

Women empowerment in pakistan narrative essay

[Sociology](#), [Empowerment](#)



Quaid e Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah said, " " No nation can rise to the height of glory unless your women are side by side with you; we are victims of evil customs. It is a crime against humanity that our women are shut up within the four walls of the houses as prisoners. There is no sanction anywhere for the deplorable condition in which our women have to live." well its a very well self explanatory quote, Jinnah said in 1947, a hot topic for discussion and most needed action of these days around the globe.

Women's situation in Pakistan

In Pakistan, the women have no contribution in most activities or decision making, and this can be seen as a major obstacle towards development. And women's participation in civil and social activities, and their contribution on a national and international level, is necessary in order to progress gender equality and reduce gender disparities, thus steering the country towards development. Furthermore, there is no doubt that without women's participation, a country is unable to achieve success in matters relating to politics, sports, and the economy etc.

Women possess equal rights, as much as men do in progressing development - be at home, or in formal or informal environments, women are taking their responsibilities seriously, and in a sincere and committed way.

Voilence

The women make more than half the population of the country, but sadly they are not treated well. Struggle from different non governmental organizations and some courageous women of the country to make a change

in their lives showing a ray of hope to every female. Domestic violence is one of the harsh realities of a Pakistani woman. Activists who work for women's cause say that many women remain in violent relationships because they believe they must obey their husbands and that divorce is a shame. Majority of the women population has same thoughts because of lack of education. One third of women in Pakistan are uneducated and have very little concept about making their own choices.

According to a report of NGO White Ribbon Campaign (WRC) Pakistani women are subject to increasing abuse. Increased cases of violence are being reported each year in Pakistan. According to the report: "sexual harassment at the workplace, abuse, beating, and rape were some of the forms of violence against women."

Misconception about women empowerment

In general, few people have misconception that women empowerment and gender equality is a foreign agenda, people also think that women empowerment will destroy their society set up and women will not obey their husbands or their family, but it's only a misconception. Women all over the world have been facing challenges and gender inequalities since the beginnings of history.

According to Quran and Hadith

Quran and the Hadith both also emphasize on the protection of the rights of women, including the rights of education, worship, freedom of opinion, choice of spouse, economic freedom and social role.

What measures we should take??

Pakistan government has taken many measures to enhance the participation of women in economic sphere but instead of all this, there is a terrible need to upgrade the status of women in society and it is only possible through giving them protection legally and mentally. She should be given access and control over resources. An effective mechanism should be institutionalized to enable the women in decision making at all levels. Subject of gender studies should be introduced from secondary level in the course curriculum, provision of women friendly infrastructure and environment at workplace, research and documentation on the achievements of women and launching of awareness raising campaigns among citizens on gender and development.

Pakistani women can achieve their goal by joining hands together and motivating each other. Educate women which will ensure awareness of what is happening to women around the world today is an essential step towards improving their situation. It is a surprising fact that women are made to do some of the things simply because of the fact that they are women. No one can change the world by themselves, but many people doing a little can make a real difference in the society.

“ A man and a woman are like two wheels of a cart. The cart can move fast and safely when both of them are pulling the cart in the same direction, and with equal strength, but if one of the wheels is damage, nothing will be possible.”

Voilence

Geographically and culturally Pakistan is very diverse, but violence against women is endemic, and widespread, cutting across all differences. It is found

on streets and in homes, in offices and bedrooms. Gender-based violence in Pakistan includes domestic violence, rape, trafficking, honor killings, forced prostitution, public humiliation, incest, child marriages, and sexual harassment. Extreme forms of physical abuse include burning, acid throwing, physical mutilation and female infanticide.

However it was not until the 1980s that violence was exposed to public scrutiny, and only in the Nineties did the issue gain acceptance, especially by the government. Gender-based violence both reflects and reinforces inequities between men and women and compromises the health, dignity, security and autonomy of its victims. It encompasses a wide range of human rights violations, including sexual abuse of children, rape, domestic violence, sexual assault and harassment, trafficking of women and girls and several harmful traditional practices. Any one of these abuses can leave deep psychological scars, damage the health of women and girls in general, including their reproductive and sexual health, and in some instances, results in death.

Women Empowerment

It is beyond any doubt that women play a significant role in development of society. History bears the testimony to the greatness of women as vibrant members of society. Even in the current scenario women have stood shoulder to shoulder with men for the general cause of humanity. But, it is unfortunate that their efforts have not been given due recognition in society. In the name of various customs, rituals and practices, women are being deprived of the legitimate rights. Consequently, women are found in the abysmal state.

