

Essay topic:

"Gender Equality is a Myth" Date _____ 20____

Outline

I. Introduction.

IV

II. What does it mean by the words "gender" and "gender equality"?

II. Why is gender equality still considered a myth?

(A) Evidence of gender based disparities

1. In economic arena

Case in point: Women earn 20% less than men globally (WHO).

2. In social and political arena

Case in point: Political representation of women in national parliaments is 26.9% (UN women).

IV

(B) Evidence of gender stereotypes

1. Cultural norms and gender roles

Case in point: 24% Women in media (UN women).

(C) Evidence of gender based violence and discrimination

1. Honour killings

2. Female Genital Mutilation

3. Health care discrimination of non-binary individuals.

IV. Where does Pakistan stand on the issue of gender equality?

(A) Second worst on Global Gender Gap Report, 2024.

(B) Home to 19 million child brides (UN women)

(C) Zero maternal deaths after 122 years (UNFPA)

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(D) 12m girls out of school (ESP)

(C) 200 acid attack victims annually

VI. How the myth of gender equality can be turned into reality?

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A. By financially empowering individuals

B. By improving ~~in~~ maternal and child health

services.

.II

C. By ^{implementing} robust political and legal reforms.

D. By institutionalising gender mainstreaming.

E. By providing ~~education~~ gender sensitive education.

VI Conclusion.

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"Why are Republican men so eager to subjugate women's bodies?" asked Christina Mercier in her article "The Philosophical Origins of Patriarchy." Her inquiry was the result of passage of anti-abortion bill by Alabama senators in 2019. She criticizes people like Senator Clyde Chambliss who still think that it is the duty of the men to protect the women's pro-creative powers for the greater good of humanity. Women are still denied to exercise their basic human right which is to make decisions regarding their reproductive health. In this era of artificial intelligence and rapid technological advancements, women ~~are still~~ ^{continue} to ~~feel~~ feel alienated. And they fight for their equality rights with men. Gender inequality manifests in various forms such as in equality in employment opportunities and earnings; in ownership and property rights, in survivability, in health and education, in freedom of expression and in respect of violence and discrimination. Albeit gender equality ~~remains~~ continues to remain a myth in today's society but it can be turned into reality through specific actions and ~~their~~ robust implementations of the ideals of gender equality set by governments ^{and humanitarian organizations} ~~↑ all over the world~~. In this regard, this essay will focus on defining the terms related to gender, discuss the reasons of gender inequality, ascertain the position of Pakistan in terms of gender equality and finally give recommendations to ~~achieve~~ conveniently achieve the task of gender equality parity.

To begin the discussion about gender equality, it is pertinent to shed some light on the terms like "gender" and "gender equality".

According to WHO, gender refers to the characteristics of women, men, girls and boys that are socially constructed. This includes norms, behaviours and roles associated with being a woman, man, girl or boy, as well as relationships with each other. As a social construct, gender varies from society to society and can change over time. Gender and sex are inter-related but are different from each other. Sex refers to the different biological and physiological characteristics of females, males and intersex persons, such as chromosomes, hormones and reproductive organs. Gender inequality and discrimination of women have been prevalent in every society, at a certain level. Meanwhile, the world is increasingly realising the importance of gender equality. Gender equality, ~~means that the~~ according to UNFPA, is first and foremost, a "human right". It implies that women, men, boys and girls of all classes and races participate as equals and have equal value. They enjoy equal access to resources, freedoms, and opportunities to exercise control. In above light, the concepts of gender, sex and their equality are important

to understand.

The previous paragraph discussed explained some terms related to gender, ~~mean~~ meanwhile, the following paragraphs will discuss the reasons ~~like~~ that justify that gender equality is still ^{remains} a myth and not a reality.

In the economic, social and political arena women have been subjugated ^{to men} throughout the centuries.

This injustice is showcased in form of several datas collected from time to time.

One such report by the International Labour Organisation suggests that women earn ~~20%~~ 20% than ~~20%~~ men globally. The economic inequality manifests in several forms such as pay gap between both genders, under-representation of women in leadership positions and gender-segregation in the workforce. Meanwhile, women are lagging behind ^{men} in the social and political activities.

