



Exploring the Causes and Consequences of Women's Limited Economic Participation in Pakistan

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Abstract

Women in Pakistan exhibit considerably lower participation in formal employment compared to their counterparts in other South Asian countries, with only about 23% of women engaged in the workforce, one of the lowest rates in the region. This is largely due to social taboos, lack of education, reluctance, and other pressures that a woman faces daily. This untapped potential of human capital has raised questions about Pakistan's steps to eliminate gender disparity and incorporate human capital into economic activities. With this background, this study examines the reasons behind women's reluctance to join the workforce in Pakistan. Later, the bearing of low participation of women in business on Pakistan's economy is examined. In researching this paper, a close societal-level observation has been made. Primary and secondary data have been utilised in the study. Subsequently, chapters/sections of books, articles, official documents, and diversified opinions were examined to support an objective and empirical analysis. It is found that the lack of a female labour force has adversely affected Pakistan's economy and left some negative social impacts. Women's empowerment by changing stereotypes and the inclusion of females in all economic activities may be effective in improving Pakistan's socio-political and economic conditions.

Keywords: Women Empowerment, Pakistan, Low Participation, Economic Activities, Patriarchy.



Introduction

The modern world has changed societies significantly; many women still grew up in societies that raised them in a way to be meek and obedient. Discussion about women's emancipation is considered an immoral act in most parts of Pakistani society. This deep-rooted issue is causing controversy in different circles of thinkers /activists in Pakistan. Due to this misogynist mindset, females in Pakistan often face inequalities in access to employment. that hurts their lives (Ali et.al., 2022). Despite the efforts of the government to empower women, their participation in formal jobs is lower than in other South Asian states (Shibuya& Tirmazee, 2024). Several factors prevent women from participating in Pakistan's workforce (Trask, 2014). As per the data of the International Labour Organization (ILO), the percentage of labour force participation of women in Pakistan went from 13.95 in 1990 to 21.67 in 2019 (Amber & Chichaibelu, 2023). The low participation of women in jobs not only causes a loss of productivity but also hinders the development of the country. Many sources have illustrated that the participation of women in employment contributes to economic growth (Kabeer & Natali, 2013). Another study emphasises the positive effects of gender equality on economic growth as women are important human capital, and a rise in the existing human capital would be quite helpful to accelerate economic growth (Pervaiz, Akram, Jan, & Chaudhary, 2023). Since the government of Pakistan is trying to enable women to contribute to socio-economic development as equal partners, many proposals have been presented for their empowerment through quality education, by eliminating gender segregation and adopting legal reforms. The mention of an amendment made to the Companies Act in 2020 (Hamel, Alkastalani & Gokalp, 2023) is deemed necessary as it was an initiative for women entrepreneurs to start a business through the same procedure set for men. Many efforts are being made to empower women through education. Notwithstanding these efforts for women's emancipation, the system could not bring much difference in the overall situation of women as the entrenched patriarchy in the societal structure of Pakistan bars a change in the existing arrangement.

This discrepancy between the efforts of the government and the actual situation has barred many thinkers from digging deep into the issue. Therefore, this issue has not received much attention from researchers and academics, who invariably focus on women's empowerment. The study found that women are reluctant to do jobs due to the dominant patriarchal mindset in society. The prevalent cultural and social taboos, harassment at the workplace as well as in travelling, and household responsibilities are deterring women's choice to participate in businesses, which has also slowed down Pakistan's economy.

Research Problem and Background

It is observed that an empowered and visionary woman bears a bad character in most of the cities of Pakistan, and sometimes she yields the tag of 'a lady dangerous to society'. Thus, a large segment of society thinks that women should remain in pardah (wear hijab) and should be low because this reflects their good character. Looking at the rigid social taboos and the



governmental efforts generates a puzzle to unravel this absurdity. The de-jure and de-facto women empowerment in Pakistan enthused my mind to see why women are not becoming a part of the formal jobs in Pakistan and what implications this trend has for Pakistan.

