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Abstract

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Keywords: Empowerment, Opportunities, Gender Equality, Technology, Education, Sustainable Development

Authors:

Tooba Zulfiqar: (Corresponding Author)

M. Phil Scholar, Department of Pakistan Studies, National University of Modern Languages Islamabad, Pakistan.
(Email: toobazulfiqar929@gmail.com)

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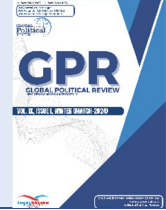
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Abstract

In the light of globalization and technical breakthroughs, this study examines the complex history, current issues, and potential future directions of women's empowerment in Pakistan. This article starts with the moral obligation and societal advantages of gender equality before diving into the historical viewpoints of women's empowerment in Pakistan highlighting significant individuals and occasions, such as General Zia-ul-Haq's regime and Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's support for women's education. Opportunities for reaching gender parity through legislative reforms and political leadership are analyzed. Further, there is a focus on reasons why technology contributes to women's empowerment, especially in the aspects of economic, educational, and informational opportunities. Idea considered in this article is that education plays a crucial part in the liberation of women, the issue of gender equality as the key to sustainable development, and people's and governments' mutual cooperation in the face of retained inequality and the need for gender equality.

Keywords:

[Empowerment](#),
[Opportunities](#), [Gender Equality](#), [Technology](#),
[Education](#), [Sustainable Development](#)

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Authors:

Tooba Zulfqar: (Corresponding Author)

M. Phil Scholar, Department of Pakistan Studies, National University of Modern Languages, Islamabad, Pakistan.

(Email: toobazulfqar929@gmail.com)

Introduction

Not only is it ethically right to empower women, but it also revolutionizes society. Therefore, it is now imperative for society as a whole to make gender equality a reality in practice rather than merely a theoretical idea. The youngest Nobel laureate and passionate advocate of women's education, Malala Yousafzai, emphasizes that empowering women and girls is essential to the advancement of civilization (nations, Messengers of Peace, 2017). Gender parity

remains elusive despite notable progress. For equitable opportunities for all Pakistanis to be advanced, structural hurdles must be addressed via legislative changes, wise investments, and capable political leadership. Governments, private citizens, and civil society organizations must work together to provide the structure required to guarantee true gender equality in the future. This will open the door to a society that is more affluent, welcoming, and equal for all. It's fundamental to understand that



gender equality is a basic human rights problem that impacts all of us, not just women. Prioritizing gender equality will help us create a more promising future for everybody.

Women Empowerment

This is the place where the notion of empowering women has been sourced as it has followed the struggle for women's emancipation leveled during the protestant reformation. However, it gained more attention in the twentieth century through feminism, Black power, and liberation of Women and Blacks, and the fight for equality and emancipation. Over the years writers have expanded the definition of the term and although this is a dynamic and full concept, this has made the term be possibly over or wrongly interpreted (Batliwala, [2010](#))

Hence, for Narayan, the concept of Empowerment is anchored on the redefinition of the freedom of choice and action to gain control over resources. With the help of the World Bank (2001), women's enhancement can be defined as the process of expanding their options and their ability to manage their lives, in other words, becoming empowered, gaining rights, controlling resources, and making choices regarding their lives. (Kabeer, [2001](#)) Also noted that in some way, women can have capability-enhancing control over their choices and strategies or the strategies in their lives.

It is possible to place bridging this gap within the context of women's empowerment or comprehensive for it is a complex process that takes place on social, political, and economic planes. It means the act of women getting an education, acquiring skills, becoming capable, and developing the ability and efficacy for the betterment of their lives. Last but not least, it is about women as persons who are trying to optimize the available opportunities in their lives by increasing the likelihood of making a rational and positive choice.

Progress on Gender Equality

Despite being a human rights issue, gender equity is also basic to any organization since gender equity is the foundation of any healthy socio-political and economic structure in the world. There has been a great advancement in different sectors in the past decades; nevertheless, the global community is not

on the right path as far as the quest for gender equality in 2030 is concerned. Despite momentous advancements made in some fields and industries, gender disparities have become a worldwide issue, and remain the primary agent of social stagnation and marginal economic growth.

