

**Defining Power from the Perspective of Powerless:
A Standpoint Perspective of Ismaili Women of
Gilgit Baltistan**



by

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that this thesis entitled "Defining Power from the Perspective of Powerless: A Standpoint Perspective of Ismaili Women of Gilgit Baltistan." submitted by **Ishrat** is accepted in its present form by the PIDE School of Social Sciences, Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE), Islamabad as satisfying the requirements for partial fulfillment of the degree in Master of Philosophy in Development Studies.

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Author's Declaration

I Ishrat Karim, hereby state that my MPhil thesis titled Defining Power from the Perspective of Powerless, A Standpoint Perspective of Ismaili women of Gilgit, Baltistan, is my own work and has not been submitted previously by me for taking any degree from Pakistan Institute of Development Economics or anywhere else in the country/world. At any time if my statement is found to be incorrect even after my Graduation the university has the right to withdraw my MPhil degree.

Date: Ishrat Signature of Student

Name of Student: Ishrat

DEDICATION

To my Grandfather, Parents and Brothers, for everything they do for me

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the unseen lives of Ismaili women in the beautiful area of Hunza, with the overarching goal of redefining the notion of power from the viewpoint of the seemingly helpless. This study, which takes a feminist point of view, questions long-held assumptions about women's place in society by highlighting the strength, agency, and outstanding accomplishments of Ismaili women. They speak up with bravery, resilience, and transformational acts via in-depth interviews and engaging storytelling, showing a route to empowerment that goes beyond cultural norms. This insightful investigation provides a fresh perspective through which to understand and appreciate the power that exists within traditionally marginalized groups.

Keywords: Power dynamics, Patriarchal society, Marginalization, Gender Gap, Sectarian Gap, Maternal Health, Political affairs, Socio-economic Status, Caste, Ethnicity

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Accounts of a man sitting on a wall while another one is standing behind the same wall are different about what is there beyond the wall. The vantage point of the observer is of critical importance since that vantage point affords the observer a position that is unique and exclusive and thus helps him or her interpret the observed given his/her own position. Similarly, the second man that is standing behind the wall is only disadvantaged due to the blockage of the view created by the wall but is also of small height and doesn't have upper body strength, the muscle necessary to lift himself up to stand on the wall. His weak eyesight is another hindrance. There are more than one chains that restrict his movement and distort his observations. This second person is at the junctions of disadvantages. Standpoint theory which is the epistemological lens for this study explains the difference in the accounts due to unique positions occupied by the two men in the given structure while the constraints of height, eyesight and muscle strength make the experience of the one standing behind the wall unique relative to the one sitting on the wall. The view shaped in response to these constraints is unique. This is well explained by Crenshaw's concept of Intersectionality. The disadvantaged person is at the intersection of many constraints that bind him from operating at full capacity. The current study is an attempt to use the standpoint perspective to see how women view power structures, and what sort of challenge or resistance they put up while also keeping in mind that women in the locale (Hunza henceforth) women at Hunza are also at the intersection caste, Gender, Sect, Religion, Political and Economic Status.

Women, an already marginalized segment due to social constructs of Gender, face many other bases of marginalization. Literature has mostly focused on the marginalization of women based on gender alone, but a detailed study will reveal Gender is but only one among many other lines of marginalization. A Hunza woman is marginalized right from birth. The innocent baby has her first identity of the caste she is born to, and her gender determines the opportunities that she will have in life. Her stigmatization and gender identity begins to take hold even before the innocent infant can become comfortable with the new setting. While she must even begin the game, society

starts to impose constructs on her. The stratification of gender, religion, sect, and social status form the intersection while the position that the women occupy in the structure makes her account of power narratives unique and worthy of scientific and systematic study. This is what this study is attempting to explain. The study hypothesizes that the viewpoint of the women, the victim of discrimination resulting from social constructs is unique and we need view the powerlessness from her standpoint and a woman may be marginalized on not one but many bases and thus is buried under a layers of marginalization. This intersection of layers determines the opportunities she has in terms of social actor, career, choice, education, health, and political participation.

1.2 Objectives

The study objectives are therefore stated as:

- 1) To understand the power dynamics and hierarchy in the given social and political order of Gilgit Baltistan .
- 2) To understand the role of Caste, Gender, Religion and Politics as lines of marginalization and how they affect the Victims' view of herself in reference to the social order of Gilgit Baltistan.
- 3) To understand the Constraints to health services availability, educational opportunities and political participation created by the intersection of different lines of marginalization in the socio-cultural setting of Gilgit Baltistan.

1.3 Research Questions

- 1) How does a Gilgit Baltistan woman view power? How does she define Power, Powerlessness, and powerfulness?
- 2) What sort of intersection is created by the social forces of Caste, Gender, Religion, and politics?
- 3) How is access to health, education, and political participation constrained by the intersection of the lines of marginalization?

1.4 The Locale

Hunza is one of the most beautiful regions. It is properly known as the hilly northern parts of Pakistan. It is bordered on the south by Azad Kashmir, on the west by the province of KPK, on the north by the Wakhan corridor of Afghanistan. And the east and northeast by Xinjian in China.

In

1970, the Gilgit agency, the Baltistan district of Ladakh and the states of Hunza Nagar merged to form a unified administrative unit known as the Northern areas of Pakistan. These areas or territories, known as federally administered northern areas, were under the administrative supervision of Pakistan's Federal Government (FANA). Since 2002 the Northern area's Legislative

Assembly has overseen these areas' affairs. The Pakistani government recently granted these areas independent status and changed their name to Gilgit and Baltistan, while honoring the opinions and requests of the local people. In 2009, the Pakistani government granted Hunza a semi provincial status and established its own legislative assembly. Hunza has now a governor and chief minister of its own. Hunza celebrates its independence on 1 November 1947. It covers an area of 72,000 square kilometer with a population of 2 million people. Gilgit is the Capital of Hunza, but Skardu is the largest city. Gilgit, Skardu, Diamer, Astore, Ghanche, Ghizer, Hunza, Shigar, Nagar and Kharmang are among ten districts in Hunza.

1.4.1 Hunza Valley

Hunza is the Hilly valley in Pakistan's Hunza province. At an elevation of roughly 2500 meters, the Hunza is located north/west of the Hunza river. Hunza has an area of around 7,900 square kilometers. Aliabad valley is the Hunza valley's district headquarters and the Centre of Hunza communities. Aliabad markets are enormous, and it offers a wide range of commodities and merchandise. In terms of Health, education, markets, commerce, private and government agencies Aliabad is feasible and accessible for Hunza rural districts. According to the 2017 census, the population of Hunza is 50,000 0.05 and area Sq. KM is 10109.

As Aliabad is the main and center area of Hunza valley. The inhabitants of Aliabad belong to Ismaili community. Around 70% of people are Ismaili's having a strong belief of faith. Around Six Jamatkhana's (Religious places). So, in Aliabad there are six different vast areas like, Center,

Sultanabad, Agha Khan Abad, Sinaa Kuhn, Rahim Abad, and Dalaat. Shia and Sunni communities are very rare. There are two mosques one is for Shia community and another one is for Sunni community in Aliabad. Hunza has Ismaili majority. The purpose of selecting this area is to see how the majority and minority status affects the perception of power of women in Hunza. This will also give the comparison through which we would be able to understand what the major layers of women marginalization are, if we control for certain variables such as religion and sect. Since the locale is Ismaili majority will small population of Shia and Sunni. Therefore, it afforded me the freedom

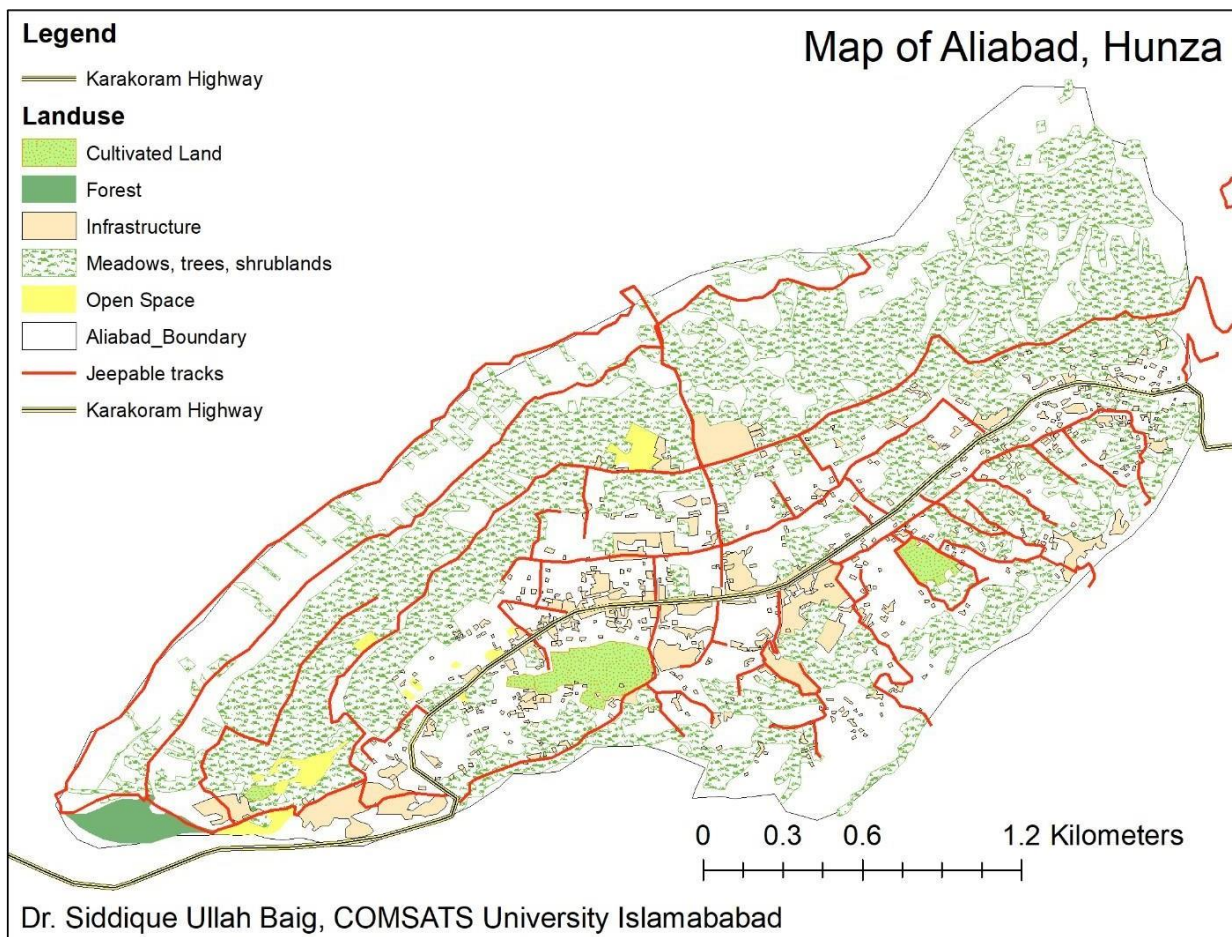


Figure 1 Aliabad, Hanza

1.6 History of Ismaili

The Ismaili community is the minority Muslim group, that follows the Ismaili branch of Shia Islam. The Ismaili community traces its roots back to the 7th century and the time of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).¹ The Ismaili's believe that after the passing away of the prophet Muhammad (PBUH), leaders of the Muslim community should have passed to his cousin and son in law, Ali, rather than to the companions of the Prophet who was chosen, as the first Caliph. The Ismaili's follow the line of Imams who are believed to be spiritual and political successors of Ali. The history of Ismaili community is complex and varied with the community experiencing periods of prosperity and persecution. During the early centuries of Islam, the Ismaili's were a major force in the Islamic world and their Imams played a significant role in the political and religious affairs of the time. However, the community faced persecution and marginalization, at various points in its history, particularly during the Fatimid Caliphate, when the Ismaili's were seen as a threat to the ruling Sunni dynasty.² The early history of Ismaili is closely tied to the Fatimid Caliphate which was founded in the 10th century by the Ismaili missionaries in north Africa. The Fatimid's were a major political and cultural force in the region, and their rules marked a period of great prosperity and intellectual achievement.³ The Fatimid's eventually expanded their empire to include Egypt, Palestine, and the parts of Arabian Peninsula.

