

Essay: PAKISTANI WOMEN HAVE THE SAME CHANCES AS MEN

OUTLINE

1. Introduction

Thesis Statement: Gender parity is a popular slogan yet far from being achieved. Women lag behind in every aspect of life due to gender discrimination. Nevertheless, by spreading awareness and educating people, the chances for women empowerment may enhance.

2. How women in Pakistan have less opportunities than men - Deconstructing gender inequality.

3. Pakistani women do not have the same chances as men. (Thesis)

a. - Dearth of educational opportunities due to patriarchal culture.

b. - Scarcity of women in workforce and economic participation of the country.

c. - Ratio of women availing employment opportunities are far less as compared to males.

d. - Lack of political empowerment.

e. - Violence against women is rife in male dominated society.

4. Pakistani women have the same chances

as men. (Anti-thesis)

- a- Educated and intellectual families encourage female education.
- b- Women personal ^{issues} ~~issues~~ ^{happens} ~~economic~~ participation and self-independency.
- c- Many sectors offer grave employment opportunities to women than men.
- d- Women possess the right to political empowerment.
- e- Certain laws have been passed to ~~protect~~ protect women.

5. Despite improvement and policies to women empowerment, men still dominate the society. (synthesis)

- a- In many regions, men's education is prioritized over women's education.
- b- Men ^{still} hold bigger chunk of economic participation.
- c- Other factors also contribute to unemployment of women except gender.
- d- The ratio of political empowerment is rather low.
- e- Violence is ubiquitous due to ineffective laws.

6. Conclusion

ESSAY:

"A man's education is a person's education, but a woman's education is a family's education." (Holy Prophet P.B.U.H). This highlights the significance of woman's literacy and empowerment. The importance of women from upbringing of children to the workplace and economic contribution towards country, cannot be undermined. In the modern era, gender parity is a popular slogan, yet far from being achieved. Pakistani women lag behind men in every aspect of life due to gender discrimination. Nevertheless, by spreading awareness and educating people, the chances of women empowerment may enhance. Owing to the fact that Pakistani women have rather less chances and opportunities than men, they have comparatively lower exposure to the education, workplace and economic contribution towards country. Besides, lack of political participation and violence cases against women deprive them from availing equal rights to men. However, in the era of modernization, people encourage female education and empower

ment. In order to serve this purpose, teaching profession is very favourable for women. Moreover, women have are given political rights as well as many laws are being passed to counter violent cases against women. Nevertheless, at times personal issues are a major hurdle in women empowerment. This is not always the case. Pakistani society is a male-dominated society. Despite reforms, women are unable to achieve same chances as men in education, economic and political sector. Furthermore, they are more insecure in male-dominancy and face the challenges of violence and unemployment.

The gender parity in Pakistan refers to the differences between men and women in terms of social, political and economic participation and rights. Pakistan has been ranked 142 out of 156 countries with 57.5% gender parity, the highest since 2006 (WEF, Global Gender Gap Report, June 2023). No improvement has been seen in biases against women in a decade, with 9 out of 10 men and women still holding such biases today, worldwide including Pakistan (GSNI, Gender Inequality, June 2023). In the era of

economic and technological advancement, women must contribute equally to the country as of men. For this, same chances ^{to men} in every aspect of life are required for them. Women empowerment is necessary for the betterment of society as elaborated by a Chinese proverb, "women hold half of the sky".

In Pakistan, women do not acquire the same chance as men. They have scarce educational opportunities. This dearth is because of conservative mindset and patriarchal domination in Pakistan. The lower education ratio among girls is due to traditional idea of early marriage and the household responsibility. In Pakistan, there are 22.8 million out-of-school children, with girls disproportionately affected (UNESCO, Education, 2023). Besides, in the past, COVID-19 and floods have further impacted the girls education. Nearly 15,000 schools have been damaged in Sindh due to flood in 2022. In addition to this, almost 2.5 million children, especially girls could go out of school (Arab News, Sep 2022). Therefore, girls education is not prioritized in Pakistan.

Moreover, the chances for women to participate in workforce and contribute towards country economically are not same as men. In this perspective, social and educational factors are involved. The literacy level among women, especially financial literacy is insignificant. According to a recent financial inclusion survey, only 13% of Pakistani women are registered users of financial services, with only 10% of women being financially literate (WEF, Gender Parity in Economic Participation, July 2023). Furthermore social restrictions imposed on women restrain them to contribute and become part of economic participation towards country. Pakistan lags in economic participation with 0.36% increase in the current pace of improvement (WEF, Gender Parity in Economic Participation, ^{in gender parity} July 2023). Hence, women do not avail equal chance of economic participation to country as men.

