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Pakistan Peoples Party and Socio-Economic Empowerment of Women in Pakistan (1988-2013)

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the initiatives and impact of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) on the socio-economic empowerment of women in Pakistan from 1988 to 2013. During this period, the PPP played a significant role in Pakistan's political landscape, with notable female leadership, including Benazir Bhutto, who served as Prime Minister. The research analyzes key policies and programs implemented by the PPP aimed at enhancing women's economic participation and social status. Initiatives such as the establishment of the First Women Bank, Women Police Stations, the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP), and legislative measures like the Protection against Harassment at Workplace Act 2010 are critically assessed. The study also explores challenges in implementation, socio-cultural barriers, and the interplay between political will and outcomes for women's empowerment. Findings suggest that while the PPP undertook significant efforts to promote women's rights and empowerment, persistent societal norms, resource constraints, and governance issues influenced the effectiveness and sustainability of these initiatives. The research contributes to understanding the complexities of advancing gender equality and women's socio-economic empowerment in Pakistan's context.

Keyword: Socio-economic empowerment, Political landscape, social status, Harassment, resource constraints, governance issues

Introduction of the Study

The socio-economic empowerment of women was a critical dimension of development and gender equality, particularly in countries like Pakistan where patriarchal societal structures and cultural norms often posed significant challenges to women's advancement. Between 1988 and 2013, Pakistan witnessed notable political shifts with the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) playing prominent role, including having female Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto, who served two terms during that period. This study examined the efforts and impact of the Pakistan People's Party on socio-economic empowerment of women in Pakistan from 1988 to 2013. The period was marked by various initiatives and policies aimed at promoting women's rights and participation in economic and political spheres, against backdrop of complex socio-cultural dynamics. Focusing on PPP's tenure and policies, this research explored the extent to which the party's initiatives contributed to enhancing women's socio-economic status in Pakistan, considering legislative measures, social programs, and political participation. The analysis situated the PPP's efforts within the broader context of Pakistan's socio-political landscape and assessed the interplay between political will, policy implementation, and outcomes for women's empowerment. The research was done with the aim to assess initiatives by PPP aimed at promoting socio-economic empowerment of women in Pakistan by using the qualitative content analysis technique and in-depth interviews method.

Concepts of Women Empowerment

Women's empowerment referred to the process of enabling women to have control over their lives, make informed decisions, and exercise their rights and opportunities. It involved enhancing women's ability to access resources, participate in decision-making processes, and challenge societal norms and structures that may have limited their potential. Different perspectives existed on approaches to and measures of women's empowerment, reflecting varying cultural, social, and economic contexts. Gender equality was also a concept in

this regard which referred to the idea that there would be equal opportunities and equal treatment for all individuals in society, irrespective of gender.

Socio-Economic Empowerment of Women

Social development is a comprehensive social improvement strategy that aims to improve the lives of all citizens, with a focus on those who are impoverished or otherwise in need. It is defined as the framework of norms, general rules, and a level of quality that regulate human interactions. Social structure changes of a qualitative nature are linked to this phenomenon. It altered the opportunities for those seeking to rise in social standing (Fritz, 2010). Economic development is a phenomenon of increased GDP and market productivity that aims to improve people's growth and well-being through policy interventions (Lucas, 1988). Economic growth is one aspect of the process of economic development," said by renowned economist Amartya Sen (Sen, 1983).

Socio-economic Development and Humanitarianism

In summary, socio-economic development is a factor that is preferred in the definition of development, influences how a phenomenon is understood, is documented by international organizations and national declarations, and collaborates to achieve development goals (Bellu, 2011). For instance, the UNDP (2000) proposed the Millennium Development Goals, which included good governance, education, food security, health, and sustainable resource use in addition to poverty reduction. Development considerations are no longer given much thought, primarily in the context of reducing poverty in underdeveloped areas (Massey, 1988). The construction of the concept of socio-economic development is the main focus of Chojnick (2010). Two issues are addressed: (a) the nature of socio-economic development and its reference, and (b) the scope of the concept. They contend that social changes, the majority of which are economic in nature, are included in the concept of socio-economic development and that economic factors are central to studies on economic change and cannot be separated from social factors. "Change and socio-economic development"

combines two elements, namely change and development (Chojnicki, 2010). The expanding definition of humanitarianism is linked to socioeconomic development, but other important factors include the acceptance of the importance of social capital, the popularity of environmental conservation, and philosophical and sociological notions of equality of possibilities (Fritz, 2010).

