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## **Socio-Political Narrative and the Misperception of Feminism: A Case Study of Pakistan**

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### **Abstract:**

Pakistan is a country rich in religious and cultural legacy, struggles with its complicated relationship to feminism. Although there has been progress in gender equality, it is frequently obscured by deeply ingrained misconceptions that prevent more advancement. This study's primary contribution is to clarify the core idea of feminism and sheds light on feminism's impacts on Pakistani society, from positive and negative perspective. It also illustrates the obstacles Pakistan has in achieving feminist goals. Such actions are necessary to reduce the myths that our society holds about feminism and feminists. The goal of this study is to address the resistance to feminism and gender equality. Primary as well as secondary data were employed in this qualitative study. Primary data was obtained by non-probability convenient sampling, while secondary data was gathered from various sources such as books, papers, and research journals pertaining to feminism in Pakistan. A few of the interviews took place in person, while others were conducted over the phone.

Key Words: Feminism, Impact, Females' Rights, Pakistan.

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**Introduction:**

The movement known as feminism, fights for women's economic, political, and social rights. Feminists believe that men and women are equal. Therefore, women in society are deserving of the same rights as men. The feminist movement has fought for a number of causes, such as women's voting rights, unrestricted employment opportunities, and a life free from violence. The feminist movement works to advance gender equality and protect the rights and interests of women. The 1970s saw the rise in popularity and significance of the terms "feminism" and "feminist." Three "waves" have been identified by various feminists and academics in the history of feminism and feminist groups. First wave began in the 19th century and lasted until the early 20th century; the second occurred between the 1960s and the 1990s; and the third wave began in 1990s and is still going strong now (Bowden & Mummery, 2014).

Prior to Pakistan's independence, there was a feminist movement in India where women fought for their rights. However, during the establishment of Pakistan, feminism faced strong opposition from groups such as conservative individuals and society, who were against the notion of feminism and equality in general. But the real problem lies not in the resistance that feminism faces in our culture, but rather in the inadequate comprehension of this idea, which leads to a lot of misunderstandings. These misunderstandings have a detrimental effect on feminism in Pakistan. The majority of Pakistanis still do not fully understand feminism, and as a result, it is frequently misinterpreted.

Dr. Khalid Manzoor Butt and Jaweria Shahid explains feminism as;

*“Freedom from gender discrimination in all spheres of life is the ultimate goal of feminism, along with impartiality and equality for women. Those who dare to speak out against injustice and the unequal treatment of men and women and who want to change these things are known as feminists.”* (Butt and Shahid, 2012)

The goal of every feminist endeavor is to create a social movement that will win social rights for women. Women have been fighting against male exploitative Behaviour in society ever since Pakistan became independent. The social, political, and economic climate hinders women's development and forces them to fight for their fundamental rights. Pakistan's traditional society

is hostile to women who want to get better life style through education, employment, or even selecting a life spouse. Conversely, Non-Governmental Organizations and other groups that work to help marginalized women are held accountable for brainwashing and deceiving Pakistani women (Ovais, 2014).

*“Understanding and thinking that women are human beings as well is the revolutionary viewpoint known as feminism, not the name of an organization. You want to talk about rights, equality, good and terrible women, loyal and respectable women, and so on, but my dignity and respect are not anything that any guy can take from me or give to me. I come into this world bearing my rights because I was born of the same woman that a male is born of.”*(The News International, 2020, January 20).

Therefore, feminism is an idea, ideology, and movement that aims to advance women's equality in society, politics, and the economy. This word originated in the West and then expanded throughout the world. Currently, it is represented by a number of organizations that are committed for serving and advancing the interests and rights of women. The exploitation of women was the driving force for the creation of this idea. Throughout human history, women have faced several constraints and limitations, confined primarily to the home sphere, whilst men have been afforded unrestricted freedoms of all kinds. For instance, women were denied the ability to own property, get an education, or even engage in several spheres of society.

