

## Gender Discrimination in the Curriculum of Urdu (Compulsory) at Khyber Pakhtunkhwa -An Analysis

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### ABSTRACT

Education is the change agent in the human society. It is education which took the human from caves to space. Education does its work through curriculum. Curriculum is so designed that it may enlighten the minds and souls of the students. But curriculum is not designed for only one gender i.e. male, but it is designed and taught to the whole bulk of population. So both the genders are given the same weightage in the curriculum. But, in case of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the scenario is quite different. In its curriculum, female gender has been ignored and it is not granted with its due weightage. It is the need of the day to remove this drawback from the curriculum so that the curriculum of this province may become balanced and more effective.

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### Introduction

The research paper deals with the Urdu curriculum of Khyber pakhtunkhwa (a province of Pakistan) focusing upon the gender discrimination in it. As it is a common phenomenon in the backward countries that female gender is deprived of proper education facilities. Pakistan is also a developing country and its female gender is also poor with respect to literacy/education ratio. However the situation is getting better day by day. The female education is now being focused, by the authorities as well as civil society, to develop the nation and country.

The article under study is also an effort towards the betterment of the situation of female education in Pakistan in general and in KPK province in particular. The ratio of the representation of both the genders has been sort out and a conclusion has been found. And recommendations have also been presented for making the curriculum better from the gender discrimination point of view.

Man is the best creature on the earth. He is bestowed with reason. Through this power, he is responsible to lead the life on earth. The life he started was unsafe and full of dangers and hardships. He kept on changing the situation and reached upto the current age. He started life in caves where he was bare to the nature's hardships and dangers. He used his reason, overcame the hardships and got the status of today's developed man who can fly in airs and swim in waters. Many of the natural powers are subdued to him.

The journey of man towards development and advancement is still in progress. He is getting on to the newer destinations day by day. His power of reason is overcoming the hurdles coming in his way towards progress. But it is also a fact that man did not get the current status in a day. It is the fruit of the struggles of thousands of years. Millions and Billions of men contributed their services and struggles to reach this position.

Today we see that man is at the height of advancement in all aspects of life i.e. social, intellectual, physical, emotional. The history of human is the witness that the services rendered towards progress were by both genders i.e. man and woman. Both contributed their part in this journey. If the man was a king, a soldier, a scholar, a farmer or a judge, the woman was the mother (she gave birth to all these people). She not only gave birth to these soldiers and kings, but also brought them up and provided them with such nurture that they got such prestigious statuses. She helped the man as sister and daughter to do the praiseworthy deeds. Apart from this, woman has also been the independent ruler in so many countries and dynasties in history. She has served in the fields of art and literature, too.

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The world history witnessed the great services and contribution of woman. None can deny the dignity of Queen Bilqees of Saba (Yemen), the Poetess Sefo of Greece, the scholarly services in Islamic theology of Hazrat Ayesha and Hazrat Fatima, The soldierly services of Hazrat Khola, the political services of Queen Alezebeth 1 and Queen Victoria of Britain.

When the time of "Pen Power" came into rule, the woman did not remain behind. In the realm of pen-power, Jane Austen, Virginia Woolf, Bronte Sisters, Dorothy Richardson earned the name in English Literature. Similarly, Fehmida Riaz, Ada Jaafri, Parveen Shakir, Kishwar Naheed took part in the evolution of Urdu poetry. Quratul Ain Haider, Khadija Mastoor, Jamila Hashmi, Razia Butt, Altaf Fatima wrote Urdu novels and Bano Qudisia, Hijab Imtiaz Ali, Hajira Masroor and Mumtaz Sherin created remarkable Urdu short stories. These are the few amongst the innumerable female writers of literature.

If we study the history of nations, it is evident that the nations where women are active superceded other nations in the pace of development. The nations with active women got speedy developments while nations with inactive women remained far behind in the race. These nations are ruled by the developed nations as they observe disgrace and are dishonoured in the international fraternity. For the speedy development, it is very necessary that both the sexes in community should be active in the run towards advancement. Only one sex i.e. man can not cope with the fast growing demands of development.