Several studies have already substantiated that the patriarchal structure of Pakistani society is the main cause of barring women from participating in jobs (Majid & Siegmann, 2021). Nevertheless, a large number of women in Pakistan, along with men, do not consider the patriarchy an issue. Moreover, women, dependent economically on male family members, are unperturbed over the violations of their rights. Interestingly, the majority of people accept the difference in the status of women, and some defend the status quo and justify it on traditional, social and religious grounds. Therefore, the perceived discrimination against women varies at the individual, organizational and state levels. Given the limited empirical literature on the relationship between women's empowerment and its impact on Pakistan's social, political and economic growth, this paper endeavours to provide shreds of evidence about the unequal participation of women in the job market and its impact on the social and economic growth of Pakistan.

In this background, I take the lead from a variety of scholars concerned with themes of women's emancipation and excavate the history of women's empowerment to unfold the reasons why many educated women could not join the formal workforce in Pakistan. This indicates that the governmental efforts for sustainable development are insufficient and inadequate too. Therefore, I argue that a drastic change is required to end patriarchal hegemonic designs, stereotypical thinking about women and a cumbersome judicial system.

Research Methodology

While researching this paper, a close societal-level observation has been made. Many popular workplaces, including banks, educational institutions, and other government offices in Pakistan, were examined, where the security of women is ensured, yet women feel unsafe. This discord between the governmental protective policies and the actual safety of women exposes an entrenched societal issue. The uneasiness of women does not stem merely from the threat of physical harm, but from prevalent gendered power dynamics. Many factors form an environment where the available structural protections for women fall short, because the psychological and cultural dimensions of insecurity have never been addressed in a true sense. This observation highlights the dire need to move beyond symbolic security protocols for the women of Pakistan. To further analyse the situation and its implications for Pakistan, secondary data sets have been used in this study. Important official documents were examined to match them with the real situation to prove the symbolic security protocols. Subsequently, relevant books, articles, opinions, and websites were examined to support an objective and empirical study.

I will conceptualise the interplay between the efforts to develop Pakistan and women's underrepresentation. Women's entry into the country's socioeconomic development would help the government achieve sustainable development. In this setup, this research critically assesses



the causes of Pakistani women's reluctance to join formal jobs in Pakistan. It later discusses the impact of the said trend on Pakistan's progress. This paper will also examine the current policies and programs promoting women's economic empowerment in Pakistan. In the end, recommendations are made based on findings to cope with certain challenges.

Situational Analysis

Modern studies have proved that investing in women is crucial for sustainable development. Women's skill development and their economic empowerment are considered an effective way for economic growth and the eradication of poverty (Mariappen, 2023). However, women in Pakistan still face hurdles in advancing and benefiting from development, they are not getting proportional gains due to the prevalence of cultural norms and the typical marginalization of them. Unlike Europeans, the women in Pakistan are not very educated; they don't read too many books, they do not travel frequently and are aloof from the world outside their homes, so they don't have any tools to learn from their limited exposure.

In most of the families, women are not regarded as capable of having any economic role (Hassan, 2020). Generally, it is thought that women are not liable to work, and their education and career are not obligatory. In most cases, the families are proud of the progress of their males, whereas the progress of a woman is seldom commended. Pakistani women are raised in such an environment where they know that their status is linked with the ranks and positions of their husbands, fathers or sons. This situation is grimmer in rural areas, where having girls in families is a matter of shame, even families without sons are significantly ridiculed, and many mothers have to endure taunts for not having male children. In some families, without sons, one daughter is selected, in childhood, to be raised as a boy to fulfil the family's needs, where the young girl has to assume the role of son until her puberty. The young girls occupy boys' roles, such as buying groceries for home, because they cannot go out in a girl's getup. If a woman fights for inclusivity, equality and freedom, she would be regarded as spoiled and dishonourable because of being vocal against patriarchy (Aamir, 2024). With this approach, it is very difficult to accept a woman's role in any progressive work. Moreover, this mindset limits Pakistan's ability to achieve global targets set by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGS).

The Dilemma

It is imperative to mention many initiatives taken by Pakistan in collaboration with international and local organizations, to improve the situation of women in the workplace. The International Labour Organization (ILO) 's Gender Policy envisions promoting gender equality in the workplace through various conventions (International Labour Organization. n.d.). A very popular framework, Convention No. 190 on violence and harassment, passed in 2019, ensures to creation of a safe working environment for all workers. (International Labour Organization. (2019). However, the situation in Pakistan is different as many workers are reluctant to report incidents due to fear of retaliation and due to the lack of trust in the legal system.