Up to the 19th century, women in the West were denied certain privileges. For a very long period, they were not allowed to vote or occupy elective office in Europe. The absence of a male representation prohibited women from operating any type of company. The mothers lacked any fundamental authority or indulgence over their own children. In addition, women have been denied the opportunity to pursue even the most basic education and are prohibited from entering the economic or professional worlds. Unfortunately, though, these restrictions on women still exist in a number of nations today. (Mitchell, 2015).

## **Historical Overview of Females Campaigns and Movements in Pakistan**

The origins of women's movements in Pakistan date back to the period before independence. Bourgeois women organized a vocal part in the Pakistan movement and the Anti-Colonial war. The women's movement and their participation led to Jinnah's acknowledgment of their contribution, as he provided compelling arguments in favor of removing barriers and limitations on women's rights.

In 1944 Quaid-e-Azam stated that

*“No nation can rise to glory unless your women are side by side with you. We are victims of evil customs. It’s a crime against humanity that our women are shut up within the four walls of the house as prisoners. There is no sanction anywhere for the deplorable condition in which our women have to live. You should take your women along with you as comrades in every sphere of life”* (Rouse, 1986).

Many women are actively engaged in advocating for the rights of women in Pakistan. Looking back at history, we can see that women played a significant role in the liberation movement. Their success in serving the newly formed nation during its rehabilitation process may be attributed to their persistence and hard work. Following that, in 1948, a few vocal groups of women put pressure on the government to allow women to inherit rights. To protect women's rights to marriage, the government developed the Muslim Family Law Ordinance in 1952. (Batool, et.al, 2018).

## **The Earliest Post-Independence Female Organizations**

Following independence, two female organizations were formed, the Women's National Guard (PNGWG), which was founded in 1949 by the well-known "Begum Rana Liaquat Ali Khan," and the Women's Voluntary Service (WVS), which was founded in 1948. These two organizations taught women various skills, such as how to wield a gun, type, work in social welfare, and study first aid, marksmanship, and signaling. Through these skills women were quickly incorporated into the National Guard Corps, which employed over 2,400 women for

rehabilitation. This group changed its name to the "All Pakistan Women Association" in 2004” (Naz, et.al, 2013).

### **Female’s Organizations against Zia’s Oppression**

In order to challenge President Zia ul Haq's dictatorial rule and strict legislation, women banded together and organized the "women activist movement." The campaign's primary objective was to examine the formation of feminist writers, activist group theatre, human rights and legal cells inside non-governmental organizations for women, as well as activist documentary filmmakers who share the same vision of social justice and transformation (Imran & Munir, 2018).

#### **Women Action Forum (WAF)**

As per numerous scholars, the founding of the "Women Action Forum (WAF)" in 1981 marked the beginning of female campaigns and movements in Pakistan. This organization started out as a significant attempt to unite all female organizations in response to the attack on women that General Zia-Ul-Haq's martial law administration was launching. However, even before the Women's Action Forum (WAF) was established, women fought hard to be liberated from Zia's harsh rules. They were somewhat successful in doing so, and they also inspired other women to get involved in social, political, and economic spheres. Women were regularly engaged in collective action, with the specific goal of opposing the government's oppression. Because WAF raised a great deal of awareness among women, the organization is still actively working to educate women about their rights so they can keep growing even after many years. (Gardezi, 2008).

#### **Female Activism in Pakistan: An Analysis of ‘AURAT MARCH’**

While female activism has been started in Pakistan since the country's independence, a new kind of activism known as the "Aurat March" has been observed there since 2018. Women's rights have been ignored by the public, media, and government even though they have been on the social agenda for a long time. However, Pakistani women were eventually inspired to speak up for their fundamental rights as time went on, and probably most significantly, with the beginning of the "Women March" protests. The inaugural *Aurat March* in Pakistan was started on March 8,

2018, which is also Women International Day. In Urdu, *Aurat* means "women." Essentially, a handful of youthful, creative feminists organized this march with support from the Awami Worker's Party, the Lady Health Workers Association, and several women's rights organizations. This march's primary goals were to put an end to violence against women and offer complete assistance to those who suffer harassment and assault at home, at work, or in public areas. The demands of women for equal social, political, and economic rights were motivation behind this march (Zahid, 2021).

