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Essay : Women empowerment is a
myth or reality in Pakistan

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Women empowerment is a myth or reality in Pakistan

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No nation can rise to the height
of glory unless your women are side
by side with you.
(Muhammad Ali Jinnah).

Women are equally as important as men for the development, progress, prosperity, and survival of any nation. It can be seen that one of the common denominators of success of western nations is women empowerment. On the other hand, women oppression in developing countries shows inability of nations and that can never see the glory of development. While the 21st century has seen significant progress in women's rights globally, the illusion of women empowerment in Pakistan remains largely a myth due to persistent challenges. Firstly, the abysmal literacy rate among women in Pakistan, challenges the notion of empowerment. Secondly, the patriarchal system which suppresses women and depriving them from their basic rights. Thirdly, when women try to exercise their autonomous power, they become the victims of honor killing on the name of protecting family honor. Additionally, domestic violence which is a threat to women empowerment which make them restricted to their home. Furthermore the patriarchal mindset restricting women from to become economically independent. Lastly, the gap between laws on papers and and enforcement and legal discrimination hindering women to get justice. These above mentioned

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factors make women empowerment myths; however there is another school of thought who believe that women empowerment is reality in Pakistan. Therefore to make it reality there is a dire need to take some effective measures.

The women empowerment refers to the process of enhancing women's autonomy, access to available opportunities, basic resources of education, decision making authority and ability to participate in all vital aspects of life. In short, an environment where women have equal rights comparable to men. However, there are other several types of empowerment such as Economic empowerment, social empowerment, and Political empowerment.

Throughout the history, women have been suffering from one another form of violence. In medieval era, women had no rights to cast the vote, freedom of speech and inherit property. They had limited access to education, economic opportunities and decision making power. Despite all these sufferings women stood and fought for their basic rights; however, the path to full empowerment is a long journey for women of Pakistan they have to cover.

Women have played ^{Pivotal} a role in

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all ~~aspects~~ aspects of life, whether it is in the creation of Pakistan where women like Fatima Jinnah is classical example or in modern day where women are breaking the barriers of politics, education and economic. Women empowerment is as necessary for the development as oxygen for survival. Moreover, Pakistan is going through multiple crises, the chief among them is economic crisis where women empowerment is only remedy. It can be seen how women are playing effective role in western countries. In Pakistan, however, cultural norms and patriarchal mindsets continue to impede in their full empowerment unless this mindset exists in Pakistan. Pakistan can never truly free itself from the curse of oppression.

The development of any country heavily depends on the combined efforts of men and women. Despite some progress still illiteracy rate of female education in Pakistan remained abysmal low which clearly shows that Pakistan is still suffering from the curse of women oppression. Additionally, there are several factors which make it more difficult for girls to get education such as cultural norms, harassment, lack of awareness and poor government policies. Due to these factors around more than 20 million girls are out of school and more than 26% girls have never attended school. In the ruler

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areas of Pakistan, parents often see girls as inferior to boys. It led them believe that investment in girls' education is a waste of time and resources. For instance, Bangladesh is a part of Pakistan, but its women literacy rate is 75% which is more than that of Pakistan. Due to the hard-working and prioritizing women education that helps Bangladesh to flourish its economy and way of living life. To conclude, education is the backbone of women empowerment and the recurrent situation of women in Pakistan is the result of negligence of the state. It shows women empowerment is myths in Pakistan.

Women population in Pakistan is more than fifty percent. Despite this, the women of Pakistan is suppressed by the patriarchal family system whether it is her husband, brother or father. Moreover, patriarchal system refer as the cultural and tradition provides the rights and power to men to make decisions of the whole things even about the women whether man is their father, uncle, brother or husband. Due to male dominance in society, women are deprived from their basic rights like liberty, and property and are deprived from

to exercise their decision making power in any aspect of life even regarding their marriages. Thus women are becoming the victim of patriarchal system, contributing to the perception that women empowerment is myth in Pakistan.

Moreover, women who exercise their autonomous right to marry or free will or seek a divorce they become the victim of honor killing. This abnormal and amoral traditional practices often carried out by the family members on the name protecting family honor. Mothers who lose their daughter by honor killing often suffer the deep trauma. The recent highlighted case, Reema Bibi who was shot dead by her father in their family home in KPK in November 2023.

