

# IMPACT OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION OF POOR COMMUNITIES ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT: A STUDY OF DISTRICT LODHRAN IN SOUTHERN PUNJAB (PAKISTAN)

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## **Abstract**

This research assesses the impact of social exclusion on social development and has been carried out in district Lodhran, located in South Punjab, Pakistan. This study directly targets the beneficiaries of Benazir Income Support Programme and the major stake holders of public service providers of the state. Elected public representatives (politicians), governing officials of public institutions and heads of Non-Governmental Organizations/Social Development Organizations were selected as representatives of major stakeholders of social development in the district. This study concentrates to check the effects of social development in the prevailing picture of weak social integration, low income, poor health, low education and poor health conditions and gender discrimination in the area. The situation of social development is evaluated in district Lodhran by analyzing the economic status, level of integration and relationships, situation of education, health, governance, discriminatory attitudes and the functionality of all service providers' stakeholders of the state. Qualitative study was conducted with the community (beneficiaries of Benazir Income Support Programme). Social development stakeholders were also taken on board to take their responses towards the impact of social exclusion on social development, so qualitative part of the study were conducted with these major stake holders. Results of quantitative and qualitative studies reinforced the researcher's model. Research model reflects that basic/fundamental rights of the poor would be fulfilled by engaging them, then the level of social exclusion would be decreased which ultimately promote social development. Results also indicate that if elected politicians, government officials and activists from well-known development organizations recognize their responsibilities and paly their duties as per their job descriptions and if the level of engagement of these with the communities is high, social exclusion of poor communities will be eliminated. So it is the need of time to minimize the social exclusion to accelerate social development.

**Key Words:** Social exclusion, social development, education and health, governance, fundamental rights

## **Introduction**

Pakistan has diverse social structures dispersed into various clusters like Biradaries (Extended Kinship Network), Quoms (Caste), Clans, Zimindars (Farmers) and Landless Harees (People Working on lands of Landlords). This structural complexity has a substantial impact on distribution of assets, social and economic inequality status, gendered perspective, rigidity in behaviors and attitudes and differences in the availability of basic facilities like education, health, pure drinking water

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and sanitation. Moreover, poor grip of services providers on governance, low commitment of political leaders, lack of coordination among the state institutions and uncertain security circumstances lead the poor people to exclusion.

In Pakistan, poor people facing unequal economic status, exclusion, low literacy, effects of uncontrolled diseases, political uncertainty, low integration among them and discrimination. These circumstances make the poor individuals more excluded. On the contrary, representatives and legislatures are bound to counter these hurdles because of poor governing machinery and unskilled officials. Consideration towards social exclusion is hundred times more important than poverty; it does cause hardships and deprivation for the effete. These people facing, at peak, the structural and economic inequality, reinforced by laws, add to a sense of grievance and injustice, encourage resentment and hopelessness, and produce social and political uncertainty (Social Policy and Development Centre, 2012).

### **Concept of Social Exclusion and Social Development**

#### ***Social Exclusion***

Social Exclusion is multi-dimensional and dynamic concept. *European Union* (2005) defined social exclusion 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.

According to *United Nations Research Institute for Social Development* (UNRISD) "social development is concerned with processes of change that leads to improvements in human well-being, social relations and social institutions, and that are equitable, sustainable, and compatible with principles of democratic governance and social justice".

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### **Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP)**

In October, 2008, federal government in Pakistan introduced Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) to improve the marginalized portion of people. Initially, a fund of one thousand rupees per month was awarded to every nominated and registered family. This supporting money increased with the passage of time and right now it reaches up to rupees 12, 00 per family.

### **Objectives of the Study**

This study revolving around the following objectives;

- To assess the effects of social exclusion on marginalized communities.
- To measure the space between poor people and government offices/office holders.
- To investigate effects of exclusion on gender discrimination.
- To observe the working and functioning of social institutions responsible for social development.
- To formulate some suitable policy measures to overcome social exclusion and accelerate social development.

