

## Prospects of Women Empowerment Under The Pretext of Indonesia and Pakistan

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### Abstract

*As many countries would benefit from promoting women's empowerment, several developing countries are also endeavoring. Pakistan and Indonesia are among those countries that took severe measures to improve the state of women's empowerment. This study provides an overview of the efforts of Indonesia and Pakistan made at the state level to empower their women. When each country matches the rate of progress, an opportunity would also come from raising female participation. In both countries, many hundred women live their lives under the societal pressure exerted by ancient traditions. The patriarchal structure swept up women to live as hand-maiden of men in society. As a result of multifaceted discrimination, women are lagging in many fields. The central theme of this research is to examine the level of women's empowerment by focusing on politics, economic and social. The nature of this study is descriptive as well as exploratory. A qualitative method has been adopted to carry out this research. While conducting this research, both primary and secondary sources of data will be used. This study will be helpful to identify the causes which detain the progress of women. This brief but comprehensive analysis will also help recommend suggestions to improve women's empowerment in both states.*

**Keywords:** *Disparity, Patriarchy, Discrimination*

### A. Introduction

It is axiomatic that the development of a nation could not be possible without women's empowerment. Women, who comprise almost half of the world's population, do not have easy access to healthcare, education, and political decision-making institutions in many parts of the world. Like UNO, World Economic Forum, and World Bank, International bodies claim that gender equality correlates with

national development. The World Conference on Human Rights adopted the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, as mentioned in article 5: All human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent, and interrelated. While the significance of national and regional peculiarities and various historical, cultural, and religious backgrounds must be borne in mind, it is the duty of States, regardless of their political, economic, and cultural systems, to promote and protect all human rights fundamental freedoms.<sup>1</sup>

Universal Declaration of Human rights, Article 1 also says that all human beings are born free and have equal dignity and rights. They are bestowed with conscience and reason and should promote brotherhood. In the light of this declaration, all women must have the liberty to enjoy their rights.<sup>2</sup> The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was signed by Pakistan, pledging to eliminate every sort of discrimination against women and take measures to protect women. The ratification of this treaty was the guarantee to introduce a mechanism to ensure complete protection for women.<sup>3</sup>

Gender equality is one of the development goals of almost all countries. It is evidenced by the inclusion of gender equality goals in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). World leaders, including Indonesia, agreed upon the SDGs. One of its important goals is to achieve gender equality and empower all women.<sup>4</sup>

It is observed that the countries which empower their women are growing very fast in this highly competitive age. Around the world, it's conscious that men and women should work hand in hand to ensure progression. Hence, it is self-evident; the barriers to women's empowerment should be identified and investigated to

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<sup>1</sup> Enforcing Rights and Correcting Wrongs (UNDP, 2011). ). Accessed on June 20, 2021

<http://www.snapundp.org/eLibrary/Publications/EnforcingRightsCorrectingWrongs.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 110.

<sup>3</sup> Azad Kumar Singh, *Killing: A Global Perspective* (Dehli: Saad Publications, 2014), 222.

<sup>4</sup> Cita Puspita Sari, "Gender Inequality: Its Impact on Per Capita Income (Case Study of 33 Provinces in Indonesia 2011-2019)," *Berdikari* 1, no. 1 (2021): 48, <http://www.jurnaljesi.com/index.php/jurnaljesi/article/view/20/5>.

resolve this matter on the state level.<sup>5</sup> Since its inception, various governments in Pakistan have taken severe measures to eliminate the disparity and violence against women. They had taken initiatives to ensure the preservation of women's rights and the advancement of women's empowerment. Under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which stresses women empowerment without discrimination, Pakistan is trying to reconcile with its directives.<sup>6</sup> Pakistan strives to certify that women are liberated to lead their lives as the signatory of various international covenants. But various issues, including patriarchal setup and social stereotypes, create hurdles in women empowerment.

