



عورت مارچ

Women's March

Naima Shaukat Shah, 2020

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Abstract

This report aims to uncover the Aurat March (AM) that has been taking place in Pakistan annually for the past three years. It was first organised in 2018 in hopes to bring attention to the increasing number of women's issues mainly violence and harassment that takes place against women, through doing so it aims to give women a voice that has often been silenced. It has long been recognised that Pakistan is one of the worst countries for women and this will be reflected in the report through looking at the increasing violence both social and economic. It will look at gender-based violence including honour killings and rape cases. Despite bills being passed in parliament to help women, these are implemented in a non-effective way and continue to work against women. This report also looks at women in employment, uncovering the many challenges women face to get into work and the further challenges they face once they enter the workplace. Religious and cultural values are often interpreted in a way that subordinates' women's involvement in the workplace. Furthermore, once women enter the workplace, they are often faced with issues such as unequal pay and sexual harassment. Despite the prevalence of these cases women often choose not to speak as they risk jeopardising their careers and their only source of income. Women in agriculture also face great challenges in Pakistan. Although the agricultural industry contributes the most to Pakistan's economy, with women working longer hours than men in some regions, they their labour is failed to be recognised. As a result of this report will indicate what can be done to improve women's involvement in agriculture and how their exploitation can be put to an end. After discussing women in agriculture, the report looks at the growing backlash towards the AM. Lastly, the report discusses organisations that support and funding of the AM.

Section 1 Aurat March

What is the Aurat March?

The Aurat March (AM) translates to the “Women’s march” which is organised in Pakistan every year by activists and volunteers. It consists of many different organisations such as Women’s Action Forum, Women’s Democratic Front, and Hum Aurtein (us women), a feminist group (Al, Jazeera, 2020). The AM takes part in various cities in Pakistan including Lahore, Hyderabad, Sukkur, Karachi and Islamabad. It first took place in Karachi due to cities cosmopolitan nature: linguistically, ethnically, religiously. Karachi is therefore a launch site for development projects. In the year 2020, the AM focused on the theme of ‘*Khudmukhtari* (autonomy) and Violence both sexual and economic.

What is their purpose and why do they protest?

In recent years, Pakistan’s history on the treatment of women can be summarised through forced child marriages, child conversions, rape, and lack of employment opportunities. Such issues underpin the development of the AM and its purpose. Those involved, protest for a society without exploitative patriarchal structures and the control of economic resources. They fight for women to be able to make decisions about their own bodies, putting an end to harassment, forced conversions among other things (Al, Jazeera, 2020) such as sexual and reproductive rights, freedom from physical abuse, domestic violence and rape, or being subjected to any medical procedure without informed consent (Amnesty, 2020). In addition, education is a significant aspect of these marches. This includes equality in education, justice, health care, and economic opportunities for women and girls (Amnesty, 2020).

Quotes from ‘*The Wide Side*’ (2020) demonstrate why people took to the streets:

“*I’m a young woman [and] I’m here today because I don’t feel comfortable walking alone at night,” “And I’m here for all those women who couldn’t be here today.”*
Fatima Hassan (student activist)

“The space for women is growing. I see more women engaging today than five years ago. There used to be 2/3 woman at some protests but today that has changed.”
Tooba Syed

“It’s shocking that women have to beg for respect, its rubbish! And this is why I protest”
Omair Rana (Actor and Director)

“They don’t want to hear or see women taking to the streets against economic injustice and patriarchal violence that are both tied in together,”
Nighat Dad (Aurat March organiser)

“I was rejected from an ad agency because I was a mother, yet I have won awards pre- and post-pregnancy.! Women should be able to work and being a mother shouldn’t hinder this”
Human Mobin (Advertiser)

Section 2 – Gender Based Violence

Violence against women is the most prevalent yet least recognised human rights violation in the world (Heise, 2002). Gender-based violence can be defined as a host of harmful behaviours that are directed towards women and girls because of their sex, including abuse, sexual assault, dowry-related murder, marital rape, selective malnourishment of female children, forced prostitution, female genital mutilation, and sexual abuse of female children (Heise, 2002). These are the issues that the Aurat March also seeks to highlight and to change. Two of the most prevalent gender-based problems in Pakistan are: Honour killings and Rape and sexual violence.

Honour killings

Pakistan has one of the highest incidences of honour killings (HK) in the world. This is a major human rights issue that has received little attention outside of human rights groups and women activist networks (Knudsen, 2004). HK is defined as the killing committed by a person to restore family honour damaged by a victim, usually female (Muhammad, 2010). It is a homicide provoked by the perpetrator's *"loss of honour"* and therefore can be termed as *"traditional justice"* or *"tribal justice"*, a contested form of private retribution (Nancy, 1991).

Honour can be defined in terms of familial respect (*izzat*) and social prestige (*ghairat*). Therefore, honour can be defined as a relation between a person's own feelings of self-worth and that of the peer-group (honour group) to which s/he belongs. It is delivered by society and, therefore, it can also be lost and must be regained (Knudsen, 2004).

The concept of honour is mainly tied with women. Women are seen as male property whose actions directly impact the family honour. Most gender-based violence is justified by cultural norms as they hold the view that men have the right to control their wives' behaviour and if this is challenged, they must be punished (Heise, 2002). Khan argues *"Women are considered the property of the males in their family, the owner of the property has the right to decide its fate. The concept of ownership has turned women into a commodity which can be exchanged, bought and sold"* (Khan, 2006).

Reasons that can cause dishonour and lead to honour killings

Studies identify a list of events that are said to 'trigger' such violence (Heise, 2002)

- Refusal to have an arranged marriage or seeking a divorce (Muhammad, 2010).
- Being raped (Amnesty International, 2012)
- Deviant behaviour against family norms (Muhammad, 2010).
- Exercising any sexual freedom (Amnesty International, 2012)

- Conversing with men, having past relationships, traveling unaccompanied outside the home without permission (Zia Lari, 2011).
- Physical chastity - the merest hint of 'illicit' sexual interest means a woman loses her value and, therefore, her right to life (Zia Lari, 2011).

These reasons can be seen as “Offences” that incite this violence and can be wide-ranging and trivial (Knudsen, 2004). These can also demonstrate transgression of dominant gender norms (Heise, 2002). As a result, HK removes the offensive act, redeems the family honour and resurrects its prestige. The murder is a means to an end and is used instrumentally to “restore honour” and “remove shame” (Lari, 2011).

Pakistan and honour killings – statistics

In Pakistan, HK continues to occur, particularly in the four tribal regions of the country: Punjab, North West Frontier Province, Baluchistan, and Sindh (Patel & Gadit, 2008). Whilst Pakistan does not have an official nationwide database on HK, some figures available indicate the prevalence of the issue.