### **Review of Literature**

Room (1998) and Barnes (2005) reported that resolution with the passage of time is an important part of social omission, while some other scholars (Levitas et al., 2007) concluded that decisions about resolution are not on empirical basis or on theory. Social resolution is not equally distributed among different ethnic and socio-economic groups because it is a dynamic process that people experience in whole life and places. For example effects, experience and conditions of HIV/AIDS are entirely different in different regions like South Africa and the United States. Moreover, fast changes in structural components, especially the effects of globalization, are changing the course of barring and enclosure among different societies, countries and regions.

Dietz (1997) describes the effects of social stratification in the analysis of health results. He has concentrated on the developed countries and gives two main propositions, like: the classless system has the highest rate of better health facilities and low rate of health

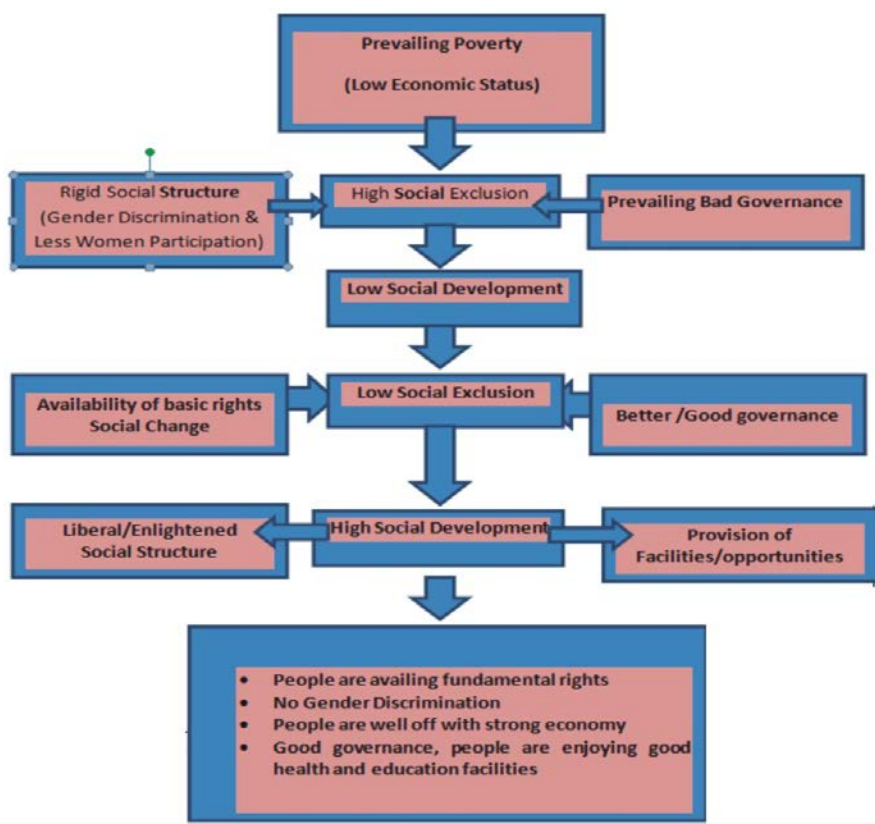
discrimination and vulnerability as compared to the world's rich countries. The second proposition explains that health and economic differences are psychosocial in nature. By conducting experiments on the animals, Wilkinsen concluded that the health problem inside our body is the straight product of the psycho-neuroendocrine system, and sometimes it is created due to the unhealthy behavior outside the animal's body. Similarly, weakness or disorganization in social solidarity and harmony guides people towards deviant behavior. This theory is still tentative, yet it is supported by the number of scientific researches. For example, the comparative disparity affects the levels of anxiety, isolation and security, are the determinants of chronic stress (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2006).

Levitas (2005) said that exclusion from the perspective of agency reflects the sense of eviction, discrimination, expulsion, and rejection. But a society that asks big requirements for inclusion by any society could be more exclusive. These are latest strategy measures regarding the exclusion. There are a number of laws published in books and journals to abolish discriminations in various spheres of life. Now question arises whether the state has a will to enforce these laws. Legal and policy based remedy is not sufficient to foil discrimination when the problem is advanced and surrounded in social relationship. One solution of this problem is associative redistribution (Durlauf 2001). It says group membership is easy to access and shows positive actions for the members of excluded group. Another method of implementation of the anti-discrimination laws is the establishment of the institutions their members working for their basic rights. People participate in it because it has complete range of civil, political, and social rights for their own inclusion.

