

# I Introduction

(i) Hook

(ii) Thesis statement: Women in Pakistan are facing challenges in achieving equal rights and opportunities compared to men. Cultural norms, economic disparities and unequal education opportunities hinder them to achieve their goals.

## II Factors contributing to unequal opportunities for women

(i) Cultural norms

(A) Early marriages

Case in point: According to UNICEF, Pakistan has 19 million child bride.

(B) Patriarchal society

(C) Less participation in decision making process

(ii) Economic disparities

(A) Deprive from inheritance

(B) Unequal job opportunities

(C) Pay gap

(D) No promotion structure

Case in point: According to world economic forum report Pakistan ranks 142 out of 146 countries as per the global gender gap index 2023.

(iii) Violence against women

(A) Domestic violence

(B) Harassment

Case in point: According to UN report 93% of women face harassment at their workplaces.

(C) Honour Killing

(iv) Unequal political participation

Unequal representation

Disputes to into

**Case in point:** According to a report of Gallup Pakistan 58.9 million female were registered for 2024 general election, only 41.6% women cast their vote.

(C) Male dominant parties

(D) No political campaign

**(III) Way forward to ensure equal rights**

(i) Equal education opportunities

(A) More budget allocation

(B) Improve infrastructure and facilities

(C) Scholarships for women

(ii) Equal job opportunities

(A) Job creation for women

(B) Reduce pay gap

(C) Implementation of law against harassment

(iii) Equal representation in politics

(iv) Reduce violence against women

**(IV) Conclusion**

During World War II, women played critical roles on the home front and in various aspects of war effort. Millions of men enlisted in the armed forces. Women stepped into traditionally male dominated roles in factories, farms and offices. They made weapons and bullets in industries. Moreover, women served as nurses, providing vital medical care to wounded soldiers on the front lines and in hospitals. Their compassion and skills saved the lives of many injured troops.

Their efforts were really crucial in the war zone. Due to their services and contribution they

became known as 'Rosie the Riveter' symbolizing their contribution to the war industry. They also

joined groups like the Women's Army Corps (WAC) and Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP). Despite

their direct involvement in the war effort, women also played crucial role in supporting morale and

maintaining communities on the home front. They showed their strength and bravery on every front.

History has witnessed their contribution in the wars. Today in third world countries, women are

facing many socio-economic challenges in achieving equal rights and opportunities compared to men.

Cultural norms in Pakistan is one such country where women are deprived from basic rights and

opportunities. Cultural norms, systematic discrimination, and unequal opportunities hinder them from achieving

their goals.

Firstly, our cultural norms hampers the women to avail equal opportunities. One big problem is that women are subjected to early marriages in Pakistan. After marriage they are forced to drop out of school. It impacts their education, health and overall well being. According to a report of UNICEF "Pakistan has 19 million child bride." It means these 19 millions girls are deprived from education. Similarly, patriarchal society enforces traditional gender role where men hold power and women are subordinated. This kind of social structure limits women autonomy and access to resources and opportunity. Apart from early marriages and patriarchy, women are often excluded from decision making process. They are not included in important discussion and choices, both in their family and society. This hinders societal progress and perpetuates inequality. This exclusion sidelines valuable perspectives resulting in policies that may not address diverse needs. This exclusion limits women's opportunities to shape their future. Therefore, these cultural norms are major hurdles in availing equal rights and opportunities.

Secondly, economic disparities impede women from having equal equal opportunities. These discrepancies are major obstacle to the progress of women. Women in Pakistan are deprived of their inheritance rights. Our traditional culture often prioritizes male heirs over female heirs. This results in unequal

treatment in inheritance matters. Many women, particularly in rural areas, are not fully aware of their inheritance rights due to their limited education and exposure. Women are forced by their family to give up their inheritance rights in the favour of male relatives. If they do not renounce their rights, they may have to face social stigma including allegation of being disrespectful and greedy. According to demographic and health survey, "97% of women do not inherit land or a house." Moreover, women in Pakistan have unequal job opportunities. Our society dictates women that their responsibility is to look after their children and husband. Men is considered the only breadwinner of the family. This kind of social behavior discourages the women from pursuing higher education and entering the workforce. The women, who are working in the offices, are often discriminated. Many workplaces have such policies that do not support women. For example many organizations do not provide maternity leaves and daycare centres to their females employees. It becomes difficult for women to continue their job with children. According to Global Gender Gap report, "Pakistan is the second worst country in terms of gender parity, ranking 145th out of 146th countries." Lack of knowledge also hinders women participation in the workforce. Most of the women who are unemployed do not understand how the labour market works. These women do not know how to look for a job. They do not have awareness about those jobs that provide

decent earnings. The International Growth Center conducted a survey in Pakistan according to this survey, "41% of men look for jobs using multiple search methods compared to 29% of women." Likewise women are paid less compared to their male colleagues for similar work. Most of the women in the labour force are not even able to earn the government-mandated minimum wage on a monthly basis. Despite their best efforts women in Pakistan are not able to reduce this gap. There is no proper structure of promotion for females in many organizations. According to a Labour force survey, "The average wage for women is 82% of their male counterparts." This pay gap discourages the women to play their role towards economic growth. Hence, these economic disparities are significant barriers to the advancement of women.