Social Empowerment of Women

Finding answers to the current social issues as well as fostering goodwill among people and forming the next generation of law-abiding citizens are all part of social empowerment. In addition, it seeks to uphold humanitarian ideals and foster interindividual harmony and collaboration. The process of gaining the independence, strength, self-assurance, and other resources required to effect change and clear the path for a brighter future is known as social empowerment. Individuals and groups alike are both impacted by social empowerment. A person's definition of social empowerment might be defined as having the inner and external means to make decisions about their own lifestyle and surroundings, including what to eat and where to live.

In general, social empowerment refers to groups and establishments that assist marginalized individuals in obtaining the means of empowerment, including financial resources, excellent health, education, social connections, self-worth, self-assurance, and employment opportunities. Giving those without access to these resources a sense of self, belonging, and wellbeing will enable them to flourish. It also aims to dismantle the systems that deprive them of essential resources and prolong their marginalization (Sunkad, 2023).

Gender Equality and Women Economic Status

One of the greatest global threats to women's happiness and health is still gender inequality. The World Bank (2001) calls for policies to address gender imbalance in "rights, resources, and voice" in its report "Engendering Development." It suggests that specific measures, like quotas for women in

parliament and scholarships for girls, be adopted, as well as that institutional structures be redesigned to promote equality. The report argues that these actions are appropriate because they advance equity and are also required to hasten development (Bank, 2001).

Pakistani women still face numerous obstacles, notwithstanding some advancements in recent decades in the area of human capital investment. Only women are responsible for performing unpaid caregiving and household work. The government does not even include women's unpaid caregiving labor in its GDP calculations. Women are not paid equally by employers. The illiteracy rate among women is two thirds. Their movement is severely limited. A startlingly high percentage of them experience gender-based and domestic violence (human trafficking, bonded labor, acid throwing, sexual assault, and honor killings). These all make it more difficult for Pakistani women to escape the cycle of poverty and vulnerability. Only Iraq, Yemen, and Afghanistan rank lower in the world for women's health and educational outcomes, as well as their access to economic opportunities, than Pakistan. In terms of gender parity, Pakistan is ranked 153rd out of 156 countries by the World Economic Forum (Bank, 2001). There are currently only 21% female members of Pakistan's parliament. It is ranked 139th in educational attainment, 145th in health and survival, 97th in political empowerment, and 146th in economic participation and opportunity.

More women are employed by women-owned businesses worldwide. The impact of varying levels of empowerment on women's subjective and emotional well-being in order to examine the relationship between gender inequality and women's happiness levels in South Africa. The study specifically assessed the impact of pure empowerment, or the welfare-promoting effect of empowerment through continuous consumption. The study's findings indicate that increased levels of empowerment appear to further depress women's welfare. Despite the fact that some models appear to provide no proof that the effects of true empowerment and wellbeing are significantly inversely correlated. Interestingly, a far more nuanced message is adopted in the 2012 World Development Report. Although it highlights the business case" for women's empowerment, its main

premise is that gender equality is a desirable goal in and of itself, and that policies should work toward achieving that goal (Bank, 2001).

Empowerment initiatives aim to achieve gender equality and community welfare. Ensuring basic needs like food, health, and housing is a simple way to gauge the welfare dimension, as is the degree to which both men and women benefit from it. Improving women's quality of life, achieving international human rights goals, and strengthening the economy are all made possible by empowering women. It also helps to create a stable and fair society. Three elements are included in women's empowerment: Building women's abilities is the first step in capacity building; changing culture, specifically to support women; and making structural adjustments that support women are the next three (Bank, 2001).

Commitments of Pakistan to Women's Constitutional Rights

The Beijing Platform for Action, the Sustainable Development Goals, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), and other important international commitments to women's rights and gender equality have all been embraced by Pakistan (UNWomen, 2023). Through establishing a respectable workplace and financial stability for women, UN initiatives in Pakistan are mitigating the effects of glass ceiling. Without doubt, since turn of twenty-first century, Pakistan's constitution has undergone numerous revisions aimed at empowering women. Since Article 25 (1), 2 and 3 of the Pakistani constitution states that all citizens are equal before the law, women have been granted equal status. Article 25(2) states that "there shall be no discrimination based on sex alone," while Article 25-A 25(1) states that all citizens to be equal before the law and entitled to equal protection of the law. Furthermore, article 2(3) gives the state the authority to establish unique regulations for particular problems that women and children face (GOP, 2011). Article 34 also authorizes women to participate in all aspects of life and instructs the government to implement appropriate policies that allow women to engage in social activities.

