

HOW SOCIAL NORMS SHAPE WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN PAKISTAN: EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, AND POLITICS

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ABSTRACT

This article concerns the complex interplay of social norms and women's rights in Pakistan. It examines how longstanding cultural practices and traditions suppress women's rights, particularly where Education and employment are concerned – much less political participation. This article reviews the constraints on gender equality in Pakistan due to prevailing social norms. It summarizes recent studies by Pakistani researchers, which explored areas where progress has been made. The results of this study further demonstrate that a comprehensive approach, ranging from legal reform to Education and grassroots activism, is necessary to contest these norms. The paper ends by enumerating policy and civil society-oriented recommendations, which target the improvement of women's rights in Pakistan but consider that implementation must be made within a culturally devised context.

Keywords: Social Norms, Women's Rights, Gender Equality, Pakistan, Cultural Practices.

INTRODUCTION

In Pakistan, these social norms play of crucial role in defining the humdrum existence, especially for women living here. These norms — frequently shaped by historical cultural and religious practices, determine what is viewed as 'appropriate' behaviour for women and thus influence their rights and freedoms. While the country has taken steps to address these alarming statistics from a legal perspective and through international commitments, women's rights in Pakistan are curtailed by powerful social norms. This paper investigates the relationship of these norms with women's status and rights, focusing on critical spheres, including Education, work life, and political participation.

In Pakistan, the entry of women's rights is mutually in battle with popular ethics. Social norms in Pakistan are embedded challenging them also means ostracization and sometimes violence. There is a powerful resistance, especially in the country, where tradition is of most excellent presence. However, some women are only relatively better off; even in the cities where these rights would be more available to them, there will

still be norms set by society and imposed on female pacers that limit how they can express their womanhood.

In recent years, social norms have been recognized as seriously impacting women's rights. Both domestic and global gender equality movements have contributed to this awareness. However, progress has been slow, and women in Pakistan are still confronted with high level challenges to their rights. This article seeks to illuminate some of these challenges using an analysis of the prevailing status of women's rights in Pakistan and deconstructs how social norms work to disenfranchise them.

The article is organized as follows: Literature review will examine prior scholarship on the effect of social norms on women's rights in Pakistan; Methodology will describe how research was conducted; results and findings shall present information and analysis about the current state of affairs regarding women's rights in Pakistan Discussion interpret these results through contrast to existing literature Conclusion embody recommendations for solving problems identified.

Literature Review

While the diversity and complexity of social norms surrounding women's rights in Pakistan and elsewhere are well documented, so too is their reliance on cultural heritage and religious mandates as disseminated by conservative elements within an increasingly diverse cleric community, furthermore, shaping interlinked legal frameworks that define how those laws can or cannot be implemented. Research has shown that family structures, media representation, and educational establishments consistently enforce social norms that purport the marginalization of women. Ali (2022) explores how traditional gender roles are promoted through the logic of Education in a manner that maintains patriarchal norms. Raza and Ahmed (2023) also examine how media assist in promoting stereotypes that inhibit women from participating the public life.

The effects of religious interpretations on women's rights in Pakistani society is the focus of a study by Khan (2022), which equates Islam with gender equity yet acknowledges that its manifestations through interpretations are conspicuously approbative to patriarchal impulses. As a result, women are often held back in many areas, such as education and work opportunities. It also points out the impact of religious leaders on societal norms — being either friend or foe of women's rights.

Another central thread of scholarship investigates the effect of legal structures on women's rights. Pakistan has made legal strides, including the Protection of Women Act 2006 and the Sindh Child Marriage Restraint Act 2013, to protect child rights, but implementation remains feeble because societal norms are prevalent. The point of Fatima (2023) is that just implementing legal reforms is not enough to break reality unless accompanied by measures altering social norms. Saeed (2024) agrees with this in his work because the normative aspects are here to stay until diminished by civil society activism.

The literature also speaks to how social norms are intersectional and different for women from various socioeconomic backgrounds. For example, women in rural areas have worse restrictions due to greater adherence to traditional values. On the same popular demand, Hassan and Bano (2023) conclude that rural women are least likely to

participate in Education or employment due to social norms emphasizing housework over personal growth. On the other hand, urban counterparts of women seem to have more chances to break these features as they get exposed and acclimatized in a decent way with broadminded ideas.