Remarkably, the Aurat March emerged in the midst of the nation's long history of hostility towards feminism. The benefit of these movements is that they have gained further knowledge from the criticism of those who are essentially opposed to these activist movements. An additional noteworthy aspect of this movement is that, as time goes on, men have also come forward and joined similar kinds of movements (Khan et.al, 2020).

### **Challenges and Movement's Responses**

People in Pakistan continue to live by traditional rules, rituals, and cultural practices due to the country's conservative majority and backward society. Another fact about Pakistani society is that it is patriarchal. As a result, Pakistani society has found it very difficult to understand that women would openly express their anger and disregard for patriarchy as well as their demands for equal rights. Over the course of the previous six years, numerous Pakistanis have claimed that those taking part in these Marches are members of the affluent class and by organizing these Marches, those elites seek to spread the western agenda. Some claim that "the activists are foreign funded," posing a danger to Pakistan's traditional norms. It might be because of the first two "Women Marches," when women fearlessly marched through public holding banners and slogans like "*mera jism, meri marzi*." As a result, many people became outraged and began to argue that such remarks were out of step with Pakistani society and culture. However, the Aurat March organization is working to address the criticism and create fresh, better slogans that are appropriate for the local context. For an extra layer of protection, they even made the decision to send creative phrases to the high court for approval in the form of a clear stamp before to the

march. In order to defend the slogans in front of conservative groups, they will be able to do so at various public forums. Eliminating male supremacy and patriarchy, which are the root causes of many issues in Pakistani society, is another challenge facing this movement. The goal of the Aurat March is to dispel this idea because women and men play significant roles in society, yet conservative factions in our community are not prepared to embrace the shift towards women advocating for themselves. It is obvious that these conservative groups oppose the activism of women, and they are essentially coming up with ways to outlaw the March. For example, separate applications to outlaw the March were filed in the high courts of Islamabad, Lahore, and Karachi. However, the applications were dismissed by the courts in Karachi and Islamabad, allowing the March to go unhindered through these cities. Women who participated in this movement as activists and feel threatened by various conservative groups frequently experienced job termination, other forms of punishment, and social disgrace simply for attending the March. However, the movement's good aspect is that, as time goes on, they developed fresh concepts and novel approaches to address public criticism. They also organized local trainings to address and prevent sexual harassment of transgender individuals and women in Pakistan (Azeem, 2020).

### **Impact of Feminism in Pakistan**

Gender equality through equal social, economic, cultural, and political rights is the central goal of feminism. Feminists have a long history of working to end women's oppression and gender inequality. Despite having originated in Europe, feminism has had a global impact on women's status and has been classified into three waves, including those of Pakistani women. Pakistani women were given the right to vote and reserved seats in the parliament starting in 1956.

Similar to women in the West, Pakistani women experienced harassment from men in many settings, sexism, and objectification during the second wave. However, feminist movements and their impact on women worldwide gave them the courage to confront all forms of injustice and exploitation perpetrated by males. Inspired by the second wave of feminism in the 1960s, Pakistani women came to understand the significance of gender equality as well as their fundamental social, cultural, and political rights. Pakistan passed the "Muslim Family Law

Ordinance" as a result of the early influence of feminist movements during the nation's second wave. The main objective of this policy was to preserve women's morals. Another piece of legislation that was introduced in the years that followed 1962 was the "Muslim Personal Law Sharia Act". It rendered all forms of property inherent to women in Pakistan. The third wave of feminism emerged in the 1990s. Its primary goal was to assist all women worldwide, irrespective of their race, nationality, class, or colour, and to globalize the feminist cause.