Empowerment can be explained as a "multi-dimensional social process that makes people gain control over their own lives. It is a practice that accelerates a unique force in people to use in their own lives, their groups, and society by acting on issues that they describe as vital.<sup>7</sup> Women's empowerment also regards women's ability to make strategic life choices where that ability had been previously denied.<sup>8</sup> It is the act to enhance the eminence of women by allowing them easy access to education or training and raising their awareness.<sup>9</sup>

In Pakistan, most women are anguish enough as they are forced to remain busy in domestic chores and denied their participation in any frivolous activity. Few working women set a precedent for others but still have to perform their duties at home.<sup>10</sup> In various areas of the country, women are restricted in mobility as traveling alone may not be safe. It is one of the reasons to avoid paid jobs among women. If

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<sup>5</sup> Kalthum Hassan, Ummu Atiyah & Ahmed Zakuan, Women's Economic Empowerment in Developing Countries: Reengineering Patriarchy January (2019) DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-75108.ch016). Accessed on June 14, 2021 <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/345063612>

<sup>6</sup> Many initiatives taken for women empowerment, *The News*, June 15, 2017: 08.

<sup>7</sup> Nanette Page & Cheryl E. Czuba, Empowerment: what is it? *J. Ext*, vol. 37, no 04 (1999), P.87.

<sup>8</sup> Malhotra, Anju, et al., Innovation for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality, *International Center for Research on Women (ICRW)* (2009), 110.

<sup>9</sup> Michelle Lopez Alvarez, From Unheard Screams to Powerful Voices: A Case Study of Women's Political Empowerment in the Philippines, *12<sup>th</sup> National Convention on Statistics (NCS) EDSA Shangri-al Hotel, Mandaluyong City* (October 1-2, 2013).

<sup>10</sup> Gender Inequality in Pakistan, *Daily Times*, October 27, 2016. 07. Accessed on June 16, 2021 [www.dailytimes.com.pk/editorial/27-Oct-16/gender-inequality-in-Pakistan](http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/editorial/27-Oct-16/gender-inequality-in-Pakistan)

a woman decides to opt out of a paid job, she has to endure grave discrimination at the workplace in terms of promotion, wages, etc. Moreover, women are offered low cadre jobs considering them inappropriate for managerial jobs.<sup>11</sup>

Several organizations are working for women around the world. According to the Thomas Reuters Foundation research, women are surviving very hard in various regions of Pakistan. Global Gender Gap reveals that women are denied education and health facilities and lagged in politics and economics.<sup>12</sup> The Georgetown Institute for women collected data from 153 countries, showing that Pakistan secures 150<sup>th</sup> in women's protection and gender discrimination.<sup>13</sup>

According to the Global Gender Gap Index 2021, Pakistan ranks 153 of 156 countries. The report shows that Pakistan's gender gap has increased 0.7 percent to 55.6 points. Pakistan ranks higher than war-torn Iraq, Yemen, and Afghanistan.<sup>14</sup> The report placed Pakistan at 152 in economic participation, 144 in education, 153 in health, and 98 in political empowerment. Among South Asia countries, it is in 7<sup>th</sup> of eight countries. Unfortunately, the country requires 136.5 years to decrease gender disparity to its lowest level. It depicts a bleak picture for women to strive for their dues in all spheres.<sup>15</sup>

On the other hand, Indonesia has also made several efforts to eliminate violence and discrimination against women by ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women with Law Number 7/1984. The government enacted Law No. 39/1999 on Human Rights and issued Presidential Instruction No. 9/2000 on Gender Mainstreaming in National Development.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Sadaf Shahid, *Silent Voices, Untold Stories: Women Domestic Workers in Pakistan and their Struggle for Empowerment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 131-139.

<sup>12</sup> Ricardo Hausmann, Laura D. Tyson and Saadia Zahidi, *The Global Gender Gap Report* (World Economic Forum, 2012). Accessed on June 14, 2021. [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GenderGap\\_Report\\_2012.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GenderGap_Report_2012.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

<sup>14</sup> Amin Ahmed, "Pakistan Loses Two Spots on Global Gender Gap Index, slides into ranks of worst four countries", *The Dawn*, March 31, 2021. 07.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 07.