It is reasonable to assume that robust legislation is empowering women in society given the state of the law. There are undoubtedly protective laws in Pakistan, such as the Women's Protection Act, but their application is lax. A pessimistic outlook on the future results from the apparent lack of progress made by legislation in influencing people's attitudes and behaviors. 2006 saw the passage of the Women's Protection Act, which gave women protection from rape. To put an end to harassment, the Protection Against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act was passed in 2010. Following the passage of this law, numerous reports of harassment were made. However, because of the additional issues that have arisen as a result of the proliferation of social media and social websites, it can be challenging to handle harassment cases in practice. Numerous women experience various forms of online harassment, including name-calling, sexual remarks, and threats of rape (DRF, 2017). In 2011, a new act was passed that included some measures to give Pakistani women and girls a safe environment. This act was extremely thorough and detailed when it came to protecting women (Lari, 2011). Nevertheless, numerous cases have been reported even after this act was passed because the intended outcomes could not be achieved on a larger scale.

Furthermore, more disparities have come to light, particularly among vulnerable populations like low-income and illiterate families. Furthermore, the 18th Amendment was approved by the Pakistani National Assembly in 2010 and gave provinces control over a number of social issues as well as the ability to enact laws pertaining to women's rights within their borders. As a result, provinces gained autonomy in regulating society and advancing women's liberation (PCSW, 2015). Currently, a few provinces have declared that there will be no more gender disparities. In an effort to end violence against women in private settings, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa introduced the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act in 2012. Ironically, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F), a powerful political party, opposed the law, claiming it was un-Islamic and would weaken men in society. It was also labeled as un-Islamic by the Council of Islamic Ideology (CII) (Khattak, 2019).

This act made it illegal to rape children and those who are mentally or physically ill (Bilal, 2016). Sadly, there are gaps that make it impossible to adequately prevent these crimes. The main cause of this impotence is the persistence of social attitudes toward the issue. Because these laws are ineffective at deterring crime, they are merely pieces of paper. Most women still live in constant fear because they are unable to marry against the wishes of their families and because honor killings have not yet been stopped. Deep-seated misogyny can also be seen in various widely accepted customs, like minimum marriage ages and unequal inheritance rights (Rauf, 2022). In any case, Pakistan has ratified all international conventions supporting women's rights and protection from discrimination in all forms, though the appropriate application of these conventions is still up for debate.

Pakistan Ratified International Conventions and Treaties

Convention/Treaty	Signed	Ratification
Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)	1948	1966
UN convention on the rights of persons with disability (CRPD)	2008	2011
International convention for the protection of persons from Enforced Disappearance (ICPPED)	2006	Not ratified
Convention against Torcher and other racial inhuman degrading Treatment of Punishment (UNCAT)	2008	2010
Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination and against women (CEDAW)	1979	1996
International Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD)	1966	1966
International convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)	2004	2008
UN Convention on the Rights of Child (UNCRC)	1990	1990
International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)	2008	2010

Source: Amin, N. (2020). *International Commitments and Pakistan*. Faisalabad: AWAM.

National and International Organizations' Working

In the 1990s, Pakistan started to focus again on women's rights, primarily through externally directed initiatives. The goal of "leaving no one behind" was centered on women's economic empowerment, which is one of the Sustainable Development Goals (Goal 5: Achieving Gender Equality). The UN Secretary General's High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment asserts that empowering women advances social and economic development while fostering a more equitable society, making it not only the moral but also the astute course of action. Pakistan signed the 1993 Vienna Declaration, which recognized women's rights as human rights, the 1994 Cairo Population and Development Conference's Program of Action, and the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action after becoming a state party to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990. As part of its efforts to end the grosser iniquities against women, Pakistan's senate established a "high-powered commission" in 1994 to review the nation's laws while the country was preparing its national report for the upcoming Beijing conference (UNIP, 2013).

The Commission of Inquiry for Women's Report that followed sharply denounced the circumstances that faced women in Pakistan at the time: There is a common misperception about the status that Islam grants women. This misperception is not limited to the West; it is also present among the intellectual elite in the Muslim world, including Pakistan. Islam is said to cast women in a lower social class, keep them confined to their homes, prevent them from working outside the home, and prevent them from starting their own businesses. This is completely untrue (GOP, Report of the Commission of Inquiry for Women, 1997). According to the report, which is quite provocative for that era, many of the discriminatory laws and customs in Pakistan are regrettably justified in the name of Islam or have been introduced as Islamic laws when, in reality, they are outdated traditions and customs or misguided interpretations that have no bearing on the divine design. It is necessary to make this distinction clear once and for all. Ambiguity gives rise to insecurity among women domestically and to a very negative image overseas, and it allows obscurantist elements to reopen debate on established fundamental principles (UNIP, 2013).

Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA):

The 189 countries around the world, including those of the EU Member States and the EU itself, vowed to work toward gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at the Beijing, 1995, Fourth United Nations (UN) World Conference on Women. The conference's Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA) is regarded as the most extensive worldwide framework for women's rights policy. It clearly acknowledges the human rights of women and lays out a comprehensive and ambitious plan for achieving gender equality. Twelve interconnected critical areas—poverty, unequal access to health care and education, health care disparities, violence against women and girls, the effects of armed conflict, economic empowerment, power and decision-making, mechanisms to advance women's advancement, women's human rights, the media, the environment, and ongoing discrimination and violations of girls' rights—are covered by these specific goals and targets (GOP, Report of the Commission of Inquiry for Women, 1997).

Under Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's direction, Pakistan provided substantial backing for the formulation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action during the Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW), which took place in Beijing in 1995. The nation committed to achieving the 12 areas outlined in the BPfA and focused on these areas in its National Plan of Action of 1998, the first comprehensive agenda for GEWE in Pakistan, when it signed the Beijing Declaration that same year. Pakistan conducted an assessment in 2019, noting advancements in the following areas: 1) Development that is inclusive, shared prosperity, and respectable work; 2) The elimination of poverty, social services and protection; 3) Absence of stigma, violence, and stereotypes; 4) Institutions that are gender-responsive, accountable, and participatory; 5) Harmonious and inclusive communities (UNHR, 2014).

Women in Distress and Detention Fund

Similar to the previous bill, this one would give financial support and legal representation to the numerous disturbed women who are incarcerated in American prisons. On December 13, 2011, this bill was approved by the upper house of parliament and became law. This bill was signed into law to amend the Women in Distress and Detention Fund Act of 1996. The amendment was put forth by Syed Nayyer Hussain Bokhari in the House. Prior to now, the Ministry of Law, Justice, and Human Rights' Human Rights division administered a fund that was available to imprisoned women in need. It all began with this specific fund in 1996. However, the 18th Constitutional Amendment's ratification directly led to the creation of the Ministry of Human Rights as a distinct organization.

The reorganization of funds had a financial benefit for the newly established Ministry of Human Rights as well. On April 18, 2010, the Pakistani President signed an ordinance into law to put this policy into effect. The stated purpose of the law is to guarantee that the Ministry of Human Rights is in charge of attending to the unique requirements of women during emergency situations or periods of incarceration, including offering them financial assistance and legal counsel. The directive bears the signature of the president of Pakistan. A new law has been implemented to allocate this money under the new ministry's supervision. A provision of a new law passed in 2011 gives the Ministry of Human Rights the power to decide how these funds should be used. The following is the distribution of the funds: (1) women who are imprisoned due to legal issues (i.e., they are awaiting trial or have already been found guilty); (2) women who are imprisoned due to extreme poverty (i.e., they require medical attention, a place to stay with their children, or both); and (3) women who need legal representation. The government adopted this strategy to assist women in order to prevent any potential obstacles from getting in the way of their recovery and independence (Qasim, Shah, & Ali, 2023).

PPP on Gender Equality and Socio-Economic Empowerment

The UN agency United Nations Human Rights (UNHR) gave the concept of gender equality with the powerful assertion "Women's Rights are Human

Rights” (UNHR, 2014) that resonates deeply with Pakistan Peoples Party's (PPP) commitment to social justice and equality for men and women (Nisa, 2023). By recognizing intrinsic link between women's empowerment and human rights, PPP aligns itself with global movement that seeks to uplift and protect dignity of women everywhere. This philosophy reflected in the party's efforts to promote women's participation in politics, education, and economic opportunities, underscoring its belief that the advancement of women is essential to the progress of society as a whole (Iftikhar, 2023).

PPP's Slogan and Socio-Economic Empowerment

Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) was founded with the ideology of empowerment of common man and developed the Pakistani society as beneficial for them (Khan, 2023). Societal development and human prosperity was the basic objective of PPP and party always remained focused with this objective, either it was in government or opposition (Nisa, 2023). PPP was the party of the common man as it was shown by its name and basic principal that is shown by its slogan “*Roti, Kapra, Makan*” (Bread, Clothes, House) which represent basic needs of everyone and economic as well as social empowerment. The founder of PPP Zulfikar Ali Bhutto used this slogan to promise for basic necessities to people of Pakistan. This phrase became synonymous with party's populist agenda and Bhutto's charismatic leadership (Lodhi, 1980).