Some conservative and religious people in Pakistani culture have an unfavorable opinion on feminism. Some people think that being a feminist is the same as being anti-male or anti-Muslim. Even though women's rights are sometimes misconstrued, prevented, and disregarded in Pakistan, they do exist. It is important to educate the people of Pakistani society that being a feminist does not entail being against Islam or men. Radical or anti-Islamic behavior is neither encouraged by feminism, nor does it imply that women are in any way superior to men. It only aims to improve women's quality of life in society by establishing essential rights for them (Lakhvi, & Suhaib, 2010).

Gender discrimination is a major obstacle to the growth of socioeconomic domains in Pakistan (Bari, 2000). Another significant element causing discrimination and gender disparity in Pakistani society is the lack of norms and regulations. The government should empower women by providing them with sufficient education and raising their understanding of their fundamental rights so they can actively contribute to Pakistan's socioeconomic and political progress. Shah & Baporikar, 2013).

### **Role of Feminist Movements in Securing Females' Rights**

In Pakistan, women are largely subjected to injustice and inequality, and they face a variety of discrimination due to the persistence of the feudal system, incorrect religious interpretations, and tribal customs. However, it can be said that throughout Pakistan's history, women's activism and feminist movements have been crucial in winning women's rights. Women obtained the right to vote and the ability to hold office both during and after Pakistan's inception. As was previously mentioned, Begum Shaista Ikramullah and Begum Jahan Ara Shah Nawaz were the two female representatives in Pakistan's first assembly in 1947. Together with other distinguished women,



these two persisted in advocating for legal reforms in Pakistan that would empower women politically. As a result of their support and efforts, the "Muslim Personal Law of Shariah" was passed in 1948. They were also responsible for the fruitless attempt to get the 1956 constitution to contain a charter of women's rights by the government. These legislation safeguarded the rights of educated and politically conscious women while also empowering women, particularly those living in rural areas. A few female organizations were founded at that time, including as the progressive Anjuman-e-Jamhooriat Pasand Khawateen and the All Pakistan-Women Association (APWA). The feminist movement in Pakistan has been instrumental in raising awareness of women's issues and uniting them at the policy-making table. By questioning their assigned positions in society, educated and middle class women have gently sought women's independence without causing a significant rift (Ali, 2006).

Feminist activists have developed research aimed at advancing inclusive democratic government and amplifying the political voice of women. But in 2008, the emergence of social media and commercial media outlets marked a turning point for Pakistan's feminist movement. Women started to come out to voice their beliefs and thoughts. Numerous cities witnessed Aurat Marches. The movement demanded safer public spaces for women as well as an end to all types of violence against them. However, most people in Pakistani society rejected the concept of feminism and disregarded the laborious efforts of these feminist movements to protect women's rights due to a lack of understanding and education. (Ahmad, 2009).

### **Peoples' Perception of Feminism in Pakistan**

In order to ascertain popular opinion towards feminism, a small number of general public interviews were undertaken. The following are the participants' opinions regarding the notion of feminism:

“Feminism is a movement with goals that differ from nation to nation. It implies that those belonging to the suppressed genders should know their rights, receive equal treatment, and not let others to abuse or rule them in a way that confines them to violence and boundaries”. (Anum, 2023) (Sharif, 2023)

“Complete social, political, and economic equality for women is a tenet of feminism. In essence, it encompasses a variety of movements (political, social, ethical), viewpoints (gender equity & equality), and philosophies that contribute to the development of socio-political, individual, psychological, and economic equality between the sexes. It is gender equality in social, political, and economic spheres" (Haseen, 2023) (Simab, 2023)

“The goal of the feminist movement was to grant women the equal rights to suffrage, property ownership, and education. In Pakistan, the term "feminism" refers to a group of movements that work to define, uphold, and protect women's rights” (Basrin, 2023)

We can deduce from the interviews that Women's rights have long been the focus of feminist movements. It has been somewhat successful for them to get women the right to vote, equal pay for equal work, public office, property ownership, suitable education, marital equality, and paid time off for children. Their primary goal is still to shield women and girls from sexual, domestic, and rape assault.