<sup>16</sup> The Eastern Indonesia Knowledge Exchange Foundation, *Women, Patriarchal Society, and Gender Equality* (Makassar: BaKTI, 2020).

In general, Indonesia remained successful in making persistent efforts as it gained a certain level of achievement in gender development. In 2019, Indonesia Gender Development Index reached 91.07 percent, and it increased 0.08 points compared to data in 2018.<sup>17</sup> However, based on a Global Gender Gap Report report, Indonesia is still in the 101<sup>st</sup> rank, with an average of 0.688, of 156 countries. Indonesia is accelerating by securing the rank of 99<sup>th</sup> in economic participation, 107<sup>th</sup> in education, 76<sup>th</sup> in health, and 92<sup>nd</sup> in political empowerment.<sup>18</sup>

## **B. Economic Perspective**

Although the government of Pakistan has taken several actions, the condition of women has remained dismal. However, the shade of discrimination varies in Pakistan, but its effects are terrible. Women are in agony and face sheer discrimination in their lives. Besides personal life, their share in the nation's development is also missing because of the disparity.<sup>19</sup>

Pakistan almost failed to maintain its sustainable economic growth. Several reasons exist, such as imbalance of payments, economic underdevelopment, colossal defense budget, corruption, bad governance, etc. One of the main reasons is the marginalization of women and gender inequality. The issue was overlooked in the past, but now it has gained attention. Women's social and economic deprivation has been admitted as the significant problem that drags Pakistan's economy.<sup>20</sup> Gender disparity in economic participation and opportunity is 31.6 percent.<sup>21</sup>

The concept of stereotypical gender roles has segregated society, and a low ratio of women in labor force participation is two reasons for the gap. Various

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<sup>17</sup> Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection, Gender-Based Human Development, 2020.

<sup>18</sup> World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Report 2021, 2021.

<sup>19</sup> Azad Kumar Singh, *Killing: A Global Perspective* (Dehli: Saad Publications, 2014), 229-235.

<sup>20</sup> Isobel Coleman, *Gender Disparities, Economic Growth and Islamization in Pakistan* (Washington, D.C: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2004). Accessed on June 14, 2004. <http://dev-www.cfr.org/asia-and-pacific/gender-disparities-economic-growth-islamization-pakistan/p7217>

<sup>21</sup> Amin Ahmed, "Pakistan Loses Two Spots on Global Gender Gap Index, slides into ranks of worst four countries", *The Dawn*, March 31, 2021. 07.

discriminatory practices and laws of workplaces discourage women from participating. Moreover, women have minimal choices for work in Pakistan because several jobs are regarded unsuitable and irresectable for them. Additionally, women are always required to provide unnecessary details, for instance, the husband/father's name, address, and identity of a witness, to ensure registration in any business.<sup>22</sup>

The result of governmental efforts is that improvement is observed in women's ratio, joining professional and technical jobs, in which 25.3% have taken up the roles.<sup>23</sup> Besides, the overall women's participation in the labor force is 22.6 percent compared to men. According to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 33.20% of men are employed. The women's ratio remains low, with 13.35% in rural areas. In urban areas, employed men and women are over 31.69% and 3.88%, respectively.<sup>24</sup>

On average income, women earn less than men. According to the International Labour Organisation, women earn 34% less than men for the same job. Many women workers earn a meager sum of money or work as unpaid employees; their income is just 16.3 percent of average men's wage.<sup>25</sup> Men's sheer domination is involved in deciding women's remunerations. For recruitment, the mechanism devised by the government does not include any discriminatory rules. Still, women are discouraged from being appointed, especially for executive jobs, as they are considered incompetent.<sup>26</sup> Only 4.9 % of women acquire managerial positions. Technological and industrial fields are also regarded as not suitable for women.