1.6.1 Fatimids

After the fall of the Fatimid Caliphate in the 12th century, the Ismaili community underwent a period of decline and persecution. However, in the 20th century, the Ismaili community experienced, a resurgence under the leadership of Agha Khan, the spiritual leader of the Ismaili's. Today Ismaili community is a diverse and global group with a presence in many countries around the world. In the modern era, the Ismaili community, is a diverse and global community, with a significant presence in countries such as India, Pakistan, East Africa, and the middle east. The

¹ Khalidi, O. (1999). A short history of the Ismailis: Farhad Daftary. *Digest of Middle East Studies*, 8(1), 87–88

² Salati, M. (2016). Farhad Daftary: A History of Shi'i Islam, The Institute of Ismaili Studies, Shi'i Heritage Series, I, I. B. Tauris in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies.

³ Brett, M. (2017). *Fatimid Empire*. Edinburgh University Press.

current Imam of the Ismaili community, prince Karim Agha Khan IV, is the 49th Imam of the time.⁴

1.6.2 Ismaili's in Hunza

The Ismaili's are Shia Muslim communities who follow the teaching of Agha Khan, the spiritual leader of Ismaili's. The Ismaili's have a long and rich history with a presence in many different countries around the world. In Hunza, a region located in the Hunza territory of Pakistan, the Ismaili's have a significant presence. The Ismaili's of Hunza are known for their strong cultural traditions and their commitment to education and community development. They have a strong sense of identity and pride in their community development and they have made significant contributions to the development of Hunza and the surrounding region.⁵ The Ismaili's of Hunza have a long history of cultural exchange and collaborations with other communities in the region and they have played an important role in the development of the cultural and economic fabric of Hunza.

1.6.3 His Highness Prince Karim Agha Khan (49th)

Sir Imam Agha Khan IV is the Ismaili Muslims' spiritual and political leader. He has spent his 49 years as Shia Ismaili Muslims' hereditary spiritual leader seeking to enhance the lives of people all around the world by fostering peace and social improvement. Sir Imam Agha Khan's commitment to promoting access to excellent education, healthcare, cultural preservation, and economic opportunity has been demonstrated on a consistent basis via an engaging combination of tradition and modernity.⁶ He is a respected global statesman and an inspirational campaigner for compassion, unity, and development via his diplomatic engagements and interfaith programs, in addition to his remarkable charitable work. Sir Imam Agha Khan has made an everlasting mark on the world as a beacon of enlightenment and harmony via his transformative leadership,

⁴ Farhad Daftary. (2008). *The Ismailis : an illustrated history*. Azimuth Editions In Association With The Institute Of Ismaili Studies.

⁵ HUNZAI, F. M. (2004). A LIVING BRANCH OF ISLAM: ISMAILIS OF THE MOUNTAINS OF HUNZA. *Oriente Moderno*, 23 (84)(1), 147–160.

becoming a symbol of hope and bridging gaps and building bridges between communities, countries, and civilizations.

1.6.4 Jamat Khana

Ismaili Jamat Khanna is the place of worship and community gathering for the Ismaili Muslim community. The word Jamat Khana means the place of congregation, in various languages spoken by Ismaili communities around the world. Ismaili JamatKhan's are found in many countries and serve as a central location for Ismaili's to come together for prayer socialization, and community events. They also often serve as a center for cultural and educational activities. Ismaili Jamat Khans are typically open to all members of the Ismaili community, regardless of their ethnicity.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Marginalization and discrimination of women based on their gender is a basic core concept of feminist theory, practice, and academic literature. Gender, a social construct becomes the defining characteristic of women as she is born. The Gender given to her is not chosen by her rather by the society. It's the social forces and structures that create a structure where-in opportunities are defined for the women, the dos and don'ts, from dreams to action she must first take the dictation from the structures surrounding her, so she won't even have the liberty to dream. From her thought process to the way she must behave is also pre-decided, her gender is the defining point. Most of feminist literature until the 1990's and even afterwards was studied the marginalization of women from the perspective of Gender alone please see {Uganda (1959)} {Banu and Kanimozhi (1960)}⁶⁷{Lenin and Zetkin (1965)}⁸{Brown (1988)}⁹ {Scott (1986)}¹⁰ {Winchester, & White (1988)}¹¹{Shangpliang(2018)}¹², {Williamson and Nemri (2009)}¹³, {Ghosh (2002)}¹⁴, however the literature and much of feminism activism also, has ignored that Gender is , but one line of marginalization. There could be many others and the strata of marginalization are not mutually exclusive. A person can be marginalized based on gender, ethnicity, religion, sect, orientation, social position, and ascribed statuses and many more. What is more important is to understand that these forces may work together and oftentimes they do. Intersectionality studies is line of

⁶ Banu, J. S., & Kanimozhi, S. P. M. (1960). Ethics of post-colonialism and endeavor of women in adichie's purple hibiscus and half of the yellow sun.

⁷ Uganda, H. (1959). *Education in Uganda*. Government Printer, South Africa.

⁸ Lenin, V. I., & Zetkin, K. (1965). *On the emancipation of women*. Moscow: Progress Publishers.

⁹ Brown, S. (1988). Feminism, international theory, and international relations of gender inequality. *Millennium*, 17(3), 461-475.

¹⁰ Scott, A. M. (1986). Women and Industrialization: Examining the 'female marginalization thesis. *The Journal of Development Studies*, 22(4), 649-680.

¹¹ Winchester, H. P., & White, P. E. (1988). The location of marginalized groups in the inner city. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 6(1), 37-54.

¹² Shingling, R. M. (2018). Livelihood and gender: Marginalization of Khasi rural women in land and forest rights.

¹³ Williamson, W., & Nimri, E. (2009). Insights into gender dynamics in marginalized urban communities in Jordan.

¹⁴ Ghosh, R. (2009). Displaced by Development: Confronting Marginalization and Gender Justice's

academic thinking tries to discuss the multiple layers of marginalization, how they interact and determine the

opportunities available for the marginalized, how is the intersection determines, what constraints are put in place by that intersection and most importantly how the victim responds to the established structure which defines the murky atom like structure of marginalization i.e., intersectional feminism is credited to Crenshaw and her work there is no doubt that the major theoretical foundation is provided.

By Crenshaw's work of intersectionality there has been the use of this term and some appreciation that there is an onion like layer structure where there are different layers of marginalization see {Hamden (1970)}¹⁵{ Explains (1960)}¹⁶{Sark and Katrina (1980)}¹⁷ {Harner (1971)}¹⁸ {Alcha (1960)}¹⁹.

2.1 Crenshaw's Theory of Intersectionality Studies

Crenshaw's work stands unique in the sense that her writings and approach transformed the concept of intersectionality to a distinct field of studies with Feminist literature. It gives us a whole new perspective on emancipation and empowerment by unveiling that otherwise latent forces of race, religion and orientation intersect with the gendered identity of an individual, especially women.

Crenshaw's is credited by some scholars as someone who coined the term but discussed in the preceding section Intersectional feminism as concept has been there before Crenshaw's first work namely ""Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of

¹⁵ Hamdon, E. (1970). Lessons on dismantling the master's house: An adult educator's reflections on intersectional feminism. *Transforming conversations: feminism and education in Canada since*, 171-187.

¹⁶ Explains, M. (1960). Hates Students.

¹⁷ Feminisms, N. F. (1980). An Anthology. Ed. Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Cour-tivron. Amherst: U of Massachusetts P.

¹⁸ Hamer, F. L. (1971). Until I Am Free, You Are Not Free Either. speech delivered in Madison, Wisconsin.

¹⁹ Aicha, A. M. R. I. (1960). *Black Feminism: Case Study US. Africa (1960_1990)* (Doctoral dissertation, Ministry of Higher Education).

Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics.” appeared. but to understand how important it is to understand the intersection we need Crenshaw's work to guide us and therefore, it provides the basis for the conceptual theoretical framework of the study.

Crenshaw herself belonged to the African American community and was therefore at a point where she could understand marginalization from a more holistic perspective. because a) she was African American she was a woman. intentionality does mean layers with well-defined boundaries they could be overlapping so it's hard to tell whether her racial gender identity was more dominant. on her and her work but Crenshaw did give intersectional feminism a direction which has opened new avenues for research and understanding of the field.

Crenshaw has defined how the powerless should be looked at. how to study them, and what are different intersections of powerlessness and therefore, understanding and appreciating the intersectionality is important and necessary. see Crenshaw (1991)²⁰, Megasus and Griffin (2011)²¹ and more recent studies like Pulley et al (2018)²², and Makeret (2016)²³ to quote a few.

2.2 The Three foci of Crenshaw's' Approach

In Crenshaw's terms it can be defined as the way African American women r experiences a marginalization of a different kind compared to African American men while political intersectionality is the fact that African American women are not recognized as being unique the uniqueness of African American lies in her being of African origin and being women. but this fact is seldom recognized by mainstream anti-racial literature as well feminist literature and practice finally representational intersectionality, the symbolic manifestations of excluding the unique identity of women of color, see (Crenshaw 1991).

²⁰ Crenshaw, K. (1991). Race, gender, and sexual harassment. *s. Cal. l. Rev.*, 65, 1467.

²¹ Museus, S. D., & Griffin, K. A. (2011). Mapping the margins in higher education: On the promise of intersectionality frameworks in research and discourse. *New Directions for Institutional Research*, 2011(151), 5-13.

²² Green, Dari, Tiffanie Pulley, Melinda Jackson, Lori Latrice Martin, and Kenneth J. Fasching-Varner. "Mapping the margins and searching for higher ground: examining the marginalization of black female graduate students at PWIs." *Gender and Education* 30, no. 3 (2018): 295-309.

²³ Mackert, N. (2016). „Kimberlee Crenshaw: Mapping the Margins (1991). Oder: Die Umkämpfte Kreuzung “. *Olaf Stieglitz/Jürgen Martschukat (Hg.), race & sex: Eine Geschichte der Neuzeit*, 49, 50-56.

2.3 Defining Intersectionality

Intersectionality can be defined in different ways for instance Henna and Torchinsky (2013) while explaining Crenshaw's intersectionality approach define it as an overlap of different although some theorist both feminist and outside feminist scholarship believe that the intersectionality concepts needs to be revisited since there can be many racial and discriminating forces that may remained masked due to the overemphasis on understanding the intersection see {Puar,(2005)²⁴} {Tsing (2004)²⁷} {Hong (2008)²⁸} However, as blurry as these studies believe that intersectionality is, it is a fact that powerlessness and marginalization can and is based on not one but many of the lines or layers of marginalization. the boundaries though not clear show Venn intersection of different axis of marginalization. Studies such as Puar, (2005) however don't believe race and gender to be considered as axis of marginalization.

