

## Gas Shortage, Food Patterns and Effected House Life - an Anthropological Perspective

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### Abstract:

*Availability of energy sources (CNG, LPG and electricity) are among one of the indicator of socio-economic development in any country. In Pakistan, the scenario is quite unbelievable and shocking from last two decades due to continues shortage of primary energy sources like gas and electricity. This research mainly focused to answer the question that what kind of difficulties faced to prepare food and how they were managed by housewives of Rawalpindi. A sample of 150 house wives was randomly interviewed with the help of structured questionnaire from Tehsil Rawal town of District Rawalpindi. Among*

*150 respondents 90.7% reported that they were experience gas shortage in their daily lives, 94 (n=150) respondent argued that they faced lower pressure of gas in evening timings, 83.3% respondents were use LPG cylinders to fulfil kitchen requirements as an alternate fuel to cook their food, 53.34% respondent strongly believe that gas shortage disturbed their routine life, in 49.3% cases delay was recorded while serving the food to family or to guests, 86.67% argued that due to gas shortage their House Holds budget get higher and finally 83.3% house wives were of the view that there is no change in the amount of bills while there is crucial gas shortage is grounded. This study unveiled the inside situation of households. The study results demanded rich policy making along with serious series of actions taken for implementation to secure primary energy sector and to enhance the quality of life of citizen.*

**Key words:** Gas shortage, Lower pressure, Food patterns, Kitchen requirement, Alternate fuel, LPG

## **Introduction**

From Last two decades, in Pakistan worst energy crises is observed including the power cuts in the form of load shading of electricity and gas lasting over hours. As a result the Socio-Economic development of the country is restricted and this crises also negatively affecting the lives of the people of urban areas and as well those who belong to rural areas, poor or even middle-class<sup>1</sup>.

In the ranking list of natural gas consumption countries Pakistan is among the top users. Consumption of gas reserves is getting fast due to the notoriously inefficient pipeline system subject to the main reason of theft in LDCs. Household consumers and CNG pumps contributed with 40% consumption of the natural gas in this situation which puts additional pressure on gas prices for clients. The involvement of Supreme Courte in Price fixing case has resulted as closure and non-

supply of gas<sup>2</sup>.

Present crises in the sector of primary energy, is generally believed as a self-created issue ensuring years of insufficient policies, poor management, lack of vision and personal interests. Unluckily, the problem is now at that stage where no immediate solution is available. If one observe the last ten years of Pakistan there is no considerable increase in the generation capacity with comparison to the demand of the country<sup>3</sup>.

An existing study explained that at present gas supply is available to about 17% of the country's population for domestic use. Domestic demand includes mostly the demand of urban and semi-urban areas where a proper distribution system is placed and also limited rural areas. Supply of gas to commercial, industrial, CNG and Power sector is also not compatible with the demand of mentioned sectors. The constraints are inadequate local production and non-availability of gas network in many areas of the country<sup>4</sup>.

In last decade, Pakistan has experienced an extremely swift increase in primary energy demand. Figures shows, there is an about 150% increase in primary energy utilization over the last two decades. The primary energy sources cover all basic forms of energy such as electricity, gas and fuel. Disturbance among these three basic energy sources is a real reason to develop commotion in everyday life of peoples as well as the reduction in the production of industrial sector<sup>5,6</sup>.

Over the period demand for natural gas in Pakistan has increased by almost 10 percent annually from 2000-01 to 2007-08, reaching around 3200 million cubic feet per day (MMCFD) in 2008 against the total production of 3774 MMCFD<sup>7</sup>.

Gas as an energy; is a basic element required to run the vehicle of life while living in a Household to prepare food items for the survival especially in urban areas and its importance not also rejected in rural areas where consumption of gas is less required as compared in urban areas. In Pakistani scenario the

situation is more than critical from many years. Home users, industrial and transportation activities are worst effected by energy shortfall especially in winters. This study was focused within households to explore what type of issues families usually faced to prepare their food during gas shortage and what are the least possible measures they adopted to satisfy their gas regarded needs in Rawalpindi.

## Material and Methods

To get the data on identified problem of Rawalpindi, a sample of 150 household women were interviewed from different areas of Tehsil Rawal town of District Rawalpindi. A structured questionnaire was developed to explore the areas of study. Tool was piloted before implementation and after taking necessary measures to improve the quality of data. Data was entered in EpiData and further analyzed in SPSS to get the requited format of results.

