes.

**YOUNG WOMEN’S ASPIRATIONS FOR THEIR CHILDREN’S SCHOOLING: INCREASING THE COSTS AND VALUE OF CHILDREN**

The financial and opportunity costs of schooling (rather than the learning content or the levels of schooling) was having a perhaps unintended effect on desired family size and their prospects of social mobility. Most young women explained their reasons for wanting a čhoṭī (small) family by referring to mehaṅgāi (increasing costs of living). Irrespective of their own schooling levels, young couples felt compelled to plan their families according to the expenses incurred by children and the limits of their budgets:

There is no ṭā’ida (benefit) of having many children, [particularly at a time] when a person cannot even fulfil their [children’s] needs of simple roṭī (flat bread), leave aside their educational needs which is a matter for later…the more children one has, the more expenses he has to bear (Sameena, U33-NoSchooling).

Now there is [the concept of] aĉchī tarbiyat [good upbringing]…We are the ones to educate them [children] and deal with their upbringing. Now it is not like give birth to a child and leave him… Now even garīb se garīb [very poor] households educate their children well Afaf (U24-Grade10).

We, the new generation, want smaller families and we’re getting by on that… So they [the children] can be raised and educated properly and our expenses can keep going up as well Ameena (R25-Grade10).
In these young women’s accounts, *mehaṅgāi* was associated with an increase in living expenses, childbirth costs and schooling which led them to perceive children as expensive. The increasing schooling costs, associated as they are with the expansion of private schools in rural and urban areas, was the most common reason reported by young women for *mehaṅgāi*. These costs have been rising because of higher fees, and charges for books and exams.

Firstly, parents were being encouraged to educate all children irrespective of their gender: schooling had become a norm in a context where the Pakistani government has promoted mass schooling. In our study, parents reported feeling social pressure to send their children to school as ‘responsible parents’, particularly when education to secondary level was now easily available and accessible. Private tuition, which was perceived as necessary to gain good grades, despite adding to the costs, had become common: Aslam & Mansoor (2011) showed that of children aged 3-16, 11% receive private tuition in rural areas, in urban areas like Lahore and Karachi it was over half. Tuition was more common among the children of uneducated women as they could not teach their children themselves. Private schooling was also preferred by the parents because it seemed to offer better teacher attention, and greater language and computer skills than in *sarkārī* (government) schools. However, children were staying longer in education and often moved schools incurring readmission costs. In the case of private schools, pupils started school as young as three or four years old and stayed until at least high school. Parents now seem willing to pay high travel costs, if necessary, to send their children to good schools:

I arranged tuition for him. From my *kharča* [expenses for the household], the money that their father gives me, I pay for his tuition fees. We already have enough expenses and now I also have to pay this... As much as we could afford, they should study. Otherwise they will say they [parents] did not study themselves and they did not make us study as well… If their upbringing and schooling is good, then they will be able to become *kučh* [someone] (Sameena, U33-NoSchooling).

One has lots of desires to educate their children, but for that you also need financial resources... The times of *āzādī* [freedom] are over, one has to think a lot before taking
a step... I mean there [Beacon house private school] the fees for children are very high, and it [their schooling] is going to last long as well, I mean until their schooling is over. Then there will the problem of their tuition as well (Gulsum, R33-Grade14).

The costs of schooling for daughters and sons were also equal: there were no gender differences in aspirations for children’s schooling, or in the private schooling of children in relatively better off households. Girls in poor households, however, were the least likely to attend private schools and only in these households was there a difference in the types of schools that girls and boys attended.

Aspirations for intergenerational mobility: Respectable jobs and good marriages

The importance given to children’s schooling was explained by young women’s aspirations for their children’s futures. Almost all the women associated schooling with əcəhə zindagî [a good life] and considered it as the main means to intergenerational mobility – to a better life than they had:

I know only education can benefit them, otherwise they are just going to suffer as we are suffering today (Aziza, U25-NoSchooling).