The need of hour is to give women workplaces and business environments that support and welcome them to improve society at a large; a mass movement that Pakistan desperately needs to help push it out of Economic and Social quagmire in which it finds itself today. “ No nation can rise to the height of glory unless your women are side by side with you; we are victims of evil customs. It is crime against humanity that our women are shut up within the four walls of house as prisoners.” (Quad-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, 1944)

The Pakistani society is one of the different kinds, where on one side it places women as the centre of attention and life; it then on the other hand considers them no more than a secondary citizen. For years the role that a women played as a citizen, a member of family or a home-maker has been highly undermined and today it has turned into a tradition to degrade women's ability. However, over the years this scenario has changed, and the awareness of her abilities, her rights and her status has reached almost all parts of Pakistan.

This country was formed on the basis of Two-Nation Theory, which emphasized Islamic teachings and values, and is therefore called as Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Islam gives the best and most balanced code of life, but Pseudo-fundamentalists converted the teachings of Islam to read in the best interests of men and highly unjust towards women. Despite this the women of Pakistan has come a long way in proving herself. The lives of Pakistani women have changed during the past thirty years and they are more powered and emancipated then they were ever before.

More and more women are entering the workforce today as their predecessors, who made the first time at the workplace and also made life easier for women, lent them the encouragement to do so. The U. N Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women defines Empowerment as: “ Empowerment means that people-both women and men can take control of their lives; set their own agendas, gain skills (or have their own skills and knowledge recognized) increase self confidence, solve problems and develop self reliance. It is both a process and outcome”

By empowering women it is meant that women should be allowed to participate fully in economic life across all sectors and throughout all levels of economic activity. With the tagline of “ Equality means Business” the U. N has put together seven “ Women’s Empowerment Principles” designed to bring about a gender-equal environment in workplace and business. They include:

- Establishing high level corporate leadership for gender equality
- Treating all women and men fairly at work, respecting and supporting human rights and non-discrimination

- Ensuring the health, safety and well being of all women and men workers
- Promoting education, training and professional development for women
- Implementing enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practice that empower women
- Promoting equality through community initiatives and advocacy
- Measuring and publicly reporting on progress to achieve gender equality

With the passage of time and economic development women have attained high level of liberty in the developed countries. Women in said countries are enjoying almost equal rights in accordance to men. They have acquired such

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status due to high literacy rate, better infrastructure, enlightenment and sincerity of the ruling class. Unfortunately, man has woefully militated against God's commandments in Pakistan. He has brought down women's social status to the level of a third rate citizen. Three main factors have encouraged man to do so.

Firstly, it is the physical strength and a false sense of superiority as against women's physical weakness that makes her vulnerable to oppression. Man has enforced the law of Jungle where the weaker leads life at the mercy of stronger. Secondly, it is the so-called religious scholar i. e. the ill-educated pseudo-scholar who interprets the Holy Quran in the light of his own gender prejudices against the women folk. Himself being man he preaches absolute property rights of men over women.

Thirdly, it is the feudalistic, political, economic and socialistic system of government that has taken charge of national affairs ever since independence. In the political field, this autocratic order has denied advent of democracy in the country. In some parts of the society, she is not allowed to exercise her right to vote. Restoration of right to vote has not much difference because she is not free to vote as per the voice of her conscience. In the economic sphere teeming millions are leading lives of serfdom. Denied opportunities to improve her economic lot she has been the worst sufferer.

Dependent on man for every bit of her needs she virtually leads slave's life. Feudalistic order has kept major part of nation illiterate but women have been left far behind literacy, knowledge, awareness and education. In some quarters even education is a factor that tends to indulge in sinful activities. It has therefore preferred to keep them illiterate and pious. In social matters

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man has successfully managed to keep her ignorant of her human rights. He has introduced devilish customs that victimize woman to accord her the status of domestic animals. The practice of Vani, Swara, honor killing, marriage of daughters with the Holy Quran, commitment of gang rape under orders of jirga etc are some of the examples of man's inhuman treatment of woman. Target of all these social evils has always been woman.

Anti-women practices have adversely affected the status of women in Pakistan. The inequality and depression of women have negative impacts on society. The implications of anti-women practices on society are as follows:

Firstly, women are found in an abysmal state in Pakistan. When father is not a father and brother is not a brother, man has taken undue advantage of vulnerability of the weaker sex. That is the mark of his cowardice. When it comes to address women's problems, father is not a father but only a "MAN". He would hand over his child girl in marriage to an eighty year old man just to get out of a difficult situation in which circumstances have placed him by chance.