Historical Perspective of Women's Empowerment in Pakistan

Prominent Muslim educators like Sir Syed Ahmad Khan were always part of campaigns for women's education emphasizing the fact that education was the key to societal progress. His efforts were the foundations on which further advancements towards knowledge acquisition for women were built. Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah party had similar progressive views about the roles of women in society. His sister, Mohtarma Fatima Jinnah supported the Pakistani women and worked towards eradicating the socioeconomic problems Pakistani women faced after independence.

In pre-1947 Punjab, while Muslim women were ardent supporters of the Muslim League and involved in important public agitational processes, in Pakistan, suffrage was given to women when Pakistan came into being in 1947 under the Pakistan (Creation of Pakistan) Ordinance of 1947, and the right to vote was given to women in the interim constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan in 1956. The fact stated was that the women had reserved seats in the Parliament from 1956 to 1973.

The democratic regime of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (1970-1977) can be treated as a historical period for Women's Rights. The Bhutto government launched liberal social policies for women, who were offered some of the prohibited governmental facilities. The Constitution of Pakistan, which was enacted in 1973, brought out constitutional parity between male and female citizens of Pakistan by enshrining the principle of equal rights for both sexes in the constitution by saying that there should be no discrimination based on sex alone.

Currently, existing phenomena linked to the regime of General Zia-ul-Haq (1977-1986) include the Cabinet Secretariat's Women Division and the recently assigned Commission for the Status of Women. There are the following achievements: The government provided a chapter on women in development for the first time in the Sixth Five-Year

Plan; 20 women were nominated as members of the Majlis-e-Shoora in 1981. It was in 1985 by the non-Party election of the National Assembly that women reserve seats boosted from 10 percent to 20 percent.

Although the People's Party had some rhetoric regarding the issues affecting Pakistani society, its first foreign minister Benazir coming into power in 1988 found it to have more focused and serious concerns about women's health issues as well as discrimination. With this, she committed: women's police stations, courts, and development banks among them.

During the Musharraf period in the years 1999-2008 some initial changes were seen; in the year 2004 a new MOWD was established and the Ministry of Women Affairs was renamed as the Ministry of Women Development. The Hudood Ordinances of Pakistan were partially repealed in December 2006 by passing the Women's Protection Bill. This pointed out that as there is a change in women's quota which has been specified under the centrally recruited civil services from 5 to 10 percent there has been a change in the WEM.

Some activities were made during the presidency of Asif Zardari to deal with matters related to discrimination against women by enacting some legislation including, the Women Protection against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act 2010, the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act 2011 and Acid Control and Acid Crime. Other TTCs that we also measure are the Women Business Incubator and, the Benazir Income Support Program, one million women have opted for this service.

Again in the third time of Nawaz Sharif's government in Pakistan, a bill was passed that women should participate and must be allowed and should be involved in the activity on every level as stated in CEDAW (Technology, 2013). The recently launched PM Youth Loan scheme targeted to provide fifty percent credit facilities to ladies to support them economically active helped in employment generation throughout put business.

Nevertheless, there are massive challenges in the fight for emancipation for this reason because the Pakistani culture and the structures of the associated country are still unfriendly to the rights of women.

Persistent Inequalities

Such gender prejudice and discrimination remain the norm in places where half of the global population's potential belongs to women and girls. Women in particular receive globally, on average, 23 percent less than men in the labor market, and they are employed three times longer time in unpaid domestic and care work than men (NATIONS, United Nations Sustainable Development Logo, n.d.). Such factors as sexual violence, exploitation, and discrimination within public offices also further complicate the matter.

