

"The Role of AI in Development"

As the world is moving towards increasing advancements in every sector, Artificial Intelligence has also increased its pace, moulding societies, economies and governance. However, this transformation depends upon human choices. As it is evident from Pakistan's situation where economic pressure, limited digital access and structural constraints have led to widening global inequality and stalling Human Development Index. Consequently, Pakistan has been placed in the low developmental category and ranked 168th out of 193, according to the latest HDI. UNDP Pakistan's National Human Development Report Doing Digital for Development, argues that there can be no significant human development without digital progress. Pakistan is expanding its digital access, meanwhile the world is moving towards more advanced technologies like AI. In this regard, France is at the forefront, focusing on the use of AI to enhance its scientific and industrial growth. At 2024 AI Action Summit in Paris, President Emmanuel Macron has announced 109 billion euro investment in following years. France's 2018 AI strategy has led to the creation of 81 AI Labs. Pakistan can also adopt such strategies to promote inclusive development through AI with equal participation for women and marginalized groups. Moreover, this decline can

be transformed into growth through a proper vision, investment especially in human capital, and long-term commitment.

Child Marriage

The cases of child marriage has increased recently, in Pakistan having multiple reasons. This issue, being a complex challenge has two school of thoughts about the minimum age limit of children, particularly girls, for marriage. The proponents of gender equality and child welfare opines that higher minimum age ^{limits} should be set for girls to get married. On the other hand, religious parties and lobbies are in favor of lower minimum age limits and claim it as in accordance with Islamic laws. High rates of child marriage is both a cause and an impact of gender inequality, child neglect and abuse. Therefore, to decrease the rate of child marriage, the proponents of stringent criminal laws support harsh penalties. They acknowledge the negative impacts of child marriage but are unable to guarantee that these laws will prove effective to address this menace. In this context,

Islamabad's law has increased the minimum age limit from 16 to 18 years for girls. Likewise, Sindh has also passed law for raising the minimum age limit. However, this proved to be ineffective because an overall increase in girl child marriages in Sindh between 2014 and 2019 has been witnessed, as reported by the UNFPA and population council. Moreover, not all the child marriages are arranged by parent, infact one of the major factor of child marriages is self-arranged marriages by adolescents. Now, it is necessary to understand why girls run away from their homes? Many girls take this step because either her parents have arranged her marriage without her consent or they are abusive and violating. This is another tragedy that they find running with another man the only way to escape from this abuse. Welfare mechanisms fail to protect young girls from abuse due to their inability to understand the cause. Therefore, any punitive measure without understanding the cause will exacerbate the situation, making the girls more vulnerable to violence. However, proper counselling, safe environment and trust building in families can help to mitigate this issue. Additionally, certain policy measures are also required that promote education, health and social reform efforts to alter patriarchal mindset.