They get their representation in the national assemblies mostly through the quota system that has their seats reserved for them.

Women ~~do not~~ participate or are ~~deferred~~ ^{deferred} by their male counterparts in the ~~general~~ ^{UN women} to fight on the general seats. The [↑] data suggests that women's political representation of women in national parliaments is 26.9% which is way further from the parity. Hence, the figures ^{suggest that} women face inequality in the economic, social and political life throughout the world.

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The ~~Aspects~~ aspects of gender inequality can be witnessed that have the most serious consequences for the society are the gender stereotyping of men and women and their societal expectations. Simone de Beauvoir in her treatise "The Second Sex" says that "one is not born a woman, but become one". This Her analysis reflects how gender is a social construct. The girls are taught to be submissive and considered the "other". The "other" means deviant, abnormal or something that is historically subservient to men and must be taught to remain in such a way. In order to reign in the volatile nature of theirs, the men are ~~always~~ given a superior role and this leads to the oppression of women and neglect of their fundamental right of freedom. These gender roles ~~of~~ ascribed to woman have negatively impacted them historically. It is widely evident in their media representation where they make up only 24 percent of the persons heard, read about or seen in newspaper, television and radio news, according to UN women. Also, their mis-representation in the media industry where they are chronic targets of violence, side characters, villains and fighting for male gaze shapes cultural perceptions and ~~blends~~ forms a defeatist picture of women. So, gender roles and cultural norms ~~are~~ perpetuate the gender inequality.

Moreover, the patriarchal society deems it necessary for men to control the actions and movements of girls. Hence, they resort to violent means such as honour killings.

According to the UNFPA, as many as 5,000 women are killed annually for the reasons of ~~violence~~ honor. This number is widely suspected to be underreported.

~~According~~ to Nearly half of all honor killings occur in India and Pakistan.

A harrowing tradition of female genital mutilation also represents a large chunk of violation against minor ~~women~~ girls and women.

According to WHO estimates of 2024, more than 230 million girls and women alive today have undergone female genital mutilation (FGM) in 30 countries in Africa, the Middle East and Asia where FGM is practiced. It is a violation of human rights of girls and women. To ~~sum~~ up, ~~honor~~ women face gender based violence and discrimination on daily basis throughout the world.

According to the WHO, 1 in 3 women worldwide ~~face~~ experience physical or sexual violence mostly by their intimate partners. To sum it up, the violence perpetrated by patriarchal society against women and girls has distorted the social fabric of society.

The ~~preceeding~~ ^{preceeding} paragraphs highlighted the ~~scope~~ prevalence of gender inequality in the world, while the succeeding paragraphs will identify the position of Pakistan in terms of gender equality.

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Violence and discrimination are a norm against non-binary or LGBTQI+ community in ~~some~~ ^{many} countries. They face discrimination at workplace, society and even in health care. According to Frontier.org, as compared to cis-gender, sexually diverse people, significantly non-binary people reported that hospital staff denied them healthcare (20.8% vs 5.4%), referred them elsewhere because of their gender (12.0% vs 2.9%) and misgendered them (38.7% vs 1.1%). They serially face a number of issues in their daily lives in the form of harassment, bullying, ~~etc~~ name-calling, physical and sexual abuse and ~~job~~ frequent job denials. So, rampant use of violence and discriminatory attitudes prevail ~~as~~ in many societies against the ~~non-binary~~ individuals. gender diverse individuals.

The preceeding paragraphs highlighted the prevalence of gender equality in the world, ~~in~~ meanwhile, the succeeding paragraphs will identify the position of Pakistan in terms of gender equality.

Like the rest of the world, Pakistan is also facing hurdles in terms of gender equality.