- The Pakistan Human Rights Commission’s 2004 report suggests 1,464 HK occurred between 1998 and 2002 (HRCP, cited in Patel & Gadit, 2008).
- December 2011, the Sindh assembly found 577 cases of HK, double that of the previous (Gauhar, 2014).
- According to media reports, 66 women were murdered in Faisalabad in the first six months of 2018. (AsianLite, 2020).

However, studies suggest that the real figure higher. Nasrullah for example states that how the killings must be treated as a *“public health issue” and there should be more research into this*” (Nasrullah, cited In Solberg, 2009). It is also significant to recognise how many cases fail to get registered therefore measuring victimisation is difficult (Solberg, 2009). Current figures only provide an estimate since many HK cases go unreported, especially in patriarchal societies that sanction this practice. (Patel & Gadit, 2008).

Who commits these “Honour Killings”?

Most HK are committed by an individual the victim (woman) knows, most times close family members such as a brother, father or husband (Knudsen, 2004). A study published by European Journal of Public Health, (Solberg, 2009) found that: Nine out of ten victims were killed because of allegations of extramarital relations, 43% were killed by their husbands, 24% by their brothers and 12% by other close relatives, such as uncles and grandparents (Solberg, 2009)

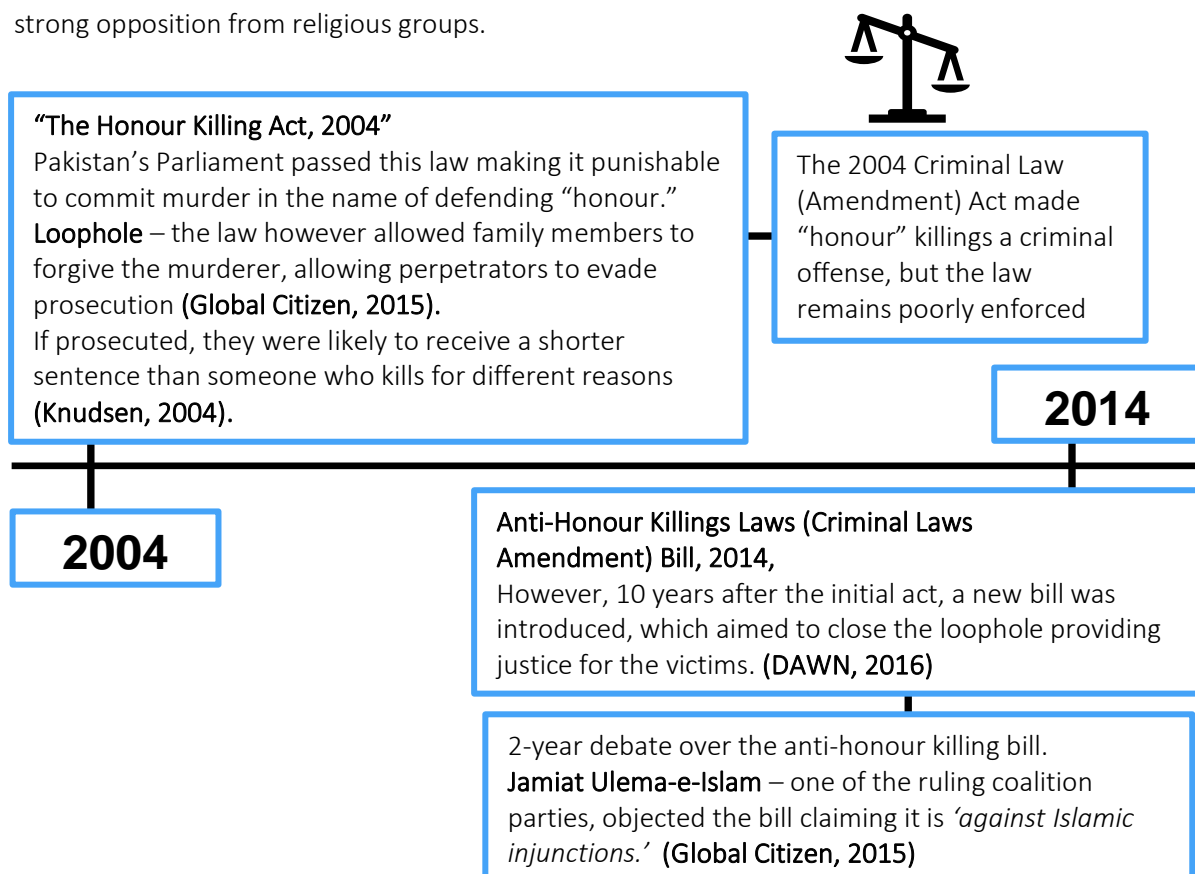
Justice and Government Responses

Pakistani law has often been criticised for allowing “killers to get away with murdering the women in their families” (Adams, Executive Director of Asian Human Rights Watch). Nisha Varia who is deputy director of the Women's Rights Division further argues that Pakistan is one of the places with the highest recorded cases of HK and yet a place where little justice is done. This is supported by Pakistan Peoples Party's (PPP) Senator Syeda Sughra Imam further reiterated this concern arguing:

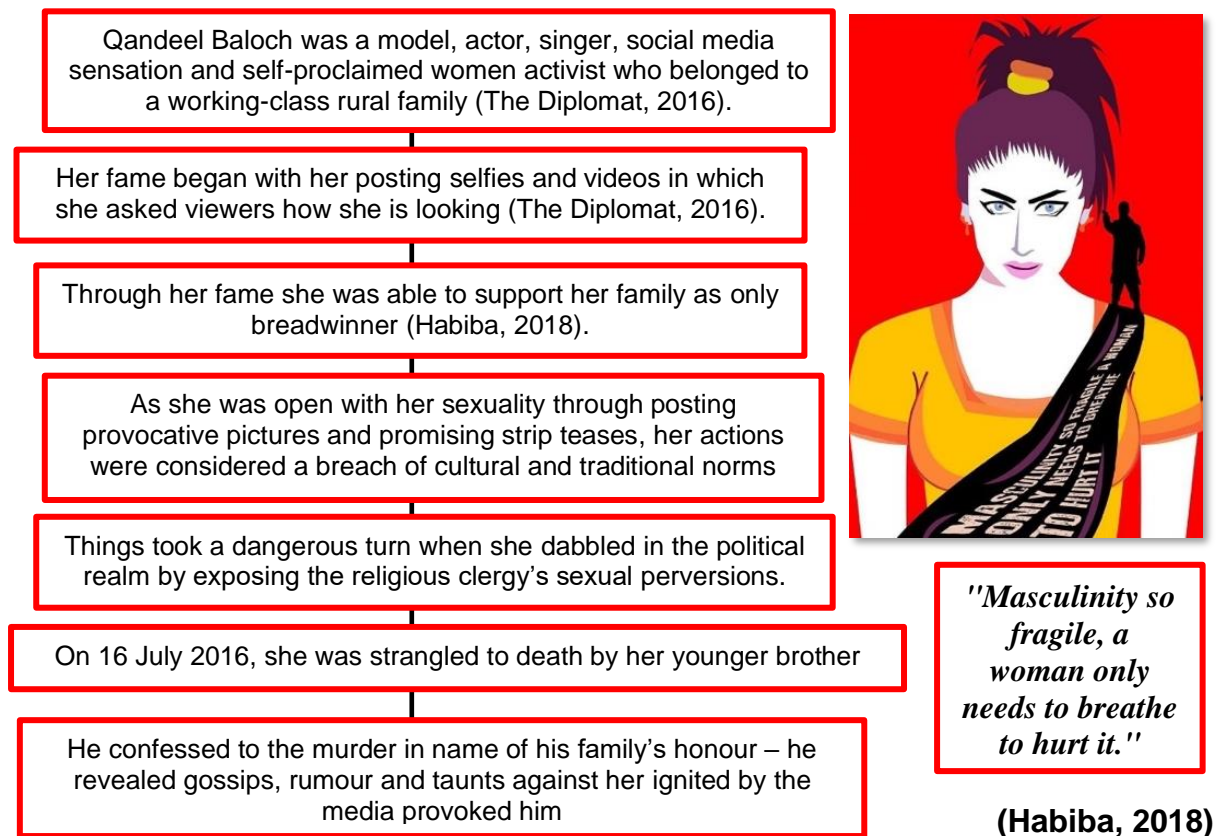
“In Pakistan, rape cases are reported and registered, however, the conviction rates of the accused are abysmally low. in the last five years, the 103 reported rape cases registered in the Islamabad Capital Territory none of the culprits or accused have been convicted or brought to justice,” (cited In Dawn, 2014)

Timeline of Laws Countering Honour Killing

Over the years, the Pakistani government has tried to put in place laws for the victims of honour killings after the prevalence of such killings. The timeline below highlights the most important statutes that have attempted to be introduced, however, these have either been poorly implemented or face strong opposition from religious groups.



Case study 1 – Qandeel Baloch: A Celebrity Honour Killing



HK are a grave issue and despite the passing of legislation and laws they are still occurring. This raises concern about the ways in which the laws implemented and executed. Personally, I believe one of the most important things that must happen in order to see change, is educating the masses. Instead of policing women on what they should and shouldn't wear, men as well as women must be educated on the rights of women regarding their choice and body. Real change occurs not only by providing justice after an HK has taken place but when women are protected from the very beginning to prevent such killings from taking place. Furthermore, police are key characters when it comes to investigating killings providing justice for the victim and their families, however, due to corruption and the mixing of religious interpretation and law, killings are still very much seen as a private issue. This narrative must change, and laws must be actively implemented through the state agencies. This can only be achieved when corruption is removed from the state. Those who are powerless and lack financial ability, find it incredibly difficult to gain justice. An example of this is Afzal Kohistani who tried to speak up for his sisters who were believed to have been killed by male relatives for "breaching their honour" by clapping and dancing at a wedding. Through speaking up for their rights, his life was also put in danger to the point he had to go into hiding. He was later found shot dead. This shows how there is a lack of protection for those who speak up. Consequently, there should be ways to protect and support victims and their families such as witness protection.

Rape and Sexual Violence

The Definition of Rape

Sexual violence against women exhibits itself in different forms, the most commonly recognised form is rape (Heise, 2002). Rape in UK law is defined as '*penetration with a penis of the vagina, anus or mouth of another person without their consent*' (CPS, 2020). In Pakistani law it has been defined by "*penetration of a penis into the vagina or anus of another*" (Zia Lari, 2011). This comes across as outdated in comparison to other countries where this definition has been broadened and it is now accepted as including penetration of the mouth as well as vagina and anus, as well as rape by object. Fundamentally rape is a violent, hostile assault that a person commits to dominate, overpower and humiliate the aggressed. It is an act of exerting power and control (Zia Lari, 2011).

Forced sexual contact can take place at any time and includes a wide range of behaviours, from forcible rape to non-physical forms of pressure that compel girls and women to engage in sex against their will (Heise, 2002). It involves coercion which means a woman lacks choice and can face severe physical or social consequences if she resists sexual advances. Studies indicate that the majority of non-consensual sex takes place between individuals that know each other, this can be spouses, family members, courtship partners, or acquaintances (Heise, 2002).

The Misconception About Rape


There is often a common misperception that rape is the fault of women, and that she invites, incites, or instigates a man's sexual desires through her clothes behaviour. This implies a woman's victimisation is caused by her. In comparison, feminist scholars argue that power lies behind rape and sexual violence. Men use rape to exercise their control over women (Brownmiller, 1975). Sexual violence can therefore be identified as a social mechanism to subordinate women (Hadi, 2017).

Whilst there is a lack of literature on rape, the news indicates the growing concern.

The New York Times

Rapes of Woman and 5-Year-Old Fuel Outrage in Pakistan

The girl's burned body was found two days later. The woman was dragged from her car. The two cases have focused the country's attention on its handling of sexual abuse.



ASIA

Pakistani women learn self-defense amid rising rape incidents

With a rising number of rape cases across the country, and the authorities' failure to punish the culprits, women in Pakistan feel more insecure than ever. Some women are now learning self-defense techniques.

Pakistan woman gang-raped after being sold by husband

The suspects took her to their place and gang-raped her for 21 days before she managed to flee and reached the local police station.

A WOMAN was allegedly gang-raped after being kidnapped while waiting for a bus in Pakistan, days after the country's Prime Minister called for sex attackers to be castrated.

Pakistan: 15 men accused of gang-raping and filming two sisters aged 15 and 17

The family of the victims did not seek legal action due to poverty, the mother said

Statistics indicate

- 10,000 rape cases were reported in Punjab from January 2014 to June 2017.
- On average 100 women are raped every 24 hours in Karachi city alone (Dr Zulfiqar Siyal).
- Aurat Foundation documented 8,539 cases of violence against women, including 1,575 murders, 827 rapes (The Annual Report of the National Commission on the Status of Women, Amnesty International, Pakistan 2012)

Governor Chaudhry Sarwar statement on rape statistics pertaining to Punjab. Sarwar revealed:

"Pakistan is among the 10 worst countries when it comes to rape cases"

(Sarwar, Punjab Governor, 2020)

Conviction rates

Existing laws addressing violence against women are either weak or inadequately implemented. An example of this is the Protection of Women Act, 2006, which provides punishment for the offences of abduction and rape, however, it does not recognise marital rape and severely punishes non-marital sex (Mehdi, 2006). According to media reports, more than 51,241 cases of violence against women were reported in Pakistan between January 2011 and June 2017. However, conviction rates remain low, with only 2.5% of all reported cases ending up being convicted by the courts (DW, 2019). Issues that affect the numbers and the conviction rates are:

- The victim is pressurised to not report the case but that they should settle the 'dispute' with the perpetrator, so a case is never made.
- Evidence collection – evidence collection is poor in Pakistan due to corruption within the institution, therefore evidence is not collected adequately, and DNA tests are not taken on time and even when such evidence is presented in court, a conviction is hard to achieve.
- Victim blaming – a woman's character is analysed, she is seen as the offender rather than a victim as Pakistan has no effective protection scheme, women don't report their cases.

