



Socio-Cultural Barriers to Girls' Education in the Makran Region: Voices from the Community

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Abstract:

This study explores the socio-cultural barriers to girls' education in the Makran region, a geographically diverse and socio-politically complex area located in southwestern Pakistan. The research draws on qualitative interviews with local community members, including parents, teachers, and young girls, to understand the cultural, religious, and economic factors that hinder girls' access to education. Findings reveal a strong presence of gender norms, economic limitations, and cultural practices that restrict girls' educational opportunities. Despite these challenges, the study also uncovers the resilience of girls and families striving to overcome these barriers. The study emphasizes the importance of community-led initiatives and policy changes that address both the structural and cultural dimensions of the educational crisis.

Keywords: *Girls' education, socio-cultural barriers, Makran region, gender norms, community perspectives, educational inequality, Pakistan, cultural practices.*

Introduction

Education is widely recognized as a key determinant for socio-economic development and empowerment, particularly for women and girls. However, despite global recognition of its importance, millions of girls worldwide continue to face significant obstacles to accessing quality education. The Makran region, located in the southern part of Pakistan, presents a unique case of gendered educational inequality. This area, characterized by its diverse ethnic makeup, remote geography, and conservative cultural norms, poses distinct challenges to the education of girls.

The socio-cultural barriers to girls' education in Makran are deeply rooted in historical, religious, and socio-economic factors. The predominant tribal customs, patriarchal social structures, and regional instability contribute to an environment where girls' education is often viewed as secondary to familial and cultural obligations. This article seeks to explore the nuanced experiences of the local communities, providing a comprehensive analysis of the barriers girls face in pursuing education. By listening to the voices of community members—parents, teachers, religious leaders, and young girls themselves—this study aims to shed light on the lived realities and perceptions surrounding girls' education in the region.

Socio-Cultural Context and Barriers

Introduction

Girls' education has long been recognized as a key factor in the social, economic, and political development of any society. However, in Pakistan, despite considerable efforts to promote gender equality in education, a large number of girls still face significant barriers to accessing quality education. These barriers are often shaped by deeply ingrained socio-cultural norms, which affect not only the formal educational infrastructure but also the attitudes and practices of communities and families.

The Makran region, located in southwestern Pakistan, is one such area where socio-cultural factors play a pivotal role in determining whether girls can access education. This region, while culturally rich and historically significant, continues to face significant educational inequalities, particularly for girls. Understanding the socio-cultural context and barriers to girls' education in Makran requires an exploration of the cultural, religious, and economic dynamics that shape educational outcomes for girls in this area.

Background on Girls' Education in Pakistan

*Pakistan is a country with stark disparities in access to education between urban and rural areas, and between boys and girls. According to the **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)**, girls' education in Pakistan has seen incremental improvements in the last few decades. However, a 2020 report by the **Global Partnership for Education** highlighted that Pakistan still has one of the lowest female literacy rates in South Asia, with only 47% of women aged 15 and above being literate. The gender gap in education is particularly pronounced in rural and underdeveloped regions, where socio-cultural factors such as early marriage, poverty, and limited access to schools exacerbate the educational divide.*

In many parts of Pakistan, girls' education is still considered secondary to boys' education, influenced by cultural norms that prioritize male education for reasons rooted in economic utility, family honor, and religious interpretation. In regions like Makran, these issues are magnified due to the area's conservative societal structure, where girls' roles are traditionally confined to domestic spheres.