A federal ombudsperson for the protection of women against harassment at the workplace was established and was functional at the federal and provincial levels. Women are still afraid of working with men because of numerous cases registered as

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<sup>22</sup> Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, Report on State of Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, March 6, 2015, 161-170.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 160-170

<sup>24</sup> Labor Force Survey of Pakistan, (Islamabad: Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, November, 2020). Accessed on October 15, 2020 [http://www.finance.gov.pk/survey\\_1516.html](http://www.finance.gov.pk/survey_1516.html)

<sup>25</sup> Uzma Qureshi, Pakistan has highest gender wage gap in World. *The Dawn*, March 22, 2019. 07.

<sup>26</sup> Ameena Ulfat and G. M. Chaudhary, *Women and Protection of Women Rights* (Lahore: Federal Law House, 2007), 83-87.

workplace harassment. The issue also detains women from having a job. The whole scenario stumbles not only national development but also personal growth.

As in Indonesia, women's participation in the field of work is often ignored as the wages received by women are lower than men. With the same level of education, female workers earn 50% lower than men who earn 80%. Women are appointed on low cadre jobs and paid less without legal protection because their work is seen as a side job.<sup>27</sup>

Based on the 2021 Global Gender Report, unlike Pakistan, Indonesia has reached 68.8% of its overall gender gap, corresponding to a rank of 101<sup>st</sup> globally. However, the gap gets 1.3% larger this year. The decline has mainly from broader Economic Participation and Opportunity gaps. The country has lost 4% since last year, regressing to a gap currently closed off 64.7%, almost exclusively by a sharp drop in the share of women in senior roles, which halved from 54.9% to 29.8% in a year.<sup>28</sup>

One of the efforts of the Indonesian government is to regulate the equality of wages between men and women in Law No. 80/1957 concerning the International Labor Organization's Consensus Agreement No. 100 regarding equal pay for male and female workers for work of equal value.<sup>29</sup> Despite the regulation, the wages received by women are always lower than men. The Central Bureau of Statistics states that the wage gap is due to the assumption that women are less likely to contribute to work. Women also tend to be placed in low-value positions.<sup>30</sup>

### **C. Social Perspective**

In Pakistan, women confront severe discrimination in various regions of the country. Unfortunately, they have fewer duties in their lives. Male-child is regarded as the pillar of the family, expected to earn the livelihood in future, and enjoys

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<sup>27</sup> Dwi Edi Wibowo, "Women's Dual Roles and Gender Equality," *Gender* 3, no. 1 (2011): 358.

<sup>28</sup> World Economic Forum, *Global Gender Gap Report 2021*.

<sup>29</sup> "Law Number 80 of 1957," nd

<sup>30</sup> Cita Puspita Sari, "Gender Inequality: Its Impact on Per Capita Income (Case Study of 33 Provinces in Indonesia 2011-2019)."

significant status throughout his life. The level of liberty which boys relish in their choices is almost non-existence for girls. Most girls are deprived of their right to decide about education, marriage, job, etc. Sometimes, their right of inheritance is also confiscated by male family members.<sup>31</sup>

As girls are regarded as burdens in many families, they are compelled to be married off early. When it comes to education, more attention is likely to be given to boys. Girls cannot seek opportunities until they get an education. Education, as a critical indicator, closely connects to empowerment. Educated women can possess better prospects in decision making, employment, business, etc. Although the government of Pakistan offered free education for everyone up to primary level, 32% of primary school girls are out of school, compared to a total of 21% in schoolboys.<sup>32</sup> The gap at every level of education is quite evident in Pakistan. A 13% gender gap is presently observed in education, with over 46.5 % in women's literacy rate. The gap is widest at a lower level of education and narrower at a higher level, with 84.1% and 84.7%, respectively. Women who belong to the upper class of society are the lucky ones. They are assumed to have equal rights among other social classes. However, surveys proved it wrong. Simorgh claims that upper-class women are equally marginalized, even in affluent families.<sup>33</sup>

There are many ongoing social protection programs underway sponsored by the government to assist women. Women empowerment centers are established throughout the country, which provides free training in various skills. Individual financial assistance is also part of this program, ensuring general assistance, education, treatment, and rehabilitation.<sup>34</sup> The establishment of the National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) is also an effort to examine policies, programs, and other government measures. It also reviews the laws and regulations to address the grievances and violations of women's rights.

