

Impact of Exclusion of Poor Communities on Social Development: A Study of District Lodhran in Southern Punjab (Pakistan)

Muhammad Shabbir Ch

(Corresponding Author), Lecturer of Sociology, Department of Sociology
GC University Faisalabad, Pakistan

Uzma Niaz

Research Officer at SFARI-Pakistan

Kamran Ishfaq

Visiting Faculty Member Gender Studies Department BZ University, Multan, Pakistan

Safdar Hussain

Deputy District Education Officer, Lodhran, Pakistan

Shazia Naseem

Psychologist

Doi:10.5901/mjss.2016.v7n1s1p369

Abstract

This study describes the impact of exclusion of poor communities on social development in district Lodhran, Pakistan. The study circulates around the involvement of poor communities of district Lodhran, particularly BISP beneficiaries and function of responsible major stakeholders of social development, generally; service provision of local government departments, political leader's engagement with community and efforts made by Social Development Organizations (SDOs)/Non-Governmental Organization (NGO). The Major focus of the study is to identify the relationship between exclusion of poor people and social development by analyzing prevailing level of poverty, social integration and relationships, health and education, governance, gender discrimination and organizational gap. The results of this suggested that if prevailing conditions of poverty, governance, social integration, gender discrimination would be improved and involvement of government agencies and community development organizations is increased then exclusion of poor people would be reduced which will improve the social development automatically in district Lodhran. Consequently there is an immense need to ensure inclusion of poor community members in the process of social development in district Lodhran on urgent basis.

Keywords: Exclusion, Social development, Discrimination, Poverty

1. Introduction

Pakistan has nearly 180 million inhabitants which express the 146th ranking out of 187 countries, 21% of whom live on less than US\$1.25/day. Poor communities are highly excluded due to their own poor level of awareness about the accessibility of their human rights and the provision of daily basic needs. Irresponsible behavior and cold response by service providing stakeholders/institutions added the exclusion of poor communities in Pakistan. This situation leaves such communities highly excluded from the mainstream and this is continuously increasing with passage of time in Pakistan (Human Development Index, 2013).

In Pakistan, social structure is strongly complex and divided into different social groups like ¹Biradarries, ²Quoms,

¹Extended Kinship Network

² Caste

Clans, ³Zimindars and Landless ⁴Harees etc. This prevailing social structure has a significant impact on resource distribution, socio-economic status, gender dynamics (especially women involvement in the process of decision making and access to education and health facilities) and attitude towards social development and good governance.

Commencing from abysmally low levels of social and economic development in 1947, Pakistan has come a long way. There have been impressive gains in a number of areas. However, the pace of development, particularly in the social sector, has not been what it could or should have been. The nature of development has been alarming. Despite more than sixty years of development effort, high exclusion and poverty, low literacy, high incidence of diseases, low integration among human beings, increasing rate of discrimination and political instability continue to persist. More seriously, inequality in income, nutritional intake and access to basic services make the poor communities more excluded. On the other hand, policymakers in Pakistan have been constrained in responding to these challenges due to bad governance and poor grip on the government machinery. Attention to exclusion is perhaps more important than poverty. While exclusion does cause deprivation and hardships for those affected by it, high degrees of inequality ingrained in the structure of society and the economy, and reinforced by policy actions, contribute to a sense of grievance and injustice, promote despondency and anger, and generate social and political instability (Social Policy and Development Centre, 2012).

2. Origins of the Concept of Exclusion

"Exclusion" is vacant container that emerged as a social issue in social sciences and as a subject to study in the late 1980s, so it is not a primitive idea in the social sciences. The vacant container has since been filled with a large quantity of pages, discourses and images and changing patterns of academia. With this understanding and speedy spread of exclusion nationally and internationally, the phrase "exclusion" is exercised with different ways at multiple places in different times and indicates its impact institutionally, politically, historically and geographically.

The "exclusion" may act like a spot to see socio-political systems. During, 1970s, the modern concept of "exclusion" developed in France. It is linked with alleged failure in social cohesion, subsequent civil society disorder in the late 1960s in the framework of rising rate of joblessness which directly hit social and economic inequalities. Its historic roots can be linked with Aristotle. During the poverty discourse in France, the use of this phenomenon spread through the different institutions of European Union. The United Kingdom (UK) elected new labor government adopted it particularly enthusiastically, in the late 1990s and International Labor Organization (ILO) took initiative to spread out this phenomenon into less economically developed countries. The concept of "exclusion" has been credited for its political acceptance and it has been claimed that its flexible nature permits it to be affordable to a huge sphere of politics. This appearance has been connected with the individualism and uprising of neo-liberalism philosophy in 1970s (Silver, 1994).