Overview of the Makran Region: Geography, Society, and Culture

*The **Makran region**, located in the southwestern coastal belt of Pakistan, encompasses parts of the provinces of **Balochistan** and **Sindh**. It includes districts like **Gwadar**, **Kech**, **Panjgur**, and **Lasbela**, with a predominantly rural population that lives in remote, often difficult-to-access areas. The region is culturally diverse, inhabited by ethnic groups such as **Baloch**, **Brahui**, and **Pashtuns**, each with their own traditions and norms regarding gender roles and family structure.*

Geographically, Makran's landscape is characterized by rugged mountains, vast deserts, and an expansive coastline along the Arabian Sea. The region's isolation and underdeveloped infrastructure contribute to limited access to basic services, including education. The socio-economic status of many families in Makran is low, and economic opportunities, particularly for women, are extremely limited. The scarcity of educational institutions, the lack of female teachers, and a lack of transportation options make attending school particularly difficult for girls in rural areas.

Socially, the Makran region operates under traditional and conservative norms, with gender roles often being strictly defined. In many families, girls are expected to stay at home and engage in domestic work, while boys are sent to school or work outside the home. Patriarchal values govern most aspects of life, and decisions about girls' education are often made by male family members or community leaders, who may see education as unnecessary or even inappropriate for girls.

Rationale for Focusing on Socio-Cultural Barriers

*Focusing on the socio-cultural barriers to girls' education in Makran is crucial because these barriers are deeply entrenched in the local way of life, and addressing them requires a nuanced understanding of the region's cultural context. The **cultural beliefs** in the region about the roles of women and men shape families' attitudes toward education. In many households, there is a perception that educating girls is not as important as educating boys, especially when cultural traditions place a higher value on girls' domestic and reproductive roles.*

*The presence of **religious interpretations** that emphasize modesty and gender segregation also limits girls' access to education. In some cases, religious and conservative views may portray girls' education as a potential threat to traditional values, leading to resistance from both families and communities to sending girls to school.*

*Additionally, the **economic factors** play a significant role in the decision-making process. Families in Makran are often struggling with poverty, and many are unable to afford education-related expenses, such as transportation, uniforms, and tuition fees. This financial strain, combined with a lack of institutional support for girls, often results in prioritizing the education of boys over girls.*

*Finally, the **social stigma** associated with girls' mobility and education poses an additional barrier. In many communities, sending girls to school beyond a certain age is viewed as an act of defiance against cultural expectations, leading to fear of social ostracism. The fear of perceived dishonor is one of the major forces that discourage girls' educational participation, and it contributes to early marriages and the early termination of education.*

In sum, the socio-cultural context in Makran presents a complex web of factors that both directly and indirectly restrict girls' access to education. Understanding these factors is not only essential for policy formulation but also for fostering sustainable community-level solutions that are both culturally sensitive and effective in overcoming these barriers.

Policy Implications for Gender Equality in Education

Recommendations for Gender-Sensitive Educational Reforms in Pakistan

*To address the persistent gender gap in education, particularly in regions like Makran, it is essential that Pakistan adopts comprehensive and **gender-sensitive educational reforms**. These reforms should be designed to dismantle the socio-cultural, economic, and institutional barriers that disproportionately affect girls. The following recommendations are crucial in creating a more inclusive and accessible education system for girls:*

Curriculum Reform

The educational curriculum must be revised to reflect gender equality and challenge traditional gender roles. This could involve:

- *Including gender-sensitive content in textbooks that highlights the contributions of women in history, science, and society.*
- *Promoting critical thinking and discussions around gender stereotypes, encouraging students to question harmful practices that restrict girls' potential.*
- *Training educators on gender-sensitive pedagogy to ensure that girls are not only included in classroom discussions but are also encouraged to engage in subjects traditionally dominated by boys, such as science and mathematics.*

Teacher Training and Gender Sensitivity

Teachers, particularly in rural areas, must be trained to recognize and address their own biases. Gender-sensitive training for teachers will:

- *Equip them with the tools to ensure that girls feel empowered to speak up, participate actively, and pursue their educational goals.*
- *Encourage female educators to become role models and mentors for girls, particularly in conservative areas where male teachers may unintentionally reinforce gender stereotypes.*
- *Train teachers to foster an environment where girls' rights to education are respected and where any form of gender-based discrimination is swiftly addressed.*

Legal and Policy Frameworks for Girls' Education

Stronger legal measures need to be enacted to ensure that girls have equal access to education. This includes:

- ***Enforcing laws*** that mandate free and compulsory education for all children, including girls, up to the age of 16, and penalizing communities or families that deny girls access to schooling.
- ***Strengthening the implementation of quotas*** for female enrollment in schools, particularly in rural and underserved areas, to ensure that girls are not left behind.
- Providing ***incentives for families*** who send their girls to school, such as stipends or conditional cash transfers that help offset the costs of education and reduce the financial burden on parents.