### **Misperception of Feminism in Pakistan**

The participant's reaction to the researcher regarding the false impressions of feminism in Pakistan is as follows. Feminism is a phenomena that talks about gender equality, but because we don't really grasp what it means, we have shaped it into something completely different (Mahsood, 2023).

Despite the fact that feminism advocates for gender equality for all sexes, women and men alike, it is frequently misconstrued by the mainstream. Because many people in our society are ignorant of the term "feminism," they believe that the feminist movement and feminism are led by a bunch of angry women who despise or seek to dominate men. However, feminism is primarily a movement or campaign to eradicate sexism, sexist oppression, and exploitation in all societal contexts. Hatred of men is not the goal of the movement.

"I think that feminism is misinterpreted a lot in our culture. People in Pakistan mistakenly believe that feminism is a Western concept that is anti-Islamic and anti-men because they lack

awareness about it. It is incorrect, in the opinion of some, that it encourages vulgarity in society” (Mahrukh, 2023).

"In our society, feminism is still a topic that needs further clarification. The real meaning of feminism is beyond the comprehension of both feminists and society. Which is their own fault for going too far in the liberal-religious spectrum" (Ayesha, 2024) (Fahima, 2024)

The participants were of the opinion that Pakistanis had not been sufficiently educated about the genuine purpose and meaning of feminism by feminists. In Pakistani society, feminism is misinterpreted by both men and women due to outdated ideas and a lack of knowledge.

### **Discrimination and Inequality against Women**

In response to questions concerning gender inequality and discrimination, the participants stated that although "both gender are given equal rights according to their roles and activities as members of an Islamic society," "gender discrimination in our society is at its peak due to lack of Islamic education, outdated disbeliefs, ethical and social issues. In Pakistan, prejudice against women is pervasive. Everyone has equal rights under Islam. Regrettably, Pakistan's local society and government disregard women's rights despite the country being an Islamic state. The primary causes of this are Pakistan's patriarchal society, incorrect religious interpretation, and dearth of Islamic education. Pakistani women have traditionally been viewed as the weaker gender throughout the country's history. We might use the military administration of General Zia-ul-Haq as an example. After taking power in 1979, he enacted regressive legislation that targeted women and minorities as part of his aggressive programme of Islamization” (Haseen, 2023).

“Women face significant prejudice in our society; in Pakistan, for instance, they are not allowed in public spaces. The second major issue is denial of women's property rights, despite the fact that inheritance laws allow them to receive their rightful portion of their husbands' and parents' property. Men receive their portion of the property. The third example is the lack of space that women have in Pakistani politics compared to men; since independence, there has only been one female prime minister, for example. In addition, women are not allowed to enter politics in the same way that men are (Aysha, 2024) (Anum, 2023).

“Despite advancements made elsewhere, Pakistani women continue to be treated as second-class citizens. The majority of girls are frequently denied from education and viewed as burdens because of cultural norms. Pakistan has one of the lowest rates of female literacy in the world because the education system contributes to this by providing limited opportunities for girls in rural areas. Comparably, discrimination in the workplace remains rampant, with many women prohibited from working alongside men. This is a reflection of the deeply rooted patriarchal mindset that forbids equal participation in the economy. Even while some women choose to work in traditionally masculine fields, discrimination is nonetheless pervasive. It is imperative that Pakistani women have equal access to education, rights, and employment opportunities in order to attain true equality and empower them” (Mahsood, 2023) (Simab, 2023).

In Pakistan's patriarchal society, women are sidelined and seen as inferior despite making up more than half of the population. They are denied basic rights, confined to their homes, and even denied of legal rights like property ownership. Although women have certain legal rights, they are not able to fully benefit from them due to cultural and familial constraints.

