

CLOSING PAKISTAN'S ECONOMIC GENDER GAP IS A GROWTH STRATEGY, NOT A SLOGAN

OUTLINE:

1) INTRODUCTION

Thesis Statement: Indeed, closing Pakistan's economic gender gap can be a growth strategy due to inclusiveness in political, economic and social, and other spheres of society. Therefore, government needs to take lucrative measures in these areas to increase economic growth.

2) CLOSING PAKISTAN'S ECONOMIC GENDER GAP AS A GROWTH STRATEGY IN FOLLOWING WAYS:

2.1) POLITICAL DIMENSION

- Closing Economic ^{Gender} Gap is a means to increasing woman political mobility.
- Leading towards efficient use of vote, diminishing pre-poll rigging.

2.2) ECONOMIC SPHERE

- Closing Economic Gender Gap will increase exports
- It will improve the well being of

woman, stabilizing socio-economic conditions

2.3) Social Arena

- a. More focus on Education and Health
- b. Reducing abject poverty

2.4) Technological Sphere

- a. Increasing digital literacy, reaping Economic Rewards
- b. Recognizing the culture of Modern Technology especially Artificial Intelligence

2.5) ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

- a. Less emission of carbon owing to rising income levels of Households
- b. more use of Renewable Substitutes

3) MEASURES TO REDUCE ECONOMIC GENDER GAP

- a. Free and Fair Education
- b. Reducing Gender-Based Violence
- c. Eroding Patriarchal Mind-set by awareness
- d. Constitutionalizing Equal Labour wages
- e. Improving Public Health.

ESSAY

There is no doubt that economic growth is tied with having equal economic opportunities to man and woman. Countries in Europe such as Norway, Sweden and Finland have more woman participation as compared to man. They are on ^{the} top of the Human Development Index due to prevailing gender equality. However, Pakistan finds itself at 168th country out of 180+ countries in HDI. This basically stems from chronic gender disparity in Pakistan. Closing country's economic gender gap could be turned in growth strategy. Closing the gap will increase women political mobility, exports and focus on education and health. It will also lead to digital literacy and least use of hydro carbon in house chores. For further reducing economic gender gaps, government should provide free and fair education, reduce gender-based violence and improving public health. In fact, closing Pakistan's economic

gender gap can be a growth strategy due to inclusiveness in political, economic and social, and other spheres of society. Therefore, government needs to take lucrative measures in these areas to economic growth.

To begin with, closing Pakistan's economic gender gap will increase woman political mobility. Politics plays a pivotal role in economy. When women are given the same chances as compared to men in economy as as a labour, they will be able to participate in politics. Men is more in pursuit of power and money in politics, while women is more leaned towards improving health and education. According to International Labor Organization, women labor in Pakistan stands only at 24%. And woman political participation is only 17% as per National Assembly of Pakistan. So, closing the economic labor gap will increase the political participation of women.

Besides, closing the economic gender gap will help women vote independently. Women political participation is not only matters at national level but it also matters at time of vote casting. According to report of Commission on Pakistan's 2024 elections, it said that the elections were rigged one.

Normally, pre-poll rigging is widespread in Pakistan and women becomes the most vulnerable ones. Votes are casted in exchange of some money. If women gets equal economic opportunities, it will rise their income levels leading towards independent selection of their representatives. Therefore, selection of a representative on merit base will help improve the economy.

Moreover, reducing economic gender gap will improve country exports. For any country both women and men labour is the most important for the economy. As per State Bank of Pakistan,

Country's exports are nearly \$20 billion and this exports possesses only 84% woman participation - ILO demonstrates If equal opportunities are given, exports will definitely skyrocket. In terms of IMF report, Pakistan has the potential of \$80 billions in exports. Hence, closing economic gender gap is vital for country's economy.

Furthermore, shrinking economic gap is a means to enhance women well being. Due to low household income, woman faces chronic issues of health, education and sanitation. The wellbeing is not limited to her, her children are also beneficiary of her well-being. By giving economic opportunity, she will be able to take care of herself in case of health or any other emergency. She will also invest on her education as well as her children's education. This will ultimately open the road for community as well as

economic growth. Pakistan ^(Bureau) Bureau of Statistics (PBS) says hardly 3% women are property owners or well-established entrepreneurs in Pakistan. Thus, closing the economic gender gap is essential for women well-being.

In addition to this, improving gender gap in economic terms will lead to more focus on education and health. Pakistan's rural areas are far-behind in education and health due to prevailing income discrepancies. In this, women are the grave victim of poor education and health. If women gets the same chances as men, their condition can be improved. Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) survey declares that there are 24%.

Students who lie in the age bracket of 18 and 21. This is because of low household income. If both husband and wife are employed, then those children can education. So, reducing economic gender gap improves the condition of education as well as health.