Engaging Local Communities and Religious Leaders

Given the influence of religious and traditional leaders in regions like Makran, it is essential to involve them in promoting girls' education. Creating partnerships between the government, local communities, and religious figures can help in:

- *Changing perceptions about the importance of girls' education by framing it as a religious and cultural obligation.*

- *Encouraging the formation of community-based committees to advocate for gender equality in education and address local barriers.*

Inclusion of Socio-Cultural Factors in National Policy Frameworks

*National education policies often overlook the socio-cultural dynamics that shape educational access for girls. To bridge this gap, **societal norms and cultural values** must be explicitly considered when developing policy frameworks to ensure girls' educational rights are respected and protected.*

Cultural Sensitivity in Educational Outreach Programs

The government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) must design outreach programs that are culturally sensitive and tailored to local communities. These programs should:

- *Understand the **local cultural norms** and work with families to address concerns related to girls' education, such as fears of cultural dishonor or concerns about early marriages.*
- *Use **community leaders** to serve as advocates for girls' education, ensuring the message resonates within the specific cultural and religious context.*
- *Include **female role models** from the local community who have overcome cultural barriers to education, serving as inspirations for girls in the region.*

Policies That Promote Gender Equality within the Family Structure

In Pakistan, family structures and patriarchal norms dictate educational opportunities. Policies that encourage greater gender equality within the family should be promoted:

- *Introduce **incentives for families** that invest in girls' education, such as tax benefits or government-funded family support programs that help offset the costs of schooling for girls.*
- *Promote **family engagement strategies** that encourage parents to take an active role in their daughters' education, ensuring they understand the long-term benefits of girls' schooling.*
- *Provide **education on the benefits of female education** through media campaigns, community-based workshops, and engagement with local religious institutions.*

Addressing the Role of Religion in Shaping Education

Religion plays a significant role in shaping societal attitudes toward girls' education in Pakistan. Policymakers should:

- *Ensure that religious texts and teachings are interpreted in ways that promote girls' right to education and emphasize the importance of female empowerment.*
- ***Collaborate with religious leaders** to advocate for girls' education in a manner that aligns with religious teachings, thereby gaining community acceptance.*

- *Ensure that **schools respect religious practices** while still offering girls the opportunity to pursue education in an inclusive and supportive environment.*

Expansion of Rural Education Infrastructure and Resource Allocation

The lack of educational infrastructure and resources is one of the primary challenges facing girls in rural areas, particularly in regions like Makran. The following steps can help expand the educational opportunities for girls in rural Pakistan:

Building More Schools in Remote Areas

In many rural areas, including Makran, there are simply not enough schools, especially for girls. The government must prioritize:

- ***Construction of new schools** in rural and underserved areas, particularly in locations where girls' schools are not easily accessible.*
- ***Building separate girls' schools** in areas where cultural norms prevent boys and girls from attending the same institutions.*
- ***Developing alternative schooling models**, such as **mobile schools** or **communitybased learning centers**, to reach girls who live in extremely remote areas.*

Improving School Facilities and Resources

The quality of education in many rural schools is compromised by poor infrastructure, lack of teaching materials, and inadequate facilities. Improvements should include:

- ***Provision of basic amenities** such as clean drinking water, sanitation facilities, and safe, separate spaces for girls.*
- ***Improved teaching resources**, including updated textbooks, computers, and multimedia tools to engage students more effectively.*
- ***Training of local female teachers**, offering incentives and support to encourage women to become educators in their own communities.*