Although Pakistan has made strides in progressive gender policies and legislation but it still faces challenges ~~are~~ that need to be tackled promptly. The economic plight of Pakistani women is widely evident by the ~~are~~ ~~due to~~ wage gaps, their participation in informal sector, illiteracy, violence, ~~poor~~ undernourished mothers and ~~poor~~ ^{children} ~~poor~~ healthcare accessibility and lack of political empowerment ~~are~~ ~~hurting~~ ~~the~~ ~~impede~~. These factors impede their social mobility in the society, ~~are~~ perpetuating a cycle of abuse and neglect towards them. This deplorable aspect of gender ~~is~~ marginalization was calculated by The World Economic Forum in its annual ~~gender~~ Gender Gap Report (2024) which ranked Pakistan at 145th position out of 146 countries of the world. Pakistan lags behind regionally as well where Bangladesh is ranked at 99 while India is ranked 129 in the overall gender gap index. Hence, Pakistan ~~is~~ ~~not~~ ~~making~~ ~~significant~~ ~~effects~~ lags behind in Gender Gap Index. ~~and~~ ~~it~~ ~~is~~ ~~most~~ ~~distressing~~ A sad aspect dimension of gender inequality in Pakistan is its large number of child marriages. Due to social and cultural norms, girls are married off at an early age, before the legal age of 18 ~~is~~ mentioned in the constitution of Pakistan. According to the UN

Women, Pakistan is home to 19 million child brides today.

In addition, consequently, ~~to~~ the early marriages increase ~~girls face the poor~~ pregnancy outcomes.

Consequently, the early marriages increase the poor pregnancy outcomes. As these young girls are unaware of their nutritional requirements and ^{their} need for prenatal, natal and post-natal assessments by a proper healthcare facility, they suffer detrimental implications to their health. A significant imbalance is seen in the maternal health outcomes in the women and girls of the lower social strata and rural areas.

For example, when any conflict, war or natural disaster occurs, it disrupts the food and supply chains, and send many of the already weaker economies, including Pakistan, into a tailspin. The price hike of the essential commodities push a large number of below the poverty lines, especially impacting the women, girls and ~~transgender~~ LGBTQ+, who don't have a regular source of income and are dependents on their male heirs.

In days keeping this in view, the UNFPA report 2024 suggested that Pakistan is likely to achieve zero maternal deaths after 122 years.

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Last Pakistan's children are also suffering from the setbacks of economic degradation, especially the girls/children, who along with early marriages and pregnancies are also denied their constitutional right to which education clearly stipulated in Article 25-A of constitution of Pakistan. Out of 22 million out-of-school children, 12 million are girls, as estimated in the Economic Survey of Pakistan, 2023. There are many reasons for it. The increase number of female dropouts are due to preference of ~~the~~ education of male child, poverty, lack of infrastructure, ~~and~~ early marriages, pregnancies, security issues, lack of bathroom and sanitation facilities for the girls reaching puberty and lack of transport facility to reach educational institutes. That is the reason behind a poor literacy rate of females, who ~~make up only 56% of~~ ~~adult literacy rate which is 52%~~ which are only 46% literate. Ergo, Pakistan faces

Lastly, gender-based violence & scars the women empowerment efforts ~~by~~ made by government. The rampant ~~or~~ of abuse of power ~~being~~ by ~~doing~~ domestic violence, workplace harassment, rapes, ~~and~~ cybercrimes, child abuse and acid attacks. A report suggested that Pakistan there are 200 acid attacks occurring annually in Pakistan. Not to forget that most of them are not reported due to stigma and fear.

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Ergo, Pakistan also ~~suffers from~~ faces hurdles in the way to achieve gender ~~is~~ equality.

Previous paragraphs analysed Pakistan's scenario, meanwhile, the next paragraphs would provide some practical recommendations to achieve gender ~~to~~ equality.