(Sahar Bandial – advocate high court, 2020)

Case study 2 – “Motorway incident”

3am on 9 September 2020, a woman was driving with her children on the Lahore-Sialkot Motorway after midnight when her car ran out of fuel.

Whilst waiting for help from the motorway police's helpline, she was gang raped in front of her children in a nearby field and was also robbed of her cash and jewellery.

Lahore Capital City Police Officer Umar Sheikh later appeared in front of the media and implied that she had been partly to blame (**DAWN, 2020**)

He questioned why she had not taken a busier road, since she was alone with her children, or checked her fuel before departing (**DAWN, 2020**)

This sparked countrywide protests as rape is a prevalent issue in Pakistan, it was especially concerning to see a police officer victim blame (**AI, Jazeera, 2020**)

On the 21st of October 2020 both culprits were identified by the victim, taking the police more than a month to find. Currently the case remains



“I am the victim of injustice, how is it my fault?”

Section 3 – Women in Employment

According to the United Nations: “*Gender equality is at the very heart of human rights*” (UN women’s human rights and gender equality, 2017). Therefore, impartial access to education and employment has been acknowledged as not merely a women’s concern but as a human rights issue (UN Women, 2016).

Background information on inequality

In Pakistan, women make up half of the population, however, their contribution towards household income is far below what they could contribute (Kocchar, 2017). The labour force participation of Pakistani females is 13.29 million out of a total of 57.24 million (labour force survey 2011 cited in Fouzia, 2015) indicating the lack of utilization of the female workforce. Furthermore, the female work participation rate (FWPR) in developing countries is extremely low, and Pakistan is no exception (Sheikh, 2011). The world bank statistics indicate that in 2012 Pakistan’s FWPR remained low at 24 percent, in comparison to 32 percent for South Asia and 69 percent in low-income countries (World Bank, 2016) indicating the concerning gap of women working in Pakistan. This can further be observed through statistics.

Statistics

the World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Gap Index ranked Pakistan second-to-last in the Global Gender Gap Index (143rd out of 144 countries) This index measures the gap between men and women in four categories:

1. Economic participation and opportunity (labour force participation, wages, senior managerial, and technical positions)
2. Educational attainment (literacy and educational enrolment)
3. Health and survival (sex ratio at birth and healthy life expectancy)
4. Political empowerment (parliament seats, ministers, and length of heads of states).

The Gender Gap index concerning gender equality further found that Pakistan ranked just one rank above (144th) of war-torn Yemen (GGGR, 2017). The International Labour Organization data supports this and states that Pakistan is the worst in terms of the gender pay gap (Varela, 2018), where almost four out of every five Pakistani adult females do not represent the work force and only 25% of women who obtain a university degree, work outside the home (Tanaka and Muzones, 2016).

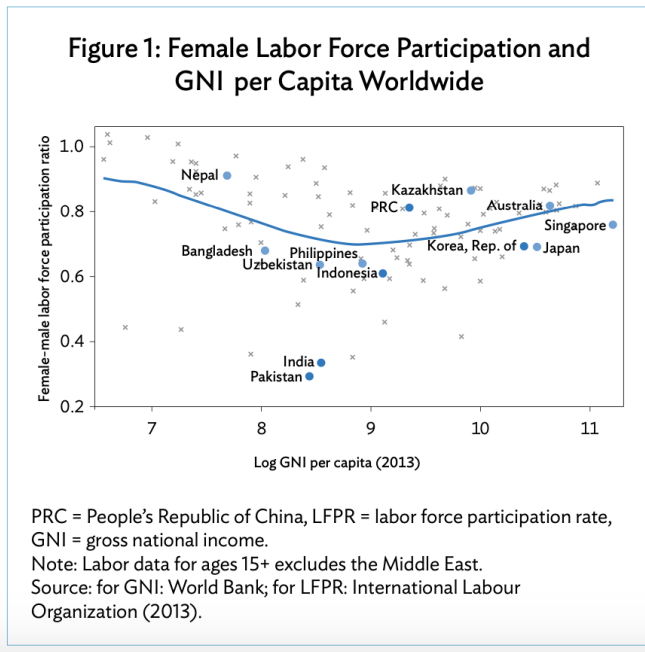


Figure 1: provided by ACB, 2016 indicates the low level of female Labour participation in comparison to other countries and below the national income level.

Challenges faced by working women in Pakistan

Patriarchal ideology and religious views

Islamically, the cultural interpretation is that the husband is seen as the breadwinner who financially supports the family, and as a result, women's participation, encouragement and opportunity is restricted or limited. Almost

40% of women who are not working report that the main reason for this is that male family members do not permit them to work outside the home (Asian Development Bank, 2016). However, it should be recognised that Islamic teachings allow female employment (Al-Asfour et al, 2017), therefore, we can see this ideology as a cultural reasoning that has manifested itself with religion. A study carried out in Pakistan looking at women's career prospects in Pakistan found that misinterpretation of religious text was a challenge for women. According to them, the cultural norms and traditions are misrepresented as the religious guidance leading to negative stereotypes regarding women going out to earn money (Sarwar and Imran, 2019). A quote from one of the participants further reiterates this:

“They think that women's priority should only be house chores, care giving and serving men. Such men mingle religion with culture, traditions, and regulations which acts as a barrier for women to go and work outside the home. Patriarchal ideologies play a major part in this”

Sexual harassment

The prevalence of sexual harassment (SH) is another challenge which women face and is routinely practiced at the workplaces reflecting of the current state of working women in the world (Sadrudin, 2013). The United Nations defines harassment any kind of behaviour (verbal or physical) that hinders work or promotes an offensive work environment. Sexual harassment is the most common form of harassment, defined as an *“unethical code of conduct a woman finds threatening or offensive”* (Goonesekere, 2004). This is unwanted sex-related behaviour (Fitzgerald, Swan, & Magley, 1997) which exists in many occupations and industries (Fielden & Hoel, 2007). It can vary from a range of behaviours including:

- Verbal harassment – such as sexual comments, emails, jokes or photos
- Physical harassment – such as unwanted touching (from a hand on the back to groping of breasts), kissing and sexual assault which can be considered as an unethical act for gaining attention (Fitzgerald, 1995)
- Sexual coercion - sexual bribes or threats (Fitzgerald, Gelfand, & Drasgow, 1995).