Hardoy and Enrique (2005) analyzed the bad and good political system of exclusion in Europe; he noted that there is no authority in the hands of weak social groups. For their equality it is necessary to change the feature of the handicapped people and improve their integration to make them dominant in society. This thing also eliminates the powers of exclusion. Sen (2000) distinguished between powerful exclusionary phenomenon that is created due to projected policy resulting in prejudiced action including economic, political, and human rights maintenance from migrant people or conscious favoritism on basis of

caste, gender. Inactive procedures of exclusion arise when trading strategies breakdown to create unemployment in the state. Exclusionary process, whether it is active or passive, works on a number of levels such as villages, cities and households, national and international levels. For example, informal discrimination, political ideologies, patriarchy, and racism are working on the regional, national and global economies. Environmental change is also creating new kind of exclusionary phenomenon that will enhance the conflict and competition over resources such as land that also creates exclusionary feelings of greed, love and hatred that is continuously growing. In this type of review we cannot cover the whole range of such phenomenon and we will not make justice with this due to its complexity. In these processes our main concern is mostly the socio-economic-cultural and political domains and globalization. More formally we check its effect on the public policy, socio-cultural and symbolic process. This part is closed with distinctive working and contribution of social exclusion relational context.

### RESEARCH MODEL



This model is developed by the researcher for this study
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### **Research Methodology**

This study was conducted in District Lodhran situated in the Province of Punjab, Pakistan. There are three tehsils and seventy three union councils in target district. The target population was total beneficiary families of Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) and it was 19670 beneficiary families according to the survey done in 2009. For quantitative study, registered BISP beneficiary was taken as respondent. Sample size was 400 registered BISP beneficiaries by using convenient sampling technique and information was gathered through well-structured interview schedule. Whereas, for the qualitative part, total of 27 respondents were engaged on 03 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) from major services provider stakeholders regarding social development. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze the quantitative data and qualitative data was analyzed through content analysis with a detailed discussion on the themes of research.

### **Results and Discussions**

This study describes the impact of exclusion of poor communities on social development in district Lodhran. Major findings of the study are:

#### ***Perceptions of Exclusion***

There was a common view among discussion group members that the poor governance and poor economic status are the main indicators of social exclusion along with other related social issues like low education, poor health, lack integration and relationships, gender discrimination and less involvement of political leaders and NGO heads. There was resentment about these indicators and some participants believe that the stereotypes generated by these indicators have influenced government policies in district Lodhran. Most participants agreed majority in district Lodhran were excluded and cannot participate in the process of development. People had to struggle to get ahead but they are pushed back from different edges. Responses indicated that participants disliked the stigmatization of exclusion, which they regarded as hindering people's capacity to 'get ahead'. Most tended to be doubtful about suggestions that the local economy was improving.

***Bad Governance***

Poor grip of governance by the local governing authorities was identified by the greater number of participants. Especially poor law implementation, non-provision of basic needs, protection of human rights were identified as the major flaws which reflect the poor governance of the local governing body of district Lodhran. Poor governance was nominated by many group members as an issue that contributed to exclusion in district Lodhran, particularly for people who are dependent on BISP. Bad governance in social, economic, political, gendered and physical spheres promote the inequality, disparity, discrimination and unaccountability in the area which effect the social development of the people.

***Weak Social Integration***

Critically important to link up a society with the development bridge, so for this bridging social integration among the community and state agencies always very important for the social development of the area. So this link was found very weak among the poor communities and state barriers. Poor people even alienated with their relatives, neighbors, colleagues and friends and no body attend to any other one, at the time of emergency. According to these three discussions, it was easy to say that there were no networking between the government executives, political leaders and even social development activists.

***Weak Social Relationships and Poor Decision Making***

All the participants of all stakeholders of community development agreed that there were no strong relationships in the area. So because of lack of unity the state barriers do not bother and they never called them in decision making or policy making of their area. All focus on the local government system and said this is the only system which involves the common community in decision making and it also strengthens the relationships.

***Poor Economic Status***

All the participants from the three discussions agreed about the existing poverty in district Lodhran. Poverty issues were recognized by majority participants as contributing to social exclusion in Pakistan especially in South Punjab. There was a general belief that poverty ratio was higher in the South Punjab region than elsewhere in Punjab.