PPP's commitment for economic empowerment was also shown by its slogan “*Roti, Kapra, Makan*” which referred the house-hold needs and basic necessities of people (Khan, 2023). PPP never differentiate the people on the bases of gender but prefer the women in services which also shown by its initiative of Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) and house-hold ownership for women during relief program after flood in Sindh (Iftikhar, 2023). ZA Bhutto and after that Benazir Bhutto were focused to provide basic necessities to the people of Pakistan. PPP did not forget this promise until its last government in 2013 and worked for the socio-economic empowerment of women. Benazir Income Support Program (BISP), rehabilitation of flood victims in Sindh and plan

to provide agriculture land in Sindh and Baluchistan were one of its examples (Nisa, 2023). For promoting economic empowerment of women, the Sindh government led by PPP handed over 25 acres land to landless women farmers in the province (Iftikhar, 2023).

PPP's Initiatives for Women Empowerment

The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) implemented various initiatives aimed at the socio-economic empowerment of women in Pakistan, reflecting their commitment to advancing women's rights and status. Key measures included the establishment of the First Women Bank to promote women's financial inclusion, the Ministry of Women Development for policy formulation, and Women Police Stations to handle cases involving women sensitively. Legislative actions like the Protection against Harassment at Workplace Act 2010 and the Acid Control and Acid Crime Prevention Act 2011 sought to protect women from violence and harassment. Programs such as the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) targeted poverty alleviation with a focus on women-headed households. Additionally, institutional mechanisms like the National Commission on the Status of Women were established to advocate for women's rights. These initiatives underscored the PPP's efforts to enhance women's economic participation, ensure their protection, and promote gender equality in Pakistan's socio-political landscape

Benazir Income Support Program

A premier social welfare initiative in Pakistan, the BISP was introduced by the Pakistan People's Party government in July 2008. Yousaf Raza Gillani, the former prime minister of Pakistan, took the initiative to establish the Benazir Bhutto Income Support Program in 2008 after President Asif Ali Zardari advised him to do so. The program is called BISP in remembrance of the late PPP Chairperson, Benazir Bhutto, in honor of her lifetime dedication to eradicating poverty and enhancing the lives of the disadvantaged and marginalized groups in society, especially women, who are frequently the primary caregivers for their

families. The Pakistani government made large annual budgetary provisions for this purpose. More than 3 million Pakistani families received financial assistance from this program in 2008–2009. The Pakistani government provided additional assistance to 5 million low-income families in 2009–2010.

The BISP's contribution to women's empowerment in Pakistan has been among its most notable effects. The program's goal is to directly give women, who are frequently the most vulnerable members of society, cash transfers. Through the provision of financial support, the BISP has facilitated women's economic empowerment and independence, allowing them to take a more active role in decision-making processes within their communities and families. Furthermore, in Pakistan, where women are frequently viewed as dependant on men and assigned to domestic duties, the BISP has assisted in challenging conventional gender roles and stereotypes. By giving women the money they need to launch their own companies or spend on training and education, the BISP has contributed to the advancement of gender equality.

The Prevention of Anti-Women Practices Act

PPP introduced the Prevention of Ant-Women Practices Bill in 2011 and it was approved by the Senate unanimously on December 23, 2011. The approved bill was sent to the National Assembly and approved. The law forbade depriving a woman of her inheritance in a dishonest manner or allowing teenage girls to mediate civil or criminal cases in Badl-e-Sulha. The Quran states that forcing women into marriage is wrong. prohibition against preventing women from inheriting property. Section 498B forbids forced marriages. A minimum sentence of three years in prison and a maximum fine of half a million rupees are imposed for forced marriages. The prohibition of marriage in accordance with the Holy Quran, found in Article 498C, carries a minimum sentence of three years in prison and a fine of five million rupees. There are some cruel traditions in Pakistan. These actions constitute a violation of every human right. The goal of this law is to put an end to these abuses. Islam is the religion of equality on the basis of religious performances, social, political, and economic sphere. New laws

for women were added to the Quran. Standards that denigrated women were created by humans. In rural, feudal Pakistan, women's rights are restricted by male family members (Qasim, Shah, & Ali, 2023).

Women are particularly susceptible to oppression and other types of discrimination against them in some regions of the nation. Male members of society utilize their privileges granted by the government and religion. Women are used as property to settle disputes. When women mediate disputes, their autonomy and lives are violated. Jirga culture in feudal zones grants minors in marriage, but Badl-e-Sulha, Wanni, and Sawara cultures settle disputes by marrying minors. A young girl is exchanged for blood by rival family members. In Balochistan and other parts of Pakistan, this habit is known as Ijaee. Pakistani languages are Sawara in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Wanni in Punjab, and Sang-Chatti in Sindh. It is the worst kind of violence against women and a flagrant violation of both Islamic and human rights. Campaigners for human rights, especially those who support women's rights, passed this legislation. Wins for women's equality in rural and tribal areas were significant. Women could never be financially independent if they did not have access to their inherited property (Nisa, 2023). The male heirs protect the family inheritance by marrying women who believe in the Quran. This would be against their rights since it would prevent them from getting married.

