

## **Social constraints associated with language in Punjabi society**

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### **SUMMARY:**

Research has revealed variations in language use due to gender-based social constraints in Pakistan's Punjabi society.

Social constraints hinder the adaption of different forms of language between males and females in this group.

The use of language forms, such as assertive and declarative, are influenced by factors such as gender, economic, professional status and social dealings.

The research found that women tend to use a more polite, standard variety of language and also use more declarative forms, with less use of imperative and assertive forms.

The study also revealed that social constraints affect the use of language: males use a more declarative form, but they also use assertive and imperative forms.

The female gender's use of "apologetic" forms of language when talking to their husbands is attributable to the male's dominant role in Pakistani society.

Conversely, research also highlighted males' use of an apologetic form when talking to their sisters, because they know that their sisters are only with them for a limited period of time until they get married into another family, and in Pakistani society, males traditionally have great respect for their sisters.

The author's research has opened new vistas for ethno-linguistic studies in Pakistan.

### **Conclusions:**

Social constraints have an influence on the different forms of language used by males and females in Punjabi society.

Males can use the language in a more liberal way.

Females at work usually use a declarative form of language but sometimes they adopt forms of language such as "requesting" and "apologetic" when talking to their boss and male colleagues. Because of our society and our religion we cannot get out of this situation.

### **Discussion:**

**Q.** Does social status of males and females play a role in the use of different forms of language in specific circumstances?

**A.** This study has added a new dimension to know the differences in the use of language by males and females on the gender-based social constraints in Punjabi society. Gender and sex were the same for researchers until the 1970s because the researchers were male and they did not take any notice of the gender differences in the use of language.

**Q.** Islam is a religion which makes men superior to women (and therefore empowerment through a more equitable use of language between the genders is irrelevant)?

A. Islam promotes equality between both men and women. In Islamic countries such as Yemen, Pakistan and Indonesia, gender equality is viewed differently. We have to be careful not to assume that religion is the only factor. There are other influences in society on gender equality. There are other factors such as cultural norms.

Comment: In several communities around the world, the role of advocacy is important to consider especially from multipronged approaches. Look at textbooks, Bollywood, etc, what kinds of images are portrayed and what kinds of messages are given. Are English-speakers given roles? Through advocacy we may be able to get out of this.

Comment: It is also important to exercise caution when making assumptions from such a small sample. This study was conducted in one community and therefore the scope of the study is limited. However, it has opened the door to further research in this area.

Moderator's comment: MDGs are a linear assumption but we can see here that there are cultural/language impacts. Gender issues/cultural issues have an impact. There are many complexities.