Secondly, the brutal customs of honor killing (called as Karo-Kari in Sindh), Watta Satta marriages, marriage with Holy Quran and denial of inheritance are prevailing in society. A real brother is not a brother but only a "MAN" who would kill his sister mercilessly just because in his view, she has disgraced him and his family. To deny inheritance, the father in collusion with sons, would marry his daughter to the Holy Quran. To get rid of an unwanted daughter or to get a daughter in law of his choice, he would give her away in forcible marriage exchange.

This practice is called as Watta Satta which often ends in miseries and eventual breakup marriage; on both sides. Husband is not a husband but only a “ MAN” who utters the word of divorce thrice in one breath and sends the woman home. Man makes her work like an animal and beats her up whenever he feels the urge to do so. Domestic violence in the form of physical thrashing and mental torture with which woman is treated is considered to be the birth right of man. Man who is ordained to protect women by the Almighty God as per teachings of Holy Quran and Sunnah, leaves her exposed to every kind of threat, fear, misery, misfortune, indignity, uncertainty, unhappiness that one can imagine in this life.

Thirdly, women have been used as bargaining chips to resolve disputes in disgraceful customs of Swara and Vani. Swara is a custom usually practiced in tribal areas, in which woman is used as a commodity to resolve feud between two clans.

Similarly, in Southern Punjab Vani is a custom practiced in order to settle blood feuds. Vani could be avoided if the clan of the girl agrees to pay money called as “ Deet”. Otherwise, the young bride may spend her life paying for the crimes of her male relatives.

Fourthly, women face harassment in society, especially at their workplaces. The bosses particularly harass them. Trafficking is a worldwide phenomenon. It is the smuggling of women for the purpose of prostitution. Many women are abducted or blackmailed from Pakistan to other parts of the world and intra country also. To correct the despicable scenario, the law men sitting in the Assemblies have off and on enacted various laws to wipe the rampant social vices and customary practices that distort the fair image of women.

The passage of Domestic Violence (Prevention and protection), Act 2012 and establishment of Women' Rights Commission with financial and administrative powers aimed at promoting social, social, economic, political and legal rights of women in Pakistan, who constitute half of its population is laudable. But, our history bears the testimony that commissions to uplift the status of women was made and they were not successful because they were not independent. It has remained a custom to put good laws on paper but a little effort in history has been made to implement them.

The Prevention of Anti-women Practices (Criminal Law Amendment) Act 2011 is a milestone to empower and enlighten women. The struggle of women for emancipation and against discrimination has a long history throughout the world. Even in Pakistan, it is the high time to introduce a legal redress to ensure basic rights of women in society and to protect them against discriminatory traditions. The aim of this bill is to reduce injustice against women by discouraging several practices and customs in vogue in the country which are not only against human dignity, but also in contrast to Islamic injunctions. It is therefore, necessary that such inhumane practices and customs are done away forthwith and those who are found guilty should be dealt severely by providing penal and financial liabilities.

The Protection against Harassment of Women at Workplace, Act 2010 is also an important legislation done to protect women against harassment at workplaces. The objective of this Act was to create a safe working environment for women, which is free from harassment, abuse and intimidation with a view to fulfilling their right to work with dignity. Harassment is one of the biggest hurdles faced by the working women

preventing others who want to bring themselves and their families out of poverty.

This Act builds on the principles of equal opportunity to women and their right to earn livelihood without any fear of discrimination as stipulated in the constitution. This Act complies with the government's commitment to high international labor standards and empowerment of women. It also adheres to Human Rights Declaration, the United Nations Convention for Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women and ILO's Convention 100 and 111 on worker's rights. It adheres to the principles of Islam and all other religions which assure women's dignity. This Act requires all public and private organizations to adopt an internal code of conduct and complain/appeals mechanism aimed at establishing a safe working environment for all working women.

The Prevention of Domestic Violence Act, 2008 was passed unanimously by the National Assembly, but, the bill lapsed after the Senate failed to pass it within three months period required under the constitution. The domestic violence bill seeks to prevent violence against women and children with a network of protection committees and protection officers and prompt trials of suspected abusers. The bill includes protection in public places such as markets, public transport, streets or parks and more private places such as workplaces, private gatherings and homes. The Protection of Women (Criminal Laws Amendments) Act 2006 was enacted to provide relief and protection against misuse and abuse of law and to prevent their exploitation.

