

Pakistani Women have the same chances as Men.

Outline

1. Introduction

Thesis statement, Men and women are considered equal and there has been a progress towards providing them equal opportunities. However, challenges still exist in a society like Pakistan, where women are subjugated and discriminated in social, political and economic aspects, getting less opportunities as compared to their male counterpart.

2. Significance of providing equal chances to both genders in the society.

3. Prevailing Gender inequality (Thesis).

- a. Girls education is considered less important
- b. Disparity in the job market
- c. Women lag behind in political and leadership opportunities.
- d. No measures against GBV and discrimination
- e. Lack of decision making.

4. Men and Women are given equal opportunities.

- a. Gender gap in education has significantly decreased
- b. Women are on top position in their professional careers.

- c. Women participation in politics increased.
- d. Various bills has been passed to ensure women's right and their protection.
- e. They take their decisions on their own.

5. Though women have the opportunities, yet gender discrimination persists.

- a. The ratio of girls' education is low
- b. as compared to boys.
Mostly women are considered house wives, not allowed to do jobs.
- c. Less participation in politics as of their population
- d. Although various laws are present for women's protection but they are not implemented.
- e. Male dominance in their decisions persists.

b. Conclusion.

No nation can rise to the height of glory unless your women are side by side with you. We are victims of evil customs. It is a crime against humanity that our women are shut up within four walls of the houses as prisoners" (- Muhammad Ali Jinnah). This quotation emphasizes the importance of gender equality and active participation of women in nation's progress. It highlights the negative impacts of customs that confine women to their homes, limiting their potential and denying them the opportunity to contribute to the society.

Men and women are considered equal and there has been progress towards providing them equal opportunities. However, challenges still exist in a society like Pakistan, where women are subjugated in social, political and economic aspects, getting less opportunities as compared to their male counterpart. Women lag behind in terms of education, political, leadership, and economic opportunities, not able to make their life choices, facing GBV and discrimination.

However, in view of proponents of gender equality, gender gap in education, job fields and career choices have been decreased. Women participation in leadership roles are increasing, thereby bills has been passed to ensure women's rights. Yet, ratio of girls education is low as compared to boys. Women are considered as housewives, not allowed to perform their roles in job.

market, male dominance in their decisions persists, facing discrimination. Their participation in politics is less as compared to the population. Although various laws are present for women's protection, yet they are not implemented in true sense.

Men and women are both considered as the important pillar of the society, contributing towards its development. If both the genders are ensured to have the equal chances and opportunities, society as a whole benefits. No society can achieve high levels of development unless every individual, irrespective of gender, contributes their due share towards its social-economic uplift. Despite of this fact, due to several social customs, urban norms, and governmental policies gender equality is a far distant dream. Both the genders are not given the equal opportunities - the condition of women is pathetic. Women in the male dominant societies of Pakistan stand far behind their male counterparts with only 43 pc literacy and 18.2 pc of labour force participation. Such a low number signifies the fact that women are not enjoying the same chances as that of men. Their exclusion from important aspects of lives gives rise to many problems including, high birth

rate, low literacy, stagnant GDP, etc.

To begin with the arguments related to gender inequality, first in line is the disparity in girls' education. Prevailing cultural norms, poverty, ^{lack of} awareness of the rights are some of the barriers in the way of girls' education. Lack of education among girls not only hinders the personal growth of women, but also limits the overall development of the society. This triggers multifaceted gender-based problems, like female illiteracy, violence against women, and child marriages - due to lack of education for girls. According to UN data, there are some 19 million child brides in Pakistan. One in six girls gets married in her childhood. This unfortunate trend continues to grow because of lack of girls' education which is not considered as important as of boys, and this in turn deprives girls of their rights such as their right to marriage. For this reason girls lag behind in almost every field. Improper and inadequate education facilities for girls also hinders the progress of the country as girls can contribute less, affecting the overall GDP growth. A report released by United Nation's Children's Fund (Unicef) revealed that about 32 million girls of primary school age and 29 million girls of

Lower secondary school age were not getting education because of the problems they face. This is indeed a very high number regarding the education of girls. Thus, it is evident from the fact that despite claiming the same chances to both genders, the number is exceeding in terms of dropout rates of girls and not having access to education.

Similarly, still the stereotype regarding women's role exists. Women are typically considered as the housewives, shut behind the four walls not allowed to excel in their careers. Cultural norms and traditional roles of patriarchy are the barriers, restricting women to participate in the job market and contribute to the country's progress. Such a mindset believes man as a sole source of bread earner. The International Labour Organization estimates that Pakistan has one of lowest female labour force participation rates in the world, that is only 25%. The same number for males is estimated at 81%. Thus, this low number of women participation in economic spheres creates the intra-household income disparities where men are given the chances and they end up earning much more than women.