### **Gender Inequality in Pakistan**

Gender discrimination is firmly ingrained in Pakistani society. It is common knowledge that without women accomplishing their roles, societies cannot run well. A woman is a fundamental component of society; she creates the institution of the family, looks after the house, raises the children, and works to instill virtue in them. The development of the perfect family, ideal community, and ideal nation is greatly aided by women. Equal rights for men and women are necessary to create a thriving and healthy society. Women make up over half of humanity, but sadly, they are often regarded like second-class citizens around the world, particularly in developing nations like Pakistan, where this problem has existed since the country's founding in 1947. In Pakistan, a number of gender-prejudicial structures constrain and shape the lives of women. Political, social, and cultural rights are denied to women in proportion to their entitlements. Even they are denied access to schools so they cannot receive a proper education. She is deprived of her identity as a human being. Even in some places, she is seen as a piece of property that was once possessed by her brother and father before being married, and

subsequently by her husband. She is mostly left out of the decision-making process and lacks the authority to make life-changing decisions. Someone else makes decisions regarding her own schooling, marriage, and childbirth. (Bukhari & Ramzan, 2013).

Participants emphasized respecting Islamic bounds in their pursuit of social, political, and economic equality. They preserved women's and men's separate responsibilities within Muslim traditions, but they acknowledged the spiritual equality of both. They quoted scriptures emphasizing that all people, regardless of gender, color, or language, are created equal before God. They emphasized equal rights for all people in social, political, and economic domains while respecting diversity in roles and adhering to Islamic values. "Equal access regardless of gender, within religious frameworks" is a resounding fundamental message. (Sharif, 2023) (Anum, 2023) (Haseen, 2023)

### **Feminist Movements' Contribution to Securing Women's Rights**

When questioned about the contribution of feminist movements to the advancement of women's rights, the participants gave the following answers.

“The current feminist movements have strayed from their original goals, and their goal of granting women their fundamental rights has been abandoned in favor of shouting catchphrases about trivial problems.” (Mahsood 2023) (Haseen, 2023)

Participants said that women activists were more concerned with advancing women's rights. During that period, a lot of women's organizations were formed, which helped advance women's rights and give them the confidence to stand up for themselves. Examples of these women's organizations include WVS, APWA, and WAF. These groups, along with a few other women's movements at the time, were crucial to the empowerment of women. However, contemporary feminist movements are creating imbalance and friction in society rather than actively advocating for women's rights and raising social awareness. Instead, they are encouraging a negative attitude towards human rights. Less emphasis should be placed on slogans and more on the rights of women. It's true that the feminist movement has brought about reforms in Western nations, but it hasn't had any positive impact in Eastern nations like Pakistan. The gender issues facing our nation require a fresh strategy.

“Even the protestors themselves now refer to many feminist movements and demonstrations as parties or celebrations. Numerous theories surround them, such as those that claim they support homosexuality or are involved in foreign agendas, etc. Because of this, a lot of people observe March 8th as just another holiday rather than as a serious day to demand women's rights. However, they haven't resulted in any improvements for women's political, social, or economic rights.” (Mahwish, 2024)(Aysha, 2024).

While another participant stated that “They are making every effort for elimination of inequality against women. In addition to raising social awareness, they are fighting for the rights of women. For example, the current Aurat March movement in Pakistan addressed a wide range of challenges that women suffer, including the denial of many rights. The March also spoke on behalf of rape survivors. The Aurat Azadi March demanded a number of things, including women's participation in politics, healthcare rights for women, education and about issues pertaining to patriarchy that affect women. Additionally, while many people are still unaware, the march's placards and social media activists for modern feminist activism raise people's awareness of social issues. Even though they're trying their hardest, more has to be done.” (Mehrunisa, 2024).

We can analyze from the interviews of the respondents that Western-imported modern feminism ignores the problems faced by Pakistani women. Here, women are subjected to systemic oppression: they are perceived as weak, ignorant of their rights, and unable to speak up for themselves. By focusing on "meaningless platitudes" rather than actual issues like sexual harassment and illiteracy, the "Aurat March" damaged feminism's reputation. Genuine advocacy need to empower women, inform them of their rights, and provide them with the means to realize their full potential. Women's rights have a long history, but the Aurat March ignited a public conversation about them. This movement addressed important concerns like healthcare, education, and violence against women in spite of opposition from patriarchy. Their mission is to inform and empower women about their inalienable rights. Although it is still difficult to shift deeply rooted patriarchal ideas, activists continue to struggle for the social, political, and economic rights of women.

