



CSS PMS
Gender Studies

Contents

Despite major breakthroughs in the field of health globally, Pakistani women lack access to basic health facilities. Discuss the status of women's health in Pakistan.:	3
In your Opinion, what are the barriers to women's education in Pakistan?	6
What are the problems faced by the working women in Pakistan? In this context, what policy measures can be taken to increase women's participation?	9
POLICY MEASURES REQUIRED TO INCREASE	11
EXERCISE	13
MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS	13

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Despite major breakthroughs in the field of health globally, Pakistani women lack access to basic health facilities. Discuss the status of women's health in Pakistan.:

INTRODUCTION

Pakistan is a developing country. So, its women must face lot of health problems, particularly in the rural area. According to an estimate, about 1600 women per 100,000 die during childbirth. Even though the international community has undergone tremendous improvements in the health sector, a lot still needs to be done in Pakistan.

A large chunk of women suffers from pregnancy related complications such as chronic pelvis pain; loss of uterus, infertility and pelvic inflammatory diseases. More than 80 percent of women are delivered at home in the presence of unskilled birth attendants. Moreover, majority of the villages are yet to have proper hospitals and health care centers for women. Even the basic health Unit (BHUs) and Rural Health Centers (RHUs) are not functional. All of this combined, adds to the misery of women.

DISMAL STATUS OF WOMEN'S HEALTH IN PAKISTAN

1. ANEMIA IN WOMEN

Anemia basically refers to a medical condition arising due to a lack of iron in the diet. The condition is common in women, particularly those belonging to the lower socio-economic strata. Lack of proper sewerage system and clean water cause worm infestation which causes death and morbidity. iron deficiency. So, women living in slums and rural areas are at a higher risk of iron deficiency.

2. FOUR DELAYS OF PREGNANCY

- a) Delay in Decision: - occurs when the decision to consult a doctor is delayed in case of an obstetrical emergency.
- b) Delay in Transportation: - when the delay occurs because of unavailability of transport and absence of roads and communications.

c) Delay in emergency care:- when the delay occurs in healthcare centers because of the non-availability of doctors, anesthetists, operation theatre staff or oxygen and blood.

d) Delay in Recognition of Post -natal complications:- when the delay occurs in recognition of complications occurring in the post-natal phase.

3. UNSAFE INDUCED ABORTIONS: -

Unsafe Induced abortion is another cause of women suffering in Pakistan. An estimate shows that around 1 million abortions occur annually the major complications of which are bleeding and infections

4. MENOPAUSAL WOMEN: -

Menopause is used to refer to the age of women whereby they stop having periods. Majority of menopausal women have no access to healthcare in Pakistan. Routine screening for age related diseases are not available; such women cannot afford the hormone replacement therapy even if needed. Menopausal women often receive unscientific treatment due to economic reasons.

5. CANCERS OF WOMEN

Breast, ovarian, cervical and colon cancers are the leading causes of women's death in Pakistan. The department of health has no screening programs to prevent these cancers. Moreover, chemotherapy is extremely expensive and can't be afforded by poor women. The option of radiotherapy is available but the hospitals providing it free of cost are overcrowded and therefore fail to provide quality treatment to individuals.

6. VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Acid burning, gang-rape, honor killing, and slavery of women are deeply rooted problems in our society. After falling prey to such in humane acts of violence, women hardly get justice and therefore, commit suicide. Also, because of forced marriages and rapes, women are likely to suffer from sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and at times, they become infertile as well.

7. WOMEN'S MENTAL HEALTH

Pressures for women created by their multiple roles, gender discrimination and associated factors of poverty, hunger, malnutrition; domestic violence and sexual abuse combine to account for women's poor mental health. As a result of the factors mentioned above, psychological problems like depression, anxiety, psychological distress and obsessive-compulsive disorders (OCD) are a common prevalence among women. According to data gathered on the subject, doctors diagnose depression more often in women than in men. This also seems to have a spillover effect - mental illness is associated with a significant burden of morbidity and disability.

8. HEALTH PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH A GIRL CHILD

A girl child starts being subjected to discrimination right at the time of her conception. First of all, particularly in rural areas, pregnancy is terminated based on the ultrasonic confirmation of gender. The girl child infant mortality rate is higher than the male child infant mortality rate. Moreover, a large number of girl children are forced to marry against their wishes. Also, girl children are sold, bartered or given away as compensation to resolve family and tribal feuds. Lastly, they are also given as "blood-money" to settle crimes such as murder and are exploited sexually and physically.