Similarly, many efforts have been made by local organizations to bring women into businesses and jobs. The State Bank of Pakistan highlighted in its report in 2020 “women are disproportionately underserved by the country’s financial system” (State Bank of Pakistan. (2020)). Some positive initiatives have been started by the State Bank of Pakistan through the Credit Guarantee Scheme to enhance access to finance for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), particularly women-owned businesses (State Bank of Pakistan. 2012).

On the same lines, Meezan Bank of Pakistan also offers financing products tailored for women entrepreneurs, as part of its commitment to supporting gender-inclusive economic growth. (Meezan Bank. n.d.) In addition, KASHF Foundation provides microfinance and capacity-building programs aimed at empowering women in rural areas of Pakistan to start their businesses and improve their living standards (KASHF Foundation. n.d.). The above-mentioned initiatives collectively aim to improve women's economic participation and support entrepreneurs in Pakistan. These are positive steps taken for the empowerment of women in Pakistan, yet these initiatives face substantial challenges hindering their effectiveness. Despite providing access to financial resources and training, these programs could not be fully implemented because of limited outreach, the illiteracy rate of women and social norms. Moreover, women still face difficulty in accessing loans, sometimes due to their gender, because they have limited guarantees required for a certain amount of loan. Notwithstanding financial support, most women entrepreneurs are restricted due to a lack of mentorship and networking opportunities. These challenges indicate that the offered programs often fall short of bringing about considerable improvements in the overall economic empowerment of women. Thus, there is a need for an inclusive strategy to bring a permanent change for working women in business.

Moreover, Pakistan's Vision 2025 foresees an inclusive and thriving economy, it is a launching pad for the complete fulfilment of the SDGS before their target date of 2030 (Ministry of Planning, Development & Reform, Pakistan. 2025). Just like other initiatives of the government of Pakistan, Vision 2025 also faces obstacles as societal barriers stop many women from fully accessing financial services and training.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGS) Gender Mainstreaming Strategy aims to integrate gender considerations into all policies, programs, and initiatives (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. 2024). However, this strategy often faces substantial problems in Pakistan emanating from patriarchal structures restricting its effectiveness. Social taboos and limited access to education are preventing women from full participation in any economic activity. So, this weak enforcement of gender-sensitive policies hinders meaningful progress in Pakistan.

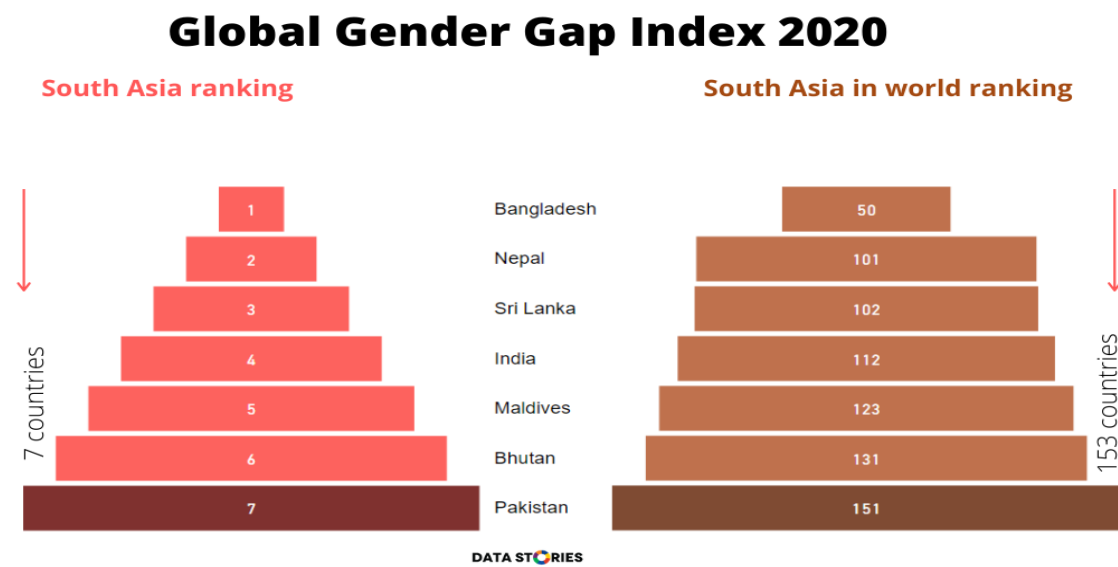
Those who are hopeful and see the optimal solution through education are somehow dejected too, as women receiving university degrees either cannot opt for jobs in offices or are working in lower positions than they deserve. The report of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) shows that the workforce of women in Pakistan is the lowest in Asia, where only 22 per cent of women join the labour force (Shahid et al. 2022), even though the percentage of educated women has been