Protection against Harassment at Workplace Act

The Act of 2010 defines harassment as "Any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favors or other verbal or written communication or physical conduct of sexual nature or sexually demeaning attitudes, causing interference with work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment or the attempt to punish the complainant for refusal to comply to such a request or is made a condition for employment". This law required all organizations to create a permanent committee to handle these kinds of issues in addition to a code of conduct. The victim may file a complaint with the ombudsman if the committee looking into the sexual harassment allegation is

unable to identify the harasser and bring them to justice. This code of conduct sets expectations for all employees, from managers to business owners, in order to foster a friendly and safe work environment free from harassment and intimidation (Adil, 2021).

The Senate passed the Protecting Women from Harassment Act on January 21. A 2007 survey revealing 78 percent of working women had experienced sexual harassment at work—a statistic that rose to 91 percent among domestic workers—highlights the need for such protection. This law's goal was to make it mandatory for all organizations that are registered to have a code of conduct that includes a policy against sexual harassment. This statute gave a comprehensive explanation of sexual harassment and associated ideas (PCSW, 2015). Every group is required by this law to form a committee consisting of three members, at least one of whom must be a woman. Penalties for management failing to implement such a code include up to PKR 100,000 in fines and prosecution. The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act 2009, which accompanies the amendment to Pakistan's penal code, acknowledges that sexual harassment happens outside of designated work hours in public spaces like parks and markets in addition to workplaces and homes. Although the first clause specifically targets women when it comes to insulting modesty, the second clause is not gender specific (PCSW, 2015). Because there are now legal guarantees and consequences for breaking the law, which can support campaigns to raise awareness about sexual harassment and inform women of their rights to pursue legal action against this kind of discrimination and persecution, this may indicate a shift in how society views sexual harassment. Sexual harassment reports will be gathered by this panel (Adil, 2021).

This legislation's main objective is to ensure that women can live their lives without fear of violence or intimidation. The freedom to work and the right to be treated with respect were the two main issues that the Act addressed for women. Thanks to this legislation, harassment is now illegal in Pakistan for the first time. This is a significant improvement. In Pakistan, harassment of women is a widespread issue that happens in homes, workplaces, streets, and schools (Adil,

2021). Women felt unsafe in the workplace and were unable to give their best work because of the harassment. It is the main obstacle preventing women from advancing in their careers. By passing this legislation, it is hoped that people will feel more confident in their capacity to manage their financial futures by finding gainful employment. While there are many aspects of women's empowerment, economic independence is among the most crucial. This statute is an expression of the government's commitment to global women's empowerment. In order to achieve this, this law forbade discrimination against women in any form and required that it be stopped (Nisa, 2023).

Acid Control and Acid Crime Prevention Act

In Pakistan, using acid on women is one kind of violence against them. The worst crime committed by women. It is a severe offense that may occur anywhere. The main perpetrators of this crime are boys who approach girls with proposals but are turned down, and ex-husbands who are resentful of their wives' attractiveness. This is an act of revenge. The Pakistani government has consistently denounced this violence, as have human rights advocates. As soon as things in Pakistan became worse (UNHR, 2014), To combat this crime, the government passed the Acid Control and Acid Crime Prevention Act in 2010. Under this statute, fourteen life sentences and a million dollar fine were suggested. The lack of regulations in Pakistani society allowed these atrocities to occur. Since open market sales were allowing this crime to flourish, the main goal of this statute was to restrict the production, importation, and sale of acid. This bill seeks to prevent women from being attacked with acid. New sections 336 A and 336 B define "those who cause hurt by dangerous means or substance" as those who use "fire or by any heated substance," "poison," "corrosive substance," "acid," "explosive or arsenic substance," or "substance which is detrimental to the human body to come into contact with, to inhale," "swallow," or "receive" into the body (Khan, 2023).