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<sup>31</sup> Jasmin Mirza, *Between Chaddar and the Market: Female offices workers in Lahore* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 28-35.

<sup>32</sup> Girls Education, *The Nation*, June 22, 2020. 07.

<sup>33</sup> Tehmina Rashid, *Contested Representation: Punjabi Women in Feminist Debate in Pakistan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 88-99.

<sup>34</sup> Many Initiatives taken for Women Empowerment, *The News*, June 15, 2019. 07.



Patriarchal structure and stereotypical division of gender roles persist, creating hurdles in women's empowerment. It is regarded as a challenge to the absolute authority of men, but it should be understood that women's empowerment does not imply disempowering men. Both can exert their rights parallel to each other. Women should be economically and socially independent; then, they will achieve the physical scale of empowerment.

In Pakistan, several restrictions are designated based on customary practices for women. By keeping all these social codes into account, women are answerable for their every action.<sup>35</sup> Customary practices are used to debar women from empowerment and substantiate the superiority of men in our society. Transgression of such customs is the issue that authorizes men to use violence to subjugate their women.<sup>36</sup> Hundreds of women are beaten up, strangled, and killed every day because of their trivial mistakes. In a patriarchal system, a woman will be rewarded for her decent behavior by allowing her to live more in chains"—the discrimination against women which, often, results in violence, is the result of centuries-old traditions.

Many women protection laws have been passed, but still, women are prone to violence. Several other steps have been taken to protect women's rights. The Help-Line for legal advice on human rights violations was operational and has provided legal aid services to more than 5000 beneficiaries of human rights violation cases until today. Despite all these measures, women are confronted with the humanitarian crisis.

Indonesia also consists of hundreds of ethnic groups with various customs and cultures. Like Pakistani society, culture in Indonesia becomes a guide for people to behave in their daily lives and shapes the way people think. The socio-cultural system is still dominated by patriarchy that tends to be rigid. In Indonesian society, women are restricted based on customs and norms, which itself evidenced gender inequality. As homemakers, wives are very dominant in the domestic aspect. Thus, women's

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<sup>35</sup> David Arthur DeSilva, *Honour, Patronage, Kinship & Purity, Unlocking New Testament Culture* (Downers Grove, InterVarsity Press, 2000), 25

<sup>36</sup> Nighat S. Khan, Rubina Saigo & Afia S. Zia, eds., *A Celebration of Women: Essays and Abstracts from the women 's studies conference March* (Lahore: ASR publications, 1995), 211

decision-making position is weak, lacks control over family resources, and has a tiring dual role.

Although the Indonesian Government has issued regulations regarding equal rights between men and women, women still experience sexual violence. Based on Women Commission's Annual Records in 2020, the amount of Violence against Women cases was 299,911 cases. Many women in Indonesia get married before the age of 18; therefore, Indonesia ranks 10<sup>th</sup> among countries with a high rate of child marriages in the world. It is motivated by the community's view that women do not have to be educated, for they will be housewives. In Javanese tradition, there are still assumptions that women must marry quickly. Hence, it impacts women's education. According to the 2017 National Socio-Economic Survey, among married women 20-24 years old, they do not continue their education for getting married early (47.9% married under 18 years and 42.1% married over 18 years). Women are expected to take care of the household and not to pay school fees.