Present Challenges and Opportunities

Equality between men and women is a foundational human right that must be realized to have a wealthy, happy, and sustainable society. No matter how much progress has been made in the last several years, equity will not be reached by the year "2030". Over half of the world's population consists of women and girls, who also have enormous influence. Nonetheless, gender inequality is widespread worldwide and continues to obstruct societal advancement. Women still earn 23% less than men do on average in the workforce, and they put in almost three times as many unpaid hours caring for the family and providing care as men do (NATIONS, sustainable development goals, 2023). Cases of sexual abuse have surged, women are disproportionately employed as health and social workers globally, and women have been compelled to take on greater care owing to school closures. The pandemic has brought attention to and made the obstacles to gender parity worse

The Spotlight Initiative is an EU/UN program that aims at eradicating violence in all its forms against women and girls. The appropriation is the biggest targeted investment in the world to tackle violence against women and girls stressing that gender equality is critical to addressing the biggest global challenges of contemporaneity including economic downturns and lack of access to healthcare, climate change among other issues as well as growing conflicts. Even in the situation where women are the main sufferers of such issues, they also have ideas and leadership to address it. Depriving women of their rights and opportunities means keeping the world back and adding more barriers to progression.

International Activities and Achievements of Gender Equality International human commitments towards gender equality remain paramount and have brought some improvements regarding the matter. For example, people marrying as children, women and girl cuttings, and misogyny are high but the rate of women in leadership has increased. Nevertheless, the dream and hope of a world that every woman and girl will be empowered and that all the legal, social, and economic barriers that hinder their empowerment have not been accomplished.

Achieving equal representation in positions of leadership and power, lowering inequities in legal protection, ensuring equal participation in national parliaments, and ending child marriage are all significant long-term goals. Regretfully, there is a very slow pace of advancement towards these objectives. The estimated timeframes for achieving them are as follows: 300 years for the outlawing of child marriage, 286 years for the repeal of laws discriminatory against women, 140 years for equal representation in positions of authority, and 47 years for equal representation in national legislatures (NATIONS,2023). To overcome these obstacles and remove the obstacles in the way of accomplishing Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals, extensive policy reforms, investments, and political leadership are required.

Gender equality is not only a standalone objective; it is a multifaceted issue that must be integrated into national institutions, budgets, and policies. In addition to being more impacted by these issues, women also have the intelligence and initiative to find solutions. Too many women are still hampered by gender prejudice, which therefore hinders our global community. Even with some progress in areas like lower rates of female genital mutilation and child marriage and higher rates of female engagement in politics, the objective of attaining full gender equality for every woman and girl remains unmet. To overcome these challenges and ensure that gender equality is attained for all, legislative modifications, continuous political dedication, and financial backing are necessary.

Women empowerment challenges in Pakistan

Evident discrimination against women persists in Pakistan and is largely unseen in the mainstream

media, but it is felt in many different areas. There are still a lot of obstacles in the way of women pursuing profitable careers in fields like computer technology, finance, education, medicine, and law. For instance, a 2010 research (Samina Malik & Kathy Courtney, 2010) found that women enroll in higher education at a lower rate than males. Girls' access to higher education has historically been restricted by several factors, such as sociocultural views and financial limitations (Mak., 1996.). In addition, a lot of women find it difficult to progress in their jobs because they lack experience or find it difficult to balance work and family obligations. Therefore, women's particular social conditions frequently impede their advancement to powerful positions, even if overt gender discrimination may not always be evident.

Women comprise about half of the population of Pakistan, according to the 2017 Census. Women have made major historical contributions to Pakistan, yet they still confront structural obstacles (Rauf, May 2022). The World Economic Forum's 2012 and 2020 Global Gender Gap Reports highlight Pakistan's low standing in indices of gender equality, especially among the country's poorest women citizens. These issues are made worse by women's low literacy rates, which are exacerbated by pervasive poverty.

Why Gender Equality Matters and What We Can Do?

Women's rights are human rights, and these include their special rights to work, stay, learn, go outside, and participate in politics. The rights of women and girls should be empowered since the effects will be associated with community-wide impacts. For example, ensuring that women get decent employment and weekly wages reduces world poverty (SDG 1), and ensures family education, nutrition, and well-being (SDGs 2, 3, 4). Of the targets under SDG 5- 'Ending violence against women' targeted as 5. 2 - is a key component in attaining healthy lives and well-being for all (SDG 3) since women abused physically and sexually are more likely to contract HIV (Target 3. 3) as well as experience poor mental health (Target 3. 5) (Women, WHY GENDER EQUALITY MATTERS ACROSS ALL SDGS AN EXCERPT OF TURNING PROMISES INTO ACTION: GENDER EQUALITY IN THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, 2018). Moreover, the health of

their children, who might be present when the abuse is perpetrated, will also be affected. Hence, empowering and promoting gender equality is vital to the achievement of the agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals enhancing the well-being of every society.