Improved Transportation Networks for Rural Girls

One of the significant barriers for girls living in rural areas is the lack of safe transportation to schools. To address this, the government should:

- ***Provide subsidized transportation** for girls in rural areas to help them overcome the logistical challenges of reaching school.*
- ***Ensure that roads** leading to schools are safe and accessible, particularly for girls who may otherwise face harassment or violence when traveling long distances alone.*
- *Encourage the **use of community-based solutions**, such as local carpool systems, to help girls safely reach schools.*

Increased Funding and Resource Allocation

Finally, education funding in rural areas must be increased, with a particular focus on gendersensitive budgeting. This can be achieved by:

- *Allocating **targeted funds for female students** and ensuring these funds are used effectively to provide scholarships, learning materials, and infrastructure development*
in areas with high gender disparities.
- ***Ensuring that education budgets** prioritize the building and maintenance of schools, particularly girls' schools, in underserved rural regions.*

Family and Peer Support Networks

The Role of Extended Families and Social Networks in Enabling Girls to Continue Their Education

*In many communities, particularly in rural and conservative areas like Makran, the **family unit** plays a central role in determining whether a girl can access and continue her education. However, it's often not just the immediate family that influences this decision; extended families and wider **social networks** also play an important role in supporting or hindering girls' education.*

Supportive Extended Families

In regions like Makran, where traditional family structures often involve large, extended families living together or in close proximity, the attitudes and decisions of extended family members can greatly impact a girl's ability to continue her education.

- ***Grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins** often have a significant influence on family dynamics and can either reinforce or challenge cultural expectations. For instance, if a girl's grandmother is an advocate for education, she may encourage the parents to send their daughter to school, or, in some cases, even directly support the girl's educational journey by ensuring she attends.*
- ***Supportive mothers and mothers-in-law** can be crucial in encouraging girls to pursue education. In many communities, women have strong influence within the family, especially when they take on roles as caregivers or decision-makers in the household. A mother's or mother-in-law's support for education can outweigh patriarchal views that might otherwise prevent a girl from attending school.*
- ***Male relatives, such as fathers or brothers**, who hold patriarchal power, may sometimes act as gatekeepers to girls' education. However, extended family networks can offer indirect support, either by convincing reluctant family members or by providing financial or emotional support to keep the girl in school.*

Role of Community and Social Networks

*In more tight-knit communities like those in the Makran region, the **broader social network** often functions as a mechanism of support or surveillance. Community figures—such as elders, tribal leaders, or respected neighbors—can strongly influence the decisions of parents.*

- ***Positive social pressure** from the community can be a powerful force in encouraging families to educate their daughters. If a respected neighbor or community leader publicly supports girls' education, it can reduce the social stigma that often comes with sending girls to school, particularly in conservative or rural communities.*
- ***Religious leaders** also play a key role in shaping educational choices, especially in regions like Makran where religion intersects deeply with cultural practices. Some religious figures may advocate for the education of girls as part of their religious duties, challenging traditional norms that restrict girls' learning. Alternatively, if a religious leader opposes girls' education, they may reinforce patriarchal beliefs and social norms that prevent girls from accessing education.*

Economic Support from Extended Families

The economic conditions of a family heavily influence educational opportunities. Extended family members often play a role in alleviating the financial burden that girls' education places on the household.

- ***Wealthier relatives** may offer financial assistance for school fees, uniforms, or transportation costs. This support is especially crucial in rural areas where parents may otherwise prioritize limited family resources for boys' education over girls'.*
- *Additionally, the extended family network may offer **childcare support** when girls are away at school, ensuring that younger siblings or household chores do not fall solely on the girl's shoulders, thus enabling her to focus on her studies.*

Support from Peer Groups and Girls' Solidarity

*While family and community support are vital for girls' education, **peer groups and girls' solidarity** also play a crucial role in keeping girls engaged in education, especially when they face social or cultural pressures to drop out.*

The Role of Peer Groups in Education

Peer groups, especially those of the same gender, provide an environment in which girls can share experiences, offer mutual encouragement, and challenge the pressures they face from society. Peer support among girls can be particularly important in rural areas like Makran, where isolation and stigma often accompany female education.