Furthermore, women lag behind in political and leadership opportunities. Women are not given the same chance that of their male counterpart to excel in the leadership roles and can ensure their rights, can be voice of others too. It is incredibly important for women to have representation in leadership roles, because they can bring diverse perspectives and experiences. This leads to more inclusive decision making policies and policies that better address the concerns and needs of these and many other women. Additionally, women on leadership roles serves as a powerful example for future generations. But unfortunately, statistics paint a grim picture of Pakistani women. Within realm of politics, male voter turnout in 2018 election exceeded female voter turnout by around 9.1pc, based on the statistics of Election Commission of Pakistan. Additionally, gender disaggregation of National Assembly, approximately only 20 pc of parliamentarian are women and that too in large part on reserved seats. To sum up, it can be said that women's electoral preferences are less well reflected in the governance system of Pakistan, compared to males, because of lower

female turnout as well as lower presence of females in the national parliament.

In addition, Pakistani society is a patriarchal society where male dominance is prevalent. Patriarchal norms contribute to the prevalence of gender-based violence which manifests in various forms such as domestic violence, sexual harassment, honor killing and forced marriages. These acts are rooted in traditional roles of men and their discriminatory attitudes towards women, depriving women of their basic rights, safety and dignity, perpetuating the cycle of gender inequality. According to the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) - 2017-18, a whopping 28pc of women in Pakistan between 15 and 49 years of age have experienced physical violence. Twenty six percent of married women have experienced spousal physical or sexual violence, having sustained injuries. Conclusively, this given paragraph shows violence against women remains a huge problem in the country, depriving them of their rights and sowing the seeds of inequality in the society presenting the males as dominant part factor having much opportunities than women.

Furthermore, women who lag behind in education, not have set the proper goals, have no presence in political and leadership roles, far behind in economic sphere automatically leads them to be dependendent on their male counterparts and are not able to make their own decisions. These societal norms often restrict women's autonomy and limit her progress in many aspects. Additionally, cultural traditions and expectations can reinforce the idea that women should conform to certain roles and decisions made by male family members.

However, the opponents of gender inequality presents a completely different picture. They view women as an equal contributor in the society as that of their male counterparts. They have same opportunities and chance, which a male have in the society. These people acknowledges that progress has been made in reducing gender gaps in various areas. There have been advancement in women's education.

In the world's economic Forum's Global gender gap Report 2023, Pakistan's ranking has improved from 145 to 142 out of 146 countries. This is on account

that gender gap in various areas such as education has reduced, Pakistan's enrolment indicators reflect commendable progress. Evidence from provinces, especially Punjab, reveals a significant increase in enrolment rates. Notably, there is a 19 per cent surge in the proportion of enrolled children in house hold surveys and this progress has been most pronounced among girls, with a 84 pc rise in enrollment. Thus, it shows there is precedent increase and improvement in girls' education. That means girls are getting equal chances in educational spheres.

Similarly, women's participation in economic sphere has been increasing over the years. More and more women are getting into various sectors and taking on higher positions and leadership roles. This not only promotes gender equality but also contributes to overall economic growth of the country. Women making significant strides in the workforce and bringing their unique perspectives and talents to the table. Such as higher number of females are getting their charges as police officers, setting an example to have women decision makers in positions of authority. and proves that the outdated regressive stereotypes which dictates that

women cannot be part of workforce that demands aggressive work can be shattered.

Additionally, many women are choosing their careers as doctors, empowering and setting examples for other girls. For instance according to a report by Pakistan Medical and Dental Councils, as of 2021, approximately 55% of registered doctors in Pakistan are women. This shows a remarkable increase in women's representation and participation in workforce. These achievements are inspiring and demonstrate the progress being made towards ending gender discrimination and ensuring the equal opportunities with the male counterparts.

Furthermore, women are side by side with men in political field as well. There seems an equal participation of women in the leadership roles shows that women are given the equal chances in every aspect of their lives.

Gender gap among the women in politics has been decreased which is evident from the fact the voters registration is narrowing with every new release of electoral rolls. According to a report released by Election Commission of Pakistan the latest registered voters' statistics of July 2015, indicates a gender gap of

7.9 per cent, which is lowest over the past 21 years and almost equal to lowest recorded such gap of 7.67 pc in 2002. Thus, this number shows that the disparity among the men and women in the political field is decreased and improving the number of women's participation on leadership roles which not only break the typical stereotype, but also pave a way for the women empowerment.

Despite the challenges women face, Pakistan has taken several steps to protect women's right and ensure their safety. To eliminate gender based violence, various bills have been passed such as The acid control and Acid crimes prevention Act, 2010, Anti Rape Law 2020, Protection against Harassment of Women at work place Act, 2010. These bills have been passed to address the domestic violence, acid attacks, honor killing, harassment against women, aims to provide women a legal protection and support, promoting equality and safer environment. Additionally, these bills encourages the women to raise their voice for her rights as the law itself protects the rights of women. For these measure

more positive steps are being witnessed to empower women and to break the barriers.

Though, women are being subjugated and facing the harsh treatment from their male counterparts yet, women are not letting that to stop them. Due to their exposure to socio-economic conditions, they are able to challenge the traditional gender roles and societal norms, breaking the barriers and making their voices heard. Their determination, courage, and due to legal protection, women are able to make their own choices rather than being dependent on their male dominant members. Due to this resilience, women now a days are paving the way for a more inclusive and equal society, promoting the sense of gender equality and ensuring a fact that women have equal chances that of a man.