CONCLUSION

From the discussion above, it can safely be concluded that gender disparity is exhibited in Pakistan's health sector with women being at a huge disadvantage. Women, as a result of discrimination and societal pressure, often suffer from depression and a large number of violent acts are directed against them. More importantly, our system does not adequately provide health facilities to pregnant women. It is imperative for the state to recognize the need to correct this imbalance. Every Pakistani should be educated and female doctors and healthcare centers must be present in almost all areas. Moreover, basic facilities like clean drinking water and food must be provided to prevent women from suffering from diseases in the first place.

In your Opinion, what are the barriers to women's education in Pakistan?

INTRODUCTION

Pakistan has one of the lowest literacy rates in the world. Even this literacy rate is favored towards males - more than 55 percent of girls never enroll in school. The situation is even worse in the rural areas for a host of reasons. For instance, in areas like KPK and Balochistan, women are severely bound by cultural prejudices and are encouraged to come out for the domestic chores only. Consequently, in such areas, the female literacy rate barely touches the 25 percent mark even by the most optimistic estimates. Girls who do attend schools do so on 'religious' grounds. However, what the conservative segments fail to realize is that the Quran clearly states that seeking knowledge is mandatory for every Muslim male and female. At another place, the holy prophet (S.A.W) has encouraged Muslims to seek knowledge even if it means for one to go to china. This results in a highly gendered education system. This discussion will shed light on the barriers to women's education in Pakistan one at a time.

BARRIERS TO WOMEN'S EDUCATION IN PAKISTAN

1. PROBLEM OF ACCESS TO EDUCATION

Low primary and secondary enrollment for women is often linked to the inaccessibility of schools. This is particularly true for areas where the schools are quite a distance away from residential area. Traditionally, women are thought to stay close to their homes and therefore can't travel freely to schools. Moreover, many families cannot afford public transport because it is quite expensive for them to do so.

2. PROBLEM OF SEPARATE SCHOOLS

In our society, co-education is discouraged; people think that sending their girls to co-education schools would mean a violation of their religious beliefs. On the other hand, the government has failed to build segregated schools. Consequently only a tiny fraction of girls in our society get enrolled in primary education let alone higher education.

3. CHILD LABOR

There is no denying the fact that Pakistan is a poor country with a major chunk of its population living below the poverty line. As a result, child labor is common. So, children often do not go to schools because they are working to support their families as means to ensure survival. Millions of children under the age of 14 work at brick kilns, carpet weaving industry, agriculture and in numerous other domestic services across Pakistan. This is a major hurdle in women's education in Pakistan.

4. GENDER STEREOTYPING

Gender stereotyping is firmly rooted in our society and starts right after an individual comes to this world. Parents, especially in the rural areas of Pakistan, favor the education of their sons over their daughters. The reason behind this, according to them, is that boys are likely to earn money when they grow up whereas girls are going to get married and so there isn't any point in investing in their education. Moreover, girls are stereotyped to be more suitable for domestic chores and as a result, no or little heed is paid towards educating them.

5. FEUDAL CULTURE IS ANOTHER IMPEDIMENT

Local landlords oppose the education of girls because they fear that doing so would pose a challenge to their complete authority. They fear that if women are educated, they would cease to follow them blindly, therefore, even if the government and the NGOs make efforts and build schools in feudal societies, the local landlords do not let women go to schools even if they feel like it.

6. EARLY MARRIAGES

Another impediment in women's education is the tradition of early marriages prevalent in the rural areas of Pakistan. As a result of early marriages, most women quit education since they're expected to take care of the household chores.

7. LIMITED CAREER CHOICES FOR WOMEN

Another factor that discourages parents from sending girls to schools is the limited choice of careers for women. A commonly held notion, albeit flawed, is that women are only suitable for professions like nurses, teachers and designers. As a result of limited work opportunities, parents are deterred from sending their girls to schools.

8. FEAR OF EXTREMISTS

Fear of extremists is yet another factor that comes in the way of women's education. For instance, in KPK, militants have blasted several schools and have issued open warnings to those supporting the education of women. This is confirmed by the retrieval of several threat letters issued to both government and private schools. Women are not allowed to step outside their houses in such areas and even if they do, they're expected to wear 'burqas'. Therefore, in order to avoid the fear associated with these extremists, girls chose not to go to schools.