## Results

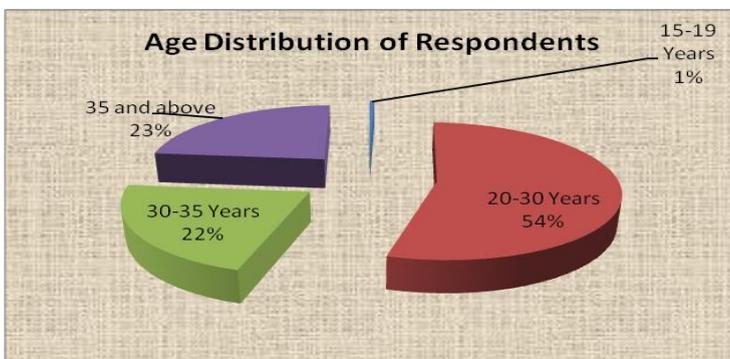


Figure 1: Age of the Respondents

Above figure clearly depicted the participation of women respondents being the part of this study. Maximum participation reported between the ages of 20-35 years. For this

study the efforts were made to cover the opinion of married and especially house wives who involved in such activities directly related to cooking patterns of family.

**Table 1: Monthly Income of the House Hold**

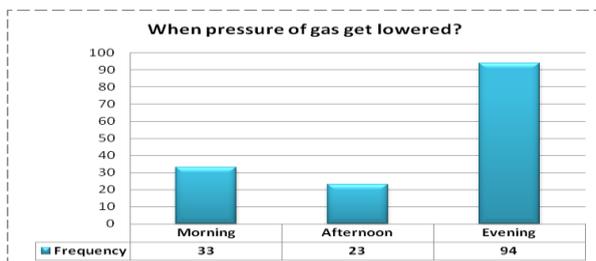
Category- Rs.	Frequency	Percent
5000-15000	36	24.0
16000-25000	41	27.3
26000-40000	37	24.7
41000+above	36	24.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 1 shows the distribution of the respondents with respect to their monthly income. In 24.0% cases respondents monthly family income was Rs. 5000-15000, 27.3% respondents reported Rs. 16000-25000, 24.7% time Rs. 26000-40000 was reported and again in 24.0% respondents family income as recorded was Rs. 41000 and above than this.

**Table 2: Have you ever face load shading/ low pressure of supplied gas?**

Category	Frequency	Percent
Yes	136	90.7
No	14	9.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Above table depicting that among 150 house wives 91% reported that they faced gas shortage in their stoves at food timing especially. Only 9% were said “no” against the question.



**Figure 2: Time when pressure of gas get lowered**

When respondents were asked about the timing when they faced low gas pressure in their daily routine, among 150 respondents; in 94 time respondents reported shortage of gas in evening timing, 23 respondents were of the view that in afternoon we faced gas shortage and 33 are replied with that in morning timing normally gas shortage was observed.

**Table 3: Alternate fuel used during gas shortage**

Category	Frequency	Percent
Coal	15	10.0
Wood logs	7	4.7
LPG cylinders	125	83.3
Raw wood stock	3	2.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 3 explains the alternate means to manage their kitchens and prepared food for their families. In 10.0% cases women used to burn coals for food preparation, 4.7% times wood logs were reported, LPG cylinders were recorded as major percentile of the finding that is 83.3% and 2.0% used other raw woods to complete their cooking assignments.

**Table 4: Do you agree gas shortage broken the whole routine at home?**

Category	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	80	53.34
Agree	50	33.33
No Response	8	5.33
Disagree	12	8.00
Strongly disagree	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Above table mentioned the responses against the question that did you agree during shortage of gas the home activities disturbed. Strongly agree was recorded 53.34% times in the study finding, agree was reported 33.33% in study findings, no

response only 5.33% and 8.00 were those who disagree with the statement.

**Table 5: Is it true that you faced difficulties to prepare food?**

Category	Frequency	Percent
Yes	131	87.34
No	4	2.66
Sometime	12	8.00
No answer	3	2.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 5 explains the responses of the women about to face the difficulties to prepare food for their families. 87.34% women said “Yes” to the question that they are in trouble due to this gas shortage, it’s quite difficult to prepare food for family and especially within the requirement of time as children have to visit their school, and working partners office timing restriction.

**Table 6: How gas shortage makes you less hospitable to your guests’?**

Category	Frequency	Percent
Restrict to limited food items	33	22.0
Delay in serving	74	49.3
Tasteless food	14	9.3
Forced selection of items to cook	29	19.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 6 depicted one important area of findings of this study that due to gas shortage the cultural and social norms to serve the guests in a very good manner with plenty of dishes’ getting disturbed and the level of hospitality becoming less in those days when gas supply was shortened. In 22.0% respondents argued that they are restricted with limited food item to serve, 49.3% were of the view that they used to delay in serving the food to the guests, 9.3% respondents said that the served food was not up-to their taste level and remaining 19.3% used to

cook forced or very limited choices of food items.

**Table 7: Gas shortage effect household budget?**

Category	Frequency	Percent
Increased (Alternative fuel are expensive)	130	86.67
Not observed as such	13	8.67
No Change	7	4.66
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 8 focused on the reported responses that due to shortage of gas what effects you observed in your household budget. 86.67% of the respondents were of the view that expenses are increased because the alternate fuel is expensive as compared to the natural gas.