2.4 Intersectionality Studies: A Means to Understand Marginalization And Powerlessness

However, there has been enough scholarly contribution undergirding intersectionality studies as a concept, a distinct field, and a plausible way of explanation of powerlessness and marginalization. and is therefore very relevant to the context of this study. intersectionality as a concept is applied by different studies in varying contexts for instance gender, ethnicity, and modernity (Choo, 2006)²⁵, race, gender, and position in eyes of the law see (Lundberg and Simonson 2015)²⁶ where the concept of intersectionality provides foundations for race justice and physical disability. Religion, orientation, and gender (Rehman. 2010)²⁷ and gender, race, class, and ethnic axis of marginalization in post-colonial societies for instance (Sylvain, 2011)²⁸. A growing body of

²⁴ . Puar, J. (2005). Queer times, queer assemblages.

²⁵ Choo, H. Y. (2006). Gendered modernity and ethicized citizenship: North Korean settlers in contemporary South Korea. *Gender & Society*, 20(5), 576-604.

²⁶ Lundberg, C., & Simonsen, E. (2015). Disability in court: intersectionality and rule of law. *Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research*, 17(sup1), 7-22.

²⁷ Rahman, M. (2010). Queer as intersectionality: Theorizing gay Muslim identities. *Sociology*, 44(5), 944-961.

²⁸ Sylvain, R. (2011). At the intersections: San women and the rights of indigenous peoples in Africa. *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 15(1), 89-110.

research has explored how intersecting social identities contribute to health disparities and inequities. Scholars have examined the impact of race, gender, class, sexuality, and other axes of identity on health outcomes, access to healthcare, and experiences of discrimination within medical settings.

Transfeminist scholars have applied intersectionality theory to analyze the experiences of transgender and gender-nonconforming individuals, highlighting the intersections of gender identity, race, class, and other factors in shaping marginalized subjectivities and resisting cisnormative norms (Taylor, 2020).

The use of intersectionality and intersectionality studies as a lens to understand marginalization and powerlessness has been well established of feminist theory as well as other disciplines of political science, economics (Kenora and Lombardo 2017)²⁹ (Bastille 2014)³⁰ (Özbilgin et al 2011)³¹ legal studies (Cho et al 2013)³⁶(Lunde(Lavon and mandis 2016) and simonson,2015) (Conahan 2008)³⁷ anthropology (Degen and Tylor 2017)³⁸ (Levon and Medres 2016)³², sociology (Hankivsky 2014³³) (Alanen 2016)³⁴and other social sciences please see ()³⁵ it has served as a lens of many scholars to examine not intersections of points of differences rather also the implications it has for theory and practice and how to inform policy from intersectionality

²⁷ Tsing, A. L. (2004). *Friction: A global ethnography of connection*

²⁸ Hong, G. K. (2008). "The Future of Our Worlds" Black Feminism and the Politics of Knowledge in the University under Globalization. *Meridians*, 8(2), 95-115.

²⁹ Kantola, J., & Lombardo, E. (Eds.). (2017). *Gender and the economic crisis in Europe: Politics, institutions, and intersectionality*. Springer.

³⁰ Bastia, T. (2014). Intersectionality, migration, and development. *Progress in development studies*, 14(3), 237-248.

³¹ Özbilgin, M. F., Beaugard, T. A., Tatli, A., & Bell, M. P. (2011). Work–life, diversity, and intersectionality: A critical review and research agenda. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 13(2), 177-198.

³² Levon, E., & Mendes, R. B. (Eds.). (2016). *Language, sexuality, and power: Studies in intersectional sociolinguistics*. Oxford University Press.

³³ Hankivsky, O. (2014). Intersectionality 101. *The Institute for Intersectionality Research & Policy, SFU*, 36, 1-34.

³⁴ Alanen, L. (2016). 'Intersectionality and other challenges to theorizing childhood. *Childhood*, 23(2), 157-161.

³⁵ Clarke, A. Y., & McCall, L. (2013). Intersectionality and social explanation in social science research. *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race*, 10(2), 349-363.

studies (Hancock 2007)³⁶, (Edelman et al 2011)³⁷ Collins and Moyer(2008)³⁸. This shows that intersectionality may go beyond race, gender and inequality and may consider the various aspects of social, political, and economic spheres that have remained hidden or noticeable. and therefore, it becomes relevant to study the women of the *locale* for this study and see are they at any intersection? And if so, what is the nature of intersectionality?

2.5 Feminist Literature on Hunza

On Pakistan there has been a multitude of literature from a feminist, women emancipation, gendered minorities, and many other aspects of where-in there an interplay of the gender with other aspects of social, political, and economic life is. but the focus of much of the literature on Hunza and on Pakistan generally has centered around women empowerment, access to health, access to education, employment, and the connected themes. for instance, see {Sadaquat (2011)}³⁹{Chaudhary &

³⁶ Cho, S., Crenshaw, K. W., & McCall, L. (2013). Toward a field of intersectionality studies: Theory, applications, and praxis. *Signs: Journal of women in culture and society*, 38(4), 785-810.

³⁷ Conaghan, J. (2008). *Intersectionality and the feminist project in law* (pp. 37-64). Routledge-Cavendish. ³⁸ Degnen, C., & Tyler, K. (2017). Amongst the disciplines: Anthropology, sociology, intersection, and intersectionality. *The Sociological Review*, 65(1_suppl), 35-53.

Nausheen (2009)⁴⁷{Khan et al (2005)}⁴⁸ {Chaudhry et al (2s012)}⁴⁹Sohail (2014)}⁵⁰, {Naqvi et al (2002)}⁵¹. the employment aspect has been much stressed upon in studies but there seems to be presupposition in women empowerment literature in Pakistan that empowerment is mostly defined by the yardstick of economic empowerment or job/work related issues please see {Khan

³⁶ Hancock, A. M. (2007). Intersectionality as a normative and empirical paradigm. *Politics & Gender*, 3(2), 248-254.

³⁷ Best, R. K., Edelman, L. B., Krieger, L. H., & Eliason, S. R. (2011). Multiple disadvantages: An empirical test of intersectionality theory in EEO litigation. *Law & Society Review*, 45(4), 991-1025.

³⁸ Collins, T., & Moyer, L. (2008). Gender, race, and intersectionality on the federal appellate bench. *Political Research Quarterly*, 61(2), 219-227.

³⁹ Sadaquat, M. B. (2011). Employment situation of women in Pakistan. *International journal of social economics*.

and Awan (2011)}⁵²{Chaudry et al (2019)}⁴⁰ Bushra and Wajiha)2009} ⁴¹ Khan (2016)⁴² the availability of credit and micro credit for women's since economics empowerment is the accepted definition or key determinant of empowerment in the current (most of the current) literature {Razzani and Islam (2020)}⁴³{Rehman et al (2020)}⁴⁴ {Abrar(2020)}⁴⁵.

This overemphasis on employment as a proxy for employment though not wrong but it is part of the issue. It is one of the consequences of social and political constructs and structures. Considering it as the focus of empowerment is therefore not going to lead to proper understanding or a holistic perspective. for instance, one of the determinants of women empowerment is that of leadership skills in women as discussed by {Aziz et al (2021)}⁴⁶ . There is a sociological, anthropological, and

⁴⁷ Chaudhry, I. S., & Nosheen, F. (2009). The determinants of women empowerment in Southern Punjab (Pakistan): An empirical analysis. *European Journal of Social Sciences*, 10(2), 216-229.

⁴⁸ Kahn, S. R., Khattak, S. G., & Kazmi, S. (2005). Hazardous Home-Based Subcontracted Work: A Study of Multiple Tiered Exploitation. *OUP Catalogue*.

⁴⁹ Chaudhary, A. R., Chani, M. I., & Pervaiz, Z. (2012). An analysis of different approaches to women empowerment: a case study of Pakistan.

⁵⁰ Sohail, M. (2014). Women empowerment and economic development-an exploratory study in Pakistan. *Journal of Business Studies Quarterly*, 5(4), 210.

⁵¹ Naqvi, Z. F., Shahnaz, L., & Arif, G. M. (2002). How do women decide to work in Pakistan? [with comments]. *The Pakistan development review*, 495-513.

⁵² Khan, S. U., & Awan, R. (2011). Contextual assessment of women empowerment and its determinants: Evidence from Pakistan.

⁴⁰ Choudhry, A. N., Abdul Mutalib, R., & Ismail, N. S. A. (2019). Socio-cultural factors affecting women economic empowerment in Pakistan: A situation analysis. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 9(5), 90-102.

⁴¹ Bushra, A., & Wajiha, N. (2015). Assessing the socio-economic determinants of women empowerment in Pakistan. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 177, 3-8.

⁴² Khan, M. (2016). Socio-economic empowerment of women in Pakistan; Evidence from Gilgit-Baltistan. *International Journal of Asian Social Science*, 6(8), 462-471.

⁴³ Jalil, M. R. M., & Islam, G. M. N. (2016). Measuring the socio-economic empowerment of rural households in Pakistan. *Journal of Governance and Development*, 12(1), 107-122.

⁴⁴ Rehman, H., Moazzam, D. A., & Ansari, N. (2020). Role of microfinance institutions in women empowerment: A case study of Akhuwat, Pakistan. *South Asian Studies*, 30(1).

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⁴⁶ Aziz, N., Khan, I., Nadahrajan, D., & He, J. (2021). A mixed-method (quantitative and qualitative) approach to measure women's empowerment in agriculture: evidence from Azad Jammu & Kashmir, Pakistan. *Community, Work & Family*, 1-24.

normative aspect of women empowerment. Limiting the analyses to or overemphasizing on the economics aspects blinds us from many of the other related and of the time reinforcing normative variables for instance education (Naz et al (2022))⁶⁰.

There are many other variables, socio-cultural entities and behaviors that have an impact on the forinstance sect. there three main sects of Islam living in Hunza. there are Ismaili dominated areas such as Ghizer and Hunza, while Asna Ashria dominated areas such as Skardu while Sunni majority is there in Diamer and Astore. there is diversity of languages ranging from Burusishki, Shina, Khowar, Wakhi {Zain (2010)}⁶¹ Some have attributed all the ills or problems to sunni-shi a decide and have overemphasized on the issue. for instance, see {Bansal (2008)}⁴⁷ {(Muhammad (2014))⁶³. No doubt sectarianism is an issue however it's just one of the issues not but as much as this is a problem this also adds to the beauty of Hunza in terms cultural and ethnic diversity. {Aziz (2021)}⁴⁸ sectarian difference does impact on economic opportunities and access to services and political participation {Ullah and Ali (2019)}⁴⁹. so therefore, it is safe to assume that sect is one foci or basis of marginalization.

Gender and Ethnicity is another factor contributing to marginalization and are also found to have an impact on the economy, society politics and political participation for instance {Dinar (2020)}⁶⁶{Khan et al (2020)}⁵⁰ {Murtaza (2012)}⁵¹ Alam (2017)⁵² (Butt and Abbas 2014)⁷⁰ Varley 2014.

⁴⁷ Bansal, A. (2008). Gilgit–Baltistan: The roots of political alienation. *Strategic Analysis*, 32(1), 81-101. ⁶³

Muhammad, P. (2014). From intra-sectarianism to fragile peace: the Gilgit-Baltistan model. *Conflict and Peace Studies*, 88.

⁴⁸ Aziz, K. Z. (2021). CPEC Issues and Threatening Cultural Diversity in Gilgit-Baltistan. *Journal of the Punjab University Historical Society*, 34(01).