This Act provided "Thirty Important Amendments" in "Offense of Zina and Qazaf" (Enforcement of Hudood Ordinance 1979). This Bill allowed rape to be

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prosecutable under civil law. Apart from this empowering and enlightening pro-women legislation, there has also been anti-women legislation in Pakistan in the form of Hudood Ordinance 1979. It was a step to downgrade the status of women in the name of Islam. The Hudood Law was intended to implement Sharia Law, by enforcing punishments mentioned in Holy Quran and Sunnah for Zina, Qazaf offence against property and drinking. As for Zina, a woman alleging rape is required to provide four adult male eye witnesses.

The Ordinance has been criticized as leading to hundred incidents where a woman subjected to rape, or even gang rape, was eventually accused of Zina and imprisoned becoming a victim of extremely unjust propaganda. This Ordinance gave woman the symbol of dirt, filth and mainspring under the sun has been heaped upon the poor hapless women. This was the abysmal depth where woman lay almost half dead some decades ago. But the amendment in Bill in 2006 had removed the major road block that stood in the way of women's empowerment. Her rights received recognition and her status was restored as an honorable member of society.

Equal treatment of women and men is not just the right thing to do but it is also good for business. By accepting Gender stereotype and keeping the workplaces and business as no-go area for women, is an act which is weakening Pakistan's economy. The need of hour is to rob both Pakistani men and women of the chance to improve their lives and perpetuate an unbalanced and unequal society. Following are some recommendations for the empowerment of women.

Economically, it is essential to identify causes that keep women subservient to men. One of the most critical power that men wields to keep women under his thumb. This power should be shared between the two. Joint ownership of agricultural land and all other moveable and immoveable assets should be made mandatory for a house-wife in particular. Income and wealth created by women should be her sole ownership. Man should have no claim over it.

Secondly, daughters' share in inheritance along with brothers should be legally ensured in accordance with the mandate of the Holy Quran and its denial should be strictly protected from being usurped by her husband or the in-laws. Thirdly, the orientation of all public sector policies, programs and projects should be equally favorable to both men and women. There should be no discrimination.

Sociologically, the deadly customs of society will continue to have their sway so long as the inhuman system of Feudalism is not buried deep down from where it should never be able to pop up its ugly head. Feudalism is too firmly entrenched in this system. It will be eliminated only in the wake of a revolution. Until then it is the responsibility of NGOs that should spring up like mushrooms throughout the country and to come to the help of women. Highly educated, economically independent and politically emancipated women will partly be able to look after her rights. Feudalism has to be side-tracked to empower the women so that it refuses to be exploited by man, may he be a husband, a father or a brother.

Religiously, the importance of women and their success as human beings is measured with completely different criteria in Islam, their fear of Allah and

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obedience to Him and fulfillment of the duties, he has entrusted them with, particularly that of bearing, rearing and teaching children. Nevertheless, Islam is a practical religion and responds to human needs and life situations. Many women need, or wish to work for various reasons. Islam does not prohibit women working outside her home, it does stipulate that the following restrictions be followed to protect the dignity and honor of women and the purity and stability of Islamic society, the conduct of women, after all is the backbone of any society. Outside employment should not come before, or seriously interfere with her responsibilities as wife and mother. Her work should not be a source of friction within family, and the husband's consent is required to avoid later disagreements.

If she is not married, she must have her guardian's consent. Her appearance, manner and tone of speech and overall behavior should follow Islamic guidelines. Her job should not be one which causes moral corruption in society, or involve any prohibited trade or activity, affect her religion, morals, dignity and good behavior, or subject her to temptations. These guidelines clearly show that a woman is not prohibited to go out of her home for the purpose of a job, if she has the right intentions.

Politically, the representation of Pakistani women in Politics is higher than India, Sri Lanka and Iran. Pakistan is listed as 45th in the Inter-Parliamentary Union's list of women in national parliaments and stood ahead of several developed democracies including Canada, UK and the US. The only positive development thus far remained the relatively large representation of women in National Assembly, the Senate and Provincial Assemblies in comparison to other countries. Increased number of seats in Union, District, Provincial and

Federal assemblies has partially given her reason to live meaningfully and lead an honorable life. This trend should grow to enable her participate in shaping the destiny of the nation in a big way.

Legally, the pro-women bills have been passed in recent past but the need of hour is to implement those laws to empower women. There is much weight in calls by women's groups to set up an implementation mechanism because it is quite common to put laws on paper but there is little government will or sturdy mechanism to get them enforced, the creation of an implementation mechanism may be spur required to put these laws into practice and strengthen the struggle to eradicate the appalling customs of society.