***Poor Educational and Health Conditions***

In district Lodhran, there are poor education and health conditions of the people shared by majority participants. This was often based on the belief that schools were not teaching them basic skills. Some participants placed the blame on parents failing to provide discipline and guidance because of their low education, rather than on the education system resulting in children not developing a sense of responsibility. Majority of the participants agreed that educational and health facilities in district Lodhran were not found adequate, in case of government facilities, these are very low in numbers and present in long distances for residents, while private educational and health facilities are too costly which are not affordable to the poor people. So this situation creates the educational deficiency and poor health in district Lodhran. Majority agreed that if children of educated parents are more inclined to be retained at school; if parents are uneducated, the children are liable to drop out early or they never attend schools.

***Gender Discrimination and Cultural Diversity***

Most participants identified as being part of a migrant community which had grown up around them since the time of partition and were very supportive of multiculturalism. District Lodhran is combination of two types of people, the natives and the migrants. Because of this diversity people of this area are very rigid with low education. People have discriminatory attitude towards one another and even after 65 years, do not accept one another. This situation creates high gender discrimination and people do not allow their women to go outside for education and jobs.

***Participation of Development Organizations***

Participants agreed that development organizations failed to engage the community of district Lodhran in participatory projects. Low education and less awareness of the poor residents of district Lodhran keep them from participatory movements. Various organizations that worked in this district along with the collaboration of some famous donor organizations but still they failed to engage the community.

**CONCLUSIONS**

It was concluded that qualitative data reinforce our quantitative research findings and provided the opportunity to explore particular issues in



richer detail. Findings relating to the impact of exclusion on social development have been strongly supported by discussion group participants. In this study, four major stakeholders were engaged to assess the impact of social exclusion on social development: the community, government services providers, local political leaders, and heads of local Non-Governmental Organization (NGO). It was concluded from the results and discussions, application of law and law implementing agencies are playing in the hands of rich people while the poor people face this cruelty and are paying the penalties of their poverty. Governance in the study area remained poor since last decade and everyone is annoyed and dissatisfied by the governing bodies. Bad governance creates the difference between rich and poor people and it becomes the cause of discrimination between them. Males of the study area have the biased attitude towards female for diverse reasons like, inflexible behavior of elders, social pressures, cultural limitations, and low education which made the female exclusion greater than man. The people of district Lodhran made different suggestions to improve the social development by decelerating exclusion like, by increasing BISP supportive amount to a reasonable amount on monthly basis instead of quarterly basis, by applying law at equal basis, by discouraging gender and economic discrimination, by regular and equivalent delivery of facilities and fundamental rights, by involving poor people in community development decisions, by exercising local government system, and by provision of free education and health facilities to everyone. Results of the study indicates that if existing level of poverty, situation of governance, integration among the human beings would be improved and economic and gender discrimination would be discouraged, it would increase the social development in the area. Moreover, quick response and timely availability of government officials and participation of community development organizations will also sped up the situation of social development. Gender discrimination was seen as contributing to social exclusion by making people selfish. Poor grip of governance by the local governing authorities was identified as barrier in the way of social development, especially poor law implementation, non-provision of basic needs. Exploitation of human rights was the major flaw in poor governance which kept the people from the loop and created exclusion in district Lodhran. Bad governance in social, economic, political, gendered

and physical spheres promote inequality, disparity, discrimination and unaccountability in the area and affect the social development directly. Quantitative and qualitative results clearly supported the researcher's model.

### **Suggestions**

- i- In order to eliminate the spaces between a common man and public offices/officials, there should be equal law implementation.
- ii- Awareness among people regarding fundamental human rights can improve the social development.
- iii- Government should introduce loans schemes for community instead of monthly spoon feeding in terms of money.
- iv- Inclusion of poor people in different bodies, encouragement of investments, local body elections.
- v- To elevate gender discrimination, women empowerment projects should be launched/
- vi- Media can play its role in bringing poor and marginalized people to mainstream.
- vii- Law enforcement agencies should play their role for social justice.
- viii- Voluntaries, national and international organizations can play their role to engage poor people in different projects.

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