⁴⁹ Ullah, M., & Ali, Z. (2019). Sectarianism at workplace in Gilgit. *South Asian History and Culture*, 10(1), 64-77 ⁶⁶ Dinar, H. (2020). *Development and Marginalization: Gender, Infrastructure, and State-making in Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan* (Doctoral dissertation, Purdue University Graduate School).

⁵⁰ Khan, A. A., Rana, I. A., & Nawaz, A. (2020). Gender-based approach for assessing risk perception in a multi-hazard environment: a study of high schools of Gilgit, Pakistan. *International journal of disaster risk reduction*, 44, 101427.

⁵¹ Murtaza, K. F. (2012). Women empowerment through higher education in Gilgit-Baltistan. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 2(9), 343.

⁵² Alam, S. (2017). Female education: The facilitating and hindering factors regarding female education in Gilgit-Baltistan context of Pakistan. *International Women Online Journal of Distance Education*, 6(2), 35. ⁷⁰ Butt, K. M., & Abbas, Z. (2014). Ethnic diversity and collective actions in Gilgit Baltistan. *The Journal of Political Science*, 32, 27.

⁶⁰ Naz, A., Ashraf, F., & Iqbal, S. (2020). The Relationship between Higher Education and Women Empowerment in Pakistan. *UMT Education Review*, 3(2), 65-84.

⁶¹ Zain, O. F. (2010). A Socio-Political Study of Gilgit Baltistan Province. *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences (PJSS)*, 30(1).

2.6 Research Gap

The above survey of literature shows that marginalization not only exists at the sectarian level, but until very recently, Gender, ethnicity, language and being neglected part since it was called the federally administered Northern areas all contribute to marginalization and limitation of access to the education, political economic and social spheres, Dinar (2020)⁷¹ Butz and cook (2016)⁵³ Raza et al (2018)⁵⁴ Wolf (2016)⁵⁵ wolf (2012).

This gives sufficient support to the fact an intersection may exist, but studies have focused on one or the aspect and have not analyzed the intersection while intersectionality studies will prove to be a very good lens to see how a Ismaili women faces marginalization differently and how does she view power for her powerless perspective what are the different layers under which she is buried.

This is the research Gap that the study intends to fill.

⁵³ Butz, D., & Cook, N. (2016). Political ecology of human-environment changes in Gojal, Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan.

In *Mapping Transition in the Pamirs* (pp. 197-214). Springer, Cham.

⁵⁴ Raza, A., Saleem, M., & Afzal, M. S. (2018). The first report of hepatitis b virus prevalence in Skardu, Gilgit Baltistan: a neglected area of Pakistan.

⁵⁵ Wolf, S. O. (2016). China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and its impact on Gilgit-Baltistan. South Asia Democratic Forum (SADF).

CHAPTER 3

METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is one of the most common analyses in qualitative research, Braun & Clarke (2006), This analysis is used in qualitative methods to analyze the patterns of themes in data. This type of analysis is used to analyze non-numerical data such as audio, video, text. The practice of discovering patterns or themes in qualitative data is known as thematic analysis. Braun & Clarke (2006), the purpose of thematic analysis is to find themes, or relevant or intriguing patterns in data, and then use these themes to address the topic or make a point about an issue. A strong thematic analysis does more than simply summarize the data, its analysis and makes meaning of it. A method of detecting, analyzing, and reporting patterns within the data is thematic analysis. It organizes and describes data sets in rich detail to the bare minimum.

In this research work, I used thematic analysis to examine the themes and patterns of meaning within the data. Thematic analysis explored evident and inherent meaning within the data, making it a suitable approach for qualitative data analysis to understand opinions, themes, and views using interviews, focus group discussions, surveys, and field research. Framework analysis was a suitable tool for understanding applied policy research and was used as a tool for the analysis in this research. Framework analysis provided a more step-by-step approach. Using framework analysis, the following five stages were conducted for completing the analysis (Bryman, 2012):

1. Familiarizing (Acquaintance with the data collected)
2. Identifying a thematic framework (making themes and sub themes)
3. Indexing (developing codes and application of codes on the themes and subthemes)
4. Charting and summarizing (Rearranging data into charts and making summaries)
5. Mapping and interpretations' (Interpreting the insights gained)

This research employed thematic analysis as a qualitative data analysis approach and a framework approach as a tool of data analysis for UDCs. Using the thematic analysis approach and framework approach, themes, and views were inferred and analyzed better from the unstructured and in-depth Interviews conducted with the women from our locale. I have extract 5main themes from the whole data that I have gathered from respondents in Locale, i.e. Gender Gap, sectarian Gap, socioeconomic status, access to education, and access to health and politics.

3.2 Case study Approach

In the qualitative research approach, the case study approach is used to create the in-depth investigation of the problem in research. Case study is not a research method although it is the approach in qualitative research. Case study research is an investigation and analysis of a single or collective case intended to capture the complexity of the object of the study (Stake, 1995). Multiple data collection and analysis methods are adopted to further develop and understand the case which is shaped by the context and emergent data (Stake, 1995).

To approach the case study in my research work, I first looked directly at the research questions that reflected the problem statement. This case study approach was required in my study for investigating the outliers of the research problem in my study. We could have a single case or multiple cases. Where we had multiple case studies, we could do cross-analysis between cases.

3.3 Research Methodology

UDC	Research Method	Research Instruments	Sampling	Approach and tool of analysis
Women's	Narrative and Interviews Episodic Interviews	Narrative Guide for Interview Guide for Episodic Interviews Case study approach	Stratified Sampling Sampling Frame: has been sourced from existing records of interventions Diversity: Gender, age, social status etc.	Approach: Thematic analysis Tool: Framework analysis

3.4 UDC 1 Women's

As our research work was concerned with the perception of power of Hunza women, we approached women in both our locales. The UDC helped us to know about the perception of power of women in our locale. We wanted to understand how they perceived power while living in different religious sects. We included women of different ages and socio-economic backgrounds. The UDC also helped us to analyze the comparative analysis of the perception of power in both sects. The data from this UDC helped us to meet the objectives of our research.

3.5 Research Design

The research designs of this study was descriptive in nature as it intended to list the perception of power of Ismaili women as how they perceive power for being an woman on different dimension of Gender, sect, health, education and political affairs.

3.6 Research Methods

As this research work was qualitative in nature, I followed the following research methods which helped me in data collection.

3.7 Interviews

I used interview guideline to achieve the study's research goal. The questions were unstructured, giving respondents more room to express themselves completely. The goal of conducting unstructured interviews in this study was to gain additional insight and in-depth knowledge from the UDC.

3.8 Focus Group Discussion

Bauer and Gaskell (2002) explain that focus group discussion is a type of group interview which helps the researcher in orienting to a field of inquiry and the local language. It also helps him/her in exploring the range of opinions, behaviors, and attitudes, and observing the processes of mutual consensus or disagreements. For these reasons, I have conducted FGDs for UDC, acted as a moderator during focus group discussions and recorded the focus group discussions and tried to diversify group participants by including women's, age-groups, and socio-economic contexts. The criteria for diversification of group participants are that I have included females of different age groups and different socioeconomic backgrounds, respondents were women's, members from the locale. In the Hunza district, a series of five Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were undertaken, each comprising four participants exclusively drawn from the female demographic. These structured discussions served as a qualitative research method, facilitating an in-depth exploration of the perspectives and experiences of women in the region. The utilization of FGDs as a research tool allowed for the gathering of rich, context-specific data, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the issues under investigation in the Hunza district.

The utilization of Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) proved instrumental in the data collection process, facilitating a comprehensive understanding of the topic "Defining Power from the Perspective of the Powerless - A Standpoint Perspective of Ismaili Women of Hunza." By bringing Ismaili women together in a group setting, FGDs fostered an interactive environment that

encouraged open dialogue and the exchange of ideas. Through this dynamic group interaction, a multitude of perspectives emerged, encompassing a diverse range of experiences, insights, and opinions. The in-depth exploration of the topic was made possible by the ability to probe deeper, ask follow-up questions, and encourage participants to elaborate on their thoughts and experiences. The interactive nature of the discussions also allowed for the exploration of participants' nonverbal cues, such as body language and facial expressions, which added a deeper layer of understanding to the collected data. Furthermore, the group dynamics within the FGDs enabled participants to build upon each other's responses, fostering a collaborative environment that facilitated a more comprehensive and nuanced exploration of power dynamics as perceived by Ismaili women in Hunza. The insights and perspectives gathered through these FGDs served as a foundation for uncovering the multifaceted dimensions of power and the experiences of the Ismaili women within their community.

3.9 Research Strategy

This research was concerned with the understanding and interpretation of power from the perspective of powerlessness, so it followed a qualitative research strategy. Our sampling framework was constructed using Stratified Sampling because we knew that there were multiple factors that impacted our perception of power as proposed by standpoint theory. We intended to find layers of marginalization under which the HUNZA women were buried.

3.10 Sampling

For this research, I used both probability and non-probability sampling. In nonprobability sampling, units were deliberately selected to reflect specific features of a group or community.

3.11 Stratified Sampling

Stratified sampling was a sampling technique used in the research study to ensure that the sample represented the diversity or variability within the population. The population was divided into homogeneous subgroups, called strata, based on specific characteristics or attributes. Each stratum

was then sampled independently to ensure that individuals from different strata were adequately represented in the final sample.

In the context of the study on defining power from the perspective of Ismaili women of Hunza, stratified sampling was used to capture the diversity and experiences of different subgroups within the population. The goal was to ensure that the voices and perspectives of various Ismaili women in Hunza were adequately represented in the research findings. To implement stratified sampling in this study, the first step was to identify relevant characteristics or attributes that were important for understanding power dynamics among Ismaili women. These characteristics could have included age, education level, socioeconomic status, marital status, occupation, or level of involvement in community organizations.

Next, I divided the population of Ismaili women in Hunza into distinct strata based on these identified characteristics. For example, one stratum could have consisted of educated Ismaili women who were actively engaged in professional careers, while another stratum could have included younger Ismaili women who were pursuing higher education. By creating these strata, I acknowledged the potential variations in power dynamics and perspectives that may have existed within the population.

Once the strata were defined, I sampled individuals from each stratum independently. The sample size for each stratum could have been determined based on its proportion within the population or through considerations of statistical power. The sampling process within each stratum could have been conducted using various sampling methods, such as simple random sampling, systematic sampling, or cluster sampling. By employing stratified sampling in this study, the I as a researcher, ensured that the voices of Ismaili women from different backgrounds and experiences were represented. This approach helped to mitigate the potential bias that could have arisen if the entire population were treated as a single homogeneous group. It allowed for a more nuanced understanding of power dynamics within the Ismaili community of Hunza and helped in generating comprehensive and accurate findings that were reflective of the diversity within the population.

3.12 Research Ethics

For the process of conducting interviews, all of the respondents gave informed-consent and pledged that they are participating voluntarily. 43 Secondly, for maintaining the confidentiality of respondents, fictitious names were used instead of their real ones. Lastly, all of the data was interpreted honestly and objectively.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Farah Naz is a young women aged 26. I met her at her house. I started off with the discussion about how she felt as a woman. At this point I did not bring any of the other themes such as sect, or access to services into the discussion. Farah said that she thought it was naturally ordained that she as a women was made for sacrifice and compromise. She had to understand that she as women had a secondary status compared to the male members of her family. And this status was (reflected in small as well as big issues of her daily life.