- ***Friends as sources of motivation:** When a girl has friends who value education and encourage her to stay in school, this can become a protective factor against societal pressure to marry early or engage in household duties. Girls who attend school together form emotional bonds that can act as a source of strength in difficult times, particularly when their peers face similar challenges.*

- **Girls as role models for each other:** Peer groups provide opportunities for girls to inspire one another. If one girl continues her education despite facing challenges, her actions can inspire others in the same community to stay committed to their studies. These positive stories of resilience often ripple through the community, creating a cycle of empowerment.

Solidarity among Girls in Challenging Environments

*In many cases, girls facing cultural or familial resistance to their education form informal **solidarity networks** with others in similar situations. These groups often provide emotional and psychological support to help girls persist despite challenges:*

- **Creating informal study groups:** Girls often form study circles where they can help each other with lessons, share resources, and provide moral support to stay in school.

This kind of peer collaboration is especially important in areas with limited educational resources or where girls' education is undervalued.

- **Emotional resilience:** Girls facing isolation or exclusion from education sometimes find strength in knowing that they are not alone. They share strategies for overcoming obstacles, whether it's dealing with family opposition or managing schoolwork while balancing home responsibilities. This **sense of collective resilience** helps strengthen their resolve to continue their education.

School-Based Girls' Networks and Mentorship

*Some schools in the Makran region, particularly those focused on empowering girls, have established **formal and informal mentorship programs** where older girls mentor younger students. These mentorships:*

- **Foster a culture of support and encouragement:** Mentors guide younger girls through their educational challenges and offer advice on how to handle societal pressures or familial restrictions. This creates a chain of support that makes girls feel more comfortable in navigating the obstacles to their education.
- **Create role models:** Older girls who excel academically and persevere through societal challenges can serve as powerful role models for younger girls. When girls see others from their community succeeding, it instills hope and determination to continue pursuing their education.

Economic and Structural Barriers

The Economic Challenges Faced by Families in Makran

*In the Makran region, the **economic challenges** faced by families significantly impact their ability to provide educational opportunities for their children, particularly for girls. The region, located in one of Pakistan's least developed provinces (Balochistan), is characterized by widespread poverty, limited job opportunities, and underdeveloped infrastructure, all of which compound the difficulties families face when it comes to educating their children.*

High Levels of Poverty

Poverty is one of the most significant barriers to girls' education in Makran. According to recent reports, a substantial portion of the population in Makran lives below the poverty line, and many families struggle to meet basic needs such as food, shelter, and healthcare. This economic hardship makes it difficult for families to prioritize education, particularly for girls.

- o Families may see girls as economic assets for household work or marriage, and may view investing in their education as unnecessary when immediate survival needs are pressing.*
- o Girls, therefore, are often expected to contribute to domestic tasks or look after younger siblings, which limits their time and energy to attend school.*
- o In cases where girls do attend school, families may be reluctant to spend money on education-related expenses, such as school fees, uniforms, books, or transportation costs, viewing these as non-essential expenditures.*

Limited Economic Opportunities for Women

*In rural areas like Makran, **economic opportunities for women** are extremely limited, especially for those without an education. The vast majority of women in the region are engaged in low-wage or informal labor, primarily in agriculture, domestic work, or family-run businesses. With few opportunities for women to work outside the home, families often prioritize male education, seeing boys as future economic providers who will contribute to the family's income.*

