

Women empowerment in Pakistan: Progress and hurdles

Outlines:

1- Introduction

a- Significance of Women empowerment

b- Status of Women in Pakistan: A

mixed picture of progress and hurdles.

2- A cursory glance at ^{Pakistan's} historical context
where women made progress

a- Women's status and role at the

b- time of independence

✓ contribution of iconic women
leaders.

3- Progress in Women empowerment in Pakistan

a- Increased educational opportunities

b- Enhanced economic participation

c- Political representation:

case in point: number of women
in National assembly has

increased from 12% (2000) to 16% (2023)

d- Women Participation in legal arena.

e- Increased women representation in sports

4- Major hurdles to women employment

a- Women face economic inequality

b- Gender discrimination in political

sector

c- Gender biasness in legal sector

d- Prolific cases of gender-based violence

e- Patriarchal mindset is major hurdle faced by women

f- Policy implementation gaps.

5- Wrapping up the discussion

The Essay

It was assumed that Germany would win WWII due to its mighty army and advanced weaponry. Despite their zeal and zest, Germany lost the war. Their fall was evident when they restricted the role of women in outside world. On the other hand, even Queen Elizabeth II contributed in automobile industry to utilize the potential of human resources. The result was clear: Britain won and Germany lost. Therefore without women empowerment, no nation can guarantee progress. In case of Pakistan women are making progress at significant levels including enhanced participation in education, economy, politics and sports. Nevertheless, women have not been

able to achieve higher status of empowerment as various hurdles consistently block their ways, some are patriarchal mindset, violence, economic inequalities and huge gaps in long list of implementations. As long as these restrictions are not addressed, harnessing full potential of human capital cannot be achieved in Pakistan and progress in various sectors will remain distant dream for country.

Before proceeding forward, it seems apt to have an understanding of historical context of Pakistan, where women made progress. Pakistan's history of women empowerment and their status is mixed. Various iconic leaders like Fatima Jinnah and Begum Rana Liaquat Ali Khan symbolized strength and resilience. They played

crucial role in independence movement and in early years of independence. They mobilized women and upheld women progress as symbol of social, political and economic advancement. Later, Benazir Bhutto, through her courageous and keen leadership, set new democratic directions after years of dictatorship. However, in rural and tribal areas, women continue to face discrimination with less implementation of gender policies since independence.

Now, it's time to have a detailed analysis of progress in women empowerment in Pakistan. Firstly, educational opportunities have increased for women. Education is filled of empowerment and personal growth. The governments have taken substantial steps to

promote girls education and retention in schools. Initiatives, such as Benazir Bhutto Youth Development Program and The Girls Stipended Program, aimed to promote financial incentive for families to send their daughters to school. Likewise, report from UNESCO indicated 35% (2000) to 57% (2022) increase in women literacy rate. It shows women have equal opportunities and more girls are attending school than ever before. As a result, literacy rate have improved and more women are pursuing higher ^{and} professional degrees.

Similarly, in the realm of economic participation, Pakistani women have witnessed improvement in recent years. Women are increasingly

entering the workforce, contributing to economic growth. initiatives like Prime Minister's Youth Business Loan Scheme have been launched to provide financial support to aspiring female entrepreneurs.

According to report published by ILO, number of women in workforce in Pakistan have increased to 47%.

Since 2000, industries such as media and technology are beginning to showcase women in leadership role. Hence women are making great progress in economic sector.

Progress in women empowerment can also be manifested by increase political representation and legal empowerment by Pakistani women. The constitution of Pakistan grants equal rights to women. So, the

reserved seat for women in both national and provincial assembly have increased. The number of women in National assembly ~~has~~ increased from 12% in 2000 to 16% in 2023.

Benazir Bhutto, who served as Pakistan's first female Prime Minister, remains an iconic figure in the country's political history. Thus, women have made strides in the country's political sector.