“I can’t cook something for dinner unless my brothers allow it. I have to ask their preference of what they would like for dinner so I don’t even have a say in that.” Naz spoke in a controlled tone, which showed that she had internalized this tradition. She did not look at it as something out of the normal. to her it was as common as it would be an Islamabad based family ordering a pizza”.

When she was referring to big things it included the decision of whether or not she should go to college. Whether she should be admitted in the agha khan education system, a private educations system or the government schools. Even which subjects should she choose. For instance, Naz recalled her college admission in the following days.

“when I completed my matriculation, and It was time for college I wasn’t even asked that whether I wanted to go to college or not. My father, my two uncles and my brothers were sitting down in the house while I with my other sisters were performing household chores as per normal routine. It was my male members who decided that I had to go to the government school, and that I had to take non-science subjects. I was only given the verdict. Although keeping in view my preference, economic situation and Ismaili identity I would have done the same. I personally did want to go for science subjects. However, I was not asked even once”.

Naz believed that it was thought to her since childhood that you are a girl and there are certain do’s and don’ts that are defined by gender. Although Naz came from a relatively moderate and educated family therefore she did acknowledge that she had access to education and health but her life inside and out was shaped by her gender, sect and even ethnicity. Naz said that outside home she still had to adhere to the code. She explained that since she was a girl she was thought

that you should never talk to male class mates although it was primary school. A time when kids, are in many ways unfamiliar with the gender divide. Secondly she was not allowed to make friends with girls outside her sect and same was true for girls of the other sect.

“when I was in primary school, I was told by the women in my house that since I was a girl I shouldn't talk to boys, I should play with boys, and if a boy does or says something inappropriate than don't tell your brothers or your father, first tell it me.”

I asked her what at the time did she know what inappropriate meant? She chuckled and said

“no I did not, in fact I didn't know what my mother meant by in appropriate for quite a long time.”

Naz wasn't allowed any further education after college. Her family considered it against them values. They married her off and now she is a housewife doing the same household chores that she did at her own house before getting married”.

I did not ask her personal questions about her married life due to certain constraints but I did dwell into the realm of access to services and how her position affected her right of access to these services. Farah now a mother of three said that although her husband provided her with best medical care especially during pregnancy but the situation at the hospitals in the area was not in accordance with the needs of women.

“There is no doctor for baby-birth 1. The local elderly women take care of it in most cases. Although the local hospitals can take care of regular routine cases but if there is a complication, they will refer the patient to Giligit city. There have been many cases that we have heard of where in the child was lost on the way”?

I asked her what was the reaction of the family members and in-laws and others towards her going to the hospital for pre-maternal care and health related issues had to explain the question to her a bit and then while she was looking at me she nodded and started answering

“well, my mom said don't trust the doctors. They give medicines which are not good. She was skeptical of it. My husband was made to feel ashamed, that it's against ethics that you take your pregnant wife outside and people see it.”

Naz had her pre-natal checkup performed by an MBBS doctor rather than by a gynecologist or obstetrician. The government hospital did not have a proper gynecology department. This shows that the women health is not taken something seriously by the society. Neither has the political representative or the village/district councils given any serious thought to it. Since there has not been any such demand made therefore the situation still lingers on. It's interesting that specialist gender neutral issues and diseases are present in both private and the public sector. But as far as women specific issues are concerned they are not given the due importance. Even AKHS, which has the machinery and specialized staff in most cases is not accessible due to high costs. Naz was not the isolated case who complained. There were other respondents who confirmed and added their experiences to the story.

Saira Karim, 26 years old young woman, I met her to discuss her experience or how she felt being a woman. For the time being, I refrained from bringing up issues like religious background or lack of access to resources. Saira added that the nature of Hunza is Patriarchy in nature, it doesn't matter which sect or status you belong from. The status of women is always inferior compared to men

It's a natural phenomenon that women have been marginalized why because she is a woman while the socio-cultural structure of Hunza is patriarchal in nature. Whether you are an Ismaili, Shia, or Sunni women, it doesn't matter, the thing that matters is that you are woman, and society will treat you based on your gender. on a lighter note, she laughed and said have you ever noticed the expressions of the family when a baby girl born as their first child?

I asked her status for being woman in her own family she replied:

"Do you know that the sitting places in the home, particularly in the haven, have been defined based on their gender?" she asked after a lengthy silence. As a male household member, he will sit in a position that provides him with the most comfort and distinct definition; on the other hand, as a woman, you must sit near Chula (Bukhari), where you have multiple tasks; as a girl, you must cook food for them, care for the child, serve them, and so on. Guus Giyaas (referring to women's by male member, Guss (women) Giyaas (child), it means being a women you are supposed to take care of child with other household chores while being Hiir (male), they will called Hirr siss(people), especial respect for male in a family gathering or other occasions.

When I asked how she felt being an Ismaili woman in terms of decision-making she remained silent for a while and added

It has been said that Ismaili's are much more empowered in terms of decision-making, yes they have better access to quality of education but for that you have to get permission from the male member of the family. how we can say that Ismaili's are much empowered in terms of decisionmaking, if I talk about my personal experience I am not allowed to choose my partner by own choice, I'm living in that type of society where a girl's character has been judged, when male members of the family are taking decision for her, if she has any objection, then she has bad character.

Referring to the socioeconomic status of the women, Saira said that still the socioeconomic is existing not only in Hunza but also in GB.

A normal woman will never get the respect that a woman belonging to the Raja family is getting whether she is rich or poor, she will get high privilege in society. We do not have any comparison with Thamovay Gushinanx (Royal women). Therefore, normal women would never be called as Nannay, Beechi, Kaaki (special names for royal women).

The third respondent **Ms. Halen Amir**, the participant seated across from me, responded positively when I shared my research topic with her, acknowledging that it offered an avenue to express shared frustrations. From birth, society has imposed gender-based divisions, evident even in the choice of toys. She recounted how baby girls in her family were invariably presented with crockery and kitchen sets, showing an early inclination toward traditional gender roles. Conversely, boys were encouraged to play with cars and other vehicles, highlighting the social construction of these preferences.

Halen said that society has divided gender roles based on gender where there are some dos and some don'ts.

Society has divided things based on our gender since our birth. Even toys have been defined by our gender. for instance, if we see in our families, a baby girl always gets a crockery set, and kitchen set, and her family loves to take her dupatta. On the side, boys get cars, automobiles, etc. and all these things are socially constructed.

Referring to the other sects in Hunza Halen said that she has better access to education and health. But

Being an Ismaili woman I have better access to education, as the AKDN institutions played an important role in access to quality education, especially for girls through Agha Khan Education Service Pakistan (AKES, P). Today I am holding a Ph.D. degree, and serving as a lecturer in a government college. My father was AKES, teacher, so he struggled a lot for our career, especially for all his daughters, but in terms of decision making being a girl I am supposed to get opinions from male members of my family.

Comparatively, Alina recognized that she enjoyed more opportunities for education and better healthcare, given her region and sect. Currently pursuing a Ph.D. while holding a government position, she found herself grappling with societal expectations surrounding the marriage, which were arbitrary and not inherent to nature. Despite her accomplishments, at the age of 30, she faced the pressure of societal judgment and the misguided notion of growing older as a burden. (As women age, society relentlessly questions their marital status, leading to negative repercussions within their social circles. This undue scrutiny directly affects their mental well-being, often resulting in feelings of depression, frustration, and unrest. The truth remains that women in society are subjected to various forms of oppression. Additionally, political empowerment continues to elude them, despite their high literacy rates. A glaring contrast can be observed in regions like Chilas, where women are denied the basic freedom to step outside their homes without the permission of male family members. These disparities serve as a sobering reminder of the ways in which women have been subjugated.)

Female in society, as she gets older, society starts questioning her about marriage which creates a negative impact on the social circle of women because it directly impacts the cognitive sense which causes depression, frustration, and disturbance, this is the truth of society where women have been oppressed in different ways.

Ms. Sana Farooq, while providing insights into the historical context of Hunza, highlighted the neglect and marginalization of women during the reign of the royal family. The queen was denied any involvement in matters of governance, perpetuating a legacy of gender-based marginalization within the economic and social spheres, even within the family. She further emphasized that in

Gilgit-Baltistan, particularly in Hunza, Ismaili women often find themselves more empowered than men across various dimensions, including education, health, and politics. While they do enjoy better access to education and healthcare, it is crucial to recognize that women continue to face numerous challenges within societies. For instance, in decision-making spaces within the Ismaili community, women are not granted the same freedom as men, particularly when it comes to attire. This gender gap is also reflected in religious and communal gatherings.

In our society, the honor of women forms the fundamental pillar. Similarly, the honor of men is interconnected with our overall honor. We view men as our protectors and leaders."

When discussing healthcare, Ms. Farooq acknowledged the significant role of Aga Khan Health Services (AKHS) in serving the community. AKHS has been providing essential health services in the northern areas of Pakistan for many years, including the ongoing Megaproject AKHSS in the central hub of Hunza, Aliabad. However, when examining the current state of healthcare opportunities for females, various issues arise, particularly in maternal health services.

Ms. Farooq added that the preference for male children persists in health and education practices. As followers of the 49th Imam, in accordance with his Farman (decree), the emphasis is placed on educating daughters over sons.

If you have two options to educate your child between son and daughter (Girl and boy), you must educate the daughter.

Despite the existence of gender equality ideals, the patriarchal system continues to oppress women in politics. Women are often required to seek permission from male family members to participate in political activities within their regions. Consequently, female representation in politics remains limited, with only a small number actively involved in political endeavors.

As our social structure is patriarchy and we are not allowed to participate in any political affair without permission of our male members and consequently women representation in HUNZA is very limited, only small number of women are involved in political affairs.

Ms. Safina Aman, as I delved deeper into the conversation with the interviewee, she shared a distressing incident that shed light on the mistreatment of girls in certain situations. The incident took place around two years ago, when a group of Ismaili students participated in a dance

performance with boys on a morning show held at Serena Hotel in Gilgit. These students were pursuing higher education, but unfortunately, the video of their performance went viral, inviting severe criticism. The repercussions were severe, with the university shutting down temporarily and labeling the Ismaili girls as perpetrators who had violated the cultural and ethical norms of Hunza. Shockingly, the students faced harsh consequences, including expulsion from the university. Tragically, one of the female students took her own life due to the torment inflicted by her family and society. This incident highlights how girls are subjected to mistreatment not only by individuals from different sects within Hunza but also within their own Ismaili community. Consequently, it questions the notion of women playing an equal role compared to men within the Ismaili community.

I have been listening since my childhood, my elder's women (Grandmother, mother, aunt, etc.,) telling us (Maaw Molusay Izaat a khayal Osin, (you need to care about honor and dignity of your father/brother), and when you get married (Shohaar k ghar sy hi apka Jinazaa Niklaay), your funeral took place at your husbands Niklaain. (Kisi Gair bandaay sy baat karnaa b haram hai), talking to non-slave is also forbidden.

Referring to the medical care and health facilities, Safina said, the Aga Khan Health Services (AKHS), operated by the government, has been offering essential services to women, equipped with advanced technology and experienced gynecologists. Notably, a monumental project is currently underway in Aliabad Hunza, where an AKH facility is being constructed to cater to the needs of the community. However, despite these efforts, numerous women continue to face challenges, particularly in emergency situations, where access to adequate healthcare remains a concern. She added that

Due to the absence of female gynecologists, we are not feeling comfortable to consult whether we can share our problem openly with male doctor, mostly we prefer to go Gilgit to consult from female doctor, or in emergency we are supposed to ask husbands that should I consult from a male doctor or not?