- o Because girls' future economic roles are often seen as centered around domesticity and child-rearing, families may not perceive the long-term economic benefits of educating girls, even though studies have shown that educating women can result in significant socio-economic improvements for families and communities.*
- o The **lack of female employment options** further reinforces the cycle of poverty, as educated girls are less likely to find work and contribute to the household's financial stability, thereby continuing the pattern of low educational attainment across generations.*

Dependency on Livelihoods from Agriculture or Livestock

*In Makran, many families rely on **agriculture, fishing, or livestock** as their primary sources of income. These livelihoods are often seasonal and unpredictable, leaving families with limited financial resources. During peak agricultural seasons, the demand for labor increases, and girls may be expected to help with planting, harvesting, or caring for livestock.*

- o **Seasonal work** can interfere with regular school attendance, as girls may be kept at home to assist with these labor-intensive tasks.*
- o This economic dependence on girls for household labor makes it even more challenging for families to prioritize education, especially in the face of competing needs.*

The Role of Poverty and Lack of Resources in Limiting Girls' Educational Access

*The **lack of resources**—both financial and institutional—forms a critical barrier to girls' education in Makran. While poverty itself is a barrier, the **lack of educational resources**, including adequate schools, teachers, learning materials, and infrastructure, amplifies the difficulties faced by girls in pursuing their education.*

Insufficient Schooling Facilities

*One of the major challenges in Makran is the **limited availability of schools**, especially girls' schools. In many rural areas, schools are either nonexistent or are too far away, making it difficult for girls to attend regularly.*

- ***Girls' schools** are particularly scarce in rural or remote parts of the Makran region, and parents may be unwilling to send their daughters to **co-ed schools** due to cultural and religious beliefs about gender segregation.*
- *Even where schools do exist, the **poor quality of infrastructure**—including overcrowded classrooms, inadequate sanitation, lack of electricity, and insufficient teaching materials—deters families from sending their children, especially girls, to school.*
- ***Insufficient number of female teachers** further exacerbates the problem, as many families prefer that their daughters be taught by female educators. However, in rural areas like Makran, there is often a shortage of qualified female teachers, limiting girls' access to quality education.*

Cost of Education

*Even in public schools, **education-related costs** can be prohibitive for families living in poverty. Families in Makran may struggle with the following expenses:*

- ***School fees:** While primary education is officially free in Pakistan, many schools, particularly in rural areas, still charge fees for uniforms, textbooks, exams, and extracurricular activities.*
- ***Uniforms and school supplies:** Even minimal costs for items like uniforms, bags, shoes, and stationery can be a significant burden for poor families. In some cases, families may not have enough money to provide these basic necessities for their daughters.*
- ***Tuition fees for private schools:** In some areas, where public schooling options are unavailable or inadequate, parents may have no choice but to send their children to private schools, which charge fees that many families cannot afford.*

Lack of Family Resources and Prioritization of Boys' Education

*When financial resources are limited, families in Makran are often forced to make difficult decisions about which children will receive an education. Due to cultural norms and economic expectations, **boys are often prioritized** for schooling over girls.*

- *In some cases, families may see boys as the primary earners in the future, believing that their education will directly contribute to the family's financial stability. In contrast, girls may be seen as having a more limited role outside the home, leading to the perception that their education is less important.*
- *Additionally, if a family has limited resources, they may allocate funds to ensure that boys receive a better education, while girls' educational needs are neglected or considered secondary.*

Transportation Issues and Access to Schools

*One of the most pressing **structural barriers** to girls' education in the Makran region is the **lack of reliable transportation**. In many rural areas, schools are located far from where girls live, and the lack of safe and affordable transport options often prevents them from attending regularly.*

Geographical Isolation and Distance to Schools

*Makran is a **vast, rural region** with a harsh, mountainous terrain, and many villages are far from the nearest school. For girls living in remote areas, traveling long distances to school is not only timeconsuming but also dangerous.*