Another vindication of the progress in women empowerment in Pakistan is legal arena. Women have equal opportunities to represent the judiciary of the state. For example, Justice Ayesha Malik is the first woman to serve on the Supreme Court of Pakistan. She has been named in the BBC's list

of 100 most influential women across the world in 2022. Such appointments of women are significant milestones showcasing the progress towards gender equality.

Lastly, women representation in sports is another indicator of progress in women empowerment. women are making strides in various sports at both national and international level. Pakistani women, not only defying stereotypes, but doing so with unwavering and fierce determination. Kisan Khan, first Pakistani woman, who won 16 medals for swimming South Asian games. Sana Mir, who is captain, Women cricket team, has ranked first in ICC ranking for bowling. Zainab Abbas first woman reporter

from Pakistan, who covered World Cup and PSL matches. Hence, in Sports, women participation is no less than men in Pakistan.

There are multiple hurdles in women empowerment in Pakistan, hence they deserved to be discussed in ^{following} essay. First major hurdle is economic inequality faced by women in country. Women are not provided equal opportunities to men. Various reports shows grim picture of women's role in economy in Pakistan. Some primary reasons are lack of access to safe transport, social norms and workplace harassment. Women participation is ^{24%} ~~47%~~, while men's participation is 83%. Even women serving in different cadres are not getting equal pay to men. This

Economic inequality is often seen as invisible in country.

Likewise women also experience discrimination in political sector. There are barriers to voting, seeking elected offices and policymaking. In Pakistan, out of 106 million registered voters, only 44% are women. As most of women voters are not registered on electoral rolls, or women are suppressed by feudal lords, tribal men and face detestation. Even in USA, world's superpower, all of the presidents has been male. Women's role in leadership is limited. Hence after decades, women have not been given equal participation in political arena.

Adding more to these, women participation in sports has been lowered due to cultural barriers and lack of access to facilities. Women in sports receive less media coverage and are often shadowed by men sports. It result in few opportunities for women to get exposure and recognition. Resource allocation also major reason; in 2021 women cricket received 4% funds, and men cricket receive 19% funding from budgetary allocations. Hence all, stated factors lowered and hindered women representations in sports.

Like other hurdles, gender violence is major hurdle in women

empowerment in country. Pakistan in 2019 was ranked as 6th most dangerous country for women. Moreover, according to global index gap ranking, Pakistan ranked 151 out of 153 (2022) in gender based violence. Cases of domestic violence, honour killing and rape victims are being increasing day after day. In 2020 430 cases of honour killing were reported in one year. Poor prosecution rate and social silence are exacerbating this issue in country.

Besides, Patriarchal mindset and culture also impede women empowerment. Such mindset regard men as inherently superior to women. Such culture normalize

women discrimination, economic dependency and increase tolerance for abuse against women. It is major factor behind, honor killing, early marriage and less policy implementation. Thus Patriarchal mindset blocks women from making significant progress in country.

Last, but certainly not the least, is policy implementation gap is primary hurdle in women empowerment. Pakistan, like many countries, has introduced several gender-sensitive legal and policy frameworks, but real issue lies in implementation. Inefficient investigation, prosecution and conviction rate hindered policy implementation. Women protection centre and helplines are understaffed,

poor advertised and victim blaming attitude in judicial system further marginalized women prevent their empowerment in country.

Conclusively, Women empowerment in Pakistan is marked by significant progress over the years along with major hurdles blocking its way. Women empowerment is a both moral and strategic necessity for nation progress. Increased representation of women in judiciary, economy and other key sectors kindled substantial strides and further hopes for more gender-equal society. However, even after decades of Pakistan's emergence, women are striving to end major hurdles, blocking their utilization of human capital.

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So, in order to end the social, political and economic troubles, Government must develop and provide exclusive opportunities to strengthening progress in women empowerment and subsequent diminishing of major hurdles. Implementation of policy is as significant as their formulation. Hence, State should introduce extensive policies to make better living-place for its significant portion of population.