increasing over the last decade. Most of the women are bound to look after the families they live with, though they are highly educated. Their domestic pressures and the constructed role in household chores inhibit the participation of women in the job market.

Despite the gender disparities in workplaces, women's participation in some professions, such as education, healthcare, the garment industry, social service, banking, and media sectors, shows higher participation of women. However, this number is still not satisfactory and cannot fill the gap due to the impediments to their access to jobs. This gender disparity has a stark negative impact on growth (Klasen, 2002).

In many cities of Pakistan, the participation of women in the labour force has increased. The World Bank Report 2018 reported that the rate of participation of women in economic activities has increased in Punjab, Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Sindh with variation. (World Bank Group. 2018). For instance, in big cities such as Lahore, Karachi, and Islamabad, women's participation in the labour force has significantly increased, but small cities and villages still have challenges. Yet the reports of the ILO and ADB show low involvement of women in comparison with other South Asian countries (Khan, 2020). The figure given below shows the global gender gap index 2020.

Figure 1



Source: Gender Gap Index 2020: Pakistan least performer in South Asia,

<https://www.datastories.pk/gender-gap-index-2020-pakistan-least-performer-in-south-asia/>

Scholars of different times accepted the need for women to be educated to be independent human beings. (Wollstonecraft, 1792). However, many Pakistani-educated women quit thinking about doing jobs outside the home. Even highly educated women are reluctant to enter the job sector. Out of the numerous reasons for female participation in jobs, one factor is that economic development could not bring equal benefits for men and women, and also it could not fix the



gender roles (Momsen, 2004) in society. For example, powerful positions (and power itself) have often been associated with men only. Some educated women cannot join the workforce because of inexplicable social barriers, such as the ordeal of daily commuting on public transport is seriously impacting the movement of females. It is also observed that women's interaction with unrelated men yields hurdles for them, and they hesitate to take up paid employment (Tanaka & Muzones, 2016). Some quit working due to harassment at their workplace or during their commute. Whatever the causes are, women's low labour force participation results in a significant potential loss of productivity (Makwela, 2022).

Harassment at Workplaces and Transport Ordeal

According to a survey conducted by the Asian Development Bank in 2016 in Karachi on a small group of women who used to travel regularly to do jobs. It is reflected that women face harassment during commutes, 85% of women reported that they were harassed on public transport. "Most of the harassment was perpetrated by male passengers, but about a quarter of women also reported being harassed by vehicle drivers or conductors" (Tanaka & Muzones, 2016).

Another dilemma is that some women do not report the issues of harassment because they are afraid of allegations against their character. They fear that families and relatives will find fault in their character instead of the wrongdoer. Similarly, in certain occupations where frequent interaction with men is usually regarded as something negative, women working in such environments are stigmatised (Shoaib, Khan & Khan, 2010). This attitude could be detrimental to women's careers, just because the ingrained beliefs, which are stronger than realities, make most cases muffled; such a situation helps in perpetuating the backwardness of women and discourages them from going out. For example, market research conducted by Habib Bank Limited (HBL), Pakistan's commercial bank, in collaboration with the Financial Alliance for Women, revealed that many women are reluctant to access financial services at bank branches because male bank staff do not treat them with respect. Sometimes, they felt disrespected and excluded when faced with a mostly male customer-facing staff (Financial Alliance for Women & Habib Bank Pakistan, 2021). Some women are hesitant to go for jobs because of late working hours, where they feel uncomfortable (Shahid, 2022). Notwithstanding the Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act, 2010, declares harassment as a criminal offence (Government of Pakistan, 2010). Yet, the weak implementation of this act cannot end the issue.