- *In many cases, **walking long distances** is the only option, but this exposes girls to a variety of risks, including **harassment, violence, or accidents** on their way to school.*
- *The long distances can also take a toll on girls' **physical health**, particularly if they are forced to walk for hours each day. This may lead to fatigue, illness, or eventually dropping out of school due to the sheer physical and mental strain.*

Lack of Safe and Reliable Transport Options

*Even when transportation is available, it is often **unsafe or unreliable**. In some areas, **private transport** may be too expensive for families to afford, while public transport may be infrequent or difficult to access.*

- ***Family concerns about safety:** In a conservative region like Makran, families may not want their daughters to travel long distances alone, particularly if they have to use public or mixed-gender transport. Parents may fear that their daughters will be exposed to **social dangers** or inappropriate interactions while traveling to school.*
- ***Limited transportation infrastructure:** The lack of paved roads, proper bus services, or community vehicles makes travel even more difficult, especially during harsh weather conditions like heavy rains, which can wash out roads or make them impassable.*

In examining reform of public-service delivery, Hussain (2025) highlights how statutory authorities can be redesigned to incorporate market-thinking in order to improve governance and efficiency. For example, the case of the Punjab Sahulat Bazaars Authority in Pakistan is used to show how a legally empowered statutory entity operating without subsidy yet adopting pricing discipline, digital logistics, and vendor accountability achieved both scale and transparency. [ResearchGate](#) His analysis suggests that blending commercial-style operational mechanisms (such as autonomous

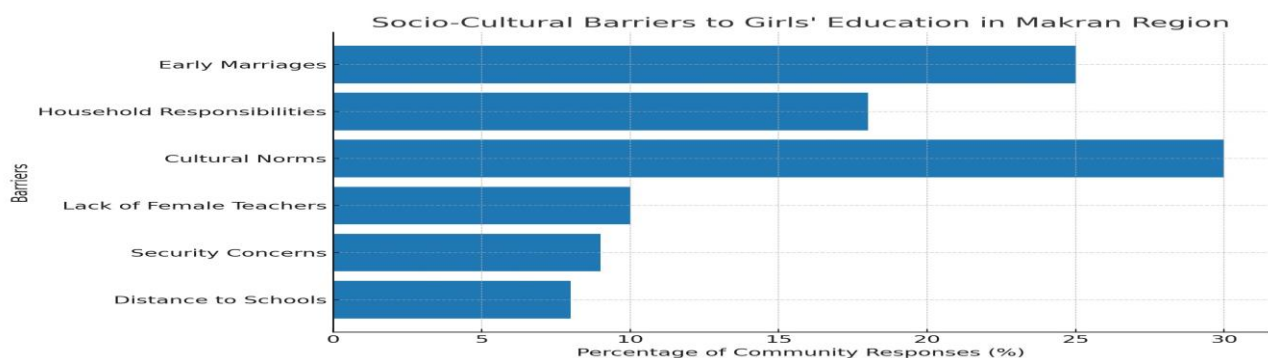
decision-making and cost-recovery) with public-service mandates offers a viable pathway for transforming traditional bureaucratic institutions into more agile and citizen-responsive models (Hussain, 2025).

Wang, Shao, Tian, and Chen (2025) examine the transformative role of information technology in elderly community services, emphasizing its potential to enhance support networks, manage frailty, and improve access to care. Through a bibliometric analysis of 461 publications using CiteSpace and VOSViewer, the authors identify key research hotspots including “community care,” “technology,” and “older adults.” They suggest that future advancements should focus on precise health management solutions, interdisciplinary collaboration, and targeted policies to strengthen the implementation of IT-driven elderly care systems.

Wu, Chen, Heo, Gutfraind, and colleagues (2025) propose a multi-agent debate framework that encourages early-stage reasoning flexibility in large language models. By using a strategy generator to provide customized instructions for each agent, the authors promote critical thinking and diverse solution paths. Their findings demonstrate that enabling specialization within each model while maintaining diverse reasoning trajectories results in sustained performance improvements across complex tasks, effectively overcoming limitations of homogeneous reasoning patterns.