**Table 9: Any effect on billing amount**

Category	Frequency	Percent
Decreases	25	16.7
Remain same	125	83.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Results of table 9 explain that people not only suffer with shortage of gas supply and disturbance in food preparations but also they are paying the same amount of billing without proper supply of gas. In 83.3% cases respondent said that the billing amount is the same in gas shortage as billing was observed in days of proper gas supply.

## **Discussion**

Gas crisis has got worsened across the country from last two decades in the result of poor policy making and lack of adequate implementation of action plans. Gas crisis are thoroughly observed through urban areas of Pakistan and especially in Punjab cities like Rawalpindi, Faisalabad, and Multan etc. In Rawalpindi women are unable to prepare food for their families.

Domestic stoves have no gas at food timings. Majority of the urban dwellers of Rawalpindi used LPG as alternate energy source when other gas supply is get lowered or not sufficient for cooking.

From last two decades, Pakistani economy has experiencing a very swift increase in primary energy demand such as gas and electricity. Previous data explains that there are around 150% increases in primary energy consumption over the period of last twenty Years in Pakistan<sup>6</sup>.

Dynamic urbanization requires continues supply of goods, services along with sustained supply of primary energy sector. Primary energy implies on two basic energy product including gas and electricity. Being the resident of urban area it is difficult for the urban dwellers to use wood, kerosene oil, coals and other basic energy item required to fulfil the demands of kitchen activities mainly food preparation for family and fellows. So one can say gas shortage or lower pressure in gas supply means to disturb the all cooking patterns of urban residents, create family related disputes and also affects the social life of the people.

Unluckily, the rapid increase in demand of gas and electricity supply in this decade was not clearly anticipated and no satisfactory measures/investment were made to control the situation and provide proper supply of gas to the domestic sector as well industrial sector<sup>8</sup>.

In winter, gas supply in Pakistan get to the lowest level which creates a situation to shift from natural piped gas to LPG cylinder. In winter, Gas shortage first put a crimp on the country's industrial sector and then has been shifted to put the forced impact on Pakistani homes. It is very obvious that food patterns of a family disturb when they don't have sufficient energy supply to prepare food. Data also shows the timing when gas pressure is get lowered, it was observed that normally gas pressure is reduced at the timing when women were used to prepare food. Delay in work, delay in food preparation, delay

from schools, delay to serve the guest, to awoke early to prepare the food before gas pressure get lowered; these are the main things normally seen in the houses of Rawalpindi especially in winter and somehow in summer also.

Another important finding of the present study shows that whatever the situation is whether gas supply was get lowered or remain same there was no affect on the billing amount which they have to submit against the consumption of gas units. Respondent argued when there is interrupted supply of gas and obviously less consumption of gas unit then why the billing amount is remains same. Another observation as recorded that respondents have to pay the bill without proper availability of gas and they also have to bear the expenses of other energy sources to prepare their food items.

Previous studies believed that the ongoing gas crisis is a self-imposed dilemma ensuing from years of poor policies, bad management, and lack of proper vision for future. Unfortunately, the level of the problem has now grown beyond any instant solution. In the last decade there is no substantial increase in the generation capacity and also no serious policy making was done at least to document the problem and its perceived solution. To a great extent, no responsible action was taken from last three Governments to improve the situation of country's energy sources<sup>9</sup>.

At the international level, such as energy, prosperity, poverty, hunger, disease and illiteracy as the fundamental social problems is very important to remove with the advancement in basic energy sources. Increasing human reliance on energy that is both local and global nature has been paralleled by a string of the challenges. Importantly it is understood that ensuring availability of adequate, cheap and eco-friendly energy is among the major challenges faced by the world in 21th century with particular reference to developing countries and generically to the whole world<sup>10</sup>.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the findings of present study in it can be concluded that there is an urgent need to review the policy development and execution processes especially related to general masses. Need and evidence based policies should be formulated keeping in consideration their long term over all impacts on general population. Presently, there is huge supply and demand disparity for all energy sources required on daily bases and their absence is making people's life miserable. No availability of domestic gas for food cooking means putting the whole family in stress while also adding a new item in their monthly budget.

This is the result of increased population and rapid urbanization where no check and balance is exercised on anything at national level. Government needs to reduce the ever increasing population growth especially in Punjab which is already most populated province.

Similarly it should discover new sources of natural gas. And also provide some relief and basic facilities to rural areas to halt their unlimited and unchecked migration to cities in such huge numbers. But all these measures need attention, time and resources besides a strong political will which unfortunately is hardly seen. Government has many other priority areas to deal with and giving the general masses a healthy, safe environment and equitable resource distribution is rarely its prime focus.

However, this problem can get even far worse if the concerned authorities don't take forestall measures like exploration of alternate and new energy resources, circumscribed population growth, provision of quality services of health, education, infrastructure and livelihood to rural population as well. Besides, decision makers should pay a candid consideration to overall favourableness of their decisions and policies for the nation and its people not only for present but for future as well. In fact Pakistan now required a long

term serious policy making and its implementation through a trustworthy way to handle this problem for future.

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