

# Status of Women Empowerment in Pakistan

## Outline:

### 1. Introduction:

#### Thesis Statement:

Women in Pakistan face numerous obstacles to avail their due rights, and it is national responsibility to help them break free from these obstacles and empower them.

### 2. Constitutional Rights of Women in Pakistan:

- 2.1 Equality before Law (Article 25)
- 2.2 Prohibition of Discrimination (Article 25(3))
- 2.3 Rights to life and liberty (Article 9)
- 2.4 Fundamental Rights (Chapter I, Part II of Constitution)
- 2.5 Protection of Property (Article 23)
- 2.6 Right to Education (Article 25-A)
- 2.7 Equal Employment Opportunities (Article 27)
- 2.8 Right to Health (Fundamental Rights)

### 3. ~~3~~ Rights granted by Islam to Women:

3.1 Right to Education - Seeking knowledge obligatory

3.2 Right to Marriage and family life

- Right to choose spouse
- Right of Mahri
- Right of Divorce

3.3 Economic Rights

- Right to own property
- Right to Earn - Example of Khadija Bint e Khuwailid

3.4 Right to Inheritance

- Share in the property of Parents, Husband, and Son

3.5 Right to Respect and Honor - Behavior of Prophet with Hadrat Fatima

### 4. Exploitation of Women Rights in Pakistan:

4.1 Barriers in <sup>way of</sup> getting Education

- Example of Malala Yusufzai
- Report of Pakistan Alliance of Girls Education
- Early marriage disturbs schooling
- Preference of Son over daughters

good well researched content

Issues

- Sick mentality and Trust

- Harassment at Educational institutes

- 58 cases at 7 universities in Islamabad

4.2 Women facing challenges in accessing proper healthcare

- Maternal Mortality - 186 deaths out of 100,000 births

- contraceptive prevalence rate is just 35%

- Highest Breast cancer rate in Asia: 50.3%

- Highest diabetes prevalence in Asia: 17.8% women compared to 16.2% men

4.3 Forced child Marriages

- 18.9 million girls married before 18 (UNICEF Report)

- Case of Reeha Saleem
- cousin marriage tradition without consent.

4.4 Gender Based Violence and Honor Killing

- Global Gender Gap Report 2022

- 10,000 cases of violence in Punjab in 2023 (Human Rights Watch)

• Acid attacks - 'Saving Face' of Sharmin Obaid

• Honor killing : Qandeel Baloch case

• "Girl in the River" by Sharmin Obaid

4.5 Rape and Sexual violence

• Case of Mukhtaram Mai

• Quote of Mukhtaram Mai

• Fatima Furio Case

• Zainab case

• Nook Mukadam case

• Hate towards victim

• Marital Rape

5. Ways to Empower women and Secure their Rights:

5.1 Access to quality Education

• Scholarship and transport facilitation for girls

• Elimination of harassment at Educational institutes

5.2 Awareness of Parents about importance of girls Education.

5.2 Better Health Services

• Legal framework for consent of women for conceiving child.

- of
- paratone Deliveries at home
- Sahat Cards for Women
- Allocation of more budget for Women's health.

### 5.3 Increasing the Political Participation of Women

- Multiplying the quota of women in Political Parties
- Promoting Female leadership

### 5.4 Eradication of Gender Based Violence and Sexual Harassment

- Establishing Women Help centers in Rural Areas - Example of Canada
- Teaching Self defense to girls.
- Empowering media to aware masses

• Conclusion:

good imaginative start keep it up

## Essay

Women in society are like the stars in the night sky, often taken for granted. Yet without them, the world would be plunged into darkness. Women give birth to society and make it developed through its endurance and hidden struggles. Though, women's rights are not taken in consideration, while talking on human rights. Women share nearly half of the population in Pakistan, but they seem mostly invisible from public, political and social platforms of life. Moreover, fundamental rights of women like health, education, security, freedom of choice, property and employment are granted by both Constitution of Pakistan and Islam. Although Pakistan is an Islamic Republic, yet its society hinders the basic women rights given by its religion. Women in Pakistan face numerous obstacles to avail their due rights and it is national responsibility to help them break free from

these obstacles and empowers them.

Fortunately, <sup>all fundamental rights to</sup> Constitution of Pakistan grants ~~numerous~~ rights to women to guarantee their wellbeing and prosperity. The Constitution guarantees equality before law and prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, ensuring that men and women have equal legal standing. Further, Article 25(3) allows for affirmative action in favor of women, such as special provisions to protect and promote their interests in society. Under Article (9) women are entitled to protection of life and liberty. Moreover, Chapter I part II of the constitution states that women are entitled to all fundamental rights, such as freedom of speech, religion, assembly, and association, which ensures their protection in public life and decision making. Women are not barred from their economic rights in constitution. Article 23 affirms women's right to own property and inherit assets. Inheritance laws are also guided by Islamic principles. Education is the pillar of social framework that's why constitution

guarantees the right to free and compulsory education for children aged 5 to 16, which applies equally to girls. Women are not only bounded to four walls they are given equal right of economic opportunities. The constitution prohibits discrimination in employment, ensuring that women can access equal job opportunities and work under equal conditions as. Even, women quotas are also included in job opportunities. Mahatma Gandhi rightly said, "It is health that is real wealth, not pieces of gold and silver." Therefore, to enrich women with this wealth of health, constitution of Pakistan provides right of quality healthcare to women in its fundamental rights.