EXAMPLE OF MALALA YOUSAFZAI

One example that perfectly fits within the frame is that of Malala Yousafzai. She was gunshot to her head when she spoke up against the threats of terrorists asking women/girls not to go to school. Malala remained steadfast in her mission to encourage girls to receive education but one day, on her way back home from school, terrorists entered her school bus and gunshot her to the head. This instilled fear in the hearts of people and deterred many parents from sending their girls to schools.

9. WEAK COMMITMENT TO THE SDGS AND CEDAW:-

Another reason responsible for the poor enrollment of girls in schools is the weak commitment of our government to the Sustainable Development Goals and the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women. At the heart of both these, lies the promotion of women education, But, owing to a weak political will, girl's education remains on elusive dream in Pakistan.

What are the problems faced by the working women in Pakistan? In this context, what policy measures can be taken to increase women's participation?

According to the Labor Force Statistics (LFS) 2012-2013, of the estimated 180 million people, only 12.51 million Pakistani females of various ages are in employment of some sort. Gender discrimination, social injustice and low literacy rates are the root causes of the dismal employment situation for female workers and professionals in the country. Only if these issues are addressed could female representation at all levels of economic activity is bound to increase.

According to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics employment trends report 2011, female participation in the workforce has increased from 16.3% to 24.4% in the last decade. Yet, there is a long way to go. The discussion will first shed light on the issues that working women face in Pakistan. It would be folded up by proposing certain remedies to counter the prevalent dismal situation.

SOME ISSUES THE AVERAGE PAKISTANI FEMALE HAS TO CONTEND WITH IN THE WORKPIACE

1. WORKING LATE

Under Pakistani Labor laws, if an employer does not arrange transport, working hours must be between 6 am a:nd 7 pm. However, in private organizations, where 'Late settings' are the norm, women, especially working mothers are discriminated against because of their inability to conform. Leaving 'early' is misconstrued as a lack of ambition in women. Therefore, dispelling this notion and breaking the shackles of discrimination is one of the major problems faced by Pakistani working women.

2. MATERNITYLEAVE

Under the Maternity Benefits Ordinance 1958, working mothers are entitled to 12 weeks maternity leave with full pay. Employers cannot terminate women during their maternity leave. However, some choose to use this as an excuse to derail career growth asking women to cut short their leave, having duties re-assigned or being passed o.ve r

for a promotion due to inability to cope with the immediate workload are some common concerns.

3. SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Another fairly common problem that women have to deal with at their workplaces is that of sexual harassment. Quite often, women are given the option by their bosses or co-workers to get promotion in exchange of sexual favors. Moreover, unfortunately, at certain places, women are treated as mere sex objects and several women have also reported attempted rapes at some point in their careers. The protection against harassment of women at the workplace Act (2010) requires organizations to set up investigative committees in case of a sexual harassment complaints. However, most employees are not aware of this critical information. Out of fear of the lasting stigma, HR departments will deter women from filing a complaint or reassign the case endlessly.

4. UNEQUAL WAGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

An informal economy operates out of homes in professions such as shoe-making, embroidery, stitching, artificial jewelry, garments, pottery etc. These home based workers, 65% of which are women, are not legally recognized as workers and have no social security or minimum wage benefits. Without the ratification of the ILO convention 177 Act, which recognizes home based workers as legitimate employees, the exploitation of the labor force will continue.

5. WOMEN PRESSURIZED BY SOCIETAL NORMS TO WEAR 'BURQAS'

Women, particularly coming from conventional families, even if allowed to work are forced to wear 'burqas' to completely cover themselves up. Failure to do so is misconstrued as a violation of both religion and the social norms. So, even if the weather is really hot, women have to and work all day long in heavy 'burqas'

6. LACK OF JOB SECURITY

Quite frequently, women are made to suffer on account of threats to lay them off. Women are threatened to be replaced with their male counterparts and the male co

Workers are often preferred in case of promotions. All of this combined accounts for the lack of job security and of working women.