Moreover, the social structure of Hunza is predominantly patriarchal, resulting in women being marginalized from political affairs. Consequently, the region lacks female representation in politics, hindering their empowerment. Women hold minor seats in the legislative assembly, and

societal constraints often discourage them from advocating for their rights. This highlights the need for greater empowerment and opportunities for women in Hunza to ensure their active participation in decision-making processes.

Zehra Jabeen, 24 years a young woman, I met her discussion about the object, emphasized the discrimination faced by girls based on their socially constructed gender. Regardless of their class status, whether belonging to the upper, middle, or lower class, women are consistently subjected to discrimination. Even in one of the most literate regions of Pakistan, women become victims due to their gender, caste, class, region, and sect. The gender gap persists across various domains, including homes and schools.

Being a female member of the household you need to sacrifice many things, whether it may be school, home, or anywhere. From my own experience, it's evident that male members of society enjoy greater privileges within the family, simply by virtue of being male. As a woman, you are expected to fulfill the role of a caregiver, cooking and serving food, irrespective of your own conditions or circumstances, solely because you are a girl.

When it comes to education, women in Gilgit-Baltistan (HUNZA) are relatively empowered, although access to education is not exclusive to Ismaili women. Women from other sects also have opportunities for better education, except in certain districts like Chilas where primary education for women is limited. However, in places like Hunza, women actively participate in co-curricular activities alongside education, health, and politics.

Referring to health care, she said

“Turning our attention to the healthcare facilities for women in central Hunza, maternal conditions pose challenges due to a lack of gynecologists and inadequate health services. Due to the absence of female doctors or gynecologists, women do not feel comfortable consulting from the male doctor”.

Ms Neelum Pari, 28 years old young woman, the subject sitting before me, shared her perspective as one of four siblings (two girls and two boys). She expressed that she had never experienced any discrimination in her household based on being a female child, particularly in terms of education and health. As the eldest child in her family, she received strong encouragement for her education and career pursuits, enjoying certain privileges over her male siblings. After completing 18 years

of education, she is now preparing for the CSS exam, a milestone made possible by the unwavering support of her family.

“I had never experienced any discrimination in my household as I am more empowered than my brothers, especially in education. But yes, I am supposed to involve them in decision-making, as the (Haa Sarbarah), male member of the household either”.

However, when discussing health and politics, Neelum highlighted the patriarchal sociocultural structure of Hunza. Despite being one of the most developed and literate regions in Pakistan, women face significant obstacles in political empowerment. Female representation in the Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly (GBLA) is minimal, and women who show interest in political affairs often require permission from male family members.

The maternal healthcare situation in District Hunza poses challenges due to a lack of medical equipment and gynecologists. In many cases, women have tragically lost their children. Although AKHS (Aga Khan Health Services) and government hospitals exist in Hunza, doctors frequently refer patients to Gilgit city, which is a two-hour journey away.

Socioeconomic status also plays a significant role in Hunza, where individuals are often recognized by their family backgrounds. The historical influence of the ruling Raja families in Hunza still lingers, resulting in privileges and respect being accorded to women belonging to these families above others.

Azra Baig, a young 29years old women, during our conversation, expressed her views with the societal expectations placed on girls. While she acknowledged that being an Ismaili grants her better access to education, health, and politics, she also highlighted the burden imposed on girls within their own families. As a female member, she is expected to fulfill the role of caretaker for the male members of the family, perpetuating a legacy that assigns girls responsibility of housekeeping and serving others.

“For instance, a girl in her home is like an unpaid Maid in her own family”.

It is as if a girl in her own home is an unpaid maid, with her future being envisioned as part of another family through marriage. The birth of a female child brings worries for the family, not only about making her independent but also about securing a good proposal from a high-class

family. This societal pressure and focus on marriage intensify as a girl completes her studies and reaches the age of 25, with society and parents questioning her unmarried status, which Azra considers unethical.

In the realm of formal politics, women face exclusion and worsening conditions. The political empowerment of women in Gilgit-Baltistan (HUNZA) has been influenced by the PPP government, which increased the quota and seats for women in politics from 2% to 33% during Musharraf's tenure. This reserved quota empowers women at the union and district levels in the GBLA. However, despite the 33% quota, women's actual participation in Hunza politics falls short of the designated percentage. This indicates that the patriarchal structure of Hunza hinders women's political empowerment.

In terms of healthcare, AKHS and government hospitals provide services in the Hunza district. Unfortunately, women still face challenges in their maternal health, as doctors often refer them to Gilgit city. Recent cases have witnessed tragic losses of children in emergency situations. However, there is a ray of hope as AKDN is investing in a Megaproject under construction in the district of Aliabad, Hunza.

During our conversation, ***Shabana Baig***, 26years old young women, opened up about the gender dynamics in her family and how girls are perceived differently based on their gender. She shared the story of her siblings, consisting of one sister and one brother. Being the eldest sister, she recounted how her family initially expressed disappointment at not having a male child. The arrival of a girl as their second child added to the concerns and anxieties within her family. Growing up in such an environment made her acutely aware of how girls are marginalized and excluded simply because of their gender.

“My family members were accusing their fate for not having male child in the family”.

When I asked her about her experience as an Ismaili girl, she expressed gratitude for being born into the Ismaili sect. She saw it as a blessing and pondered how her life would have been different if she had been born in places like Chilas or Kohistan, where gender disparities might be more pronounced. Shabana emphasized that within the Ismaili sect, women enjoy greater empowerment in education compared to men. Her religious affiliation provided her with a platform not only to

develop her identity within the community but also to make an impact at the national level, both in formal and informal spheres.

Ms. Tehmina Ali, while sitting in front of me, shared her emotional story, which brought tears to her eyes. She comes from a family of 5 siblings, including one brother, and she is the eldest among them. As she narrated her story alongside her mother, she expressed how being a girl subjected her and her family to unique challenges and discrimination. She spoke of the difficulties her mother faced due to various reasons. One reason was that her father belonged to the Ismaili sect, while her mother belonged to another sect. The second reason was the absence of a male child in the family. After having four daughters, her mother finally gave birth to a son, but another daughter followed. During the time when her mother was giving birth to girls, their family faced exclusion from various family events because their father-in-law belonged to a different sect (Shia). Moreover, one of her younger sisters faced challenges in getting married to a Shia man who was also a relative of their mother. The family resisted accepting the proposal due to the man belonging to a different sect.

“As I thought we were marginalized because we have blood relations with other sect (Shia), our family doesn’t like us, secondly we are 6 sisters and due to financial crises we couldn’t continue our education. One of my younger sister got married to another sect, our family as well as society resisted accepting the proposal because the man belonging to out of our sect. and secondly she’s girl, so they refused because marrying out of sect is against their honor, but my mother insisted against family and send off her with the man with another sect. after that we have been cut off from the family”

When I inquired about their education, Tehmina revealed that they were unable to continue their education due to several reasons, including financial constraints, despite having access to education. She completed her matriculation from a government school in Aliabad, Hunza. In response to my question about her participation in politics, Tehmina sighed and said that if a girl couldn't express herself freely at home, how could she even think about getting involved in politics? However, she mentioned that she has the right to vote independently.

Regarding maternal health and access to healthcare, Tehmina mentioned that she prefers government hospitals due to financial limitations, as they cannot afford private or Aga Khan

hospitals. She acknowledged the significant role women play in society, shaped by social norms and religious perspectives. In a patriarchal society, women often adhere to male-dominated policies and face difficulties in asserting themselves. Tehmina shared her experience as a Shia Imami Ismaili Muslim woman, emphasizing that she grew up in a peaceful community that values women's roles and respects them. She highlighted her involvement in the Girl Guides program, where she was taught to live in a peaceful environment and care for others. Through various co-curricular activities, she developed valuable soft skills. She emphasized that her religious beliefs empower her to pursue education and choose a profession she is passionate about. The Ismaili community focuses on educating everyone and provides both basic and advanced education opportunities. In Hunza, the literacy rate is high, indicating that women have access to higher education. Girls' education is encouraged without objections, which is a positive aspect for every woman. The spiritual leader of the Ismaili community guides and advises individuals on matters of health and education.

Regarding politics, women initially faced restrictions in participating in political parties due to societal beliefs that politics was not suitable for women. However, Tehmina acknowledged the importance of female politicians as they strive to address the issues women face in society. The perception of women in politics has evolved, and people now recognize that women play crucial roles in various fields. Nevertheless, the representation of women in politics remains low compared to men.

Regarding health, the region of Hunza faces prominent health issues, particularly breast cancer in women. Unfortunately, women suffering from this disease lose their lives every year due to a lack of proper facilities and professional female doctors. The majority of women hesitate to share their problems with male doctors, creating obstacles in accessing adequate healthcare. Tehmina stressed the need for proper healthcare infrastructure and trained medical professionals in the region

Ms. Kousar Sultan highlighted the progress and empowerment of women in Hunza, particularly in districts Hunza and Ghizer. According to her, Hunza women are educated, empowered, progressive, and financially independent. They actively participate in various sectors, including running their own businesses. Kousar, along with her sisters, had better access to education and health. She expressed that she never experienced discrimination based on her gender within her

family. Despite living in a patriarchal society, her family supported her education, and her brothers played a positive role in promoting education within the family. However, she acknowledged that gender roles are socially constructed, and male members of the family often enjoy higher privileges.

“As I think men are providing us security and safety to women, even I do agree with their involvement in decision-making”

When it comes to health, Kousar mentioned that some areas in Hunza still face challenges regarding women's health during pregnancies and other maternal issues. Lack of gynecologists or the hesitation to consult male doctors prevents women from freely sharing their problems and seeking appropriate medical assistance. Additionally, there are cases where women are not allowed to consult male doctors due to cultural norms or family restrictions.

“As my brother is doctor, according to his experience, still there are some women’s who they are not allowed to consult male doctors, he said in any emergency cases their husbands deal with the male doctor and hardly they allow their wives for treatment due to cultural norms”

In terms of political participation, Kousar observed that women in Hunza are not actively engaged in political affairs, despite their access to education and social empowerment. Women in Hunza have been deprived of their basic rights, both by male members of their families and by the government. Furthermore, they often face obstacles when attempting to voice their concerns or advocate for their rights. Kousar's perspective sheds light on the progress and challenges faced by women in Hunza. While there have been improvements in education and empowerment, there is still work to be done to ensure gender equality, access to healthcare, and meaningful political participation for women in the region.

According to Ms. Noor, the power and influence of Ismaili women in Hunza are significant. Despite being a minority in various regions of Pakistan, especially in the northern areas, the Ismaili sect holds a strong position. Ismaili women have not only made a name for themselves nationally but have also gained international recognition. They have excelled not only in education but also in cocurricular activities. Noor provided examples of notable Ismaili women who have achieved remarkable feats. Samina Baig, the first Pakistani woman to summit Mount Everest, has showcased the strength and determination of Ismaili women. She has also recently conquered K2,

the world's second-highest peak. Noor also mentioned Anita Karim, a boxer from Hunza, who has made a name for herself as the first Pakistani female boxer and has achieved notable records, including a match against a Sri Lankan boxer. Noor believes that compared to other districts in Hunza, women in Hunza have better access to education, healthcare, and opportunities for co-curricular activities. This highlights the progress and empowerment of Ismaili women in the region, showcasing their achievements and contributions in various fields.