In sum, the literature posits that while there has been an advancement in women's rights in Pakistan's end products, process wise social norms are still hindering determinants. From there, a combination of legal reforms and Education—as well as the fight in our communities to change norms around abuse—is needed. Building upon this literature, I present new information on the status of women's rights in Pakistan and the relevant social norms that still guide their behaviour.

Methodology

This study applies a qualitative method to understand how social norms affect women's rights in Pakistan. Pakistani researchers of 2022–2024 secondary publications have been the sources for our study: peer-reviewed journal articles, nongovernmental organization reports, and government publications. The data is explored thematically, focusing on how social norms operate to drive women's status of life regarding Education, work, and politics.

It also critically assesses a case study analysis to elaborate on how social norms influence women's rights differently among distinct regions of Pakistan. The variation in social norms and their impact on women's rights can be captured by including a mix of rural and urban sites, which is why the case studies are chosen based on geographic diversity. The case studies are based on Pakistani researchers' interviews, surveys, and observational research.

In addition to secondary data, the research includes a content analysis of media representation of women's rights issues in Pakistan. This analysis looks at how the media—television, newspapers, and social media alike—both support or contest prevailing societal norms. The content analysis also investigates the extent to which media coverage reiterates or challenges normative social constructions of women's rights and how this may, in turn, shape public attitudes towards those affected by gender-specific human rights abuses.

These tools are meant to collect data to comprehensively understand how social norms support and challenge women's rights within Pakistan's context. Through a combination of thematic analysis, case studies, and content analysis, the study offers an intricate map for understanding the role played by women in ensuring their rights. The methodological approach can also uncover patterns and trends in the data that suggest potential recommendations for tackling how social norms interfere with women's rights in Pakistan.

Ethics The ethical implications within this research come to the forefront—one must have a clear picture of what all feminist stances would not allow regarding discussion or interpretation where women affected by social norms can speak for

themselves. The research complies with the ethical requirements for using secondary data and lists all sources cited within. It is also sensitive to the cultural and conservative norms of speaking about social norms and women's rights in Pakistan; for this reason, we have tried our best to frame things accurately but with respect.

Results

The implications of this research suggest a complex situation, one in which social norms in Pakistan continue to significantly influence women's rights around Education, employment, and political participation. An examination of the research provides several trends and patterns to indicate obstacles that continue obstructing women's affirmation of their rights.

Table 1: Impact of Social Norms on Women's Rights in Pakistan (2022-2024)

Aspect of Women's Rights	Influence of Social Norms	Key Challenges	Progress Made
Education	Restrictive norms	Limited access to education, early marriage	Increased awareness and advocacy
Employment	Gendered expectations	Limited job opportunities, wage gaps	Some legal reforms, slow change
Political Participation	Patriarchal values	Low representation in politics	Grassroots movements, legal quotas

The results reveal a considerable barrier to women's Education, especially in rural areas where social norms follow apprehensive ways of inhibiting access. Women are still pressured to get married early and encouraged in their youth to put aside Education for breadwinning responsibilities, letting a future of getting ahead professionally slip through the cracks. However, positive steps have been achieved, with support from homegrown and international advocacy faces in bringing awareness to the significance of a girl's Education.

Due to prevailing social attitudes about gender roles, women still have very few economic opportunities and earn much less than men. Positive proposals to improve women's access to employment have been painstakingly slow in their progress, and many find that there are still substantial legacies of female colonization. There are more pronounced barriers to activism and advocacy in rural areas due largely to the reinforcement of traditional gender roles.

One of the most challenging areas for implementing women's rights in Pakistan has been their political participation. The normative aspects of our society and the way we look at power are male-centric. Hence, women tend to have lower representation in politics. Nothing has changed despite ongoing attempts to increase women's political participation through legal quotas and volunteering. Their voices continue to be underrepresented in decision-making processes, preventing them from shaping policies that affect their lives.