POLICY MEASURES REQUIRED TO INCREASE

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE WORKFORCE

1. PROVISION OF EDUCATION TO WOMEN/GIRLS

The best way forward is to ensure the provision of primary education to all girls free of cost. Education them will transform them into more productive citizens and they will transform them into more productive citizens and they will be aware regarding their rights. Also, education will help them break the gender stereotype that men are more suited for works such as engineering and medicine.

2. STRICT ENFORCEMENT OF ANTI - SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICIES

As has been already mentioned, organizations must strictly enforce the anti-sexual harassment policies in order to prevent the treatment of women as mere sex objects. Doing so will prove to be instrumental in terms of increasing women's participation in the workforce.

3. GRANTING FULLY PAID MATERNITY LEAVES

Organizations must conform to the maternity benefits ordinance (1958) and should grant women at least 12 weeks of fully paid maternity leaves. This will have a two pronged effect: it will instill a sense of job security in their hearts and will enable women to balance work and domestic life in a more productive and healthy way.

4. RATIFICATION OF THE ILO CONVENTION ACT

Ratification of the Act will be extremely fruitful. Doing so would recognize the work of women working from homes and therefore would provide social security and minimum wage benefits.

5. ACTIVE PURSUANCE OF THE SDGS AND THE CEDAW

Pakistan's government must actively pursue the Sustainable Development Goals and the convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against women (1979). At the heart of both these lies the equal participation of women in all spheres of life and the due recognition of their work. Both also call for the prohibition of sexual harassment directed towards working women.

6. MEDIA MUST PLAY A VIBRANT ROLE

Media has the power to shape public opinion and therefore it should help in making women aware of their rights at the workplaces.

7. SETTING UP OF WOMEN'S TRAINING INSTITUTIONS

Setting up of such vocational training institutions would help in equipping women with the skill set required to be more productive at what they do. Once they're trained, it would be easy for women to get promotions.

8. FOLLOWING THE FOOTSTEPS OF SHARMEEN OBAID CHINOY

Sharmeen Obaid Chinoy is popularly known as "The woman who Brought Oscar Home." She serves as an inspiration for the women of Pakistan. She broke the stereotype regarding women not suitable for jobs related to media through her brilliant documentaries. Her work has received worldwide recognition and therefore the young girls must follow her lead and prove their worth through their work.

Conclusion: - There is no denying the fact that the overall female participation in the workforce is low and that women in Pakistan face a host of challenges at their respective workplaces. However, if effect measures for the removal of the discrimination against women in employment are enforced, there is certainly a way forward for this; the government needs to implement policies directed at empowering.

EXERCISE

MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. PPI Stands for
 - a) Pakistan Policy Institute
 - b) Pakistan Public Institute
 - c) Pakistan Policy Instruction
 - d) None of them
2. Pakistan ranks with the number of maternal deaths
 - a) 3rd Highest in the world
 - b) 2nd highest in the world
 - c) 6th highest in the world
 - d) None of them
3. In Balochistan, female literacy rate stands between
 - a) 15 to 25%
 - b) 5to 15%
 - c) 5 to 25%
 - d) 5to 20%
4. Lower female education has a negative impact on
 - a) Cultural growth
 - b) Economic growth
 - c) Political growth
 - d) None of them
5. International women's day observes on
 - a) March, 08
 - b) March, 09
 - c) March, 21
 - d) None of them
6. Pakistan has --- Highest number of out of school female students in the world
 - a) 2nd highest
 - b) 3 rd Highest
 - c) 9th highest
 - d) None of them
7. Percent of out of School children in Pakistan are girls.
 - a) 50
 - b) 60
 - c) 55
 - d) 70
8. The global Gender Gap Report 2014, Published by the world Economic forum, ranks Pakistan 141st out of 142 counties in terms of the gap between men and women. In:
 - a) Economic participation
 - b) educational attainment,
 - c) Health
 - d) Political empowerment.
 - e) All of them
9. LFS stands for
 - a) Labor force system
 - b) Labor force statistics
 - c) Labor free statistics
 - d) None of them
10. Percent of both men and women participation in the labour force.
 - a) 77
 - b) 70
 - c) 80
 - d) None of them
11. GRAP stands for
 - a) Gender Reform Action Plan
 - b) Gender Reforms against patriarchy
 - c) Gender reforms and politics
 - d) None of them

12. NPA Stands for
- a) National Plan of Action
 - b) National action plane
 - c) National political alliance
 - d) None of them