However, there are still persisting disparities regarding the factors of the 2030 Agenda along the lines of gender. Overall, new and stronger actions are needed to help create an environment where every woman and girl can succeed and be protected. Additional advancements regarding the enhancement of data gathering and analytical efforts will assist in enhancing asset identification of gender-specific issues and the ways for their resolution. Financing gender equality (SDG 17) is thus vital to achieving gender parity and strengthening women's influence in decision-making processes in climate change (SDG 13), cities and human settlements (SDG 11), and other areas. This paper supports the disaggregation of women's rights and the consideration of the other forms of discrimination that affect women since the gender-specific barriers must be eliminated for women to fully realize themselves. Thus, by promoting organizations and institutions that support women, we can follow their effective engagement in achieving all the SDGs and finally create a world that is much fairer and progressively richer for everyone.

Collaboration between Individuals and Government

The proportion of female parliamentarians across the globe remains low despite some levels of improvement, the cooperation between the people and governments is required to increase portions of females in parliaments. While women hold 23.7 percent of the parliament, the gaps are still apparent, although Rwanda and Bolivia have more women than men in the parliament (Women, why gender equality matters across all sdfs an excerpt of turning promises into action: gender equality in the 2030 agenda for sustainable development, 2018). There is evidence that the increase in women's representation in national decision-making bodies is facilitated by the use of electoral gender quotas and other temporary special measures (TSMs). Still, only a third of the UN member states have codified quotas, pointing to the fact that more attention should be paid to their adoption and further

monitoring in order not to turn them into the women's leadership ceilings.

Optimal cooperation between people and states is vital to the solution of these problems and changes in gender relations. Governments can also help by providing and implementing the provisions of obligatory gender quotas and TSMs that will let women be active vote participants in political initiatives. Also, the governments can also encourage programs towards enhancement of political participation especially among women through capacity building in the form of offering training and other resources to the women intending to vie for political leadership positions (Women, WHY GENDER EQUALITY MATTERS ACROSS ALL SDGS AN EXCERPT OF TURNING PROMISES INTO ACTION: GENDER EQUALITY IN THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, 2018). On the other hand, people especially CSOs can push for change, demand reforms that promote gender equality, and involve formal and informal socializing agencies to popularize the need for women's participation in decision-making processes. That is why men together with governments need to build an environment that makes politics appealing to women and recognizes their worth.

In addition, no yearly statistics are available to measure the progress of women's integration into local governments, which hinders addressing the issue of gender parity in politics. It is also seen with indicator 5, which is about women's representation in local legislative bodies, and how UN Women has strived to work for the development of a standard for such representation. 5. 1b is crucial in filling this gap because the consistencies found in the proposed methodologies improve the credibility of the results. Since it is possible for governments to engage international organizations such as UN Women in the process of developing the said indicators, Uganda is a noble example in this respect. Thus, by generating the appropriate information and evaluating women's engagement in local governments from time to time, the countries could consider the efficiency of gender quotas and TSMs for all levels of decision-making. Such partnerships can result in, more precise and efficient policies, addressing issues related to gender equity, and empowering women that will have a voice and

contribute to the development of society and their nations.

Women's Empowerment in the Globalized Era

Women's empowerment is greatly impacted by globalization. In order to resolve the most significant issues facing the world today, gender equality must be prioritized as both a moral requirement and a fundamental human right. Women are usually the ones most affected by economic downturns, lack of access to healthcare, climate change, and violence in our more interconnected world. These barriers hinder women's advancement and increase pre-existing inequality, which disproportionately affects women. However, women may help resolve these problems by contributing their knowledge and suggestions. To create communities that are more resilient and long-lasting, decisions must be made with them in mind.