Overall, the results speak to a degree of progress for women in Pakistan, but cultural norms remain formidable obstacles. The struggles women bear to attain Education, employment, and political participation result from norms rooted in culture and religion that emphasize traditional gendered behaviour. It is a three-dimensional war that needs to be fought through legal struggles, changes in Education, raising awareness, and grassroots advocacy work that combats these norms.

Discussion

These findings are discussed further to reveal the nuanced relationship between social norms and women's rights in Pakistan. The progress of the spread of women's rights and legal reform across much of South Asia has been. However, social obligations continue to significantly impede or discourage a woman from being protective about her opportunities. The implications of these findings for policymakers, educators, and civil society organizations trying to promote gender equality in Pakistan are then discussed.

A significant takeaway from this research is that it will take a mixed methodological approach to change structural social constructs. Legal reforms alone to change deep-seated cultural practices and beliefs. A holistic approach that combines Education, media awareness programs, and community mobilization is needed to change public attitudes about gender issues. This method should be sensitive to the cultural history of Pakistan for the different local and class divisions that women face.

One key aspect that stands out is Education which becomes the most critical place to act. The researchers ask themselves: Do increases in Education and more prominent roles for women negate established cultural beliefs prioritizing domestic duties over the advancement of self? Revise educational curricula in areas that promote gender equality and challenge traditional roles. Further, we must make more significant strides to increase women's representation in schools as teachers and students — all our daughters need role models.

Media also play a substantial role in influencing what people perceive as issues of "women's rights." Results suggest that media representation essentially maintains and reinforces traditional gender norms, but the case of clubroom practice also demonstrates divergent tradition. Consequently, media campaigns depict being a woman as something good and healthy by targeting harmful stereotypes of women while it is a multifaceted person. Social media is primarily helpful for supporting women's rights because it provides an incredibly efficient way to bring awareness and generate support.

Finally, we challenge social norms through grassroots activism. The findings highlight the significance of local movements and organizations in women's activism and cultural resistance. These movements need to be supported and helped in scaling up —that will require financing the collaboration of national and international organizations. Grassroots activism can also act as the interface between legal reforms and cultural change, providing a vital link to ensure that laws designed to foster gender equality are well abided in communities.

It also raises the issue of intersectionality and how we must have a dynamic understanding of gender in Pakistan. Women experience extreme differences depending on where they are situated, classified according to their social background, location, or ethnicity. From this perspective, policies and interventions should be sensitive to tackle the unique needs of women that pave different pathways for gender equality. This will ensure that gains made in advancing the status of various segments do not marginalize other groups.

Conclusion

At its core, the research demonstrates that social norms in Pakistan have a powerful impact on women's rights in different sectors, such as Education, employment, and political participation. While the evolution of laws and rising consciousness have made some inroads, age-old cultural practices perennially act as impediments to women enjoying equal status with men; so too unproductive religious relic5938s. These findings underline that while the legal architecture is necessary, it is not enough to dismantle entrenched cultural attitudes that reinforce gender inequality.

Even more comprehensive than federal statutes are the multifaceted challenge of upending these norms. One area that intervention can considerably affect is Education. Changing educational curricula to encourage gender equality and challenging accepted traditional roles of men and women early in life can be a long-term way to change societal attitudes. Empowering women and broadening one's horizons also require equipping rural girls with Education.

Media representation also greatly influences public perception of women's roles and rights. Media campaigns that challenge stereotypes and provide

positive images of women can shift societal attitudes, creating distance from the norms commonly associated with gender-based violence. Another way of changing could be to encourage our propaganda through social media networks, which might encourage women and increase mobilizing support.

It also takes grassroots activism to ensure that we challenge the norm. Community organizations and any other local movement can mobilize culturally and guarantee that legal reforms are ultimately implemented. Partnering with national organizations internationally must support and accelerate these kinds of grassroots efforts.

It also underscores the intersectional nature of social norms, which requires policies and interventions to tackle a range of different types of oppression experienced by women based on other factors as well (e.g., class, location, or ethnic background). Efforts to reduce the gender gap need tailored solutions that consider these differences.

It is a complicated process, but the need to transform social norms in Pakistan must be acknowledged and pursued. Through the channels of Education, media, and many others, norm promotion is an important strategy, along with certain policies that can be more conducive to making Pakistan a land where Women's rights are not less but fully recognized.



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