A study carried out by the Everyday Sexism Project; 2016 *“Still Just a Bit of Banter”* revealed that nearly more than a half of women in the UK have experienced sexual harassment while at work. The study surveyed over 1,500 women and discovered that 52% of working women have been victims of unwanted sexual behaviours at work, from groping to inappropriate jokes. Furthermore, more recently, a survey conducted in 2019 found 13 percent of women have faced visual and verbal harassment at work such as to whistling, rude gestures or comments. In 2020 another common type of sexual harassment was reported where women were exposed to obscene proposals or messages with a sexual connotation at work (Clark, 2020). Unfortunately, evidence towards sexual harassment at workplace in Asian countries are not well documented, however, as can be seen from the examples given in this report harassment is still very much being practiced (Sadrudin), 2013).

How do we know it is happening?

One study conducted by *“Alliance Against Sexual Harassment Pakistan”* (AASHA, 2002) offers some statistics that give a good indication of SH in Pakistan. The report states nearly 80 per cent of the working women (working in the formal and informal sector) are sexually harassed at workplaces.

Another study carried out in Karachi, Pakistan, focused upon the public and private institutions where women are employed. Through interviews it was found that the most common ways of SH included gazing, touching, bullying, unwanted jokes, gender bias, intimidation, verbal insult, giving lift, placing arms on the shoulders, touching of hips, indecent body language, marginalising women, negative emails, and showing porn movies (Sadrudin, 2013). When asked if any of their colleagues faced any sort of harassment and the nature of that harassment, mostly agreed. They did not share whether they were victimised or not, however 96% of the respondents agreed that either they or their colleagues faced harassment.

One respondent stated:

“Many years ago, my friend’s boss tried to grab her but when he realized that she wasn’t going to cooperate him, he just fired her on the pretext that her work wasn’t satisfactory.”

Reporting of Harassment

This quote helps us understand why sexual harassment cases aren't often reported. According to Parveen (2010), a total 24,119 cases were reported in Pakistan during 2008-10 out of which only 520 workplace harassment cases were actually filed. Females tend to hide SH because of a range of socio-cultural practices and factors. Ali argued that Pakistani women go through an SH process that includes three levels. Firstly, women try to hide their SH due to Islamic modesty and cultural traditions. Secondly, if they decide to take action, there is a lack of help at organisational and government level, lastly, once the issue is reported, they face victimisation (Ali, 2010). Furthermore, shame, inhibition and job security further make women reluctant to report cases (Ali, 2015). In most cases the harasser is in a senior position therefore, female workers faced problems like the withholding of promotion and even demotion if they refused to fulfil the "demands" of superiors.

“*My friend complained the boss about being harassed. The boss fired me to secure the image of organization*” – respondent in Sadruddin study, 2013

“Many women raise their voice about Harassment. The woman who fails to do so is mainly because of the consequences of raising voice. Usually, the conclusion of such situation is resignation from current workplace.” – respondent in Sadruddin study, 2013

“Harassment exists and we cannot ignore that. But we have to remain silent, otherwise our fathers and brothers wouldn't let us continue working, and we cannot afford that,” Sara, a 25-year-old banker, Sadruddin, 2013

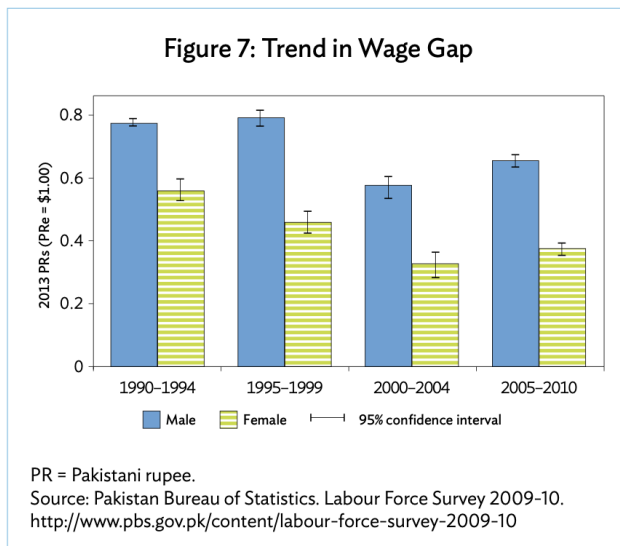
“They would touch us on the back and the chest intentionally, and pretend it was a mistake,” Things got worse when pilots started demanding sexual favours during flights and on the ground and managed to get some too” Afsheen, an air hostess, cited in Dawn, 2020

These real-life examples indicate the negative attitude that surrounds sexual harassment and the stigmatisation it is associated preventing women from speaking out. It is to be noted that some women do actively speak out and try to empower other women through seminars however, unless women are empowered with training and develop confidence, sexual harassment may continue to prevail in Pakistani society (Sadruddin, 2013).

Gender discrimination

Women in Pakistan continue to be subjected to traditional patriarchal norms and cultural and structural challenges (Ferdoos, 2005). This limits their participation in the labour market which can often limit their occupational opportunities. Discrimination in employment consists of factors like marriage, childbearing, the environment and the low literacy rate further hinders their occupational opportunities (Inayat, 2012).

Furthermore, discrimination is exacerbated by sociocultural expectations of a woman's main role as a homemaker. In Pakistani society a man is considered to be the breadwinner therefore, employers do not consider the human capital of a woman as essential. As a result of this, women are concentrated in the secondary sector of labour market (Syed et al, 2009) where the work is low paid, low status, casual and lacks potential upward mobility (Sheikh, 2011).