Pakistan is passing through a critical age. It is facing great problems. The country is losing its image of a peaceful country due to terrorism. Its people are also going through the hardships of unemployment, dearness and no-protection. There is one solution to all these problems which is not other than education. Human being is creature having the faculty of reason. He knows how to go through hardships of life, safe and successful. He started life in the unsafe caves and reached the heights of life. Now he is the ruler of land, water and air. According to John Dewey, living creatures, like man and animal, pave their way towards betterment and progress even through they collide with other powers and get crushed, they still change the situation in favour of their strength and further survival.(1)

Through this process of collision and transforming the result towards its betterment, the man kept on learning and he passed it on to his coming generations. With the passage of time this process got systematised and was called "Education".

Formal education is the process by which Man's thought and ideas are refined and polished before he gets into practical life. (2) Education not only covers the areas of contemporary thoughts, aptitudes and tendencies but it also provides knowhow about sources of social change and development. (3) Miss Farkhanda Jabeen writes:

"Education is the dynamic force that provides the factors and features for the better adaptability of man in society. And it is the source which transfers our social values, fashions and rituals, traditions and other social features from one generation to the other."(4)

It is education which defines the direction and aim of life of a nation. It is the matrix in which new generations of the nation are moulded in accordance with national needs and requirements. It is the medium through which a student's individual capabilities are developed upto its height. (5) Founder of Pakistan Muhammad Ali Jinnah also said in his message through 1<sup>st</sup> national educational conference 1947:

"There is no doubt that the future of our state will and must greatly depend upon the type of education we give to our children" (6)

The above discussion and saying of Quid-e-Azam highlights the importance of education. As education is imparted through curriculum, so curriculum also carries tremendous importance in the educational system. Curriculum is the designed procedure for inculcation of specific knowledge and achieving defined objectives. Curriculum is the most important thing in the educational system as it is responsible for making up of the students' mindset, character and intellect.

In Pakistan, education is provincial subject. And each province has its own Textbook Board for preparing of textbooks. These Boards follow the directives of Federal Government while designing textbooks. The curriculum prevailing in province Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is designed and prepared by the provincial Textbook Board of the province.

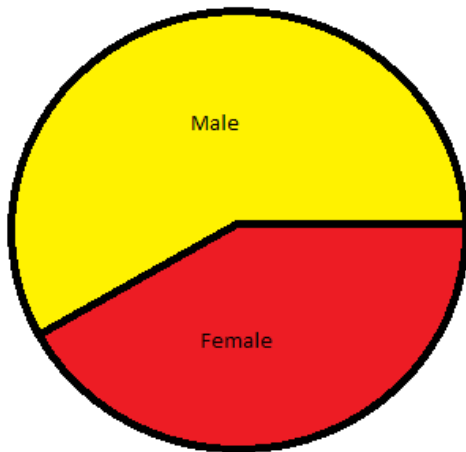
The curriculum under consideration i.e. curriculum of Urdu (Compulsory) is taught in all the government schools of the province. The boys and girls both kind of schools follow the same curriculum. But it is a fact that this curriculum is male-dominated. The female gender has not been given due representation in this curriculum. The below given facts and figures will be helpful to clarify the picture:

**Writers/Compilers of the Textbooks**

Total Writers/compilers= 19

Male writers/compilers= 11 (57.9%)

Female writers/compilers= 08 (42.1%)



**Poets/Prose writers**

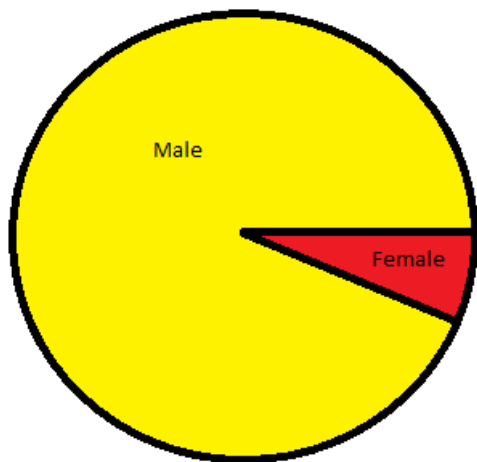
The main aim of teaching Urdu at primary and middle level is to teach language and to convey a behavioral message through the given text. That is why the names of writers are not given at both these levels. Yet at Secondary and Higher Secondary levels, the main goals of teaching Urdu are imparting command over language and behavioural message as well as to develop literary taste of the students. The contents at these levels have the names of writers with all given writings. The detail is as under:

**Prose:**

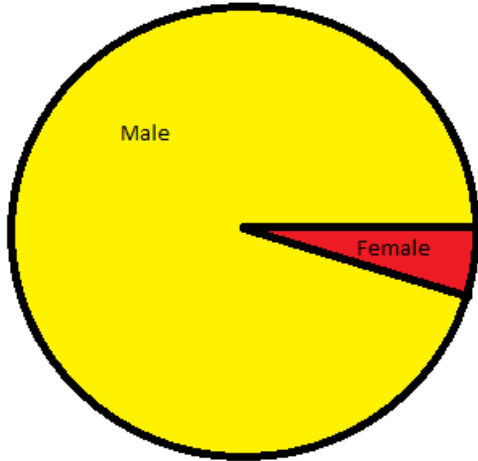
Total writers = 42

Male= 39 (92.85%)

Female= 03 (07.15%)



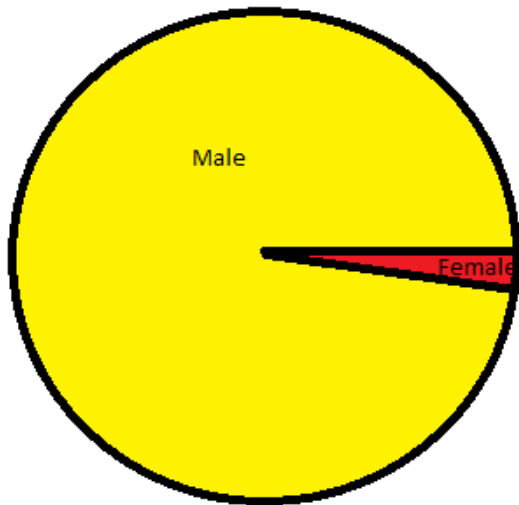
Total writings = 66  
Written by male writers=62 (93.94%)  
Written by female writers= 04 (6.06%)



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» As there are more than one writings of the same writers.

**Poetry:**  
Total Poets/Poetesses= 41  
Poets= 40 (97.56%)  
Poetess= 01 (02.44%)



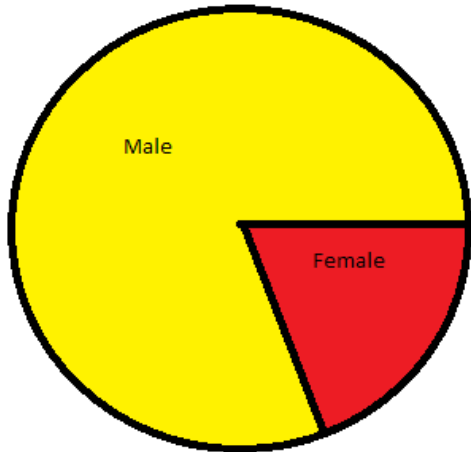
**Personalities:**

For character building, many personalities are highlighted in these books. Detail is given below:

Total Personalities= 39

Male= 31 (79.49%)

Female= 08 (20.51%)



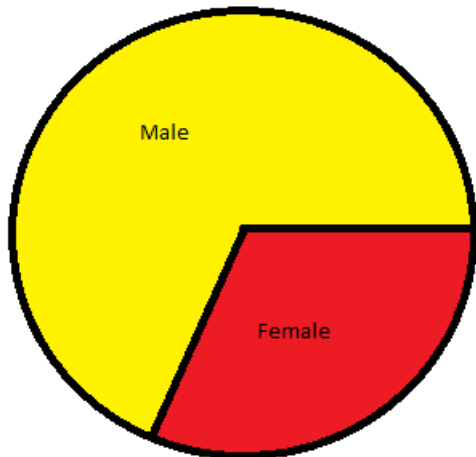
**Characters:**

Ratio of the characters given in the lessons are as under:

Total Characters= 346

Male= 245 (70.8%)

Female= 101 (29.2%)