The social, political, and economic contexts have a significant impact on how people view women's empowerment. The (Bank, [2003](#)) emphasizes how important it is to provide women the freedom to make choices that will give them more power and control over important parts of their lives. Likewise, (Kabeer, [2001](#)) characterizes women's empowerment as giving them the ability to plan ahead and make choices that are in line with their personal interests. To be fully empowered, women must, however, also learn new skills, change as people, and adjust to changing situations.

Awareness of the many forms of empowerment is critical for achieving equitable and long-term development in the globalization era. Prioritizing gender equality and women's empowerment enables society to fully realize the potential of all of its members, resulting in greater resilience, wealth, and overall well-being.

Technology and Women

Technology has been a revolutionary force whereby people's lives on the global front have been transformed; education and power. First, and today the greater part of the population is actively engaged with the Internet, which means that they have an opportunity to improve their knowledge using a vast number of available resources (Crompton, [2022](#)). This access is important for women of both

developed and developing worlds, as they get rid of the hurdles that used to restrict their right to education and come out of the bonded domination (add citation). For instance, in developed countries, women use technology to achieve more individualism i.e. in developing and low-income countries, the use of technology offers women a way how to overcome cultural and resource-based restrictions. Dhanamalar ([2020](#)) Smartphones, laptops, and the internet are key instruments for women educationists to learn and enhance the different fields of study including health, crop production, business, and information technology among others.

In addition, they found that information and communication technology has also boosted women's interactions in the economic domain. Mobile money and inclusion, microfinance, and cash have boosted women's participation in such form formal economies and production and service sectors, etc. (Çetin, [2020](#)). It assists the females in learning, which engulfs the acquisition of skills and knowledge that will improve their economic returns, thus empowering them. For instance, women can now pursue college courses online, become members of business organizations online, and even start a business, and manage it from home. The available opportunities in the areas of education and financial services that have risen to this level make it easier for women to become productive members of their society and the economy.

More so, technology facilitated the engagement of women's participation in scientific areas and provided chances for political and institutional representation (Asongu, [2020](#)). Thus, with the help of digital technologies, women can strengthen their education, expand their knowledge, and improve the skills needed for scientific work, participation in shaping policies, and career growth (add citation). Instead, this empowerment is not limited to the professional sphere but is extended to personal and community-based organizations where women are leveraging technology for advocacy; campaign; and social change (insert citation here). In total, it is possible to conclude that, at least in terms of using technology, women can get the ways to achieve what can help in gaining equal rights, and make the choices that can influence their lives and societies.

Role of Government in Women's Empowerment

Education is widely recognized as a tool that empowers women by providing them with numerous opportunities that touch on virtually all spheres of life. It empowers women by enabling them to understand and be involved in a productive and constructive manner in various arenas, which in turn improves the various aspects of women's socio-cultural, economic, interpersonal, legal, political, and psychological realms (Aslam, 2013). Education empowers women to extend their participation in civil, political, economic, and cultural activities and boosts their morale not to succumb to exploitation. This empowers women to make decisions on important matters of their lives and the political arena so that they are able to have a say on matters affecting their lives and the future of the nation at large.

Furthermore, education has a driving influence on women's social emancipation and ultimately enhances the socio-economic status of a country by decreasing poverty, illiteracy, and marginalization. It is the preparation for professional and research-based vocations and initiates processes of change in society and for democracy (Singh S, 2017). Thus, through the means of decision-making control over resources, access to opportunities, and the distribution of benefits at par with education helps women achieve greater control. Moreover, education empowers women, especially as far as financial matters are concerned through enhancing their financial practices, and creditworthiness. By planning financially, educated women have the knowledge and capacity to plan for their households, their communities, and the state; thus embracing economic justice and empowering women.