It goes without saying that the framing of laws and their implementation is only the first step towards reforming society and ridding it of Anti-women practices. A continuous effort from all segments of society, including public condemnation of destructive traditions is needed to create awareness. The challenge is considerable, but it is commendable that laws have been made to strengthen women.

In the nutshell it can be said that God in his infinite wisdom created women to play her role in the advancement of human affairs in her own way, and man was ordained to provide her protection so that she may perform her assigned duties with honor and respect. But man has subjected women to all kinds of exploitations i. e. social, economic and political. She became the worst victim of gender discrimination. The result is that half of the population that women constituted is put aside as good for nothing. The religious prejudices further made her life miserable.

To be in her true self contributing to the advancement of the society in her assigned manner, she needs to be empowered in every walk of life. It is a globally accepted fact that when women have full agency and participation in business, economies are strengthened, societies become more stable and just, internationally agreed goals for development, sustainability and human rights are achieved, the quality of life improves not just for women, but for men, families and communities, the entire businesses' operations and goals are pushed forward to success.

The status of women in Pakistan varies considerably across classes, regions, and the rural/urban divide due to uneven socioeconomic development and the impact of tribal, feudal, and capitalist social formations on women's lives. The Pakistani women of today enjoy a better status than most Muslim women. However, on an average, the women's situation vis-à-vis men is one of systemic gender subordination,[4] although there have been attempts by the government and enlightened groups to elevate the status of women in Pakistani society.[5]

Now due to a heightened awareness among people the educational opportunities for the Pakistani women increased in the previous years.[6] According to a Human Development Report released by the United Nations, Pakistan has better gender equality than neighbouring India.[7][8] However, in 2012, the World Economic Forum ranked Chad, Pakistan and Yemen as the worst in their Global Gender Gap Report.[9] Pakistani women face atrocities like rape, acid throwing, honour killings, forced marriages, forced prostitution and the buying and selling of women.[10] The past few years have been witness to a steep increase in such crimes.

Dr. Fehmida Mirza as the first female speaker in South Asia. During the tenor of (PPP) Pakistan saw its first female foreign minister, Hina Rabbani Khar, first secretary of defence, Nargis Sethi,[45] deputy speaker of a province Shehla Raza and numerous female ministers, ambassadors, secretaries including Farahnaz Ispahani,[46] Media Advisor to former President of Pakistan and co-chairman PPP, Sherry Rehman[47] former ambassador of Pakistan to US, Fauzia Wahab, Firdous Ashiq Awan, Farzana Raja, Shazia Marri, Sharmila Faruqi and others held prestigious positions within the administration.

Legislation for protection of women

On 29 January 2010 the President signed the 'Protection against Harassment of Women at Workplace Bill 2009' which the parliament adopted on 21 January 2010.[48] Two additional bills were signed into law by the President in December 2012 criminalising the primitive practices of Vani, watta-satta, swara and marriage to Holy Quran which used women as tradable commodities for settlement of disputes. In addition the punishment for acid throwing to life imprisonment.[49] The government further established special task force in the interior Sindh region to for action against the practice of Karo-Kari establishing helplines and offices in the districts of Sukkur, Jacobabad, Larkana and Khairpur.

In 2012 the government revived the National Commission on Status of Women established by General Musharraf for three years in 2000, later being revived for three years at a time. The bill moved by government established the commission as a permanent body with the task to ensure the implementation of women protection legislation and abuses against women.

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In February 2012, the Muttahida Qaumi Movement held the world's largest women's political rally in Karachi, with an estimated 100, 000 women in attendance.

Practices

Purdah

Purdah norms are followed in many communities of Pakistan.[51][52] It is practised in various ways, depending on family tradition, region, class, and rural or urban residence.[53]

Child marriage/ (Vani)

Although the Child Marriages Restraint Act makes it illegal for girls under the age of 16 to be married, instances of child marriages can be found. Vani is a child marriage custom followed in tribal areas and the Punjab province. The young girls are forcibly married off in order to resolve the feuds between different clans;[54] the Vani can be avoided if the clan of the girl agrees to pay money, called Deet, to other clans.[55] Swara, Pait likkhi and Addo Baddo are similar tribal and rural customs that often promote marriage of girls in their early teenage years. In one extreme case in 2012, a local Jirga in Ashari village, Swat ordered that Roza Bibi, a girl of six, must be married off into a rival family to settle a dispute between her family and the rival family.[56]

Watta satta

Watta satta is a tribal custom in which brides are traded between two clans. In order for you to marry off your son, you must also have a daughter

to marry off in return. If there is no sister to exchange in return for a son's spouse, a cousin, or a distant relative can also do. Even though Islamic law requires that both partners explicitly consent to marriage, women are often forced into marriages arranged by their fathers or tribal leaders.