Further, Islam is the pillar on which strong standing of Pakistan is constructed. Islam is an ideological concept of Pakistan's society ensures the fundamental rights of women. Education is a very important concept of Islam as the first revelation was also about reading.



Therefore, Islam places a greater emphasis on the importance of knowledge for both men and women. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, "Seeking knowledge is obligatory on every Muslim (male and female). Islam gives women freedom to marry on their will and manage their family lives. Islam requires woman's consent for marriage, and forced marriage is prohibited. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, "A woman cannot be married until she gives her consent." Moreover, women have the right to receive Mahr from their husbands at the time of marriage, which is personal property and cannot be taken away. In addition women are not bound to face coercion and torture by husband. If she is unhappy she can seek divorce too. Along with this, women are given the right own and manage property. The Quran emphasizes that women should receive a share of inheritance. "For men is the share of what parents and close relatives leave, and for

women is the share what parents and close relatives leave." Similarly, women can earn in a lawful manner. Hazrat Khadija, the wife of Prophet Muhammad, was a business woman.

it is good description

This highlights the significance of women employment. And, Islam teaches that women must be respected and honored by their husbands, fathers, brothers and society at large. Islam says Paradise is under the feet of Mother, and one who treats his daughters well will be with me in Paradise like two fingers. Quran commands men to treat women with kindness. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) used to stand up in the honor of his daughter Fatima. Thus, women is entitled to variety of rights and liberties in Islam.

this is start of essay  
now you are on topic

Despite the fact that women are given all rights in constitution and Islam, they (women) are ignored in all spheres of life. Their rights are violated in the society as a norm. Education is a tool to change the fate of

nation, but this tool is only considered operative for men. While women are barred from getting education. It is evident from the practices of tribal areas that girls are restricted from education, and if they try to get their right so called extremists target them. For example, Malala Yusufzai was targeted in Swat in 2014, for her fight for education against Taliban. Pakistan Alliance for Girls Education reports that 13.71 million girls are out of school in Pakistan. Also, women literacy rate is 52% as compared to 75% of their male counterparts. This rate is a result of several factors like early marriage which creates hindrances in way of getting education. Moreover, traditional families mostly prefer their sons' education to sending daughters to school. In rare cases if they are sent to school, then they are admitted into government schools where ghost teachers remain invisible. While the some are admitted in private quality institutes.

Further, it is thought that sending girls to school will make girls offensive and they may acquire bad character. Not only this, educational institutes are also not safe in Pakistan. Girl students usually become victims of male fellows, teachers, or even security guards and rickshaw drivers. In 2023 58 cases of harassment were reported at seven universities in Islamabad. All these prospects exacerbate educational doldrum faced by girls.

Secondly women's health in Pakistan is a major concern with women facing numerous challenges in accessing proper health care. Issues like maternal mortality, lack of access to reproductive health services and limited awareness about women's health are widespread.

Pakistan's maternal mortality rate stands at around 186 deaths per 100,000 live births, significantly higher than the global average. Moreover, reproductive health rights are also undermined by cultural factors and lack of education.

Many women do not have control

over their reproductive choices, including contraceptive use, due to societal pressure and limited access to health services.

Pakistan's contraceptive prevalence rate is just 35%. A woman's health is her capital, but in Pakistan, a woman is in debt. This is evident from the fact that Pakistan has Asia's highest breast cancer cases, which is 50.3%. Similarly, Pakistan ranks first in terms of most cases of diabetes in Asia. Among these cases, 17.8% are women. These grievous health conditions are signs of the calm before a storm, which may soon lead to a pandemic if not controlled now.

Thirdly, <sup>forced</sup> child marriage is a severe ~~issues~~ <sup>is a severe challenge that</sup> that deny the basic human rights of girls. According to UNICEF, 18.9 million girls are married before 18 years of age in Pakistan. The instance that highlights this condition is Reeha Suleem case. Reeha was a 16-year-old Christian girl of 8th grade abducted by Muslim neighbours and forced to marry in Gujarat.

In Pakistan, families tie the knot of cousins without their consent and minor girls are threatened to marry. In some cases the girls either leave their home or attempt suicide.

Fourthly, Gender based violence and honor killing is so prevalent in society that it is not considered a crime but a rite. Therefore, Pakistan ranks 145 out of 146 countries in Global Gender Gap Index. According to Human Rights Watch, in 2023 Punjab witnessed 10,000 cases of violence. And, 6 girls are attacked with acid if they refuse to marry. Sharmin Obaid Chiny produced a film (documentary) naming 'The Saving Faces' to highlight this issue. Unfortunately, girls are denied their due freedom of action and choice and are killed on the name of Honor. A high profile case of Qandeel Baloch, who was a social media influencer and killed by her brother on the name honor, raised brows of people. Sharmin Obaid

also shed light on this topic. She made another Oscar winning film 'The Girl in the River'. Though, there is no honor in killing, but culprits are honored as honor savers.