#### **D. Political Perspective**

Pakistan's political sphere is typically viewed as masculine and politicians as male, and significant political positions are still among men. In contrast, women are delimited to soft-profile roles, which ultimately jeopardizes their level of empowerment in Pakistan. The constituents of gender inequality in politics include barriers to voting, hurdles in seeking elected offices and access within political parties, and the under-representation of women in policy-making institutions. Citizens revealing political preferences through their participation is the key to a democratic policy.

Unfortunately, there is a massive gap in voter registration in Pakistan. Data shows female voters are around 51 million of 115 million registered electors.<sup>37</sup> The long-standing gap also exists in the turnout of voters across gender lines. In the 2018 general elections, the turnout stood at 9.1%, with 11 million male voters than female

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<sup>37</sup> Shaikh Abdul Rasheed, "Reading the Gender Report", *The Dawn*, April 14, 2021. 07

voters. Suppression among female voters was also reported in all provinces.<sup>38</sup> Many people place restrictions on women to cast votes, work as political party workers, and speak about politics.

The scorecard shows that Pakistan has been making its mark in political empowerment with a 15.4% gap in 4.7 years with a woman as head of the state; Pakistan is one of the top 33 countries on the indicator. However, women's representation in parliament is 20.2% and in ministries is 10.7%; however, the number still determines low scores.<sup>39</sup> The proportional representation model for women's elections in Pakistan is quite unfair. The number of reserved seats for women to a party is allocated according to the proportion of general seats won, at 17%. Thus, the elected women may not influence the decision-making process.

Moreover, they are not allocated development funds. Local customary practices determine not only social but also political status among women. Women as politicians enjoy certain rights, but they have to face several limitations.

In Indonesia, women as policymakers at central or regional levels are still far from sufficient, similar to Pakistan, because of systematic loopholes and erroneous policies. Apart from the stereotypical barriers and patriarchal culture, the dominance of men in Indonesian political institutions makes the institutions look masculine, making it difficult for women to penetrate the solid boundaries. Women's movement in Indonesia has an active involvement in politics, but there are still gaps in women's participation and representation in formal political structures.

Women have not been represented equally in the national legislature since elections were first held in 1955 when women occupied 5.9 % of parliamentary seats. Nevertheless, Indonesia is trying to increase women's participation in politics. To realize the equality of women's rights in politics, the Indonesian government adopted temporary measures by increasing the participation and involvement of women at least 30 percent, especially in the legislature. Thus, the presence of women in electoral contestations through the candidacy inspiration is a positive thing in challenging the

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<sup>38</sup> Uzma Javaid, "Women and Political inequality", *The Dawn*, March 8, 2021. 07.

<sup>39</sup> Amin Ahmed, "Pakistan Loses Two Spots on Global Gender Gap Index, slides into ranks of worst four countries", *The Dawn*, March 31, 2021. 07.

conditions of patriarchy in society and political parties. The value of women's representation in the last two elections increased by 11.8 % and 18 % in 2004 and 2009, respectively.

Social construction makes it impossible for women to participate in politics as the role of men is dominant. When there are women with promising political careers, it is mainly because men (husbands) let their wives participate in politics. Women's political education is also still limited; there is no democratization and political education for women. Even though women become political figures, no program upholds women's aspirations.

### E. Religious Perspective

According to Quranic interpretations, men and women have their rights. From both genders' viewpoints, there must be identical criteria and standards.<sup>40</sup> Men are regarded as the protector of women. Mostly, Quranic verses are quoted to prove male supremacy. Men are the protectors and maintainers (*Qanwam*) of women because Allah has given strength to men; therefore, they must support their women. However, the interpretations are often misapprehended to strengthen patriarchy in society. A Muslim feminist, Azizah al Hibri, has analyzed the Arabic word "*Qanwam*" and observed its various meanings. She argues that its meaning does not declare any superiority. Yet, it is the society that used the interpretations to shape hierarchical structure.<sup>41</sup>

A similar perspective tends to create an authoritarian image of men. Consequently, ancient practices made today's society recognize women as inferiors. Its core belief prevailing across the society is that men must protect a woman.<sup>42</sup> The trend supports patriarchy in society which justifies ideas on the gender-specific role.