Honor killings

Main article: Honour killing in Pakistan

A majority of the victims of honour killings are women and the punishments meted out often tend to be lenient. The practice of summary killing of a person suspected of an illicit liaison is known as karo kari in Sindh and Balochistan. In December 2004, the Government passed a bill that made karo kari punishable under the same penal provisions as murder. Many cases of honour killings have been reported against women who marry against their family's wishes, who seek divorce or who have been raped.

Marriage to Quran

In some parts of Sindh, the practice of marrying a woman to Quran is prevalent among landlords, although this practise is alien to Islam and has no religious basis. The practice is often used by men to keep and grab the land of their sisters and daughters.

Education

Further information: Women's education in Pakistan

Despite the improvement in Pakistan's literacy rate since its independence, the educational status of Pakistani women is among the lowest in the world.

[52] The literacy rate for urban women is more than five times the rate for

rural women.[51] The school drop-out rate among girls is very high (almost 50 percent), the educational achievements of female students are higher as compared with male students at different levels of education.[4] This is the story of few years ago but now the Education in Pakistan for women is improving rapidly.

In the Lahore city there are total 46 public colleges out of which 26 are female colleges and if we talk about the rest of 20 colleges some of them are offer co-education. Similarly the public universities of Pakistan has female enrolment more than boys.[63] UNESCO and the Orascom subsidiary of Pakistan telco, Mobilink have been using mobile phones to educate women and improve their literacy skills since 4 July 2010. The local BUNYAD Foundation of Lahore and the UN's work via the Dakar Framework of Action for EFA are also helping with this issue.

Employment

Patterns of women's employment vary throughout the Muslim world: as of 2005, 16% of Pakistani women were "economically active" (either employed, or unemployed but available to furnish labour), whereas ratio of Indonesian women was 52%.

Workforce participation

Although women play an active role in Pakistan's economy, their contribution has been grossly underreported in some censuses and surveys.[52] The 1991-92 Labour Force Survey revealed that only about 16% of women aged 10 years and over were in the labour force. The World Bank's reports of 1997 stated that women constituted only 28% of the country's labour force.

According to the 1999 report by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, only two percent of Pakistani women participate in the formal sector of employment.[67] However, the 1980 agricultural census stated that the women's participation rate in agriculture was 73%. The 1990-1991 Pakistan Integrated Household Survey indicated that the female labour force participation rate was 45% in rural areas and 17% the urban areas.[52] Pakistani women play a major role in agricultural production, livestock raising and cottage industries.

Women in the Pakistan Armed Forces are the female soldiers who serve in the Pakistan Armed Forces.[1] Pakistan is the only country in the Islamic world to have women appointed in the high ranking assignments and the general officer ranks,[2] as well as performing their military duties in the hostile and combat military operations.

Women have been taking part in Pakistan military since 1947 after the establishment of Pakistan, currently a strong sizable unit of women soldiers who are serving in the Pakistan Armed Forces. In 2006, the first women fighter pilots batch joined the combat aerial mission command of PAF[4] and women in Pakistan Army have been trained in combat missions, particularly in sniper, airborne and infantry warfare.

The Pakistan Navy is currently the only uniform service branch where women are restricted to serve in the combat missions especially in the submarine force command, rather they are appointed and served in the operation involving the military logistics, operational planning, staff development and the senior administrative offices, particularly in the regional and central headquarters.[6] Tentative estimates of women serving in Pakistan armed
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forces are now about ~4, 000 and seen a rise in numbers of women joining the combat PAF in last five years.

Land and property rights

Around 90% of the Pakistani households are headed by men and most female-headed households belong to the poor strata of the society Women lack ownership of productive resources. Despite women's legal rights to own and inherit property from their families, there are very few women who have access and control over these resources.

Crimes against women

The violence against women in Pakistan is a major problem. Feminists and women's groups in Pakistan have criticised the Pakistani government and its leaders for whitewashing the persecution of women and trying to suppress information about their plight in the international arena.[68] Skepticism and biased attitudes against women's complaints of violence are common among prosecutors, police officers and medicolegal doctors in Pakistan.[22][59] According to reports from 1990s, such complaints often face delayed/mishandled processing and inadequate/improper investigations.

Sexual violence

Rape is one of the most common crimes against women but grossly underreported due to the shame attached to the victim. Many cases of sexual harassment and acid attacks have also been reported.[69] It is used as an illegal way to punish women who are deemed to have deviated from marital norms[70][71] Marital rape is not recognised as a criminal offence in Pakistani law. Many cases of rape in police custody have also been reported.