According to Section 336-B of the amendment, anyone who causes damage using a coercive substance faces a minimum fine of Rs one million and

a life sentence of either kind that cannot be less than fourteen years. Women in Pakistan are frequently the targets of acid attacks. This Act reinforced the laws governing the production and use of specific substances. In 2010, the National Assembly passed the Acid Control and Acid Crime Prevention Legislation with a unanimous vote. It was suggested by Awami National Party lawmaker Bushra Gohar. Each and every legislator in the legislature supported this one with a vote. President Asif Ali Zardari signed the legislation on December 22 (Qasim, Shah, & Ali, 2023). People with criminal intentions are always using acid as a devastating and disastrous act against women," Pakistan Muslim League MNA Marvi Memon said in the House. This law will make it unlawful to purposefully hurt, vandalize, or disfigure a woman by throwing acid or another hard substance at her. Sen. Neelofer Bakhtiar, the bill's sponsor, thanked her colleagues for their support when she introduced the bill in the Senate because it was the first time no senator had opposed it. From 33 in 2007 to 48 in 2009, the Acid Survivors Foundation (ASF) received reports of acid attacks. Despite these laws, the women's rights group Aurat Foundation reported almost 8,000 assaults in 2011—44 of which involved acid attacks (PCSW, 2015).

National Commission on the Status of Women Act

With a resounding vote in favor, the Pakistani Senate passed the National Commission on the Status of Women Act on February 2. This law establishes a commission to monitor women's rights across the nation and report on any violations that are discovered. The committee will also ensure that men and women are paid equally for performing equivalent work. This new act gave the old Commission significant protections, including complete autonomy over its operations and expenditures, and also established a separate secretariat for it. The laws were passed in order to guarantee Pakistani women's access to all civil, political, and economic rights as stipulated by the constitution. Pakistan has committed to upholding the articles of the CEDAW, and this legislation is an attempt to fulfill that commitment. The Commission created by this Act will have the authority to promote women's rights in a variety of policy contexts, such as the legislature, courts, and social sector. The Commission's main duty was to

suggest policies and initiatives that would improve the lot of Pakistani women. The Commission is established, with a chair and members chosen, their terms of office clearly stated, a secretariat established, a description of the Commission's duties and authority provided, funds provided, and the need for an annual report (Adil, 2021).

March 8th is International Women's Day, so that day was chosen to be the official signing of this bill. Pakistan's President Asif Ali Zardari has openly expressed his belief that women's rights will be significantly protected by the newly created post at the Commission. The President has promised to make sure that the Commission runs as a fully independent and autonomous body in order to monitor and defend women's rights and to positively influence changes in laws and policies. The Commission will investigate violations of women's rights, gather pertinent information, and monitor the government's global commitments in this domain. Observing events occurring overseas is another area of the Commission's jurisdiction. The new law has caused an evolution in the chairperson's role.

Establishment of the First Women Bank

This FWBL was established as a development financial institution for the socioeconomic empowerment of women, a Scheduled Commercial Bank, and a unique financial institution. Benazir Bhutto, the first female prime minister of the Islamic world, took the lead in creating the bank because she wanted it to serve the banking needs of female entrepreneurs. It was aimed at women from low-income backgrounds who had little access to traditional banking. The bank supported women's economic independence, enabled them to pursue their entrepreneurial dreams, and gave them access to financial resources in an effort to empower them. On November 21, 1989, FWBL became a Public Limited Company and was incorporated as a Scheduled Commercial Bank in the Public Sector under the Companies Ordinance, 1984. On December 2, 1989, the Bank opened for business with a paid-up capital of Rs. 100 million, of which five of the nation's top public sector banks contributed, in varying amounts, 90%. These

included United Bank Limited, Allied Bank Limited, Muslim Commercial Bank Limited, Habib Bank Limited, and National Bank of Pakistan. Federal Government funding accounted for 10% of the remaining capital (Nisa, 2023).

Ministry of Women development

In Pakistan, the Ministry of Women Development was founded to deal with matters pertaining to gender equality, women's rights, and the advancement of women's contributions to socioeconomic development. Benazir Bhutto was Prime Minister from 1988 to 1990 and again from 1993 to 1996. During her time in office, she implemented a number of efforts that significantly advanced women's rights and gave them more power. Women's organizations received support during Bhutto's presidency to guarantee that women's opinions were heard in the decision-making processes. These groups were instrumental in promoting legislative changes meant to elevate the status of women in society. Under Bhutto's leadership, the government passed laws to protect women's rights, such as ones that forbade domestic abuse and improved women's access to jobs and education. The Ministry started initiatives aimed at increasing women's participation in the labor market that focused on economic empowerment through skill development and vocational training. Enhancing health care services for women was given special attention, particularly in rural areas. Education campaigns were pushed to support female education as a way to improve society. The Ministry of Women Development faced many obstacles in spite of the progress made, such as a lack of funding, cultural opposition to women's empowerment, and poor policy implementation. Sustaining cultural norms impeded women's legal rights from being fully realized (Iftikhar, 2023).