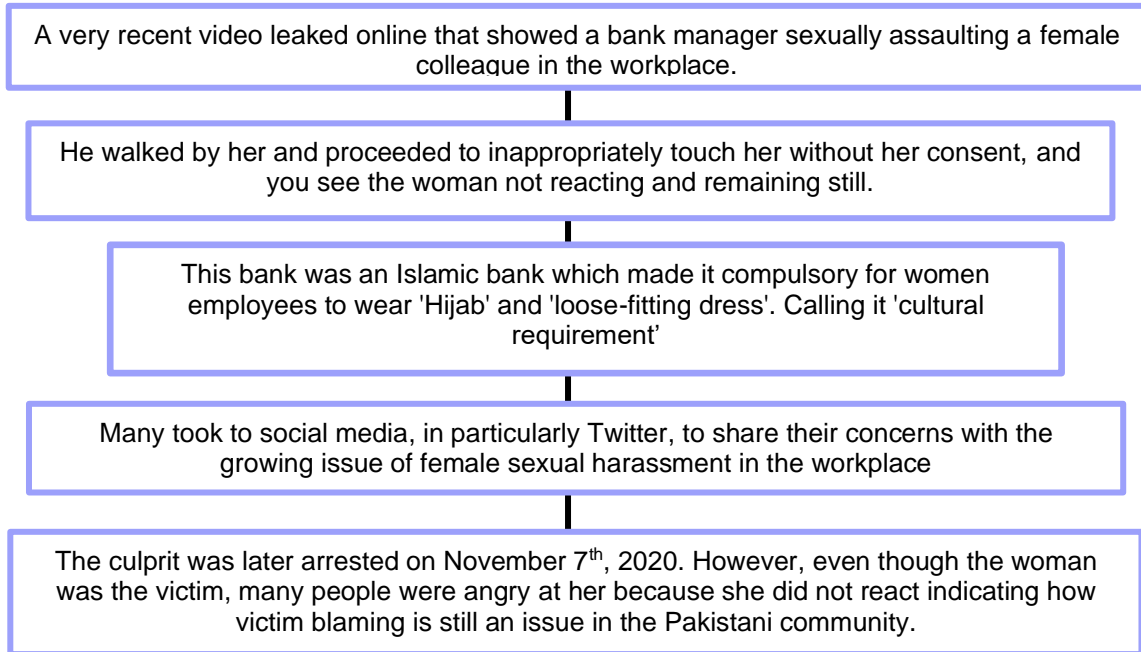


One explanation for low FWPR is that the jobs available to women pay low wages. Women earn less than men, and this difference has been persistent, a trend which can be observed in figure 7 (ADB, 2016). Employers have a preconceived notion that a woman will quit her job after marriage or having children. Therefore, income inequality is not uncommon, with women earning only 61% of a male's pay for similar work (Ali, 2017). In the public sector, the majority of women are

working at basic pay scale grade 9 or below, with no woman working in grade 22, the highest basic pay scale in Pakistan (Global Gender Report 2011) further indicating this gender and pay gap. As women do most of the housework, they take up low skilled jobs such as cleaning which in return also pay less. Furthermore, parenthood affects a woman's career adversely in contrast to men. Women take on a triple shift where they are burdened with obligations outside work, housework and emotional work (Duncombe & Marsden, 1996). Gender bias therefore remains intrinsic in society and the labour market, where a lack of supportive facilities (childcare, transport and accommodation) make full participation difficult.

Despite these hurdles, female employment has been on the rise, due to factors like rising female literacy, awareness of women's rights, urbanisation and introduction of laws and policies emphasising gender equality (ALI, 2017). Women's participation in the labour force has progressed from 13.7 per cent in 1999-2000 to 21.92 percent in 2019 (World Bank, 2019)

Case study 3 – Women in employment: Public Sector



"This is definitely not his first time. This is the poor woman getting proof because nobody would have believed her without it"



"Shame on those who are saying she didn't react so it's not harassment. You don't know how it feels, you FREEZE & maybe he blackmails her with her job"



"Women are damned if they speak, damned if they don't." Sexual harassment in Pakistan goes unreported because those who come forward have their character and morality judged. The victim rather than the offender is shamed and blamed, so they suffer in silence, just like this"

Some tweets highlighting the leaking of the video on twitter

Agriculture

Agriculture contributes to the economy growth in many countries acting as an important source that mitigates hunger, malnutrition and helps sustain improved living standards (FAO, 2015). The agriculture sector is Pakistan's biggest employer, consisting of three main subsectors: cereal and fibre crops, horticulture and orchards, livestock and dairy. It is not only the largest supplier of labour force, but also provides raw materials for the manufacturing sector, which produces the country's export goods (Agriculture and Food Security FAO, 2015). The Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) 2002 report suggests that 75 percent of the world's poor live in the rural areas and are dependent upon agriculture for their subsistence (Broca, 2002). This indicates the importance of agricultural growth in alleviating poverty in Pakistan as agriculture is the main economic activity for a large population living in rural areas (Farooq, 2009).

Women working in Agriculture

In Pakistan, women make a significant contribution to agriculture, production, processing, and marketing (Bosan, 2015). The available statistics indicate that 72 percent of women are associated with agriculture sector out of the total women labour force in Pakistan (Labour Force Survey, 2012-13). However, despite their prevalence in this sector, the *"Rural Women in Pakistan Status Report"* found 60 percent of their work is being utilised as unpaid (United Nations Women, 2018). Furthermore, male agricultural workers earned 300 rupees per day while female agricultural workers earned 170 rupees per day almost half as much as the men. In addition, women earn only 32.82 percent in skilled agriculture while men earn around 67.18 percent in skilled agriculture despite women devoting more hours per day than men. This section will look at the challenge's women working in agriculture face through focusing on the two provinces that contribute massively to the economy of Pakistan: Punjab and Sindh.

Punjab

Punjab has the largest agricultural production of Pakistan. It produces 75.5 percent of wheat, 70.2 percent of rice, 68.5 percent of cotton, 67.8 percent of sugarcane, 79.8 percent of maize, and 86.5 percent of gram, it also contributes to national fruit production (Agriculture and Food Security, FAO, 2015). Women play a major role in agriculture production, livestock rearing and running cottage industries as well as providing childcare and other caring duties. The farm work of women is usually ignored by men, both the husbands and people they work under and not counted as an economic activity. Despite their roles and responsibilities in agriculture, women have minimal role in decision-making due to existing cultural norms.

Sindh

Sindh produces crops including rice, cotton, wheat, sugarcane, mangoes, and bananas and is known for the quality and quantity of its cotton production. Furthermore, it has a total of 14 million hectares out of which 5.45 million hectares are cultivable (Alam, 2000) indicating how agriculturally based the province is. Since men migrated from rural to urban areas to improve their income possibilities, women have begun to have a more active role in on-farm and off-farm activities after. However, despite their active role they still have no ownership of land which impacts the possibilities to earn. Women in rural Sindh work on average for 12-14 hours a day (Women, Agriculture and Food Security, World Food Summit, FAO, 2015). Yet their efforts have not been recognized to the extent they contribute. Their involvement is more than men in crop production, livestock and dairy. 78 percent of the rural women work in pre- and post-harvest activities yet only 33% are involved in selling which is relatively low (Daily Times, 2020).