Those who are lucky to get jobs do not receive the value of their work as compared to their male counterparts. Even though Pakistan's economy requires women in the workforce to increase productivity, their work is neither noticed nor appreciated. It is largely because of the different expectations for women; for instance, women should perform the duties of men, no matter how long their working hours are. Simultaneously, working women are expected to perform household chores too, no matter how tired they are. It reflects that women unreasonably shoulder the burden of unpaid work, which remains unnoticed (Cerrato & Cifre, 2018). Thus, the



compulsive environment leaves no other choice except to stay at home and look after families, especially their children. Moreover, some women prefer to decrease their paid working hours to manage family responsibilities; in response, they risk losing earnings, as well as losing opportunities for advancement.

Financial Constraints

Women's economic dependence on male family members is mostly recognised as the norm, particularly in rural communities of Pakistan. Women's limited access to employment opportunities outside the home reinforces their financial reliance on males. Their male family members and in some houses, women themselves are considering doing a job outside the home as not their concern. In case a woman gets a job, she starts facing problems in a patriarchal society. A particular study on women's economic activities in Pakistan has shown that women in Pakistan have limited access to bank accounts and mobile phones. The study underscores that disparity in male and female access to bank accounts is one of the barriers to the financial inclusion of women, and if women's access to formal financial services increases, it would lead to greater economic and social empowerment of women (Ejaz & Qayum, 2023).

Furthermore, if a woman secures the job, she often faces an entirely different set of challenges, each one presenting its painful struggle. Working women often face unequal pay compared to their male counterparts (UN Women, n.d.). This wage gap perpetuates women's economic dependence on men and contributes to their financial vulnerability. Moreover, inadequate access to childcare facilities, public transportation, and other support services can make it challenging for women to balance work and family responsibilities (Shah, Makhijani, Suhag, & Mirza, 2020, December). Without adequate support systems in place, many women opt to prioritise their domestic duties over pursuing economic independence.

Moreover, some economic factors are also contributing to the exclusion of women from formal employment. Mostly, women do not have full access to credit or land ownership, either due to rituals or the legal setup. It means that after so many years of struggle for women's empowerment, Pakistan could not improve its score on gender parity. According to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index 2021, only 18% of the country's labour force is made up of women in Pakistan, ranking 145 out of 146. Economic opportunities for women were limited in comparison with men (World Economic Forum, 2023). Their limited financial resources are restricting women's ability to start their businesses, invest in education, and get the skills training required for formal jobs.

As per Pakistan's constitution, women do have the right to own land. Chapter 1, Article 23 of the Constitution of Pakistan states that "every citizen shall have the right to acquire, hold, and dispose of the property in any part of Pakistan (Fundamental Rights, n.d). Islamic law also permits women to inherit their father's property with a lesser share of an inheritance than their brothers.



Prevalent Thinking about Women's Role

One potential explanation for women's low participation in the workforce is the prevalent thinking in Pakistan about women's character. Pakistani women's role is linked to its cultural, religious, and traditional norms. Predominantly, it is thought that when a woman works outside, it affects her duties in the home, making her arrogant and less caring. Generally, the families where wives earn and go for jobs have conflicts with their husbands (Thomason, 2022). Many women report backlash from their husbands in the form of divorce and domestic violence.

Islam emphasises the importance of women's rights and dignity, but the conservative interpretations of religious texts strengthen conventional gender roles. So, the misinterpretation of Islamic principles is making women subject to torture and violence (Rashid, 2022). So, the interpretations of Islam are also contributing to shaping the attitudes of families towards women's roles and restricting women's autonomy. The general expectations of women are primarily domestic, and predominantly, women are considered responsible only for household chores, childcare, and maintaining family concord.