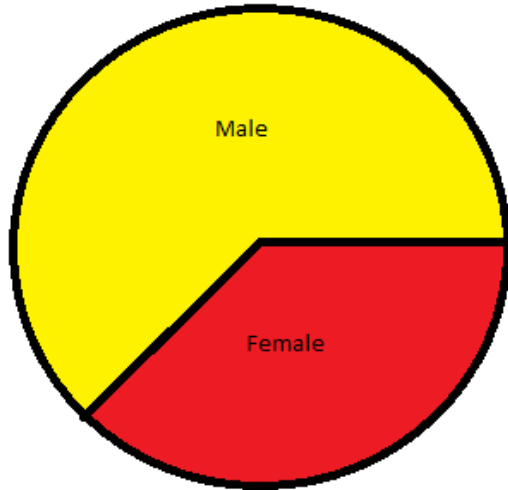
**Pictures:**

Details of the pictures given in lessons are as follows:

Total Pictures= 335

Male= 214 (63.89%)

Female= 121 (36.11%)



It seems apt to have a glance over the population ratio of the province before discussing the above given statistics. According to the census of 1981, population of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa comprised 1 crore, 77 Lac and 36 thousand. In this population the number of male was 90 lac 85 thousand (51.2%) whereas the number of the female was 86 lac 51 thousand (48.8%). It means that the proportion of male female was 51:49 (7)

So it is clear that female part of the population has not been given the due representation in this curriculum. This part of population has been ignored in every aspect. And this outlook towards the half bulk of the population cannot pave the way towards rapid national development.

There is only one aspect where female side has got appropriate representation i.e. in writers/ compilers of textbooks. Except this, in all other aspects the female side has been ignored. And the curriculum has become unbalanced.

Since this curriculum is not prepared only for the male students, but the same curriculum is taught to the female students also. This difference cannot be considered good for the proper nurture of all the students. Man and woman both are facts of life. Both need the same focus and attention. In the society of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, it is more important to pay attention to this part of population, as they have been deprived of many life facilities. They need special attention to bring them into the mainstream of life. Through education they may get confidence and would be able to serve the nation in much better way. People of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are proud of their culture and religion. In history, we find that in the primitive days of Islam, women took part in religious wars, got religious education and imparted it to others. And in Pakhtoon traditions, woman was and woman is very respectable member of society as mother, sister and daughter as well as wife. In history, and even now, the woman of Pakhtoon culture can be witnessed striving for the welfare of their families and societies. But their role still needs to be extended by giving them education and providing them more chances of services.

This province is backward (particularly in education) as compared to Punjab and Sindh. And the literacy ratio of woman is very poor. According to NWFP Development Statistics 2007, the literacy ratio of woman at the province was only 26 percent. (8). So it is very essential to boost it up on emergency basis.

Pakistan's National Education Policy 1978 declared that access to education will be equalized through provision of special facilities for woman. (9) National Education Policy 1992 comments:

“The purpose of education is to create a sizeable population of such educated men and women who could understand the world well enough and are able to bring about a change leading to a adequate health and education services, a better environment, and elimination of ignorance and deprivation, limitation which continue to strangulate the developing societies” (10).

Women education has got focus in 2009 Education Policy also:

“To equalize access to education through provision of basic facilities for girls and boys alike.” (11)

In the light of the above presented facts and figures, it is quite appropriate to demand that amendment must be made in the prevailing curriculum. Especially in literary writings, the representation of women writers should be increased, so that the writings enriched with the interest, mentality, emotions, feelings and tendencies of girls may also become part of the curriculum. Because girls have different natures and different outlook towards life than the boys. And this task is not difficult to do as the best writings of woman writers are easily available. This kind of action will encourage the deprived class as well as they will get confidence and will be able to speak on the important social issues and the process of development will get expedited.

Most of the writings/lessons included in the curriculum of primary and middle level are also about the interests and requirements of boys. So changes should be introduced in these books also so that this portion should also do for the guidance and betterment of girls, too. And their role in national progress could be enhanced.

### **Conclusion**

The above facts and figures show that the prevailing curriculum of Urdu at Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is unbalanced with respect to gender representation. It needs review and changes. As representation of the female is less than its due weightage. In the modern age women actively take part in the development of nation and society. If the woman of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa remains inactive, it will be a great loss to the society.

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