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<sup>40</sup> Anis Ahmed, *Women and Social Justice: An Islamic Paradigm Second Revised Edition* (Islamabad: Institute of Policy Studies, 1996), 7

<sup>41</sup> Azizah al-Hibri, "Islam, Law, and Custom: Redefining Muslim Women's Rights" (New York: transnational Publishers, Inc., 1998) 406.

<sup>42</sup> Asma Mohammad Abdel Halim, "Challenges to the Application of International Women's Human Rights in the Sudan" (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994) 397.

Islamic teachings are entirely distinct in the society's cultural norms. On male dominance, various sections present the controversial interpretations of Islamic ordains in Pakistan. They wanted to detain women in homes and did not want to extend any empowerment in education, marriage, job, employment, property, divorce, etc. Several religious always favor patriarchy and perpetuate the norms which tend to marginalize women.<sup>43</sup>

Several religious scholars agree that Islam extends equal rights to everyone without any discrimination. Yet, it has been molded under the influence of diverse cultures. The *Sharia* Law (interpretation of Islamic law) varies in the Muslim world. Unfortunately, it has developed under the garb of societal rituals primarily influenced by the traditions under the decisive sections of society.<sup>44</sup> In Islam, laws related to morality are motivated to empower women, but wrong interpretation reinforces men's control over women's life. In his last address, Prophet Muhammad [PBUH] mentioned that men and women have equal rights. The Prophet [PBUH] had a lot of respect for women. Women enjoyed equal rights as men during the Prophet's time. In the Caliphs' times, women also relished equal rights. The teaching of the Holy Quran and the Hadiths are clear about the status of women.<sup>45</sup>

## **F. Barriers to Women Empowerment**

Since its independence, Pakistan pledged to empower women by taking several measures. Pakistan's constitution ensures equal rights; however, it fails to pave the way for actual women empowerment. There are some main hurdles in the way of women empowerment discussed. First, sordid and rigid customs are the main obstacles to women's empowerment in both countries. Second, in Pakistan, many women are confined in the house's four walls and sometimes bear extreme violence,

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<sup>43</sup> M. Z. Kapadia, S. Saleem and M.S. Karim, "The hidden figure: Sexual intimate partner violence among Pakistani women", *European Journal of Public Health* 20, no 2 (2010): 164-168.

<sup>44</sup> Nighat Said Khan, "Reflection on the Question of Islam and Modernity", (Lahore: ASR Publications, 1995) 163.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 163.

but they agree to take it as their fate.<sup>46</sup> A World Bank report titled "Women, Business and the Law 2016" mentions various laws in Pakistan that restrict women's will to work and avail of such opportunities.

On the other hand, several Indonesian laws also failed to guarantee women empowerment but enhanced disparity. Additionally, almost 60% of people live in villages that have to obey their intricate power structure in Pakistan. They are the hand-maiden of their land-owners and feudal-lords, who are against women's rights and independence. An informal judicial system like *Jirga* (informal power structure) and *Panchayat* (informal judicial structure) is the body where women's voices are completely unheard.<sup>47</sup> These institutions perpetuate patriarchy and impact the lives of women negatively.

Next, illiteracy and lack of access to education also appear to be barriers to women's empowerment. It is worsened with misinterpretation of religion, and its amalgamation with culture also enhances women's dependency. It provides reason to obey the norms of society, which enhances the repression of women in Pakistan and Indonesia. Additionally, economic dependence and lack of opportunities make women prone to marginalization. It has excessively been linked to increasing violence against women as well.

The way media covers the stories of daily life enhances the vulnerability of women. The news channels prefer to gauge the news reports to demonstrate women as dependent and helpless beings. They have probably swept up the mindset of a society that does not accept women as strong-willed individuals.<sup>48</sup> Growing awareness about feminism also enhances violence against women. The wave of feminism challenges patriarchy and highlights misogyny which, in turn, intensifies violence against women. The discriminatory practices followed by police and the judiciary also contribute to the increase in cases of violation of women's rights. As

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<sup>46</sup> Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, Report on State of Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, March 6, 2015, 161-170.