Thirdly, the women are the victims of domestic violence. They face physical and verbal abuse by their husbands or closely family members. It hurts women and makes them feel scared, trapped and sad. Domestic violence becomes the cause of significant emotional distress, anxiety and depression. The survivors of violence also feel post-traumatic stress disorder, which affects their ability to function properly in daily life. Children who witness domestic violence may experience emotional and behavioural problems such as aggression and anxiety. The National Commission for Human Rights released a report according to which, "63000 cases of gender-based violence had

been reported in Pakistan over the past three years? Apart from domestic violence women are also the target of acid attacks. Survivors of acid attacks often face social discrimination and limited access to medical and psychological support. These attacks are typically motivated by revenge and rejection of marriage proposal. According to an independent estimates, between 1994 to 2018 some 9340 people fell victim to acid attacks in Pakistan. In addition to domestic violence and harassment acid attacks women also face harassment at public places, offices, and even on online platform. This includes things like unwelcomed comments, gestures, or actions that target women, making them feel unsafe or distressed. Victims of harassment may struggle to trust others or form new relationship due of fear of being harassed again. Harassment impacts victim ability to perform actively and effectively at workplace. Due to low productivity victim might lose his job. Most of the cases of harassment in Pakistan are not reported due to societal stigma and fear of retaliation. According to UN report, "93% of women face harassment at their workplace". In the same manner women are killed in the name of honour. These are several instances where women are killed by their close relatives. They are stabbed to death by marrying someone against the will of their families or seeking divorced from abused husband.

Recently a case took place in Peshawar where a man killed his 18 years old daughter on the order of a Jirga. The woman was appeared in a photo with two men on social media. Human rights defenders estimate that around 1,000 women are murdered in the name of honour killing every year.

Fourthly, the women in Pakistan has unequal political participation. The women representation in politics is very low. Political parties are primarily influenced by male members, which results in marginalisation of women participation. The parties prefer male candidates over female candidate.

Traditional gender roles dictate that male are more suitable for leadership position as compared to female. The voters often cast their vote to male candidates. They consider women as incompetent leaders. The parties allot ticket to women in those constituencies where chance of winning are low. Female lose their seats in those constituencies. This results in unequal representation of female in the parliament of Pakistan. National Assembly of Pakistan which consists of 342 members. Female representation is only 3%. In the same way many women do not cast their votes. They are unaware about their political rights. In some cases husband deny their wives to cast votes. They might worry that their wives independent voting choice could upset their traditional roles or authority. The female turnout ratio was low in 2024 election. According to a report of Gallup Pakistan 58.9 million



female were registered for 2024 General elections, only 41.6% women cast their vote." Similarly the political landscape is deeply influenced by patriarchal power structure. Men hold majority of seats and significant position. They do not want to see women ahead of them. This attitude is a significant hindrance in the progress of women in Pakistan. Likewise women also face challenges in conducting political campaign due to resource limitation and systematic barriers. Threat to personal security and safety also deter women from engaging in political activities. Absence of campaign hinder their representation. So, the women are unable to play their role in politics due to social hurdles.

The above paragraphs are explaining the causes of unequal rights of women in Pakistan. The next paragraph is pertaining light to way forward to ensure equal rights of women in Pakistan.

There is a significant need of reforms to ensure gender equality in our society. First of equal education opportunities should be provided to all women. Government needs to allocate more budget for women education. There is a need to open more school in remote areas of Pakistan. According to UNESCO, "The literacy rate for female in rural Balochistan is 2%." The government should bring education reforms like those in Finland, where education is free for all in school or even in universities, regardless of their colour, creed, or race. Similarly, government

Should provide equal education job opportunities to all the women. Government should encourage companies to adopt gender diverse policies. The companies must provide females day care centre and maternity leaves.

To reduce harassment cases at workplace government must strengthen and enforce **Protection against Harassment of Women at the workplace Act 2010**.

In the same way political parties must ensure the equal representation of women in their parties. Women political campaign must be encouraged.

Our history has witnessed the political campaign of **Fatima Jinnah, Benazir Bhutto and Kulsoom Nawaz**.

These women established a foundation for the acceptance of female as leaders. The election Act of 2017 must be implemented if any efforts are made to hinder women participation in Pakistan's election. Like wise to reduce

domestic violence women should be given awareness about their right. Government must ensure that women have access to justice and legal aid. Government must strictly implement the Pakistan penal code (PPC) and protection of women against violence act 2016.

It is not denying the fact that there are many shortcomings in our system. If the proper measurements are taken we can ensure a society with no discrimination.

To conclude, women in Pakistan are the victim of social discrimination. Various factors such as patriarchal society, domestic abuse, economic gap and limitations of education opportunities are

the causes of inequality in Pakistan. It prevents women to play their role in the economic growth of the country. Traditional gender roles confine the women to domestic duties. Addressing these challenges require comprehensive reforms in political, educational and economic sectors. Equal education, eradication of violence and equal employment opportunities can ensure equitable environment and well being of women. It is never too late to pledge for a new change to create a new tomorrow. Where there is a will, there is always a way, regardless of the obstacles and hindrances we can definitely achieve our goals.