Challenges faced by women in agriculture

The table below indicates some of the challenges that women face:

| | Punjab | Sindh |
|--|--|---|
| Land Ownership: | Land ownership is strictly held by the male members in society which deprives women from land ownership (Yasmeen, 2011). 93 percent of women do not own land, despite actively engaging in labour and enhancing food security in the region and 73% receive no payment for their work (Agriculture department) | Despite an increasing responsibility for food and other cash crops, women do not have a secure entitlement to land and asset ownership. Men dominate this space. Therefore, face hurdles in obtaining credit (Yasmeen, 2011). |
| Decision Making | Despite their roles and responsibilities in agriculture, women have minimal role in decision-making due to existing cultural norms. | In 57 percent of households, women do not have decision-making power therefore are less likely to decide the sale or purchase of assets. |
| Access to and use of agriculture machinery: | Tasks such as seeding, weeding, harvesting in Punjab are performed manually by women despite the availability of machinery. As Pakistan rural female literacy rate is extremely low women are unable to facilitate them (Yasmeen, 2011). | Women farmers are not given access to machinery that makes them perform most of the activities manually and increases their workload. This affects women's productivity and wage rate. |
| Education | This is closely related to the low education rates in rural areas therefore they are unable to make sense of such machinery. | Lack of access to educational and vocational training facilities and weak vocational training infrastructure limits women's ability to improve their agriculture productivity and income. |

Case study 4 – Women in employment: Agriculture – 3 stories from Rice Paddies



(Malik DAWN, 2017)

It is therefore important that there is a clear supply chain in Pakistan that would help in enhancing women’s capability to work and to be an active part of Pakistan’s economy. This will allow for greater management and distribution of resources that will help women farmers. Furthermore, it would be significant to introduce a Minimum Support Price that provides women a set price for their goods, making sure they get paid to sustain their livelihoods and prevent any exploitation.

Section 4 – Supporting Women’s Access to More and Better Jobs in Pakistan

Over the years, policies have been put in place alongside international collaborations with organisations to produce better opportunities, access to jobs and a safe environment for working women in Pakistan and to tackle the gender gap in Pakistan’s employment sector. This section will observe some of the efforts that have been made to recognise gender diversity and ways in which challenges within the employment sector can be mitigated.

The International Finance Corporation

‘The International Finance Corporation’ (IFC) has partnered with the advocacy group *‘Pakistan Business Council’* (PBC) to promote ways in which they can utilise the large pool of female talent. They aim to reduce Pakistan’s gender gap in employment, increase the female participation in labour that will contribute to the growth of Pakistan’s economy. Through this partnership, a series of webinars were produced that looked at women’s employment, tackling childcare, and effective anti-sexual harassment mechanisms. In 2018, they organised an International Women’s Day conference where companies made pledges to adopt workforce gender diversity. They have delivered Pakistan’s first women on boards training along with media campaigns to raise awareness on the importance of boosting women’s employment.

They have four case studies which aim to tackle key issues such as:

- Advancing women in business leadership and management
- Advancing gender diversity through effective anti-harassment mechanism
- Advancing women in non-traditional roles
- Advancing Gender Diversity through Equal Opportunity Recruitment Practices

Protection Against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2010

Section 3 of this act requires all organisations to have an Inquiry committee which consists of 3 members one of which must be female. This is where harassment complaints can be made (Section 3, the Protection against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act 2010). Penalties include demotion to a lower post, compulsory retirement, removal/dismissal from service and a fine (section 4). If the complainant or the accused is not satisfied with the decision of the Inquiry Committee, they can appeal to the Ombudsman who has the same powers as the civil court. Whilst it is beneficial to those experiencing harassment, this act does not require organisations to take out regular assessments of the workplace, but only when a harassment incident is reported. If the Act orders the Inquiry Committees to carry out regular assessments possible harassment incidents can be avoided leading to a safer workplace atmosphere (Khan & Ahmed, 2019)

Whilst this act has allowed women to raise their voice against harassment and has provided them an equal opportunity to earn livelihood, which in turn will lead to better women participation in the workforce and the economy, the Government must ensure the effective implementation of the Act.

Sindh Women Agriculture Act

Women Agriculture Workers Bill, 2019, was passed r aiming to recognise women’s work in agricultural sector.

The law concerns:

- Minimum wage – ensure that no woman is paid less than the minimum wage *“they shall receive pay in cash for any agriculture work undertaken individually, or as part of a family unit, on land and livestock belonging to her or her own family, or to someone else which shall be an equal to pay received by male workers for same work”*
- Rights – promotion and protection of their rights to ensure their participation in decision-making and to foster empowerment.
- Working hours – *“The working day of a woman agriculture worker shall not exceed eight working hours, and shall not commence until one hour after daybreak, or continue beyond one hour prior to sunset”*

(Women Agriculture Workers Bill, 2019)

Oxfam

International NGO Oxfam has been working towards promoting sustainable supply chains where women are adequately compensated.

“Oxfam is working with MATCO, Pakistan’s largest rice exporter and other agribusiness companies to promote corporate social responsibility and other private sector regulatory frameworks to ensure better conditions for rice workers”

(Malik, 2017)

Section 5 – Backlash over the Aurat March

The literacy rate measures the percentage of people aged 15 and above who are able to read and write. In 2017, Pakistan's total literacy rate was around 59 percent, with less than 47 percent of women being literate and more than 71 percent of men (Pletcher, 2020). Therefore, this impacted the AM was perceived by the country and how the posters were interpreted distastefully especially by the religious right wing. This section will uncover why the AM fell victim to severe backlash including: vandalization. Online hate, and violent attacks.

Religious right wing

Maulana Fazl ur Rehman, the leader of the religious right-wing political party Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) was one of the main voices in opposition. He demanded law enforcement bodies to take action to stop the marches (Al Jazeera, 2020). Most criticism was targeted at the slogans featured at the march. They thought the marchers were “vulgar opportunists” who had compromised traditional Islamic values and had cheapened a legitimate fight for rights with “liberal”, “anti-Islamic” agenda (Mahfooz, 2020). Ultra-conservatives claimed Islam is already the most feminist religion and has secured all the rights to women, so they need not have any more demands. In return they arranged 'Haya' (modesty) marches to stop Aurat March (Mahfooz, 2020).

Slogans included:



Lo baith gayi sahi se (here, I've sat properly)



Mujhe kya maaloom tumhara moza kahan hai (how would I know where your sock is?)



Mera Jism Meri Marzi (My body, my choice)



khud khaana garam Karlo (warm your own food)

Marchers had to state that it was not a challenge to anyone's concept of religion nor was it an open call for prostitution. It was a rightful desire to protect their bodies from unwarranted glances and touch, to choose to groom it whichever way they want and to not be regarded as a piece of meat or a transactional commodity that can be owned and disowned or a permanent site of someone else's muddled concept of honour (Mahfooz, 2020).

Vandalization

Posters and murals for the march were vandalised by students from a nearby religious school within hours of it going up. The students' of Jamia-e-Hafsa statement said it was their duty in accordance with the principles of Sharia to stop acts that they claimed were a conspiracy to promote obscenity in the country (Dawn, 2020).

Online backlash

Organisers of the march claimed that they faced backlash, including murder and rape threats. However, this hasn't stopped women from continuing to fight for change. Gharida is one journalist who faced abuse online for her support towards the march, she stated

“Some feel intimidated and affected, which is why they stay silent and back off. But this further reinstates the significance of Aurat March and how important it is for women to speak for their rights. The campaign against other women journalists is aimed at silencing us. Therefore, we need to fight these powers and continue to speak,”
(Gharida said to CFWIJ).