While progress has been made in women's education, there is still a gender disparity in access to education. The ratio of girls education is lower compared to that of boys. Pakistan is the country that has been constantly struggling to achieve gender equality in education. According to UNICEF data, an estimated 99.8 million children aged 5-16 are out of school.

13 million are girls, this may be a total population of some countries. Only 68 per cent of girls aged 15-23 year are able to read and write, compared to 83 pc of boys of the same age. This shows that in Pakistan, girls' education is never get on the priority list in a patriarchal society. Girls have never been encouraged to seek education due to cultural taboos and barriers. Additionally, the challenge that impede girls' education is lack of transport, growing poverty, wrong perceptions, gender discrimination, early marriages, educational infrastructure, absence of safe environment, etc. Thus, girls' drop out rate is more than boys because of being a girl in a patriarchal they have to face many challenges, that parents are not encouraged to send their daughters to schools.

Similarly, despite being educated women, due to cultural taboos are considered as housewives. Women have been subjected to sexism and misogyny, often expected to fulfill traditional gender roles, fulfilling the house duties leading them to live a miserable life, because often their self-esteem and self-worth is validated with praise, derailed by criticism. This mindset can limit their opportunities and hinder their full potential. Many of the girls.

are not able to continue their careers despite having professional degrees because of their early marriages. Such girls are becoming the trophy wives, limited to their homes and fulfilling their household responsibilities. According to Pakistan Medical and Dental Council 50% of female graduates never work after graduation. This shows that large number of female doctors are not practising medicine, even though there is desperate need of their services, and this is due to the reason that girls are forced to marriages and are not allowed to enter in the professional career. Thus, there are measures to bring women on equal footings of men by ensuring equal chances, yet many female degree-holders are often confined to traditional gender roles as housewives.

Furthermore, women in political arena, women are acceptable only as proxies or an extension of male politicians. The representation of women in politics is less, not only in national and provincial assemblies but also in local government institutions. The constituents of gender based variation in politics include barriers in voting, barriers to ^{seeking} elected offices, barriers to access within political parties and barriers to representation in

policy making and governance. There is a gender based political inequality in the country. Out of Pakistan's nearly 106 million registered voters, only 44 per cent are women. That's at least 6pc less than their actual proportion in overall adult population. This is because either the eligible women are not registered on electoral rolls or women not being registered as the citizens, because mostly women do not see the need of CNIC as mandatory as the men who require it for their employment, voting or other purposes. At least 10pc of the female population (adult) are not registered as citizens with NADRA. Thus, it shows that most men consider ^{or} women inappropriate to speak their minds about politics or to vote in general election, or become a political party workers. This mindset clearly reveals the gender inequality in political representation of women is still prevalent.

Though there are various laws in the country for the women's protection but they are not implemented. This is due to various factors such as cultural norms, patriarchy being practiced and ruled over the laws. This has led to the significant number of women to suffer brutal practices, bearing domestic violence, around 1000 of women are being killed every year in the name of honour, there is a

practice of throwing away newborns, particularly girls in garbage dumps. Additionally, cybercrimes against women is increasing, damaging the socio-economic conditions of women in the country. Women, whether rich or poor, educated or uneducated, are subjected to sexual harassment and violence in the society. Conclusively, it can be said that despite there are various laws related to acid, rape, harassment, anti violence laws, still there is no attitude towards the pro-legislation for women. Laws are not being implemented which gave a open path to male persons of society to continue their brutal practices against women.

Gender-based discrimination continues to deprive women of their rights, not letting them to pursue their goals. There is always a male-present decisions that override the women's decisions. Means these discriminated population are not even allowed to decide for their lives. Existence of patriarchal factor in the societies have made the women to led a life of misery. They are not given their own choices, Women have to say "no" to their choices and have to accept what the patriarchal society decide for her. A general example for men's preference over women is it is a common practice that parents wants son whom -

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they value more and look upon their future security. Beliefs and attitudes of women's "honour" restrict women's mobility. Girls are less empowered or to say that they are given less opportunities. They don't even practices their free will for the marriages. Even Islam allows the consent of girls for their marriages. Yet this right of girls is being violated. Additionally, their right to inheritance is being taken lightly. Thus, there is no denying fact that, there are several cultural factors that hinder gender equality and negatively impact women's well-being. With the patriarchal mindset where women are not empowered, not given their right to practice their free will, it is highly likely that the gender gap will widen further in the country, leading to disparity in the opportunities.

"O mankind! Fear your Lord who (initiated) your creation from a single soul, then from it created its mate, and from these two spread (the creation) of countless men and women" (Al-Quran, 4: 1) The verse clearly expounds that man or woman are clearly created from a single soul and are basically equal in genders. As genders, one is not superior to the others. Yet in a society like Pakistan women have to face challenges due to various factors which exacerbates the socio-

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economic conditions of women. Women are being subjugated, facing discrimination not enjoying the equal opportunities as that of men. Women are deprived of their basic rights because she is labelled as a "Woman."