A progressive agenda for women's rights was prevalent in Pakistan during Benazir Bhutto's tenure, and the Ministry of Women Development was instrumental in advancing this agenda. Even though there were still obstacles, the actions made during her administration prepared the way for later campaigning and legislative changes that supported women's rights across the nation.

Women Police Station

When it comes to the safety of female victims and the defense of civilians, police women are vital and in the spotlight. In his work, James (2000) illustrates the increasing need for women to be recruited into law enforcement in order to remove the stigma that the male-dominated services have wiped from the minds of the general public. He goes on to say that women police officers have been assigned to women police cells, a sensitive area where they are tasked with providing counseling to women who are victims of gender-based violence (Nisa, 2023). Women police officers are now the only ones qualified to handle lady processions and other law and order situations involving females due to economic development and social values that mandate women handle women (Iftikhar, 2023).

Working Women's Hostel

Benazir Bhutto championed various initiatives aimed at promoting women's rights and empowerment. Under her leadership, significant steps were taken towards improving women's access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities. One of the notable initiatives during her tenure was the establishment of working women's hostels across Pakistan. This was part of her broader vision for women's empowerment, recognizing that access to a safe living environment was crucial for women to succeed in their professional lives. These hostels provided not only accommodation but also vocational training and employment services (Ali, 2016). The development of working women's hostels and efforts for women's empowerment, reflect a significant social transition. Such facilities not only address immediate housing needs but also symbolize a broader commitment to enhancing the role of women in society. The creation of hostels exclusively for working women started to gain traction in many nations, including Pakistan, in the late 20th century. These establishments sought to give women access to safe and reasonably priced housing so they could navigate the workforce without sacrificing their safety or well-being.

The 18th Amendment

The 18th Amendment to Pakistan's Constitution, enacted in 2010, was a landmark legislative change that devolved significant powers from the federal government to the provinces, aiming to enhance provincial autonomy and governance. This decentralization potentially had implications for women's empowerment, as provinces gained more control over policy areas like education, health, and social services, which are critical for women's development. The amendment reinforced constitutional guarantees of equality and fundamental rights, providing a framework for addressing women's issues. However, the impact varied across provinces, with challenges including resource constraints, capacity gaps, and differing provincial priorities affecting implementation and outcomes for women's empowerment. The effectiveness of the 18th Amendment in advancing women's rights and socio-economic status depended on provincial governments' commitment, capacities, and localized approaches to addressing gender-specific needs and inequalities (Khan, 2023).

The creation of Pakistan's constitution during 2008 to 2013 empowered women and marked a major step toward gender equality. In order to guarantee women's participation in decision-making and boost their representation in elected bodies, PPP introduced number of constitutional reforms during his presidency including 18th amendment. Increasing number of reserved seats for women in national and provincial assemblies was one of his most important constitutional reforms, guaranteeing women's participation in decision-making. In Pakistan's political system, this action was major step toward advancing social equality. The Women's Protection Bill was passed by the PPP administration, which also brought about another crucial constitutional shift. Women were given legal protection from a range of violent acts, such as discrimination, harassment, and domestic abuse, thanks to this legislation. The bill so made a number of discriminatory practices against women illegal, such as forced marriages and the denial of inheritance rights. Ensuring that women had legal protections against discrimination and violence required the passage of this legislation (Qasim, Shah, & Ali, 2023).

Conclusion

The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) undertook various initiatives aimed at promoting women's socio-economic empowerment in Pakistan between 1988 and 2013. Through legislative measures like the Protection against Harassment at Workplace Act 2010 and the Prevention of Anti-Women Practices Act, the party sought to enhance legal protections for women. Institutional mechanisms such as the establishment of the First Women Bank, Women Police Stations, and the National Commission on the Status of Women reflected efforts to address women's economic and social needs. Programs like the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) targeted poverty alleviation with a focus on women-headed households. The PPP's tenure saw notable female leadership, exemplified by Benazir Bhutto, symbolizing the party's advocacy for women's political participation. While these initiatives indicated a commitment to women's empowerment, outcomes were influenced by factors like implementation challenges, socio-cultural barriers, and varying provincial contexts. The effectiveness and sustainability of these efforts underscore the complexities of advancing gender equality in Pakistan's diverse societal landscape. Ultimately, the PPP's policies and programs contributed to the discourse and actions on women's empowerment, though persistent challenges highlight the need for continued and concerted efforts to address deep-seated gender disparities in Pakistan.

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