“On the other hand, as the nature of Hunza is patriarchal but to some extent the influence of males in decision-making and other matters, it’s important because women are insecure in every society, it doesn’t matter how much independent you are. The involvement of decision-making of men is influential for every woman as he gives security to a woman. If he is not permitting her in political affairs, it means he gives security to her”

Noor's perspective emphasizes the accomplishments of Ismaili women in Hunza and their access to education, health, and co-curricular activities. It highlights the opportunities and advancements that Ismaili women have been able to seize, contributing to their empowerment and recognition both nationally and internationally.

I met, **Ms. Nimra Jahan**, 26years young woman, I didn’t start our discussion on my concerned topic, generally, we were talking and she started to talk her work tasks at her home which gave me a clear path to discuss my concern topic,

Referring to the gender gap is a prevalent issue in every society, regardless of its nature or location. She asserts that women are often perceived as unpaid workers within their own households. Whether it pertains to social, economic, educational, or political matters, male children within a family tend to be given higher priority and privilege compared to their female counterparts. Nimra's perspective highlights the systemic discrimination and bias that women face within their own homes and society at large. She emphasizes the unequal treatment and opportunities that persist based on gender, suggesting that the societal perception of women as subordinate and undervalued is a common phenomenon.

“As I perceived women (We) are unpaid workers within, our households. We are always supposed to serve men in every society. If they order something even small things, we should always be there to serve them, they couldn’t do it by their selves because they are men”.

By shedding light on these issues, Nimra underscores the need for greater gender equality and the elimination of discrimination in various spheres of life. Her viewpoint aligns with the ongoing struggle for women's empowerment and equal rights, advocating for a society where individuals are not judged or treated differently based on their gender.

4.1 Thematic Analysis

<i>Codes</i>	<i>Themes</i>	<i>Examples</i>
<i>C1</i>	<i>Gender Gap</i>	<i>“Society has divided things based on our gender since our birth. Even toys have been defined by our gender. for instance, if we see in our families, a baby girl always gets a crockery set, and kitchen set, and her family loves to take her dupatta. On the side, boys get cars, automobiles, etc. and all these things are socially constructed” (Farah Naz, 28).</i>
<i>C2</i>	<i>Sectarian Gap</i>	<i>“One of my younger sister got married to another sect, our family as well as society resisted accepting the proposal because the man belonging to out of our sect. and secondly she’s girl, so they refused because marrying out of sect is against their honor, but my mother insisted against family and send off her with the man with another sect. after that we have been cut off from the family”. (Ms. Tehmina Ali, 26years)</i>

C3

Access to Education

“When I completed my matriculation, and It was time for college I wasn’t even asked whether I wanted to go to college My father, my two uncles, and my brothers were

sitting down in the house while I with my other sisters were performing household chores as per normal routine. It was my male members who decided that I had to go to the government school and that I had to take non-science subjects. I was only given the verdict. Although keeping in view my preference, economic situation, and Ismaili identity I would have done the same. I personally did want to go for science subjects. However, I was not asked even once”(Farah Naz).

C4	<i>Access to Health</i>	<i>“Due to the absence of female gynecologists, we are not feeling comfortable to consult whether we can share our problem openly with male doctor, mostly we prefer to go Gilgit to consult from female doctor, or in emergency we are supposed to ask husbands that should I consult from a male doctor or not?”(Kosar Sultan, 32years).</i>
C5	<i>Access to politics</i>	<i>“We are not politically empower, 10percent of Ismaili women are representing in GMLA”(Nimra Seher).</i>
C6	<i>Socio-Economics Status</i>	<i>“A normal Hunza woman will never get that status which a royal woman gets, for instance a, there are some specific names for royal women (Bichii, kaaki, Bapoo, Ziizii), where normal Hunza women will never be called by these names”(TehminaAli,30years).</i>

4.1.1 Gender Gap

Regarding my inquiry about the perception of power among Hunza women, the prevailing response indicates that they perceive the gender gap as an ingrained and natural occurrence, wherein women have long been relegated to a secondary status within their own homes. Most of

the women answered that being a woman, they need to According to their viewpoint, women are inherently destined to endure compromises and make sacrifices, placing them in a subservient position compared to men. Since childhood, we have been instilled with the notion that as young girls, it is our solemn responsibility to uphold the honor and reputation of our fathers and brothers.

From our childhood we have been taught by the elder's women in our homes (grandmother, mother, aunt), Dasivanx (Maav, (Father), molus(Brother), izaat baan, like (Girls are the honor of their male members of the family) and after getting married (App ka Jinaza apkay shohar k ghar sy hi uthaay).

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Most respondents started their conversations with statements such as “*The Northern areas of Pakistan are often regarded as one of the more developed regions, where equality is believed to thrive*”. However, the majority of respondents expressed a universal sentiment that transcends national boundaries, religions, ethnicities, and castes. They firmly asserted that regardless of these

⁷⁵ The words in italic form is the exact translation spoken by the respondents.

factors, women will always find themselves in a subordinate position compared to men, and their societal role will primarily revolve around serving them. It was emphasized that women will never attain the same status and privileges that are inherently granted to males within their respective societies.

When it comes to significant matters such as career and education choices, a woman is consistently expected to seek the approval of male family members. For example, it is the male member who ultimately decides whether she should attend the AKHSS school, a government college, or a private institution, as the authority for decision-making lies in their hands.

During my discussion, one of the respondents, Nimra Jahan, shared an experience where male family members would sometimes ridicule women for participating in decision-making processes, dismissing it as a mere myth in our society. According to their societal perception, when a woman takes charge and makes decisions, it often leads to negative perceptions and outcomes, reinforcing societal biases and stereotypes.

As in terms of decision making, we are not supposed to interfere, as they said (Guss-Giyaas deesh kitchen bilaa), women and kids place is in the kitchen). We (women) are always supposed them to serve them.

During my discussions with women of various age groups and diverse experiences, it became evident that they hold distinct perceptions shaped by their individual stories of womanhood. One respondent, Ms. Halen Karim, who has enjoyed improved educational opportunities, shared her journey of pursuing a PhD and working as a lecturer in a government college. However, she highlighted that societal expectations have imposed certain boundaries. Specifically, as a woman, she expressed concerns about societal scrutiny that arises as she grows older, with questions arising about why she remains unmarried after the age of 25.

Female in society, as she gets older, society starts questioning her about marriage which creates a negative impact on the social circle of women because it directly impacts the cognitive sense which causes depression, frustration, and disturbance, this is the truth of society where women have been oppressed in different ways.

There exists a prevalent societal perception that places an emphasis on women getting married by the age of 25. However, in stark contrast, there are no such restrictions or expectations imposed on men. It is widely observed that if a man remains single even at the age of 40, there are no societal boundaries or judgments that he faces solely based on his gender. This discrepancy in expectations based on gender is a significant aspect of societal norms and attitudes towards marriage and singleness.

As some of the young respondents between age 20 to 25, said that for being a girl their families do not in favor of Love marriage because of their gender on the other hand the male member has full right to choose his partner by his own choice.

Being girls we do not allow to talk in front of the male members of our family even we can't argue in front of them. "Bar bar hamaien yahi yaaad dilayaa jataa hai ki aap log larki hain or larkiyaan apnay badun sy behais nahi kerti, Repeatedly, we are reminded that you are girls, and girls should not disobey their elders".

4.1.2 Sectarian Gap

A Hunza woman faces different layers of marginalization for being women. some respondents said that being Ismaili women, they have better access to Education, health, co-curricular activities as their spiritual leader insists to prevail equity and equality. Famous Ismaili girls kept record in national as well as international level for instance Samina Baig, the first Pakistani Ismaili women who summit Mount Everest, the first highest mountain peak in Nepal, Anita Karim the first Pakistani Ismaili boxer, who won international game against Bangladesh. And there are so many other famous personalities who have national as well as international record. But in the premises of these opportunities they have different boundaries for being Ismaili women. for Instance, my first respondent Ms. Farah Naz, said for being Ismaili Girl Since I was child my mother taught me to not make friends out of sect in my school.

“I was told by my mother not to eat anything from girls out of Sect”.

During the interaction with respondents, Ms. Tehmina Ali, expresses her story that how her siblings and mother have been discriminated and marginalized by their caste because they her mother belongs to another sect. their mother convert her sect from Shia to Ismaili sect despite of their strong beliefs with Ismaili their family ignored them as they have blood relation to their mother’s family who belongs to Shia community.

“One of my younger sister got married to another sect, our family as well as society resisted accepting the proposal because the man belonging to out of our sect. and secondly she’s girl, so they refused because marrying out of sect is against their honor, but my mother insisted against family and send off her with the man with another sect. after that we have been cut off from the family”.

Nimra Jehan, one of the young respondent highlighted one the main problem where Ismaili women are facing in their Jamat Khana’s. ⁵⁶she expressed her views that Ismaili women cannot wear black dress in their Worship places even in some Ismaili societies it’s strictly forbidden to wear Black outfit. On the other side there haven’t any restriction on male to wear black dresses in Jamat Khanna’s.

⁵⁶ Jamat Khanna refer to the place of worship of Ismaili’s.

Within the Ismaili community, it is generally observed that women are discouraged from marrying outside of their own sect. Instances of Ismaili women marrying men from other sects are exceedingly rare and uncommon. As such there are no restrictions for male to marry out of sect there are some common examples where men marry from outside the sect, as well as out of religion.

4.1.3 Education

As during the interaction in the field, I analyze from mostly of the respondent's that being Ismaili women they have better access to education. AKDN, institutions play vital role in the development of Hunza especially in education sector under the Agha Khan Education Service, Pakistan. The main reason of high access of the quality of education in females in Hunza is the Farman of their Spiritual leader which is

“If you have two options to get high education between your son or daughter, you should choose your daughter”.

(AKES, P). AKES, institution's not only serving on for Ismaili's but many youngsters' from other sects are getting quality of education. AKES, P institutions serving as best of best qualified staff, updated IT labs, and other opportunities in various regions of Hunza. But no one can easily get admission in AKES, schools and colleges as their merit is very high.

During my interaction to some young girls, they expressed their views regarding being Ismaili women and access to education. Ismaili women have better access to higher education, but referring to decision making whether or not she should go to college. Whether she should be admitted in the agha khan education system, a private educations system or the government schools, or which subject they should choose. Its mandatory for them to ask and consult the male member of their families in decision making. My first respondent, Farah Naz expressed her views in the following words;

“when I completed my matriculation, and It was time for college I wasn't even asked that whether I wanted to go to college or not. My father, my two uncles and my brothers were sitting

down in the house while I with my other sisters were performing household chores as per normal routine. It was my male members who decided that I had to go to the government school, and that I had to take non-science subjects. I was only given the verdict. Although keeping in view my preference, economic situation and Ismaili identity I would have done the same. I personally did want to go for science subjects. However, I was not asked even once”.

4.1.4 Health

One prominent concern that has been brought to light in Hunza revolves around limited access to healthcare, particularly for women. The majority of women interviewed expressed dissatisfaction with the state of healthcare facilities, particularly in the district of Hunza. Every respondent emphasized the prevalent health issues in the area. Currently, there are two primary hospitals catering to the needs of Hunza: The Government Hospital and Agha Khan Health Services, P. (AKES). However, a significant challenge lies in the absence of gynecologists, which is identified as a key issue impacting women's healthcare in the region.

AKHS, P are serving with trained and experienced doctors while some women cannot access to AKHS, because it's quite expensive on the other hand in government hospitals, there is not any experienced gynecologist and updated machinery. During the maternal health care, mostly doctors refer their patients to Gilgit city which covers 2hours from Hunza. And there are so many cases where women are lost their child during their deliveries.