No matter how hard I have to work I would work for the sake of educating my children. And if my daughter is educated then she would not have to go through the circumstances as mine and she would be able to find her own ways of life. And for my son also I wish him to get good education and he would be able to find a respectable job… I would educate my daughter and make her independent enough so that she could start her own business and then I will think of her marriage (Kaneez, R22-NoSchooling).

My children will be lāik aur nāik (deserving and respected) and everyone will call them jī (sir)... they will have cars, motorcycles and will have their homes (Aafia, R35-Grade2).

The number of years of schooling their children completed clearly had an effect on parental aspirations for their children’s future social status, raising their aspirations but not necessarily
the choice of employment. Uneducated women, for example, in our study were less likely to mention the type of profession they desired for their children. Aafia, for example, wanted her sons to be in respectable jobs in which they would be called ‘ǰī’ in addition to earning money to buy a car and a house. Highly educated urban women also mostly wanted a well-respected profession for their sons and daughters. For example, Hafza (U27- Grade12) and Meena (U33-Grade14) wanted their daughters to become doctors, and Kameela (U26- Grade16) wanted the same for her son. Safia (U28-Grade10) wanted her daughter to have nām (title) like a doctor or an engineer.

Schooling was considered to be a necessity for both sexes. However, social mobility for girls was still through marriage rather than through occupation. Schooling was needed if they wanted to marry educated men and live in good households. This also reflected the parents’ desires for upward social mobility for all their children, which for girls could only be achieved through a good marriage:

If only they are educated, then they will manage it. They will reach their manzil (destination). Girls will grow and get married. If they are educated only then their rishta will happen in a good place (Aafia, R35-Grade2).

If they study well, then they will have a good future. They will marry to a good place, they will have a good home. This is what one thinks for their daughters, that they have a good future... Everything happens if they study well (Afaf, U24-Grade10).

With increasing female schooling and more employment opportunities for women, the relative economic value of daughters in their natal homes has also increased. Daughters were more likely to marry later, and if educated, they could also spend the time between schooling and marriage in a paid employment. Compared to the previous generation, the mind-set of their elders appears to have changed: it is now easier for women to get ijāzat [permission] from the family to work.

We want this [more sons] so that they can earn [for the family] but nowadays even daughters get education and can do jobs... Times are changing and you have to follow them. Our time has passed. Now he [husband] is the only one earning and we are six
people to be fed... I want to educate my daughters and God should give them jobs. At least my daughters will have some earnings and they can arrange themselves (Khalida, U32-Grade5).

Now it [having a job] is not a problem. They [women] work. My BD has started working, in our house my sister-in-law works. This was not the case before... This nasl (generation) has very high education [levels]... They used to think it [women’s employment] wrong before that she is going to be outside... but now they give ijāzat [permission], the soć [thinking] of the elders has changed a lot (Adeela, U32-Grade8).

Among these young women, however, working was a preference rather than compulsory. Only young women with high schooling reported their willingness to work. Iqra was working from her rural home as a beauty parlour while waiting for job openings in local public schools; Gulsum wanted to restart schooling when her children left school, as her sisters did; and Iffat became a Lady Health Worker after her marriage. In the urban area, Hafza was waiting for her children to grow up to continue her schooling and start working again, and Kameela was planning to apply for jobs when her forty-day old son was at least three months old. None of these women wanted their schooling to be wasted. They had permission to work and wanted to help their husbands financially, but in jobs that would not affect their responsibilities as mothers.

While these changes were generally the result of economic forces, increasing female schooling and increasing job opportunities for women, the expansion of the private education sector and government jobs all contributed towards closing the gap in the values of sons and daughters by increasing the relative financial value of daughters.

CONCLUSION

Our data show the significant points at which schooling affects the personal and intimate lives of young women – their aspirations for a family, their choices in terms of the number of children, the sex of the child, decisions about contraception. Our findings suggest that women from both urban and rural backgrounds, and with different levels of schooling themselves, were actively involved in decisions about their fertility and wanted to limit the number of
children they had irrespective of their educational backgrounds. While women’s schooling leads to subtle transformations in gender and family systems, what pressurised all women to limit their fertility, irrespective of their own schooling, was their aspirations for their children’s schooling, rather than the schooling they had themselves experienced.