In addition, education enables women to be psychologically emancipated and their self-esteem and self-efficacy are boosted. It allows for a woman to break barriers of the conventional and oppressive norms and codes, and advance individual development and group advancement. Women by being part of educational institutions, political parties, and decision-making bodies gain self-confidence, learn their self-worth, and acquire control over their income and bodies (Mandal, 2013). This psychological empowerment results in personal maturity and the ability to be on their own which

enables women to cope and respond appropriately to changes. In this context Geeta Mandal established that Women's Education helps them to learn the way of living the new life, adapting to the changing circumstances, and controlling the feeling of desire to have big families which is good for their health and empowering them.

Importance of Gender Equality for Sustainable Development

Equal treatment of men and women is key to meeting the Sustainable Development Goals, as proven by UN Women's seminal article "Turning Promises into Action: Gender Equality in the 2030 Agenda." Giving gender equality a first priority and empowering women in all developmental projects is necessary to achieve comprehensive and long-lasting success. In order to implement gender-inclusive policies and distribute resources efficiently, governments, civil society groups, and other international players must collaborate. By addressing the underlying reasons for gender imbalance, such as unfair social standards and practices, significant and long-lasting change can be further affected.

Considering that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has less than a decade to implement, gender equality is clearly critical to the advancement of sustainability, peace, and humanity. The accomplishments achieved and limitations encountered emphasize the need for immediate action to close the persistent gap between words and acts in the promotion of social inclusion.

Socially inclusive development projects can cultivate a world in which every person has an opportunity to succeed and make a significant contribution to the community's quality of life and well-being. As a consequence, it has become essential to now consider the effects of all the 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) on all those being considered insignificant. Thus, we will be able to bridge the gap and might end up building a more airer, viable future. everywhere in order to bridge the divide and build a fairer, more viable future.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The United Nations created the Sustainable Growth Goals (SDGs), which highlight our collective progress by highlighting how important it is to

protect the environment and promote economic growth. Gender equality is one of the SDGs that sticks out as being crucial for overall development. However, as seen by Pakistan's existing gender equality status, deep-rooted prejudices and patriarchal structures impede efforts to achieve gender equality by 2030 (Women, Women, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), n.d.). Strongly ingrained cultural norms present major challenges to women's empowerment, calling for focused interventions in crucial areas. Encouraging women to have more control over their assets and finances is essential to increasing economic autonomy.

This is because, in most patriarchal societies and cultures around the world, the public space remains a domain that continues to oppress women even after the constitution may provide for women's rights and emancipation. Hence, there is sponsorship of women's consideration through the formulation and implementation of better policies and laws through females' representation in leadership. Hence, for enhancing the status of women or empowering them that would simultaneously contribute to gender equality as well as the development of Pakistan in general, the best intervention should target these main areas of empowering women. Therefore, any endeavor to promote women's participation in various sectors and domains of society should be encouraged since this might serve as the foundation upon which a better society and improved welfare of its inhabitants could be built.

Turning Promises into Action: Gender Equality in the 2030 Agenda

Given that it is the headline statistical report demanded by the UN General Assembly and the

main report of UN Women The evidence-based new data and analysis-focused report titled 'Turning Promises into Action' brings together the most comprehensive data-based picture of the world and women and girls in a particular year as well as what is needed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. This editorial package showcases UN Women's 2018 flagship report, "Turning Promises into Action." It includes items such as data, narratives, and videos, as well as analyses of publications that explain how and why gender considerations are important in the achievement of all the SDGs; how the goals trap women and girls into second-class citizenship where they are ignored and denied their rights and freedoms; Nations' Publications.

Conclusion

Considering the analysis above, the advancement of gender equality and women's empowerment become increasingly important as Pakistan works to meet its development objectives. Gender parity is integral to the Sustainable Development Goals framework and is necessary to achieve wider goals such as inclusive growth and poverty eradication. Even though Pakistan has made progress in establishing programs to improve women's access to opportunities and services and enshrining gender equality in its constitution, structural impediments and deeply ingrained cultural norms still exist. To overcome these obstacles, deliberate efforts are required to change social norms that support inequality, close the gender gap in healthcare and education, and modify laws. Pakistan can realize the full potential of its people and create the foundation for a more just and prosperous future by placing a high priority on the empowerment of women.

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