Narrowing of economic gender gap will also alleviate aspect poverty. Pakistan depicts a grim picture of poverty. As per World Bank (WB), Pakistan is suffering from chronic poverty as its 45% population lives below poverty line. Growing prices of necessities brings people on the verge of poverty. Single bread-winner in home is unable to meet the inflation levels. Therefore, equal labor opportunities for women is a need of hour. If both husband and wife are bread winner of the house, then they can eradicate the poverty. Hence, closing the economic gender gap will bring, especially out of poverty."

Further closing the labour gender gap will improve digital literacy. Pakistan is lagging behind reaping the dividends of this technological era. It is due to worsening socio-economic conditions of people. There is huge digital

divide due to economic gender gap. In Majority of rural areas, only the guardian of home has a mobile phone. Women, due to limited economic opportunities are always behind them. There is a huge potential in Pakistani-rural women to learn through social media. As per Pakistan Telecom Authority (PTA), the internet penetration in Pakistan is hardly 15%. Desrth of governmental support and opportunity, women is unable to earn from digitalization. Thus, removing the economic gender gap can lead to digital literacy, earning its rewards.

In the same fashion, squeezing the economic gender gap may lead to technology recognition. Most of the Pakistan's rural community is sceptical to the use of "Internet of things" such as ATM cards, vouchers, and doing online shopping. Pakistan can take the dividends of digitalization by firstly giving economic opportunities to everyone, then making them

use digital devices. Pakistan could increase tax-collection from this. The main thing will be closing the economic gender. If women are not in digital community, then growth may not take place. PTA reports the digital literacy rate of rural areas is nearly 22%.^(so, closing gender gap in economy can increase digital literacy of women, resping its rewards.) So, for spreading the culture of technology, economic gender gaps must be overcome.

By closing economic gender gap, we will be heading towards environmental sustainability.

As per (PBS), Pakistan's 70% population lives in rural areas. Due to low levels of household income, people in rural areas use animal dung for cooking food. The dung is high in carbon emission which deteriorates the environment. If equal economic opportunities are given, household income

will increase and people will no more be using dung for cooking. They will ultimately come to the gas which is provided by government. Hence, environmental sustainability can be achieved through economic gender equality.

By closing the labor gender gap, people will be shifting from non-renewable sources of energy to renewable.

The gender gap can not always be seen in rural and urban dimensions. Urban people have more job opportunities as compared to rural. The people of rural areas, therefore, use non-renewable source of energy for their agriculture and home. They use diesel for irrigating their land and contributing more in environmental degradation.

If they are given same economic opportunities, they can shift from diesel engines to solar engines for water irrigation. Thus, closing

economic gender gap also aid
in environmental sustainability.

For turning closing
economic gender gaps into growth
strategy, government needs to
take lucrative measures. The first
and foremost measure government
should take is giving free and
fair education. According to article
25A of the constitution of Pakistan,
every citizen has right to free
and fair education from 4 to 16
years of age. If this right is
given on merit, then the youth
will be able to take part in
country's growth. It not only the free
education but also fair education
which is the need of current times.
As per PIDE survey, more than 95%
educated youth of Pakistan is unemployed.
The fair education should be based on
current dynamics of education across
the globe. Hence, free and fair
education will close the economic
gender gap.

Secondly, government should eradicate gender-based violence paving a smoother way for women to do job. Pakistan is badly affected by GBV which erodes the women participation. Woman at workplace faces harassment, she while travelling, faces harassment. This should be eradicated the first. According to Human Rights Commission based in Pakistan, GBV criminal reporting and imprisonment ratio is 1 to 2 percent. There is dire need of saving women from GBV as their future is impeded by this violence.

Thirdly, government needs to take adequate measures for dismantling patriarchal mindset by awareness. This can be done through public awareness, making people understand the importance of education for the wellbeing of woman. Government should aware people by engaging community's elders as in rural areas a community elder has all power.

Government can also spread awareness through district newspapers, news channels and sending women groups to rural areas with giving them security. Therefore, patriarchy, in this way, can be removed from society.

Fourthly, concerned authority needs to close the economic gender gap by using its constitution. Currently, according to ILO, women in Pakistan earn 95% less than the men. For bringing the wages on the same page, government should come up with new constitutional change of equalizing labour wages. Hence, this way economic gender gap could be relieved.

Fifthly, government should improve health delivery. Many of rural areas of Pakistan are working with doctors and modern equipment, and medicines. Women, when get pregnant hardly

recover from the treatment leading towards loss of job & opportunity. It is a dire need of hour to bring proper health and sanitation in rural areas so that women can participate despite the seasonal ill. Thus, improving health will help women continue the job.

To sum up, closing economic gender gap can be a growth strategy due to inclusiveness in political, economic and social, and others spheres of society. The growth can be achieved through women political mobility, growing exports, improving education and health, increasing digital literacy and focus on environmental sustainable. However, government should take creative measure in the wake of prevailing challenges such as giving free and fair education, reducing gender-based violence, eroding patriarchal mindset and improving public health. So, economic growth can be achieved through

economic inclusiveness, especially women inclusivity.