"Exclusion" is the state which narrates to be powerless to enjoy the different levels of involvement which the nation takes for granted. This is multi-dimensional, many-sided, dynamic and complex idea which the European Union's (EU's) defines as,

"Certain individuals are pushed to the edge of society and prevented from participating fully by virtue of their poverty, or lack of basic competencies and lifelong learning opportunities, or as a result of discrimination. This distances them from job, income and education opportunities as well as social and community networks and activities. They have little access to power and decision-making bodies and thus often feel powerless and unable to take control over the decisions that affect their day to day live". (European Commission in April 2005)

According to Byrne (1999) "exclusion is a procedure to break the societal networking and collective bonds among the individual and groups of the society. Social networking means to constitute social unity, cohesion, integration and solidarity among the individuals and groups. Social exclusion disallow the clear involvement of individual in set patterns of a society and disallow to enjoy all kind of resources, sociability, recognition, and self-identity.

According to Young (2002) "Social Development" is defined as; it is an alternative phenomenon in the social order of a social clusters; a change in social institutions, human behaviors, natural world and social relationships of any society.

3. Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) In Pakistan

During the year of 2007-08, the shrill rise in oil prices at global level and basic products in the international and local

³ Farmers

⁴ People Working on lands of Landlords

market too caused a dual figure inflation, which directly hit people's ability to buy and it low down to half. Therefore, there was a quick need for quick relief to the deprived portion of the society. Under this scenario, Government of Pakistan initiated Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) to uplift this section from the dark room of poverty. Well-designed poverty score card is designed to identify the existing picture of the poor families. Initially, in October 2008, Rs. 34 billion was allocated to BISP programme intended to cover 3.5 million families in the financial year 2008-2009. Rs. 70 billion was distributed as cash assistance to 5.5 million families (18% of whole population) in the financial year of 2012-13 constitutes 18% of whole population. Pakistani Rupees Rs.1, 000 were given to per selected and registered family after every three months and it was increased to Rs.1200; apart from other benefits: interest free loans, vocational & technical training, health & life insurance coverage. Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) is being launched and implemented all over Pakistan. The Government has decided to identify the deprived people through an impartial, transparent and objective oriented mechanism and to reform the targeting process to minimize the inclusion and exclusion errors. It is focused to give equivalent chance to every one for applying to the BISP for registration for cash amount and different other benefits. For this, a scientific instrument "Poverty Score Card", a one of the best known procedure for identifying target community, based on Proxy Means Testing has been adopted. Moreover, by using this poverty score card a nationwide Poverty Survey has been designed to recognize the underprivileged target families. Initially, a preliminary test phase of the Poverty Scorecard based survey has been finished in 16 districts. But now it is implemented in all across the Pakistan.

4. Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to provide new empirical evidence of the relationship between exclusion and social development under the umbrella of prevailing level of poverty and bad governance. Exclusion is a social phenomenon that is used in different disciplines like health, education, sociology, social psychology, economics and politics. In current scenario, it is impossible for the poor communities to participate in normal functioning of the society due to many reasons. Weak social bonding restricts the exchange of information regarding jobs, human rights, political rights, daily activities and female involvement in common events. Nevertheless, many sociologists and social thinkers believe that geography of the area plays is an important role in exclusion of the people. In cities people are less excluded as compared to rural areas. Because in cities, there are more opportunities of jobs as well as greater chances of labor while in rural areas there are fewer opportunities of jobs and earnings.

Moreover, it is the urgent need to see the work of government and non-government organizations working to assist the poor people by engaging them and empowering them by making them skillful under different development projects in the country. Government is also doing much for uplifting poor communities by launching governmental and semi-governmental programmes. A question scratches on how far these efforts are successful in carrying down the ever rising exclusion in the country".

