

Perşembe
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CSS 2023 Gender Studies

PART-II

Question no. 7:

Answer: Introduction:

10 Pakistan, being a developing country, is not a safe place for women, especially in terms of good health facilities. With meagre health budgets and policies, women are deprived of even basic health facilities, which are the state's duty to provide. Despite technological advancements, women are still lacking behind and are subject to several minor as well as major health issues. Women are currently facing a myriad of health problems such as malnutrition due to discrimination, female infanticide, pre- and post-pregnancy related issues. Thus, there is a need to address these problems seriously and find a way out for the betterment of women as a whole.

21 Current Health Status of Women: Following are the current health issues

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08 faced by women in
Pakistan:

(i) Delayed Medical Help during Floods 2022:

09 Currently the health status
10 of women in Pakistan is not
11 in good hands. Especially, the
12 floods of 2022 have cast
13 a spell of destruction on
14 women's health. Women are
15 the one's bearing most of the
16 brunt of these tragic floods.
17 Even before the floods, the
18 health conditions of women
19 were not so good either.
20 Almost 1,400 health facilities
21 according to a health specialist
22 who works in UNFPA, have
23 been destroyed across Balochistan
24 and Sindh due to floods.
25 Not just that, among 30
26 million, 1.6 million women of
27 reproductive age were in
28 dire need of health
29 facilities.

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(ii) Social Dogmas Limit Area of Health Rights Facilitate Reproductive

It is not just natural obstacles in which act as an women's health, but way of social dogmas, such as patriarchy and old traditions rituals limit access to reproductive health services as well. For instance, the concept of midwives is not still new, and rural areas in gynae colleges, rather than health services to provide but they may cause women, unhygienic conditions which could be dangerous for both mother and child. Not just that, she male members of household also stick to the concept of midwives, thus making it difficult for women to access new technologies and reproductive rights.

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(iii) Domestic Violence: A Chief Source of Complications in pregnancy:

According to Pak Med Association, almost 16 to 76 percent of women are subjected to domestic violence once in their lifetime. Domestic violence may be attributed to several reasons, such as financial reasons, poverty, women's lack of decision-making power in the household and the demand for the male child. These causes produce various reproductive issues including sexual disorders, gynaecological dysarrays, antenatal fibrupptions, vaginal blood loss and sometimes miscarriage. The medical research by Nishet Hospital Multan in 2019 examined 16 women who were admitted to the hospital with bruises on their bodies during pregnancy. They also said that the reason behind the first miscarriage was domestic violence by the intimate partner or in some cases, other in-laws.

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(iv) Forced and Unwanted Pregnancies and Family Planning Services:

are faced by women in Pakistan, studies reported that nearly half of the pregnancies were unintended, leading to abortion. Unintended, while induced abortions and miscarriages were reported as 25 and 6 percent, respectively. Women are not given reproductive rights or the right to make decisions, for that matter, regarding how many children they want to have. This leads to a population explosion and lack of resources not just for one family but on collective stage, thus causing long-term health problems for women.

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(v) Malnutrition of Women Induced by Discrimination:

Another health issue faced by women is malnutrition by discrimination. Discrimination is mainly induced by male members of society since they prefer spending on male children more than female ones. UNICEF Pakistan Maternal Nutrition Strategy suggested that malnutrition is so common in women, especially during pregnancy, thus causing post-natal issues for both mother and child. This malnutrition thus causes iodine, calcium deficiency, stillbirth, waste, stunting of child growth, short stature, folic acid deficiency, insufficient placental abruption etc. Women in rural areas lack medical facilities therefore, unintentionally converting them into long-term health problems.

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(vi) Sexually Transmitted Infections

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs), such as AIDS, are also a major health problem faced by women in Pakistan. This happens because of rampant sexual contact and without any contraceptive measures. This further aggravates when there is absence of a proper screening mechanism to diagnose these diseases. Globally more than a million STIs occur daily, and over 53,000 women aged 15 and above were living with HIV/AIDS were living in Pakistan by the year 2020, as per a research article published by NIH. Thus, women live rest of their lives with such diseases without even knowing about them. One reason for prolonged STD in women is the unavailability of nearby medical facilities as well as a lack of education and awareness.

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Health Related Issues Throughout Life Cycle:

Stages of Life Cycle of Women

Health Issues

As a girl child

Malnutrition due to cultural discrimination in household resources.

As a teenage girl.

Infection due to the use of dirty clothes instead of clean sanitary pads to absorb menstrual blood discharged during menstrual cycle.

As an adult woman.

Female infanticide, termination of pregnancy (abortion), ultrasonic confirmation of gender, breast cancer, cervical cancer, ovarian cancer.

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Measures to be Taken to Improve Women's Status as a Whole:

Owing to all the health issues mentioned by women, there are effective steps in order to improve women's status as a whole.

(i) Free Emergency Centres and Maternity Homes: There is a dire need to establish free emergency centres and maternity homes, especially in rural areas. Moreover, these emergency centres must be accessible 24/7. Also, there must be free emergency obstetric care units (Emoc).

(ii) Appointing Skilled Midwives: There must be long-term planning to produce an army of competent and skilled midwives to reduce maternal death rate. There are many nursing homes established in various cities of Pakistan that tend to produce nurses, but

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These facilities should be the same
midwives to produce educated

(iii) Availability of Free Screening Programs: Shaakat Khanum has already taken the initiative and provided free breast cancer screening program, especially for opted facilities. This should be done by all medical facilities so that timely treatment can be done after diagnosis. Also, such facilities must be opened in rural areas where women have no medical access.

(iv) Increased Investment in the Health Sector: Right now, the health sector constitutes only 2 percent of the overall GDP. The budget needs to be increased so that maximum can be spent to improve health condition of people in the country. The budget must focus on training pediatricians, establishing medical facilities in backward areas, setting up diagnostic centers,

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and organizing programs for education and awareness about health related issues.

(v) Awareness Programs about Health Issues:

NGOs and educational institutions should take up the responsibility to hold awareness programs in order to aware young girls. Moreover, NGOs should organize similar programs in far-flung areas to educate rural women so that they may reach out to experts after experiencing symptoms.

(vi) Revise Women's Health Laws

Although section 338(A) of Pakistan Penal Code allows abortion under specific conditions mentioned in the provision, it must be revised keeping in view the Islamic restrictions and medical needs. Also, the factor of domestic violence and forced pregnancy must not be ignored and should

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be made condition of a necessary abortion to avoid infanticide.

Conclusion: The health status of women in Pakistan is not in good shape. It has been mixed by various causes such as patriarchal mindsets, cultural discrimination, complications, pre and post-pregnancy, and living issues faced by women in rural areas such as non-access to medical facilities, etc. Therefore, there is a dire need for effective measures to improve the status of women, as a whole, and not just their health. The abovementioned measures can play a vital role in improving health standards for women in Pakistan.

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