## **Conclusion**

The movement known as feminism calls for women to have equal rights in society, politics, and the economy. However, feminists misrepresented it in our country and are being taken advantage of by the majority. Few people in our culture actually think that women have equal rights and opportunities in all spheres of life. The others believe that women should marry and raise families. They only engage in a small region and receive meagre compensation. Society as a whole is weakened by pervasive discrimination against women in the social, cultural, political, and economic sectors. If both sexes were granted equal rights, with consideration for their respective responsibilities and activities in social, economic, and political life within the boundaries set by Islam, many issues would be resolved.

In Pakistan, the term "feminism" refers to a group of groups whose goals are to define, uphold, and clarify women's rights. The promotion of women's rights on the grounds of social, political, and economic equality with men is also acknowledged by women's movements.

In Pakistan, despite the country's patriarchal, male-dominated culture, a large number of women are actively advocating for women's rights. Gender inequality is well ingrained in Pakistani society, where women are still viewed as inferior to men. This leads to a host of other issues. The role and status of women have been severely damaged in Pakistani patriarchal culture, and as a result of this patriarchal framework, women are the victims of almost all crimes, including rape, honour killing, and assault.

While feminism opened up new doors and created new worlds of possibilities for women in the fields of politics, education, and empowerment, among other areas, it also inadvertently altered the lives of women. Women are now acknowledged to be just as capable as men, and they are no longer limited to being housewives or mothers.

In general, feminism is positive since it fosters social equality and works to prevent prejudice based on gender. Everyone lives in healthier communities when there is gender equity. Feminism's primary goal is to empower women and make them aware of the value of their fundamental rights. They can therefore contribute equally to the growth of their nation's economy.

Pakistan has historically been governed by a system that is dominated by men, and both the Pakistani people and the government have consistently overlooked the vital role that women play in society. On the other hand, women's organizations and civil society have been crucial in educating women about their rights. However, women-related NGOs have played a significant and ongoing role in raising women's knowledge of their social, political, and economic rights.

Given Pakistan's backward society, it has been difficult for women to publicly voice their disapproval of patriarchy and aspirations for equal rights. Religious conservatives and fundamentalists continue to try to make obstacles and challenges for women activists, criticizing the Women's March as a manifestation of a Western agenda.

Despite a lengthy history of criticism, women's groups, organizations, alliances, and movements continue to advocate for gender equality in Pakistan and bring attention to issues pertaining to women.

### **Policy Recommendations**

In light of the study's findings, many measures are advised in order to improve Pakistan's gender balance, lessen inequality and discrimination against women, and, ideally, provide women equal opportunity in all spheres of society.

1. The constitution of Pakistan ostensibly ensures that everyone has equal rights, and numerous laws are in place to uphold these rights. However, these rules are not being implemented in practice at either the governmental or private sector levels. In order to address the issues of sexism and inequality in Pakistani society, a formal committee made up of representatives from the Ministry of Women Development, the media, non-governmental organizations, and civil society should be constituted.
2. Women's education should be of higher quality, with access to a variety of educational resources. Girls and women should also be taught about their social duties through appropriate education, enabling them to support themselves.
3. Given that women make up more than half of the population, the government should actively work to increase the number of women in positions that involve employment management and decision-making as well as to further invest in women's education.



4. Applying a cultural relativist perspective is crucial for feminists and women activists advocating for gender equality in Pakistan.
5. If feminists wish to use feminism to bring about gender equality in Pakistani society, this idea must first be regulated in line with Pakistani culture and religion.
6. Men and women should participate in awareness campaigns about their respective roles and fundamental rights.
7. Adequate legislation and justice are necessary for the eradication of all these issues from Pakistani society.

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