In addition to the above, the percentage of women being employed is lower than the average when compared to men. Despite being educated and having highly qualified

degrees, women ~~ratio~~ at workplace is negligible. Household responsibilities and other factors are involved. Survey reveals that over 70% of female engineering graduates in Pakistan are unemployed (Gallup Pakistan and PRIDE, Oct 2023). On the labour demand side, mismatch in skills and education needed for available jobs; gender gaps and discrimination in hiring and retention, as well as other factors diminish the employment opportunities for women. Subsequently, their self-independency is not considered vital in Pakistani society. So, they have limited employment opportunities.

Women in Pakistan still lack a full say in Political affairs. Women's political participation in Pakistan depends on their academic education as well as their social status and family. Mainly in rural areas, they have no right to cast vote as per their choice. In fact, if they participate in the government and parliament, they are largely ignored in decision-making process within their political parties and during the proceedings of the legislative assemblies. This happens due to lack of their own electorate

of constituency like the male counterparts. Women's political participation has always been a major challenge for the parties' leaders since independence. Hence, Pakistani women are not politically empowered.

Violence against women is another prevalent issue which limits the women's equal participation chances as men. Women are unsafe; many are silent about domestic abuse, many face emotional abuse, many face harassment at workplace, many cannot ride on roads safely and so on. Between Jan 1 and April 30, a total of **10,365** cases of violence against women were reported to the Punjab Police and **777** to the Sindh Police (**Sustainable Social Development Organization, Oct 2023**). Violence against women is the major hurdle of in the way of women empowerment. Moreover, women in Pakistan mainly encounter violence by being forced into marriage. Violence by spouses and other male relatives against women is the most widespread form of violence in Pakistan. Statistics show that domestic violence cases surged during the lock-down period that was

imposed because of COVID-19. So, violence is a major contributor to gender parity in opportunities.

However, the condition of Pakistani women have improved in the present age. Many intellectual and enlightened families view women's education important. A well-educated woman provides the better skills, knowledge and self-assurance necessary to be a better mother, worker and citizen. Female students outnumber their male counterparts in degree level education. There are 296,832 students enrolled in degree level education in public sector institutions, and 62% of them are female while 38% are male. More women pursue higher education and break barriers. The number of girls getting higher education exacerbates with time: 88% of females worldwide (including Pakistan) had primary education, compared to 91% of males (Global Gender Gap Report, 2020). Hence, the literacy rate of women in Pakistan has been improved with time.

Another significant aspect which impedes the equal chances for women as men is

their trivial role in economic development of country. Again, major flaw lies on their part i.e. personal issues restrict them within the boundaries of home. Marriage is the biggest hurdle in this perspective. Nearly, 64.2% out of 70% female engineering graduates who ^{cannot} participate in the labour force ~~are~~ married (Gallup Pakistan and PRIDE, Oct 2023). In addition to this, women of living in big cities are faced with greater competition than in rural areas. A high proportion of unemployed engineering graduates is found in urban areas i.e. 91.8% as compared to rural areas i.e. 8.2% (Gallup Pakistan and PRIDE, Oct 2023). Therefore, women in Pakistan face socio-economic problems in order to contribute to the country, economically.

The low female labour force participation represents a major loss of potential productivity. In Pakistan, women ^{serve} primarily in the home or farm. However, in modern age, their ratio in education and healthcare sectors surpasses the ratio of men. These professions are considered more suitable and prestigious for women as compared to the formal employment. It also

has ~~also~~ positively impacted the women's empowerment. Moreover, medical profession is often associated with high socio-economic status for women. Pakistan has produced about 200,000 doctors ever since its inception and "half of them are females" (PMDC, Sept 2023). This highlights the equal availability of opportunities for women as men in health care sectors. Similarly, education sector also prioritizes female teachers. A report shows that female teachers working at elementary level perform better than males (UNESCO). Hence, Pakistani women have same employment opportunities as men in many sectors.

Besides, Pakistan governments have made various reforms in different periods to guarantee the political empowerment of women. Women political participation needs their participation in party gatherings, election campaigns and participation in public demonstrations. The reforms being implemented at various times give right to political empowerment to women as well as political representation. For example, granting 17% of reserved seats to women in Parliament, allocating a 33% quota to women

in the local government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and so on. If the presence of women in the political and legislative spheres becomes more prominent, it will modernize the communication patterns of women and makes them bolder to achieve their rights. So, women have the political rights within limited sphere.