<sup>47</sup> Ghulam Hyder Sindhi, *Honour Killing and Status of Women in Pakistan* (Islamabad: National Institute of Pakistan Studies, 2007), 134.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 165.

the mirror image of society, their verdicts and investigations sometimes depict the prejudices. Thus, the subordination that is pinned to women is formed because of the assumption that women are considered unable to appear as leaders.

## G. Conclusion

Under the garb of traditional patriarchal society, women are subjugated and oppressed. Shades of discrimination vary, but the marginalization of women cut across the whole country. Unlike the developed countries with a level of progression in women empowerment, developing countries like Pakistan constitute women's exploitation at large because of the preservation of archaic practices. Such practices are being carried out at the private and public levels. The patriarchal structure is a too-rooted issue in Pakistani and Indonesian societies that could not be altered easily. Until these embedded norms are challenged in our society, the latest doctrines will not be admitted. Therefore, the overall mindset of society may not be modified overnight, but gradual improvement can be possible.<sup>49</sup>

All the promises to make women independent remained in letters yet never been implemented. Hina Jilani said that "Women's right to liberty is restricted in the name of modesty, protection, and prevention of immoral activity."<sup>50</sup> In ensuring women's empowerment, it's necessary to raise her self-esteem. Women's status and protection should be sensitized. Therefore, gender education is significant in sensitizing the issues. The process will re-engineer the previous norms, and the course of achieving empowerment will be possible.<sup>51</sup> By ensuring women empowerment and gender equality, the state can guarantee economic development and social well-being. The

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<sup>49</sup> Kalthum Hassan, Ummu Atiyah & Ahmed Zakuan, Women's Economic Empowerment in Developing Countries: Reengineering Patriarchy January (2019) DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-75108.ch016). Accessed on June 14, 2021 <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/345063612>

<sup>50</sup> Hina Jilani, *Human rights and democratic development in Pakistan* (Lahore: vanguard, 1998) 143.

<sup>51</sup> Kalthum Hassan, Ummu Atiyah & Ahmed Zakuan, Women's Economic Empowerment in Developing Countries: Reengineering Patriarchy January (2019) DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-75108.ch016). Accessed on June 14, 2021 <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/345063612>

range of economic and social choices available to people will ultimately liberate them from dependency and underdevelopment.

As religion impacts people's lives, the true spirit of Islam should be implemented to stabilize society. Islam does not stress women's domesticated role, but it gives them the right to excel in every possible way. Islam is a staunch believer in women's rights, but many practices in Indonesia and Pakistan show the opposite. Sometimes, state machinery encourages discriminatory laws which depict the mindset of the orthodox community.<sup>52</sup> Despite several severe measures of governments, a large number of women are experiencing heavy dependency and disparity in their lives. The Vision 2025 and prospective 11th Five Year Plan also endeavor to open up the broader avenues of opportunity and progress for women in the series of various steps. Women will be encouraged to avail themselves of the chances of development, and they should have roles in public and private bodies.

Government must ensure easy access for women to all the social services.<sup>53</sup> In ensuring women's rights and protection, laws should be stringent that no one could violate them. Informal judicial bodies should be banished. The media should play its role in propagating the strong characterization of women. Additionally, the government must design awareness programs to support equal rights and status for women. As the literacy rate of women is increasing, it will render more chances for empowerment.

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<sup>52</sup> Tehmina Rashid, *Contested Representation: Punjabi Women in Feminist Debate in Pakistan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 88-99.

<sup>53</sup> Kalthum Hassan, Ummu Atiyah & Ahmed Zakuan, *Women's Economic Empowerment in Developing Countries: Reengineering Patriarchy* January (2019) DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-75108.ch016). Accessed on June 14, 2021 <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/345063612>



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