At workplaces, women suffer further difficulties when they become mothers because there is a perception that a mother cannot be an "ideal worker", and they cannot meet employers' expectations (Burges, 2013). They are expected to prioritise their roles as wives or mothers above other pursuits. Since working women are tied to their family roles and professional commitments, they face more anxiety in balancing family and work. In addition, a strong emphasis is on their modesty, often likened to staying within the confines of the home and adhering to certain dress codes. They are also expected to maintain the honour of the family through appearance.

The burden of household chores impedes women's mobility, their ability to participate in social and economic spaces and access to technology. They feel more uncomfortable when they do not get suitable childcare services outside the home (Khan, 2023).

Lack of Education

Education is widely recognised as a key factor in empowering women and advancing gender equality. However, multiple factors have hindered women's access to education. Notwithstanding many efforts to enable women to access education, there are still problems for females, particularly in remote areas. Girls often face challenges in accessing quality education due to factors such as a lack of transportation and inadequate facilities.

In some families, women's mobility is restricted, and they are permitted to go outside the home only if a male family member escorts them. Their restricted mobility has a direct impact on women's access to education, employment, and their personal development. Some women who enter the labour force after finishing their education might find the cost of mobility a limitation in the early part of their careers (Field & Vyborny, 2022). Similarly, families prioritise males' education, whereas females are directed to stay at home due to security concerns.



In some regions of Pakistan, particularly those affected by conflict and extremism, security concerns pose a significant threat to girls' education (Rodriguez, 2018). Attacks on schools and threats against female students and teachers also contribute to low enrollment among girls.

Female students also face discrimination in classrooms and educational institutions, affecting their academic performance and self-esteem. Therefore, they may lack role models and mentors who can inspire and support them in pursuing education and careers. The absence of female teachers and leaders in educational institutions and communities can limit girls' aspirations and hinder their progress. Limited access to higher education and vocational training programs restricts women from pursuing advanced degrees and securing well-paying jobs. The lack of female teachers and the predominance of male teachers are making parents sensitive about their daughters.

Marriage and family obligations are often considered central to a woman's identity, and they are fulfilling their domestic duties at the expense of their personal development. In many parts of Pakistan girls' education is halted due to their marriages and later childbirth. Once married, females are expected to take care of their domestic responsibilities, which makes it difficult to continue their education.

Addressing these barriers requires comprehensive strategies that focus on improving access to jobs. Hence, promoting girls' empowerment and providing support services for women at all stages of their careers is challenging. Efforts to increase investments in education, enhance teacher training programs, and promote gender-sensitive policies and practices are essential to overcoming these challenges and advancing women's progress in Pakistan.

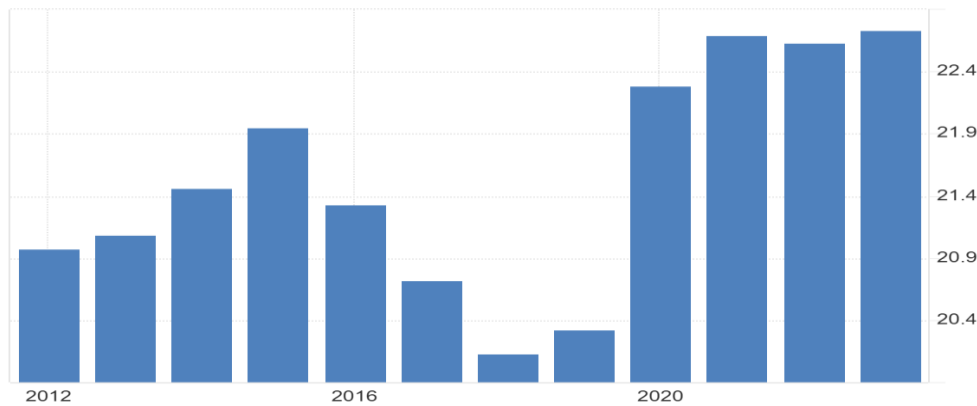
Implications for Pakistan

Half of the population of Pakistan is women; their aloofness from jobs is a big obstacle to the growth of Pakistan, as full human capital is not being utilised. The following data reflects the rising trend of women's participation in jobs. However, this is still unsatisfactory.