Laws have been enacted to counter the grave issue of violence against women. Challenges remain in implementing these laws, however, government takes steps to ensure their implementation. The new legislation specifically includes laws against domestic violence and workplace harassment. For instance, government of Pakistan enacted the **Protection against Harassment of women at workplace (Amendment) Bill 2022** to counter workplace violence. Moreover, the bill for **Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act 2020** is introduced in the National Assembly by Ministry of Human Rights. It aims to establish an effective system of protection, relief and rehabilitation of women. Furthermore, one of the most prevalent forms of violence these days is

digital violence. Article 25 of the 1973 Pakistani constitution ensures all types of protection for its citizens. According to it, "All citizens are equal before law and are entitled to equal protection of law". Hence, laws ensures protection to women in Pakistan.

Notwithstanding, gender discrimination is rife despite the laws and policies in Pakistan. Men are considered superior and in many regions only male gender is considered to have the right to education. This ratio is even distressing in down-trodden and rural areas of Pakistan. Cultural norms and conservative attitudes towards gender roles, poverty and education facilities are responsible to scarcity of female students. About 12.6 million girls are out-of-school in Pakistan while the number of boys is around 10.2 million (UNESCO). Poverty is another major reason for girls' illiteracy. Girls in poor families are less likely to attend school than boys. This gender gap gets narrower with better-off families. Women need to have the basic knowledge, so they can deal with different life issues and can keep pace with men. So, female education is not a

prevalent phenomenon in Pakistan.

Moreover, in Pakistani men's role in economic contribution ~~of~~ to the country is more than women. Social and religious traditions surrounding gender roles ~~so~~ lead to the financial gender gap. Men are seen as the primary agent of economic responsibility. They are generally the main source of income in households throughout Pakistan. Owing to this, they are the major contributors towards country's economy.

In a survey of over **135 countries**, Pakistan finished **fourth** from the bottom for female financial inclusion (**World Bank, ^{May} 2023**). Besides, man is the main regulator of ~~holdhold~~ household financial responsibility. According to **Islamic Custom**, in the case that both husband and wife are employed, the woman's income is considered to be rightfully her own and does not necessarily have to be spent on the upkeep of the home. Keeping in view the above facts, it can be said that men have greater economic responsibility than women. Ultimately, their economic contribution is also ~~to~~ huge.

In addition to gender bias, various factors

are involved in the unemployment of women. Social norms shape women's labour outcomes. To mind the demeanour of women and protect their honour, many men restrict women from leaving home. This restrains them from being financially independent. Moreover, in the workplace, male gender is preferred especially in more labour-intensive job like **Army, Police**, due to physical and mental endurance. Besides, women are relatively less liable to continue the jobs. All the above factors lead to less employment opportunities for females. Hence, men are considered more appropriate for employment.

Although Pakistan ensures political representation to women in the Parliament, their political and social texture does not support a truly democratic political system for women. Despite the significant quota (33%) given to women at the local level in 2001, there is a deep gap in their actual representation in Pakistan. This is because the structure of political parties restricts women's representation in the political process. Meanwhile, the role of customs, gender beliefs and religious values exclude women

from participating in politics. In terms of political empowerment, Pakistan ranks **95 out of 146 countries** as one-tenth of its ministers and one-fifth of parliamentarians are women (**Gender parity in Economic Participation, 2023**). Therefore, political empowerment of women in Pakistan is insignificant due to undemocratic social and political system for women.

Over and above, Pakistan has successfully passed laws to control women's rights violence, but the implementation of these laws is still missing. The law only works when implemented, otherwise, it is ineffective. Pakistani women face many challenges of violence which restrict women's mobility. Out of **100, 80%** of women face Domestic Violence in Pakistan. This include physical, emotional and sexual abuse. In recent years, Pakistan has taken step toward implementation of laws that protect women's rights and bring to book the violators of law. While progress has been made, there is still a long way to go in ensuring that women in Pakistan are free from discrimination, harassment and abuse. Hence, violence against women needs to be

countered effectively.

In conclusion, it can be said that Pakistani women have far less chances as compared to men in every aspect of life. They are discriminated against men in social, economic, political and educational spheres. Besides, women are more exposed to gender-based violence and socio-cultural stigma of the society. However, their importance in any field of life may not be under-estimated. With innovations and modernization, women have become more empowered and self-sufficient. They possess the potential to keep pace and even surpass men in today's world. Nevertheless, despite women's empowerment, Pakistani society is basically male-dominated and it does not provide conducive ^{circumstances} for women from education to the workplace. Hence, Pakistani women lag behind men in the provision of opportunities.

“There is no chance for the welfare of the world until the condition of women is improved. It is not possible for a bird to fly on only one wing.”
— Swami Vivekananda.