Lastly, Rape and sexual harassment is most widespread disease found in the apparent pious and religious society of Pakistan. A woman is raped every two hours in Pakistan. Mukhtaran Mai was raped in front of tribal leaders in Balochistan. Similarly, a 10 years old girl Fatima Jurjo, who was a househelp in Piro's haveli was raped and murdered in Ranipur, Sindh. Zainab a 7 years old girl was abducted from Kusr, on her way to Quran recitation classes. And, after five days she was found in garbage disposal in Lahore. In same way, Navee Mukadam a daughter of former Pakistani diplomat, was <sup>raped and</sup> murdered brutally by a family friend after marriage refusal. Victims not only fall in trap of criminals, but also are provoked to commit suicide by family.

and society. They are taunted and considered as impure and disrespected for family. Mukhtaran Mai said:

The rape survivors' families are not different from the rest of society. They discourage victims, from resigning or pursuing cases, in an attempt to sweep everything under the carpet. Society looks at the sufferers as if (getting raped) was his own fault. Marital rape is also another form of sexual violence against women. Men treat women as their property and cause harm to them. A man in Shangla was sentenced to life for abduction and 'marital rape' of minor wife before rukhsati.

Every problem has in it the seeds of its own solutions. Similarly, women's rights are violated but these have <sup>remedies</sup> ~~remedies~~ too. George Washington Carver said, "Education is a key to unlock the golden door of freedom." Therefore, it would not be exaggeration to call education as a Aladin Lamp for empowering women. Women should be given free



and easy access to education. Scholarships and transport should be separately available for girls. Government should make laws and policies to eliminate harassment at schools. Parents pose restrictions on their daughters regarding education. Teachers should meet parents and make them aware of <sup>importance of</sup> girls education. It is said, when a male learns he ~~is~~ an individual learns and when a female learns it means the whole society learns. Therefore, providing quality education is necessary for both women and society.

Good health is the most important thing. More than success. More than money. More than power. Women is the backbone of society and her good health is necessary to the development of nation. Government should make policies and legal framework that ensures female's consent for conceiving babies. NGOs should remain in contact with hospitals, if ~~any incident of forced~~ abortion occurs, culprits must be brought to justice. Moreover, mostly ladies die during delivery due to excessive

bleeding and majority of people prefer delivery at home where neither the lady gets blood or oxygen nor the baby gets early care. Therefore, giving birth at home should be prohibited and hostels should be made responsible to provide free services. Government has already introduced Sahat Sahulat programme, but it is for both male and female. Another programme solely for women should also be initiated. Pakistan's budget for health in 2024-2025 is Rs 27 billion. This should be increased up to 35 billion to help fulfill the gaps in health sector. Ambulances are present in hospitals but they demand heavy rent to carry the patients, that's why most of the babies die in womb. To curb this menace a regulating mechanism should be developed.

Another factor that can help empower women is their increased political representation. According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union Pakistan ranks low at 115 out of 190 countries in terms of representation of women. Although,

Pakistan has the pride of electing first women prime ministers of muslim countries, but still the ~~at~~ struggle is long. Political parties should increase women quota from 5% to 10%. Women should be given 50% parliamentary seats instead of only 20%. When there will be more women in legislation, they will protect their rights and make favourable legislation. Women themselves also come in front and make their own political parties, lead elections and run country as leaders. They should not follow the suit of male politician. Women must work to break patriarchal norms in politics.

Last but not the least, women empowerment is incomplete without eliminating gender based violence and sexual violence. To achieve this aim, women help centers should be established in rural areas, which are more prone to violence and harassment. The government should also draft new legislation for the legal empowerment of women and free legal assistance, enforcement of protective laws, and surveillance of women-specific

crimes. Moreover, free legal aid cells should be established in all High Courts, District Courts and session courts to provide free legal aid to women. Meanwhile online campaign, media awareness and social media trends should be started to instruct people, to promote awareness of women's rights and support systems. Pakistan can follow the suit of Canada which is a glaring example and a front-runner in championing women's rights. The country has comprehensive anti-discrimination laws and policies that address gender based violence and social discrimination. Like Canada, Pakistan can also eliminate these ills and make its land a safe and secure home for its women, so they can flourish their capabilities and widen their struggle to be the way of progress of their dear homeland.

In Conclusion, state of women's empowerment in Pakistan is miserable, as women cannot exercise their right to education, political participation, economic independence, employment and access better health care. Moreover, aggressive

social norms, gender based violence, harassment, <sup>and</sup> honor killing limit them from ~~the~~ developing their potential, enhancing their agency, and legal empowerment. However, the government has ~~tried~~ to adopt multidimensional strategies to ensure gender equality and women empowerment, yet <sup>still</sup> different approaches are needed to make situations completely better. Similarly, by providing scholarships, free healthcare, establishing women help units, and promoting awareness, barriers of women empowerment can be broken. As Steven Pinker rightly said, "Societies that empower women are less violent in every way." Thus, ~~Pakistan~~ can also improve its global ~~image~~ image by improving women.

---