Figure 2



Pakistan Labor force, female (% of total labor force) - %



Source: tradingeconomics.com | World Bank

Source: Trading Economics, <https://tradingeconomics.com/pakistan/labor-force-female-percent-of-total-labor-force-wb-data.html>

Women's participation in the workforce is crucial for economic growth. Therefore, the government of Pakistan tries to empower women to participate in the economy so they can contribute to household income and bring their families out of poverty. Yet, the majority of women are not employed in Pakistan, and gender inequality is on the rise, impacting women's status and perpetuating systemic discrimination. It also limits opportunities for women in education, politics, and other areas of public life. The absence of women in formal jobs can have significant effects on Pakistan's progress, ranging from poverty aggravation, a stagnant economy and unproductivity.

Economic Implications

The idea of women as drivers of a nation's economy was introduced by Kathy Matsui, who used the term 'Womenomics', a term coined by a strategist at Goldman Sachs (United Nations Development Programme 2021). The concept of 'Womenomics' helps in understanding the country's economic growth and promotes gender equality in the workforce. In his context, Pakistan could experience slower economic growth, which has direct implications for the country's progress across many domains. Women's participation in different job sectors can make Pakistan economically sound and enhance the country's progress across various domains. Women's participation in different job sectors can contribute to Pakistan's economic stability, which is vital for the overall development of the country. Moreover, economically empowered women are more likely to participate in decision-making processes at all levels of society. Exclusion of women from the workforce means missing out on the valuable perspectives that could drive innovation in various industries. It can undermine political and social stability by furthering feelings of exclusion among women. Advancing women's participation in all fields of life will promote social cohesion, inclusivity, and stability within Pakistani society.



It has been proven that more participation of women in the workforce makes a country more productive (Weinstein, 2018). According to an estimation, if women start participating in economic activities equal to men, Pakistan's GDP will increase by nearly 60% in 2025 (Shaikh, 2023). The involvement of women fulfils the requirement of manpower and impacts the economy significantly. It also helps diminish income differences, lessen poverty and motivate girls to get a good education.

Pakistan is already facing a sharp decline in overall economic growth, so it needs manpower. Since women make up half of the population of Pakistan, their participation in formal employment can contribute to the elimination of poverty. Different studies have proven that education plays a significant role in the financial inclusion of adults. However, in Pakistan due to the lack of financial awareness and financial literacy, the percentage of active bank account holders is low as compared to the rest of South Asia (Ejaz & Qayum, 2023).

Giving greater economic empowerment to women in Pakistan does not mean employing a few females in industries, but they should get all the rights to economic resources, and their control over meaningful decisions is also compulsory. Their fundamental rights, such as the right to control their own time, their income and access to participation in existing markets, are direly needed. Moreover, it is important to understand that without appropriate human capital, women's potential in the labour market will remain limited. Thus, the government of Pakistan needs to ensure access to education and health care for women.

Socio-Political Implications

Low female participation in jobs and businesses makes them a weak class of society, as they have less influence in the decision-making process at all levels. The main beneficiaries of the demotion of women are men (Rotter, 2019). So, the perpetuation of a cycle of inadequate representation of women and the absence of solutions to their problems is inevitable because their perspectives are not reflected in policy formation and implementation. Moreover, women's dependence on men causes depression, which percolates in families. A woman's mental and physical health is important not only for her family, but societal well-being is also linked to her emancipation. the persistent ignorance of women's economic rights will show the backwardness of that society. Suffice it to understand that if prevailing sociocultural designs are less cooperative for women, the rest of the sub-systems can never be supportive (Rashid, 2022).

When women are excluded from economic activities, no guarantees are left of their impact on the community. This is not only causing the entrenchment of gender inequality in society but also denting Pakistan's reputation at the international level. The portrayal of efforts for women's empowerment and its implementation on social media is making an impact on young minds, however, the stories of sexual abuse and harassment convey a message of the terrible condition of Pakistani society, where women are not safe.

The gender disparity lowers the likelihood of certain changes in society, direly needed to meet international standards. Without the inclusion of women in jobs and businesses, Pakistan cannot



meet the targets set for development. Thus, generating opportunities for women in jobs is important for the country's economic progress and for its soft image at the international level. The time has changed and everything is internationalised, so the aloofness of women in Pakistan is detrimental to its image at the global level.

