

Women Empowerment

Women empowerment is essential for inclusive growth and societal reforms. In Pakistan, where women make 49% of the total population - Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2023 - continuous gender inequality hinders nation's progress. Ranking 145th out of 146 countries, just ahead of Afghanistan, in the World Economic Forum's ~~2021~~ ²⁰²⁴ report states that Pakistan faces major disparities in domain ~~like~~ - like health, education and political sector. Despite constitutional protection under Article 25, many women face gender-based discrimination. Legislative steps, including the Protection Against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2010, and the Punjab Protection of Women Against Violence Act, 2016, aim to safeguard women's rights. Yet implementation of laws remain inconsistent. In education sector, female literacy lags behind from men, where former stands at 51% and the latter 71%, reflecting the structural issue that had been deeply-rooted in the sector. Politically, reserved seats have ensured that women hold 20% of National Assembly seats. Initiatives, like, Benazir Income Support Programme and Ehsas Nashonum Program have provided financial aid and health empowerment to the pregnant women, respectively.

However, there are role models, like Noble Prize winner Malala Yousafzai, and Justice Ayesha Malik - Pakistan's first female Supreme Court judge. True empowerment in Pakistan requires more than legal reforms. It demands societal transformations - ensuring access to quality education, economic opportunities, healthcare and safety of women.

Word Count: 225