We show that, whereas in the past there was a strong inverse relationship between a woman's schooling and her desired fertility, this relationship is breaking down in contemporary Punjab, partly with respect to desired family size but almost entirely with respect to contraceptive use, even when controlling for residence and number of living children. We suggest that the key intervening factor is families' perceptions of increasing costs of living, particularly those related to schooling and their aspirations for upward social mobility.

Our research suggests changes in fertility attitudes and behaviour of young Punjabi women, and indicates the possible pathways by which women’s schooling is contributing to these changes. Only slight differences remain between young women with high and low levels of schooling in terms of the desired number of children and their sex composition. While this might suggest a decreasing role for women’s schooling on fertility, the qualitative interviews suggest that this would be wrong. Within young Punjabi households, despite conflicting pressures of various kinds (including inter-generational ones), there is common ground that education is absolutely necessary, that the best possible education should be provided for children of both sexes, and that couples agree that the costs are so large that small families are necessary – and all this varies little if at all with respect to education or marginality. The pathways through which schooling influenced these decisions were rather more complex and cannot be considered without also analysing the changes occurring in the wider social, economic and familial contexts. With the expansion of facilities in the education and health sectors both in rural and urban areas, even young women from the more marginalised families had high aspirations for a better life for themselves and their children. This increased the costs of living for the couples who wanted to invest in the schooling of sons and daughters alike.

Given the economic pressures that are felt as increasing costs of childrearing, women think that small families are required. The schooling of children has become more important
than mothers’ schooling in influencing couples’ fertility decisions as the aspirations of parents for children’s upward social mobility emerge. The relationship between fertility and social mobility is twofold. Having many children limits the mobility of their parents, particularly mothers, by bringing extra constraints on them and divert their time and efforts from work to childcare and rearing. Furthermore, inter-generational mobility of children can also be hindered when families have large families and the financial, time and effort resources of the parents are diluted among the children (Dribe, Van Bavel, and Campbell 2012). Our findings suggest that the latter explains the contemporary fertility declines in Pakistan, where families increasingly tend to limit their family size in order to invest in schooling of their children, both boys and girls.

Nonetheless, a cautionary note is in order. Once education is seen as something that must be consumed across all parental educational backgrounds, it has different effects. On the one hand it tends to be levelling: with two to three or at most four children, parents can think of investing in quality in a wider range of households. On the other hand, if parents buy into this goal of educating all their children to the best of their ability, they are chasing a positional good which can never be available for all, in terms of upward social mobility. What happens when the spell is broken?

[Believing that] education is invariably accompanied by social mobility is to ignore the important constraints that current economic and social conditions and practices continue to have upon the lives of those for whom schooling is meant to be a liberating force (Froerer 2012, p.355).
REFERENCES


ENDNOTES

1 Roger Jeffery would like to acknowledge the contributions of Patricia Jeffery in helping to make this chapter possible. From 1982 to 2010 we worked together on a number of projects that included research and publications on education and fertility in south Asia. This chapter has benefited from that work in a general way, but does not draw directly from it, except where use is made of research material from already published joint works, when citations have been made to the original source.

2 The Research Consortium on Educational Outcomes and Poverty (RECOUP) led by Christopher Colclough was designed to investigate the social and economic outcomes of education for the poor households in Africa and South Asia. The Health and Fertility study, which was one of the six qualitative studies, aimed to explore the relationships between schooling and health and fertility-related behaviour among women of poor households. Its specific focus was on how female schooling was linked with reproductive citizenship and women's agency in poor communities.

3 Bhatti (2014) provides more information on this study.

4 For more details of the research design see Jeffery et al. (2012).

5 During the same period, women’s access to schooling in Punjab also rose. Based on the Pakistan: Demographic and Health Survey, (Pakistan National Institute of Population Studies, 1998; 2013), the proportion of women with no schooling decreased from 63.7% in 1990/91 to 51.1% in 2013, and the proportion of women who completed a level higher than secondary schooling increased from 7.7% in 1990/91 to 20.4% in 2013.