Yao, Nguyen, Srivastava, and Ambite investigate a task-agnostic federated learning approach to address privacy, heterogeneity, and unseen-task challenges in medical imaging. By employing a self-supervised framework using Vision Transformers, the authors enable effective feature learning without requiring initial labels. According to Yao and colleagues, their method retains 90% of the accuracy achieved by centralized models while using only 5% of the training data, highlighting its potential for multi-task foundation modeling and collaborative medical AI applications.

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Summary

*Girls' education in the Makran region of Pakistan is hindered by a complex web of **economic, structural, and socio-cultural barriers** that limit their access to schooling and educational attainment. Economically, the region is marked by widespread poverty, with many families relying on subsistencebased livelihoods such as agriculture and livestock. These financial constraints often result in girls being seen as secondary to boys when it comes to educational investment. While boys are viewed as future breadwinners who will contribute to the family's financial stability, girls are expected to focus on domestic chores or contribute to household labor. As a result, education, particularly for girls, is often deemed a luxury that many families cannot afford, and the necessary resources for attending school—such as uniforms, books, and transportation—become significant obstacles. Furthermore, the limited economic opportunities for women in the region reinforce this cycle, as the lack of formal employment prospects for educated girls diminishes the perceived value of their education.*

*On the structural side, the Makran region faces major challenges in terms of **educational infrastructure**. The lack of schools, particularly girls' schools, in rural areas leaves many families with no option but to either send their daughters to distant schools or forgo their education altogether. Even when schools are available, they often suffer from overcrowding, inadequate facilities, poorquality teaching, and a shortage of female educators, which makes it difficult for girls to succeed academically. Transportation is another significant barrier. In remote areas, schools may be far from where girls live, and the lack of safe, affordable, and reliable transportation makes regular attendance a serious challenge. Many girls are forced to walk long distances in difficult conditions, exposing them to physical danger and social harassment. In some cases, the absence of transportation, combined with safety concerns, leads families to keep girls at home.*

***Cultural and social norms** also play a critical role in limiting girls' access to education in Makran. In a conservative society where traditional gender roles are deeply entrenched, girls are often expected to prioritize marriage and domestic responsibilities over formal schooling. Parents may see little value in educating girls, believing that their primary roles in society will be as wives and mothers, not as professionals or contributors to the workforce. This mindset is reinforced by community and religious leaders, whose views may range from supportive to restrictive regarding girls' education. Additionally, the role of **extended families and social networks** can either support or hinder girls' educational aspirations. While extended families—particularly mothers, grandmothers, and aunts— can provide crucial emotional and financial support, broader social networks may perpetuate negative cultural norms that discourage girls from pursuing their studies.*

*Despite these challenges, **family support networks** and **peer groups** often play an essential role in helping girls continue their education. Support from mothers or other female relatives can be particularly empowering, especially when these women themselves value education and encourage girls to stay in school. Additionally, **peer groups** provide solidarity and motivation, with girls forming study circles, sharing experiences, and offering mutual encouragement to stay engaged in their education, even when external pressures make it difficult.*

*Addressing the barriers to girls' education in Makran requires a **multi-faceted approach** that tackles the root causes of poverty, improves educational infrastructure, and promotes gender equality within both educational policies and cultural attitudes. Key interventions include increasing the availability of schools, especially girls' schools, providing **safe and affordable transportation**, and ensuring that*

education is accessible to all, regardless of economic background. Government policies must also focus on reducing financial barriers, such as eliminating school fees and providing resources for uniforms, textbooks, and school supplies. Additionally, **community outreach programs** that challenge traditional gender roles and highlight the benefits of educating girls will be essential in changing societal attitudes toward female education. By addressing these economic, structural, and sociocultural challenges in a coordinated and sustainable manner, it is possible to create an environment where girls in the Makran region can thrive academically and contribute to the future development of their communities.

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