5. Objectives of the Study

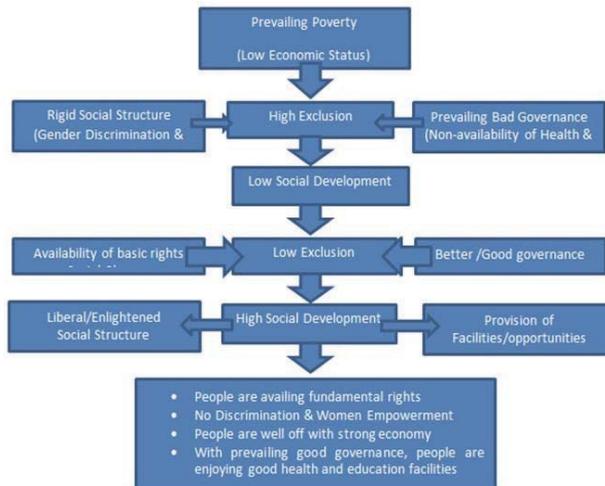
This study has the following main objectives:

- a) To examine the relationship between exclusion and social development with respect to social, economic, health, education, political & governmental and gender spheres.
- b) To measure the effects of exclusion of poor people generated by poverty.
- c) To analyze the organizational gap among people and gender discrimination in the area.
- d) To analyze the role of government to slow down the exclusion for accelerating social development.

6. Research Model/Matrix

This research model was constructed under the umbrella of defined objectives and research questions of the study and the whole research work was carried out by following the model. This model was built up by the researcher utilizing his own research oriented thought.

Research Model/Study Matrix by Researcher



7. Materials and Methods

Locale of the study was District Lodhran situated in the Province of Punjab, Pakistan. District Lodhran comprises on 3 tehsils with 73 union councils. The target population for this research was total number of Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) beneficiaries of District Lodhran. BISP Survey was done in 2009 by using the poverty score card. According to this survey, total 19670 beneficiary families were identified as poor living under the poverty line.

With the mutual discussions of research supervisor and evaluating the demographic profile of the district Lodhran, registered Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) beneficiary (the most vulnerable proportion of the community) was taken as respondent for this research study. 400 BISP registered beneficiaries were selected as sample size for the current study and they were interviewed through the interview schedule.

For the selection of target area, 06 union councils (2UCs from each tehsil) were selected out of 73 union councils of District Lodhran by using random sampling technique. Moreover, for quantitative part, numbers of respondents from each tehsil were selected by using proportionate sampling because of the different numbers of BISP beneficiaries in each tehsil. Proportionately, 144 respondents out of 7074 BISP beneficiaries from tehsil Lodhran, 74 respondents out of 3554 BISP beneficiaries from tehsil Kahroorpacca and 182 respondents out of 9042 BISP beneficiaries from tehsil Dunyapur were selected. A list of all these beneficiaries was taken from the BISP office District Lodhran to approach the selected respondents for data collection. All these respondents were selected by using convenient sampling techniques.

Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the quantitative data. Descriptive techniques were used to organize and summarize the information obtained from the sample before applying inferential statistics. The quantitative data was analyzed through Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS). It was passing through data entry, tabulation, diagrammatic representation, descriptions, findings, testing of hypotheses by applying Chi Square, conclusions and recommendations/suggestions. Uni-variate and Bi-variate analyses were also done.

8. Hypotheses of the Study:

Following hypotheses were made after in-depth study of the review of literature:

- Strong social integration positively affects the social development.
- Poor economic conditions adversely affect the social development.
- Lesser the gender discrimination more would be the social development.

9. Uni-variate and Bi-variate Findings of the Study:

Uni-variate analysis results reflected that people are illiterate (38.5%) or have low education i.e. just primary (38.2%).

People (46.5%) have large family sizes (i.e. 6-7 members) and prefer to live in joint families (61.8%). Agriculture is the largest profession for the people (31%) of district Lodhran because of its high quality land productivity. (69.5%) families are living in small homes with less number of rooms and majority (65.3%) has no conveyance to cater emergencies even. The people (85.5%) feel no satisfaction in governmental policies of governance. Poor have little access to basic facilities like food, clothing, water and shelter and this situation leads to them towards discrimination and exploitation. A large section of community (38.4%) is thumb engraver and their income is less as compared to their expenses so they are compelled to borrow money to make both ends meet. Economic as well as social resources are grabbed by the rich and the poor is left cramped. (85.5%) respondents agreed that lawlessness prevails as the law enforcement agencies are puppets in the hands of bigwigs. Most of the respondents (89.8%) agreed that exclusion of common man from policy making stopped the social development. Mostly (91%) respondents said bad governance is the cause of discrimination between the poor and rich people as well as (75.5%) agreed that bad governance slows down the speed of social development. Only (33%) and (84%) respondents cast their votes in election. (84.2%) respondents said that they have never been called upon by the NGOs/SDOs in different community development programmes/projects. Only (12.2%) respondents said, help and support is available to them from their social networks when they are in need, while majority (87.8.5%) responded negatively. Regarding the political and civic activities engagement only (10%) respondents said they are involved in political and civic activities. The results of the study show that majority (65.5%) respondents agreed that the integration among them is weak due to low social status and (67%) agreed that social status negatively affects social development. Majority of respondents (56%) said that poor socialization is the reason of low integration and (67%) respondents said low integration in the area is due to economic inequality, (61%) said due to and (64%) respondents believe that poor governance is the reason of low integration. Over all weak relationships of the respondents were observed with relatives, friends, neighbors, colleagues and public officers.