Conclusion and Discussion

In Pakistan, the ability of females has not been fully brought into work because of the dearth of appropriate job opportunities and insufficient economic motivations. It has implications for Pakistan's economic progress, as working women can contribute to any industry required for Pakistan's development. The low participation of women represents a major loss of potential productivity, holding back Pakistan's economy. A higher female workforce will increase labour productivity in Pakistan and benefit Pakistan's economic growth.

Although many organisations have been running programs for the better position of women at the workplace. These programs provide opportunities for women to enter businesses. However, cultural norms and gender biases often hamper their full participation in the workforce. Moreover, the limited acceptance of women in business roles continues to limit their economic mobility. Therefore, the gap between governmental policy and on-the-ground realities remains wide. The dire need is for a shift in social attitude for these financial and institutional efforts to achieve positive results.

Since women are half the population of Pakistan, the economic benefits of women's empowerment are clear; their participation in formal employment can contribute to the elimination of poverty. If women took part in the economy as much as men, Pakistan's GDP could grow by 60%. To change the pattern of female labour force participation, Pakistan needs to focus on changing norms through media and educational institutions. It needs to introduce such an educational curriculum that not only addresses women's empowerment but also highlights the rights of women. This inculcation is necessary to change the mindset and to make the environment secure for the women of Pakistan. By dismantling the barriers that prevent women from entering the formal workforce, Pakistan can unlock a vast potential for economic growth, social progress, and a brighter future for all its citizens.

The right calculation of the labour market, where men's and women's skills are required, assists policymakers in framing policies that could enhance the quality. The improvement in businesses is possible through the inclusivity of skills required in the market. Anticipating the skills gap can enable policymakers to meet the industry's requirements. This is equally essential to improve the productivity and competitiveness of the country's skilled workforce. This would attract investors and would foster higher economic gains. To match the skills and labour force with industries, the training providers/TVET authorities and employers should have strong coordination.

Gender-sensitive policies are required to transform social taboos because today's investment in gender-inclusive human capital can put the country on the path to prosperity and growth. Moreover, assessing the implementation, impact, and unintended consequences of these policies



can provide insights into areas for improvement and inform the design of more effective interventions.

Recommendations

This is so obvious that by investing in women's empowerment can lead to significant social and economic benefits for Pakistan as a whole. Pakistan needs to device such policies that encourage gender parity, provide support for women's education and skills training, create more job opportunities for women. The government needs to initiate such programs which could change cultural attitudes that limit women's participation in the workforce. By removing these barriers, Pakistan can harness the untapped potential of women and drive sustainable economic growth and development.

A comprehensive approach is required that involves collaboration between the private sector, communities, government and civil society organizations. The mobilization should start through social media platforms including twitter, YouTube, Facebook, and WhatsApp channels.

Efforts should focus on improving access to education, promoting gender-sensitive policies and legal reforms, creating supportive work environments, investing in infrastructure, and challenging traditional gender norms. The government of Pakistan should focus on creating technical education and skills, institutions for women separately. They should be exposed to the new world of technology as they can excel in these fields.

The government should alleviate barriers to women's participation by improving access to literacy and investing in such initiatives that close the gender gap and equip girls with the skills needed for formal jobs. Some workforce reforms are needed too to ensure equal pay to women, guarantee women's safety and provide childcare facilities. Government of Pakistan should work on to resolve mobility challenges women facing in Pakistan. Authorities should also work on percolating a new mindset that accepts women's empowerment. Moreover, public awareness campaigns through media are also needed to bring a change in social attitudes and to change traditional norms.

There should be unique financial incentives for the female business owners. In addition, such companies should also be supported by actively hiring and assigning them leadership roles. Indeed, the increased female representation in leadership positions will be one of the initial steps in encouraging women's participation in jobs. In short, Pakistan needs to reconstitute and rework the idea of development with the inclusion of women in all fields without biases. Although women are visibly participating in all fields of life, there is widespread bewilderment as to where we can realistically see the meaningful impact of the progress of Pakistan.

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