First and foremost, gender equality cannot be achieved without financially empowering the marginalized genders. If the world wants to strategically confront this problem head-on then it must provide ~~solid~~ solid economic backbone to women, children and non-binary individuals. Dr. Asha George, a researcher, says that "gender inequality is a man-made problem and so does its solution which means it can be changed". This economic plight can be diminished through skills development & and training in technology ~~and~~ where women will learn to adapt to the innovations and advancements of the world. It will equip them with demands of the formal job market, reducing their reliance on informal sector and ~~their~~ their male family members. Until women and non-binary people climb the social ladder, which can take ~~for~~ decades, the governments must work on increasing their quota system in the organizations so that they may be able to actively participate in the political, tech, and industrial arena

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Another crucial indicator that needs to be addressed is the adequate provision of maternal and child health care. It can be done through implementation of nutritional programmes, awareness campaigns by lady health workers, accessibility to family planning services, training of health care staff, provision of adequate GDP to health sector and women development. Government can ensure to give pregnancy cards to women, such as given in Karnataka, ^(India) and other countries, which provides free maternal and neonatal services to women. In this way, ~~the country~~ Pakistan can achieve 3.1 SDG, 2030 ~~by~~ by providing women with adequate structural mechanism to make their informed decisions about their sexual and reproductive health.

Gender equality must include the provision of political and legal rights to everyone. For example, increasing the quota in the national assemblies, reducing the distance from polling stations, digitalising the electoral systems, ensuring the voter turnout, safeguarding the women politicians and rights activists from physical and cyber threats. The legal reforms must be undertaken to swiftly deliver justice to the cases of violence and abuse. The quick trial ~~and~~ proceedings and punishment needs to be the need of the hour. The feminist movements and awareness campaigns should be encouraged by the government to upscale the political and civic participation of all individuals. →

Moreover, gender mainstreaming should be institutionalised. It is the most practical means for achieving gender equality and women's empowerment. It ~~fact~~ ensures integration of gender perspectives in policies, programmes and thematic issues. For example, the use of gender budgeting (BUGDGe) by Swedish government and the use of gender sensitive language by the European Union are good examples of gender mainstreaming. Gender mainstreaming will also address ~~the~~ ~~cause~~ of gender intersectionality and uproots ~~any~~ issues like sexism, misogyny, racism, ableism etc.

Lastly, education must be kept at the forefront of gender equality agenda. It is through gender sensitive education that the society transforms from a discriminatory to a diverse one. A society where diversity is appreciated and inclusivity is preferred mode of ~~treatment~~ civic engagement. Education curricula need to sensitise the community with different genders and ensure that the gender roles serve as guidelines and not prisons for anyone. ~~Health~~ Additionally, healthcare practitioners must be trained and taught about the issues of reproduction and gender diverse approaches, such as people's preference of gender-re-affirming surgeries and the inclusion of disabled and non-binary individuals suffering from AIDS/HIV to be treated without any prejudice.

Hence, gender equality can be achieved through interconnected efforts of all stakeholders through financial empowerment, healthcare accessibility, reforms, gender mainstreaming and education.

United Nations Secretary General

Mr. Antonio Guterres has stated that "achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls is the unfinished business of our time, and the greatest human rights challenge in our world."

Women have been asking for their rights from a long time starting the suffrage movements of 19th century. This movement then evolved into them asking for their social and reproductive rights along with their political and legal reforms.

in their favour. The world has witnessed a great change ever since. The four United Nations conferences, ^{re-affirming} international agreements like ICPD (1994), CEDAW (1996), Beijing UN conference on Women (1995) ^{by countries} ~~to~~ since then, women are increasingly becoming aware of their rights of freedom of expression, freedom to work, freedom to property, choose inheritance and property, ~~vote~~ to vote, to education and health, etc.

But, still women face atrocities and violence like everyday and ~~scatters~~ the powerful people like Albome senators still choose to regulate women's bodies through mere votes. This prevalence of rudimentary

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dominant - subordinate relation is haunting the balance created by the ~~of~~ tireless efforts of ~~two~~ centuries. ~~But~~ Will the gender equality remain a myth forever? One believes, no! The tides will turn and the progress is ~~largely~~ ~~clearly~~ evident in the form of social awareness through social media platforms and online discourse. A hope lingers in the dark shadows of inequality. A hope that one day Simone de Beauvoir's "Other" identification of women as "other" will be looked at with awe and disbelief. The solution of gender equality lies in empowerment and education, they have the power to radically transform and create an equal society.