Only (12%) of the respondents are having adequate income to enjoy the basic needs. (78%) of the respondents said BISP has changed the life standard of BISP beneficiaries. Majority of the respondents (80%) agreed that exclusion of people is the result of low economic status and poverty is strongly linked with the Social Development, majority of the respondents (46%) said. (81%) of the respondents said low education negatively affects the individual's social and economic life and majority (71.8%) of the respondents agreed that this is true that low education affects the social development. Only (12%) of the respondents have understanding regarding the importance of good health and (15.8%) respondents show satisfaction regarding health facilities in the area. Majority of respondents (73%) said males have the discriminatory attitude towards females due to different reasons like lack of education (20%), social and cultural constraints (25%), rigid behavior of elders (37%), insecurity of female (11%) and religious extremism (7%). Majority of the respondents (71%) agreed that females are more excluded than males due to their gender and (78%) of the respondents agreed that females empowerment accelerates the social development. (80%) respondents responded positively that SDOs / NGOs play vital role to accelerate social development while (83%) agreed strong relationships uplift the social development. Only (10%) respondents were happy with the existing level of social development and (84%) of the respondents agreed that exclusion is the big hurdle in the way of development. Majority (78%) respondents agreed that poor people are excluded than richer.

Different suggestions were extended to accelerate social development by decreasing exclusion. (34%) respondents mentioned that if BISP amount is raised for the poor people on quarterly basis, 23% said by implementing law equally, 11% said by discouraging discrimination between rich and poor people, 14% said social development can be improved in the area by frequent and equal provision of basic facilities, 9% said by inclusion of poor people in community decision and policy making, 4% said by implementing local government system and only 5% said by provision of free education and health facilities to everyone.

Bi-variate analysis results reflected that significant association was seen between the social integration and social development. Chi-square value (21.56) shows a highly significant ($P=.000$) association between social integration and social development. Gamma value (21.56) shows a strong positive relation between the two variables. So this analysis reflected that strong social integration positively affects the social development. Low economic status also negatively affects social development in the area. Chi-square value (26.44) tells a highly significant ($P=.000$) association between monthly income and social development. Gamma value (26.44) shows a strong positive relation between the two different variables. Negative association observed between gender discrimination and social development was reflected by the chi-square value (47.08) shows a highly significant ($P=.000$) association between gender discrimination and social development. Gamma value (47.08) shows a negative relation between the variables. So there is lesser gender discrimination, more would be the Social Development.

10. Recommendations

There are a number of recommendations/suggestion which were explored while the conduction of the study in hand. Such as:

- To keep away the poor people from different social evils, some loans schemes should be initiated by the government. Government should think for jobless people and try to create maximum number of job opportunities for non-skilled persons too.
- Awareness of law of accountability should be provided to the liberate people and integration among the people should be increased by decreasing exclusion so that social development may accelerate. Law and order situation should be improved and public offices and public officials should be approachable and friendly to the poor people
- Emerging inferiority complex among BISP beneficiaries should be uprooted they are considering they poor and this thinking leads them towards begging and amount should be given every month instead of after three month. Awareness campaigns aiming at exploring of education should be launched and Awareness should be provided to the people about importance of health.
- Females should involve in different social activities to increase their inclusion. Exclusion of poor people should be reduced by increasing the inclusion in different community development projects and organizations can play important roles in this regard. Social development should be accelerated by reducing the exclusion.
- Different suggestions given from the respondents should be followed to reduce the exclusion and to improve social development.

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