In Pakistan around 5,000 honor killings occur annually. This figure reflects that Pakistan is still not safe for women.

Honor killings are a stain on the conscience of humanity. They are a barbaric practice that has no place in the 21st century
(Malala Yousafzai)

The domestic violence is another cause which is rooted in patriarchal system and taking part in making women empowerment myth. This includes

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physical violence, sexual abuse, harassment and acid attacks. Over 90% of Pakistani women have experienced some form of domestic violence in their life time, according to a 2022 study by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP). Additionally, women are not even safe under the custody of law enforcement agencies. A report published in 1992, ~~that~~ ~~are~~ according to that, many incidence of custodian violence including sexual assault and rapes committed by police men during police custody are reported. These domestic violence makes to believe that ~~an~~ women empowerment is myths.

In Pakistan, women face a lot of barriers to economic empowerment, resisting their full participation in workforces and contributing to overall economic development of Pakistan. However, no country can progress without the full participation of women in public life. According to a Pakistani Bureau of statistics, there are only 22 percent of women who participate in work force in 2018-19. The patriarchal norms and the traditional role of women are major factor that restrict their entry in to job market. Moreover, Pakistan stands near bottom of women's participation in the work force. To conclude, the low

participation of women in economic sector shows a clear image that women empowerment is a myth in Pakistan.

When women do better economies do better (Christine Lagarde)

Furthermore, the weak existing laws, which are meant for the protection of women's rights, faces challenges due to the gap between laws on paper and implementation of laws on ground. The institutions which are responsible for enforcing laws related women rights often face the lack of resources, support and political will - which causes justice delayed. Additionally, a large number of women in rural areas are unaware of their legal rights. Moreover, the patriarchal and cultural norms also play a role in undermining the effectiveness of laws which protect women. Hence, the poor implementation gaps are making it difficult for women to get empowerment.

The legal discrimination against women is another obstacle to achieve the gender equality in Pakistan. Discriminatory laws, specially in family and violence matters often women do not get equally treated and to get justice. The unequal implementation of existing laws and enforcement causes

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bias in the legal system. However, women also face social stigma and threats from family, or culprit which prevent women from reporting cases of violence or pursuing of the legal actions. To conclude the legal discrimination against women and lack of equal treatment makes Pakistan harder for women to live empowered life.

Meanwhile, there is a large population that believes women empowerment is reality in Pakistan. They point to women's participation in several aspects of life such as politics, business, and education. According to them women have equal rights, power and liberty as men have. As a evidence, they highlight examples like Benazir Bhutto, the first female prime minister of Pakistan, as a symbol of women's empowerment.

To ensure a brighter future for women government of Pakistan must take some steps to empower the women such as create an environment where all women have equal opportunities and rights, enact the laws like Protection against harassment of women at the work place (Amendment) 2020 to protect women from violence, harassment, sexual abuse, child marriages and honor killings. However, eradicating gender based

violence and child marriages. ~~and~~ demand more
just policies. It requires political will
and collective actions so that women which are
victims of violence can get justice and it will
fill the gap between laws on papers and implementation
of the patriarchal system and cultural norms
are major cause, these must be changed so that
women of Pakistan can enter in the workforces
and participate in decision making processes and
get higher education. It will also contribute to
the economy of Pakistan. Bangladesh has created an
environment which has increased the opportunities
for women as result become their driving force behind
economic progress, innovation, and prosperity.

In this 21 century, the male
dominating Pakistani society is pushing
back to medieval era where women
had no rights. Despite some progress,
women empowerment in Pakistan is a
myth. Women of Pakistan are still
deprived from their basic rights like,
liberty and property particularly women of
rural areas due to patriarchal system
and cultural norms which fueled them to
believe that men are superior to women
and men only have rights to make
decisions and be the breadwinner of house.
It led them charge violence against women.
In Pakistani society, it's hard for
women to get justice due to lack of
enforcement of laws as result the majority
of Pakistani women tolerate ~~these~~ crimes

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and injustice in silence. Thus, Pakistan must take some steps for truly empower the women of Pakistan, it is important to address the patriarchal barriers they face; however, these barriers will not end overnight but it is time for the government to help and create policies to eliminate violence against women and patriarchal systems has to be change which can be achieved by strengthening the social, political and economic position of women.