

There is a general consensus that without women of a country contributing and participating fully in development, no country can prosper. The key features to development of a country such as the rise in productivity, innovative growth, growth of personal freedom and mobility, are all linked to the rise in participation of excluded groups. Inclusivity of said groups involves creativity and innovation. As Jinnah once said:

“No nation can rise to the height of glory unless your women are side by side with you.”

Discrimination is a serious issue that is not only faced by third world countries such as Pakistan, but other countries as well. According to a research, there are several reasons behind dissatisfaction in your job amongst which, gender discrimination is a major issue. Important conventions such as the convention on the Rights of a Child (effective since 1990) and Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (effective since 1981) are widely accepted (ratified by 189 countries) laws that protect girls and women against all forms of discrimination, whether traditional or not. However, till today the issue lies in Pakistan as there is no implementation of those established laws. In some firms the women are not paid equal to men. Moreover, they do not get the maternal leave that eventually becomes a major reason for the women to leave their jobs. According to a research on “Gender Based Wage Discrimination and Its Impact” it was found that men have always been favored despite females being more educated. Moreover, there is discrimination in human capital and job characteristics, lack of day-care centers and other unexplained reasons, among younger workers. Women especially young girls are widely discriminated against in other forms as well. According to an article in newspaper, girls in young age start their job are often seem to be ill-treated and sexually exploited. Moreover, those who suffer a mishap at work may also feel that this is their own fault for being inept (Laughlin 1995 & Even 1994).

The stark reality of Pakistan is that it stands at a stage where women are at the bottom of the workforce even when their population is increasing at an accelerating rate. With the increasing population the women participation is seen to be lowest as compared to men. According to a recent report by International Monetary Fund, if women are more empowered and they contribute in the labor force then Pakistan’s GDP can rise by 30%. However, the current rate of women working is at its lowest i.e. 4.3% and it gets even lower in the industry sector. Overall the production reduces in the economy and the dependency rate increases. Hence, it creates an

adverse effect on the economy as the economy has to produce more to satisfy all consumer demands, even if a large portion of women are not working. Hence, this becomes a burden on the economy.

In the Global Gender Gap report (2018) by the World Economic Forum, Pakistan was ranked 148 out of 149 countries. Pakistan was the worst performer this year. In fact, it performed worse than last the time this report was published in 2006. As women's population constitutes for about 48.7% of total population, this report proves that almost half of the population has not been given the opportunity to work for the economic development of the country. In addition, husband and in-laws do not give permission to females of the house to go for job that makes the situation even worse. It is vital that family members become the wings for their women, rather than the weight that anchors them down. It is only after this support that women would be empowered and would contribute towards the prosperity of our economy.

Pakistani government must follow the success stories of other countries by utilizing women and allowing them to contribute in the economy. A great example can be taken from South Asia; they took the initiative of providing an enabling environment for almost half of India's population to first learn various skills and then utilize them. The programme is specifically sensitive to the requirements of women and provides them flexible working timings, day-care centers, safe transport and working place. In the same way, Pakistan should provide a similar environment for all working girls and women by providing them with the facilities and services. This will help to empower women, achieve gender diversity at work and place the country in a direction towards progress.

Women empowerment reminds me of a thought-provoking quote by our founder- Muhammad Ali Jinnah:

“There are two powers in the world; one is the sword and the other is the pen. There is great competition and rivalry between the two. There is a third power stronger than both, that is the women”.