[24] According to Report of the Commission of Inquiry for Women (1997), 70 percent of women in police stations were subjected to sexual and physical violence.

Trafficking

As in most other countries, trafficking of women exists in Pakistan. Dubai and other Arab cities are a prime destination for trafficked Pakistani women, where they are sometimes gang raped.[73][74] In addition, women from Bangladesh and Myanmar have also been reported to have been brought to Pakistan and sold.[75] " Trafficked Iranian women transit Afghanistan en route to Pakistan." [76] Trafficking of women is on the rise in Pakistan. Foreign women from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Myanmar are brought to Pakistan and sold.

Dowry abuse

Many cases of bride burning due to dowry issues have been reported in Pakistan.[26] The wife is typically doused with kerosene,[77] gasoline, or other flammable liquid, and set alight, leading to death by fire.[78] In some cases, accidents are engineered (such as the tampering of a kitchen stove to cause victim's death) or the victims are set ablaze, claimed to be yet another accident or suicide.[15][79] According to a 1999 report, of the sixty " bride-burning" cases that made it to the prosecution stage (though 1, 600 cases were actually reported), only two resulted in convictions.[57] However dowry abuse cases are low after 2001. The BBC reckoned roughly 300 Pakistani brides were burnt to death in 1999.

Domestic violence

Domestic violence is not explicitly prohibited in Pakistani domestic law[15][81] and most acts of domestic violence are encompassed by the Qisas and Diyat Ordinance. The police and judges often tend to treat domestic violence as a non-justiciable, private or family matter or, an issue for civil courts, rather than criminal courts.[82] A 1987 study conducted by the Women's Division and another study by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan in 1996 suggested that domestic violence takes place in approximately 80 percent of the households in the country.[83][84] Domestic violence occurs in forms of beatings, sexual violence or torture, mutilation, acid attacks and burning the victim alive.

Acid throwing

Acid throwing (acid attack[86][87] or vitriolage) is a form of violent assault. [88] Perpetrators of these attacks throw acid at their victims (usually at their faces), burning them, and damaging skin tissue, often exposing and sometimes dissolving the bones.[89] The consequences of these attacks include blindness and permanent scarring of the face and body.[90][91][92][93][93][94][95] These attacks are most common in Cambodia,[96] Afghanistan,[97] India,[98] Bangladesh,[93][93][94] Pakistan[93][93] and other nearby countries.

According to Taru Bahl and M. H. Syed, 80% of victims of these acid attacks are female and almost 40% are under 18 years of age.[95] Women in the Islamic Fundamentalist parts of Pakistan, such as the northern reaches around the Swat Valley, who do not cover their faces risk being attacked. The men's theory is that if the women won't hide their supposedly 'alluring faces', then they will be made 'too ugly' to be 'alluring to men'. [86] It is also <https://assignbuster.com/women-empowerment-in-pakistan-narrative-essay/>

used to illegally settle family disputes in many other secular places[92] and as a way of settling financial or property issues in and around Multan.

Pakistan had 48 registered cases 2009, but only 1/3 attacks are officially reported, estimates the Acid Survivors Foundation NGO.[99] About 150 acid throwing incidents of nationally every year of which about 50 occur in Balochistan in 2009.[92] A Pakistani government report, "AcidTerrorismAgainst Women in Pakistan", revealed some cases of this horrific crime on 12 December 2009.[92] Charities, hospitals and NGOs known to be fighting this terror of acid throwing are

Acid	Survivors	Foundation[99]
Italian	Smileagain	Foundation[92]
The Depilex	Smile Again	Foundation[86]
The Bakhtawar Amin Memorial Trust Hospital		

Head and eyebrow shaving

This is the traditional, enforced buzz cutting or shaving off of a woman's head hair and sometimes her eyebrows to, as an often abused method of humiliation and chastisement.[100][101] Pakistan does not have a separate law under the Women Protection Act to declare malicious head and eyebrow shaving.[100][101] A case was reported in village of Jaddar Bhandra, in the Punjab, on 18 December 2002.[70] The woman had her head shaved and her four-year-old daughter forcibly married to the five-year-old son of her lover as punishment for committing adultery, which is considered unislamic and sinful.