“Due to the absence of female gynecologists, we are not feeling comfortable to consult whether we can share our problem openly with male doctor, mostly we prefer to go Gilgit to consult from female doctor, or in emergency we are supposed to ask husbands that should I consult from a male doctor or not?”

As during my field work I also interacted with some male doctors where they reflected the main issue for not having gynecologists because female do not feel comfort to consult from male doctors. One of my respondent Ms. Kousar Jabeen also, shared the main issue while her brother is serving as doctor in government hospital she added

“As my brother is doctor, according to his experience, still there are some women’s who they are not allowed to consult male doctors, he said in any emergency cases their husbands deal with the male doctor and hardly they allow their wives for treatment due to cultural norms”

In addition, male doctors also acknowledged instances where men restrict their women from seeking medical advice from male practitioners. It is observed that in such cases, husbands or male family members usually intervene and handle interactions with doctors, even during urgent or emergency situations. Consequently, women face significant barriers when it comes to receiving timely and appropriate medical treatment.

4.1.5 Socio Economic Status

One of the prominent and interesting concerns that I figured out the in Hunza is socio-economic status. This is an emerging issue from the period of colonialism in Hunza. In different regions and Districts, Thamo (Raja Family), were ruling over masses of Hunza and other regions as well. And they were powerful in terms of economic, social, and political as well. Still, they are in power over other people of Hunza.

During my discussion with the women of Hunza, I found that still the socio economic status exist in the region. Referring to my question on how you they perceive power as normal Hunza women, one of my respondent Afshan Baig replied,

A normal Hunza woman will never get that status which a royal woman gets, for instance a, there are some specific names for royal women (Bichii, kaaki, Bapoo, Ziizii), where normal Hunza women will never be called by these names.

During our discussion, I came across an intriguing point that caught my attention: the distinct pattern observed in royal marriages, which generally do not occur between individuals from normal families belonging to the same sect, caste, and religion. While rare exceptions do exist, such as when a common Hunza woman enters into a marital union with a member of a royal family, a historical trend sheds light on the underlying reasons. Throughout history, royal figures have held dominion over ordinary people, resulting in a perception that perceives those outside the aristocracy as mere subjects or servant.

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS AND CONCLUSION

This chapter discussed a detailed discussion of the findings of the thesis.

The fundamental underpinning of feminist theory, practice, and scholarly discourse centers on the marginalization and discrimination that women face due to their gender. Gender, which is a societal construct, is imposed upon women from birth. It is not a choice made by women themselves but is rather dictated by the society they are born into. These societal forces and structures construct a framework in which opportunities, permissible actions, and limitations are defined for women. From their aspirations to their actions, women are compelled to conform to the dictates imposed by these surrounding structures, leaving them with limited freedom even to dream. The literature indicates that marginalization is not confined solely to sectarian divisions. Up until very recently, it has been evident that factors such as gender, ethnicity, language, and being part of what was previously known as the federally administered Northern areas have all played a role in contributing to marginalization. These factors have resulted in limitations when it comes to accessing education, participating in political processes, engaging in economic activities, and enjoying full inclusion in social spheres. By analyzing the literature and findings, the women of Hunza Perceive power as women is born for compromise and sacrifice, which had always secondary status in her Sect and family. For Instance, Farah Naz and Saira Karim, added that women have always inferior status comparatively to male in every sect, caste or ethnicity. In this study, a significant revelation emerged: the initial layer of intersectionality revolves around gender, with women finding themselves marginalized solely due to their gender. Within this framework, a set of societal expectations dictates what women should and should not do, relegating them to a secondary status within their households, particularly concerning decision-making and various responsibilities.

During a conversation with Ms. Sana Farooq, women's rights and gender-based disparities were further highlighted by drawing parallels with historical instances. She shed light on the historical context, pointing out how even queens were denied participation in governance matters, perpetuating a legacy of gender-based marginalization, not only in economic and social spheres but also within the confines of the family. It became evident that a majority of the women

discussed their experiences as victims of gender-based discrimination. They consistently found themselves in a subordinate position within their families in comparison to men, despite the relatively improved access to education among Ismaili women. Paradoxically, they often perceived themselves as lacking agency and influence. Gender, ethnicity and caste stand out as two significant factors that play a pivotal role in fueling marginalization, and their influence ripples through various aspects of our society, economy, politics, and political engagement. Additionally, some respondents recounted specific incidents that shed light on the challenges faced by Ismaili women. For instance, Ms. Saira Karim recounted an incident at the main campus of KIU where Ismaili girls were seen dancing with boys from different sects during a morning show hosted by Sanam Baloch.

*It was a 2years back story where some Ismaili students danced with some boys who were belongs to other sect, in a morning show of **Sanam Baloch** at Serena hotel in Gilgit. They were university students, and after that the video becomes viral and everyone was criticizing the girls on their dancing video. The university remained closed for months on that incident. It has been called Ismaili girls ruining the cultural and ethical norms of Hunza. And they also got terminated by the university, one of the females committed suicide after being getting torturing by their families and society.*

There were two different cases in the above story where the Girls have been tortured because of their gender and another one they danced with the boys of other sect. This example vividly illustrates the various levels of marginalization at play. Firstly, society imposes gender as a defining factor. Girls, simply by virtue of their femininity, were discouraged from engaging in public dancing, as it contradicted the socio-cultural norms prevalent in Hunza. Additionally, the girls faced another significant challenge: being Ismailis and dancing with boys from a different sect. Strikes took place in different districts of Gilgit, where people staged protests on the streets, expressing their concerns about what they perceived as a disregard for the cultural heritage of Gilgit-Baltistan by Ismaili women. These protests generated significant public outcry. During the course of my research, a fascinating insight into the social dynamics among Ismaili women in Gilgit-Baltistan emerged. Saira Karim, one of my respondents, shed light on a captivating aspect of their society. She mentioned that members of the Royal Family rarely choose to marry women from ordinary families. It is an exceedingly rare occurrence for a royal man to wed a woman from

a non-royal background. According to their beliefs, this practice stems from a historical context where normal families were traditionally considered servants in the annals of Hunza's past. This intriguing tradition underscores the deep-rooted traditions and intricate social fabric that make up the rich tapestry of Ismaili culture in Hunza.

In particular, Ismaili women have better access to education. As AKES institutions play a vital role in educational development where Ismaili women have better access to higher education. On the other hand, in terms of Health and Politics, women are lagging. The majority of women have discussed the issues, especially in health where the absence of gynecologists creates problems during maternal cases. Besides this they are also not allowed to consult with male doctors regarding their issue. In terms of politics, Hunza women is not empowering for political participation, Ismaili institutions and councils also don't allow them to participate in any political affair especially for women. Therefore, in Hunza legislative assembly 10percent of women are participating.

5.1 Research Limitations

While this study aimed to gain valuable insights into the concept of power from the standpoint of Ismaili women in Hunza, it is important to acknowledge several limitations that may have influenced the research process and the interpretation of findings.

Accessing and recruiting participants, especially from marginalized or underrepresented communities, presented challenges. The research team acknowledges that participants who were willing to participate cannot fully represent the entirety of Ismaili women's perspectives in Hunza. Recruitment limitations have introduced selection bias, as those who were more willing to participate might hold distinct views from those who declined.

Conducting research on power dynamics within a culturally distinct and sensitive context like Hunza necessitated an acute awareness of cultural norms and values. The interpretations of power and the experiences of Ismaili women may be influenced by cultural factors that could limit the transferability of findings to other cultural contexts.

Resource limitations, including time and funding constraints, impacted the depth and breadth of data collection. Comprehensive data collection may have required more extensive resources than were available for this study.

The perspectives on power and identity explored in this study represent a snapshot in time. These perspectives may evolve over time in response to changing social, political, or economic conditions.

5.2 Future Implications

This research on "Defining Power from the Perspective of the Powerless: A Standpoint Perspective of Ismaili Women of Hunza" has far-reaching implications for the future, both within the Ismaili community in Hunza and in broader contexts of research and policymaking. Here, we outline some of the key future implications of this study:

The findings of this research can serve as a foundation for empowerment and advocacy efforts among Ismaili women in Hunza. Armed with a better understanding of their own perspectives on power, these women can find their voices and actively engage in advocating for their rights and interests within their community and beyond.

Policymakers and government agencies can draw upon the insights from this study to inform the development of policies and programs that address the unique needs and challenges faced by Ismaili women. These policies can encompass gender equality, social inclusion, economic opportunities, and access to healthcare and education.

This study can provide a valuable basis for future academic research on gender, power dynamics, and marginalized communities, not only in Hunza but also in other similar contexts around the world. Researchers can use this study as a reference point to delve deeper into the complexities of power from a standpoint perspective.

Comparative studies with other marginalized groups in different cultural contexts can build upon the foundations laid by this research. By identifying commonalities and differences in power dynamics, scholars can advance our global understanding of power from diverse perspectives.

Future research can explore the intersectionality of factors such as gender, ethnicity, religion, and socio-economic status in shaping power dynamics. This deeper exploration will contribute to a more nuanced understanding of how multiple identities intersect and influence experiences.

5.3 Self-Reflection

I am a 26-year-old woman hailing from the scenic Northern areas of Pakistan. Coming from a well-educated and open-minded family background, I have been fortunate to grow up in an environment that values learning and progression. My father, an esteemed educationist, dedicated his career to the Agha Khan Education Service, Pakistan (AKES, P), and is currently engaged with an NGO in the district of Hunza. As the only daughter amidst two brothers, I have received unwavering support and encouragement from my family to pursue my academic goals. Presently, I am actively engaged in pursuing my MPhil degree, further fueling my passion for higher education.

Based on my personal experiences, I have come to realize that even though I have been fortunate to have relatively better access to resources, being a female can often present its own set of challenges. I firmly believe that gender is not an inherent characteristic but rather a social construct shaped by society. While my father has always been a strong advocate for education and has consistently encouraged me to pursue it, being a girl comes with certain expectations and limitations. Despite having access to education, decisions regarding my choice of college or university are predominantly made by my brothers and father, often without considering my own preferences or input.

Growing up, my mother consistently emphasized the importance of learning domestic and kitchen chores, as these were considered essential skills for a girl like me. In our household, it was ingrained that my role as a female meant serving the male members of our family. There have been instances when I engaged in arguments with my brothers, only to be scolded by my mother, who firmly believed that girls should not engage in such disagreements with male family members. She would caution me, explaining that this behavior would be deemed unacceptable even in my future in-laws' home. These societal expectations and gender roles are not inherent or natural; rather, they have been constructed and perpetuated by society.

As I am growing older, Society often questions me about my marital status. The pressure to marry arises, with the prevailing notion that girls should ideally tie the knot by the age of 25, as finding suitable marriage proposals becomes more challenging later on. During my field work, when I had interaction with women, they were saying, *you can better understand as all women are facing same level of problems for being women*. There were some stories like my first respondent, Farah Naz in findings chapter which were same with my own story.

As I am the witnessed of the health issues in my own region. Many time I have visited hospitals where females are facing different health problems due to absence of gynecologist. As my personal experience.

Even when discussing socio-economic status, the disparity in status remains evident within my own region. Certain families possess distinct privileges based on their societal standing. The Raja Families, in particular, hold a position of superiority over the general population. I have a friend who comes from a Raja Family, and she recently introduced a young man from an average background to her parents with the intention of marrying him. However, their proposal was rejected due to factors such as his social class, religious sect, and overall status.