These threats and abuse do not remain in the online spaces but infiltrate into the journalist's offline spaces too. senior journalist Asma Shirazi's home was broken into on two different occasions. Ailia Zehra, a vocal proponent of feminism in Pakistan and has also received backlash for participating in Aurat March.

“Being a woman journalist is already very difficult in Pakistan, so when you stand up against something, it is only natural that trolls will get upset because they don't like the idea of women having a voice”

“They start attacking your character, they misuse your pictures, and they malign you”
(CFWI, 2020)

These smear campaigns can get incredibly personal and disgusting, where in most cases the state fails to take action. She argues that The Pakistan Telecom Authority is very quick to block content that it deems anti-state or critical of the government or security institutions, but it never against trolls who harass journalists

Attacks

During March that was taking place in Islamabad many of the members were subject to violence and injury from religious men, who infiltrated the march pretending to be supporters and started attacking the marchers, one who disguised as women in a burqa. Women were hit by stones and bricks and faced threats (DAWN, 2020).

The tweets below indicate the experiences of people who attended the march in Islamabad and the attacks they faced:



JUIF & Sunni-ittehad mullahs violently attacked us today at [#AuratAzadiMarch2020](#) with rocks & chilli powder and 5 of our people got severely injured. What triggered them? Seeing women reclaiming public space. This is the true & ugly face of this society that we march against!



I was with my kids in March and coming back to my car when a man sprinkled chilli powder on my face. How he brought chilli with him. Did no body check him?

Section 6 – Support and Funding

The Aurat March is an independent collective of women, aligned to the banner of “Hum Aurtein” which is an ‘organic’ group therefore any person identifying as a woman has a right to join it and have an immediate equal voice in what Aurat March stands for. The March is not aligned to any political party, NGO or corporation however there are many organisations that support it but are not officially affiliated with any of them. The funding and donations are given to the organisation “hum Aurtein” which is contributed by friends and family members of supporters and Organisers. In 2019 the intake was just over 6 Lakhs, and the biggest cost involved transporting women safely from far flung villages to the march and the cost of the stage.

Below are some of the organisations who have come in support of the march:

Women Democratic Front

Women Democratic Front (WDF) is a Pakistan-based, independent socialist-feminist resistance movement, formally established on International Working Women’s Day 8 March 2018 at Islamabad through a foundation congress by delegates from our provincial units that have been working since 2014.

Funding

- WDF are neither a philanthropic or a welfare organization, nor a non-governmental organization (NGO), nor a political party.
- They define themselves as a “**mass resistance movement, with a cadre**”
- They do not accept any form of support and financing from any government, semi-government or non-government agencies in Pakistan or in foreign countries.
- They run through membership fee and contributions collected from progressive individual sympathizers through finance

War Against Rape

War Against Rape is committed to work towards creating a rape free society. It endeavours to work on all social, legal, medical and administrative issues that could help either in the reduction of such acts of violence or support, facilitate and improve human rights and conditions for survivors.

All Pakistan Women Association

Is a voluntary, non-profit and non-political Pakistani organisation whose fundamental aim is the promotion of moral, social and economic welfare of the women of Pakistan through education and health initiatives, vocational training and advocacy.

Shirkat Gah

Initiated as a voluntary women's collective in Pakistan in 1975, Shirkat Gah has evolved into a leading women's rights organisation that operates out of offices in Lahore, Karachi and Peshawar, and six field stations across all four provinces of Pakistan. It aims to strengthen women’s capacity to fully exercise rights, make informed choices and be included in decision-making processes to redefine existing parameters of society.

Women’s Action Forum (WAF)

WAF is a pressure group committed to protecting the rights of women by countering all forms of oppression. It is non-hierarchical, non-government and not affiliated to any political party, and does not accept funding from government, non-government or International agency. It seeks to bring together individuals and organization on a common platform for women’s rights.

Women Working Worldwide

Women Working Worldwide (WWW) could also help AM through creating campaigns that will help raise awareness on the current issues occurring in Pakistan. The case studies mentioned in this report could be posted on social media and the WWW website which will help enable spread information on the personal situations that women face in Pakistan. Charities can be set up that take donations that directly provide monetary support for women who have gone through hardships and further help them become independent. Furthermore, such work could also be done in coalition and with the support of Aurat foundation which an NGOs in Pakistan. Aurat Foundation is one the leading international organisations created under the Societies' Registration Act 1860. It is committed to spreading awareness for a just, democratic and caring society in Pakistan. Furthermore, it aims to facilitate and strengthen women's empowerment in the country. In collaboration with them, WWW could be provided with funding to help women in agriculture and the supply chain. Through this education programmes for the women can be created which not only gives them a better chance to earn and explore their career opportunities but will also help educating women on how to use machinery to reduce the physical stress that is put on women. This will further empower women and prevent them from engaging in practices that exploit them.

In conclusion as seen from this report, women in Pakistan face many issues in their day to day lives. The topics uncovered in this report look at gender-based violence including honour killings and the issue of rape. Honour killings affect many women, especially those who are seen to be deviating from cultural or religious norms. Whilst there have been new bills passed in parliament to protect women, the problem however lies within state agencies such as the courts and police who fail to take claims seriously and implement the laws effectively to provide justice. However, such killings are still seen as a private matter. This is also the case when looking at the number of rape cases in Pakistan. Even though there is a lack of statistics on the number of rape cases, the increase in reporting gives a great indication around the issue. Women are therefore not only unsafe in the home, but when they are in the public sphere as demonstrated by the motorway incident. We further see the challenges in women's rights when it comes to employment. The rights to work seem to be a contented one in Pakistan, with many factors that impacting the experience of women. Cultural and religious norms are interpreted in such a way which prevents women's involvement in work. If women do work, they experience acts of sexual harassment. If women report such acts, they fear losing their career, being demoted, prevented a promotion, labelled negatively by society. Women in Pakistan are already paid less therefore they are expected to "get on with it" as if they speak, they risk of jeopardising their

careers and the little income they earn. The amalgamation of these factors not only mitigate women from working but prevent them from accessing full opportunities. Therefore, making the workplace a safe place for women which gives priority to their experience is still to be achieved. The agriculture industry is also a major concern for women in rural areas. Rural areas contribute largely to the country's economy with women doing the same amount of labour as men yet their labour not being recognised. Consequently, women in all industries lack rights. These rights are highlighted by the Aurat march to provide women in Pakistan with a voice and insight into the issues they face, to force government agencies to recognise their struggle and hold them on the same pedestal they hold men. Despite enduring backlash, the activists and supporters of the Aurat March have continued fighting for the rights of women, establishing marches every year in different cities with new themes.

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