The man was ordered to give his bullock cart to the woman's cheated husband.[70] On 3 January 2011, in Larkana district, in Sindh province,[102] a mother of 12 had her head and eyebrows shaved by her ex-husband and her three nephews, who had also beaten her, as punishment for divorcing him.[85] He started casting bad aspersions on her character for saving other people's phone numbers on her cell phone. He said were drug addicts attending the local sports teams and not just friends, which has never been proven to be true.[71] Forty-seven-year-old Ghulam Ali, of Iqbal Town, [disambiguation needed] near Rawalpindi, allegedly tortured and then shaved his 15-year-old wife's head to further humiliate her on 22 December 2011.

A Pakistani police spokesman said Ali started abusing physically assaulting his wife, Madiha Shaheen, now 15, for the last three months from the first week of marriage.[100][101] Madiha's mother subsequently lodged a complaint against Ali in the local police station in Sadiqabad and was directed to the Shahzad Town Police Station because it fell under Shahzad Town's legal jurisdiction. Ghulam Ali was known to Shahzad Town Police as being involved in numerous other local criminal acts.[100][101] On 3 March 2012, 19 year-old Rinkle Kumari, a Hindu girl from Mirpur Mahelo in Ghotki district, Sindh province was abducted by a gang and forced to convert to Islam, before being head shaved.

Marriage and divorce issues

Often, inter-caste marriages in Pakistan are met with violence against the women in the families involved. Women from low Pakistani Castes who try to get an education are looked down upon and sometimes attacked, the case of <https://assignbuster.com/women-empowerment-in-pakistan-narrative-essay/>

Ghazala Shaheen being the most infamous one which prompted international outcry.[108] The average age of women for marriage has increased from 16.9 years in 1951 to 22.5 years in 2005. A majority of women are married to their close relatives, i. e., first and second cousins. Only 37 percent of married women are not related to their spouses before marriage. The divorce rate in Pakistan is extremely low due to the social stigma attached to it.[4]

Women who seek a divorce are also often victims of honour killings.[15][70][85] One notable example is the high profile case of Samia Sarwar who was murdered in her lawyer's office on 6 April 1999 by a hitman hired by her family. She was seeking a divorce from her estranged, abusive husband, which was deemed as dishonorable by her family.[109]

Due to Samia's father being a prominent figure in the community, the police charged Samia's lawyers, Hina Jilani and Asma Jahangir, with "kidnapping" his daughter. Samia's father additionally "demanded that Hina Jilani and Asma Jahangir be dealt in accordance with 'tribal and Islamic law'" and be arrested for "misleading women in Pakistan and contributing to the country's bad image abroad. Several people belonging to religious organizations issued fatwas [religious edicts] against both female lawyers and promised to pay rewards to anyone who would kill them

Adultery

A case was reported in village of Jaddar Bhandra in the Punjab, on 18 December 2002.[70] The woman had her head shaved, and her 4 year old daughter forcibly marry off to the 5 year old son of her male lover as a punishment for committing adultery, which is considered unislamic and

sinful[70] The man was ordered to give his bullock cart to the woman's cheated husband.

Health

The health indicators of women in Pakistan are among the worst in the world.

[4] Intra-household bias in food distribution leads to nutritional deficiencies among female children. Early marriages of girls, excessive childbearing, lack of control over their own bodies, and a high level of illiteracy adversely affect women's health. More than 40 percent of the total female population are anaemic.[4] According to 1998 figures, the female infant mortality rate was higher than that of male children. The maternal mortality rate is also high, as only 20 percent of women are assisted by a trained provider during delivery.

[4]

Only 9 percent of the women used contraceptives in 1985, however this figure has increased substantially.[4] Women are also at a higher risk of contracting HIV-AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) because of male dominance in sex relations and lack of access to information.[4] Pakistan has taken certain initiatives in the health sector to redress gender imbalances. The SAP was launched in 1992-1993 to accelerate improvement in the social indicators. Closing the gender gap is the foremost objective of the SAP.

The other major initiative is the Prime Minister's program of lady health workers (LHWs). Under this community-based program, 26, 584 LHWs in rural areas and 11, 967 LHWs in urban areas have been recruited to provide basic health care including family planning to women at the grassroots level.

Other initiatives include the village-based family planning workers and extended immunisation programs, nutritional and child survival, cancer treatment, and increased involvement of media in health education.

Arts and entertainment

Noor Jehan was the melodious lady singer of the sub continent. there are many other female singers including Abida Parveen, Farida Khanum, Nayyara Noor, Iqbal Bano and Tahira Syed. Faryal Gohar Zeba Bakhtiar and Samina Pirzada are acclaimed Pakistani actresses. Nazia Hassan was an iconic female Pakistani pop singer.