



Gender gap in Pakistan: a socio-demographic analysis

Gender gap
in Pakistan

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to provide a descriptive analysis of socio-demographic bases of gender gap in Pakistan.

Design/methodology/approach – The paper analyzes various aspects of gender gap (gender inequalities) in Pakistan. The analysis is based on the secondary data drawn from reports published by several governmental, international development agencies, and local non-governmental organizations. The analysis is descriptive in nature and interprets certain social and demographic data to ascertain the states of affairs about the prevailing social conditions relating to gender inequalities in Pakistan. Besides review of literature, the paper focuses on sectoral discussion of gender gap in population, health, education, political, and economic empowerment. In light of the secondary data analysis, suggestions to improve the current gender inequalities and possible recommendations to improve the current gender inequalities in Pakistan are also given.

Findings – The paper demonstrates that there are significant socio-demographic and cultural factors, due to which gender gap persists in Pakistani society.

Research limitations/implications – The current analysis is based on secondary and published data and, therefore lacks empirical reliability. However, published quantitative data reveal certain social characteristics of gender gap.

Originality/value – The paper provides a descriptive cultural analysis of gender inequalities.

Keywords Gender, Demographics, Pakistan

Paper type Viewpoint

Introduction

Pakistan is a society in transitions. Its worldview is shaped by the contradictory socio-historical currents of Islamic rule, British colonialism, religious orthodoxy and Muslim enlightenment launched by Sir Syed Ahmed Khan (Qurashi, 1967). The enlightenment movement of Sir Syed Ahmed, in particular helped in redefining the traditional roles of gender in the Muslim society. His version of modernity called for equal opportunities for women in all spheres of social life. He forcefully advocated the liberation and emancipation of woman from the socially restrictive dogmas of traditional Muslim nobility and clergy. Working within the enlightened tradition of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, one of his disciple; Deputy Nazir Ahmed presented a new picture of a dynamic, educated and morally conscientious Muslim woman in his classic Urdu novel titled *Mirat-ul-Uross (The Mirror of Brides)*. Asghari Begum, who is the central character of the novel, is morally self aware of the needs of her times, She actively and intelligently participates in the social affairs ranging from household management, financial decisions and market visits. Following in the footsteps of the Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, the founding fathers of Pakistan Jinnah and Iqbal had an enlightened view of the equal role of the woman in the administration of the affairs of the state and society.



Despite sharp criticism from the religious conservatives of his times, Jinnah emphatically took along his sister Fatima Jinnah and other educated Muslim woman of India in his campaign for the establishment of independent Pakistan. After independence in 1947, Fatima Jinnah campaigned relentlessly for the equal opportunities for women along with men in order to make Pakistan an honorable country amongst the comity of nations. She was perhaps the first woman in modern Muslim history that contested a presidential election and fought valiantly for the cause of democracy and human rights in Pakistan.

Nonetheless, and contrary to theses inspiring women of courage and commitment, the social status of the Pakistani woman remain extremely vulnerable to extremist and chauvinistic social forces, who are bent on imposing restrictions on the socially active role of woman. These social forces want to impose their interpretations of the Islam on the role and nature of woman's social and economic life. The gender issues become much more complicated when they are confronted and challenge the centuries old tribal and feudal cultural traditions of the Pakistani society. The killing of woman by employing the cultural practices of *karokari*, *vinni*, *nangayalay*, and *izzat* (all are cultural forms of social exclusion and suppression of woman in the society) needs to be managed with great care and cultural sensitivity. The tribal and rural communities should be placed at the center of any strategy of social transformations concerning the role of woman in the broader public life. Policy initiatives should emerge and focus the communities in creating a gender equal and socially just society. The cultural reshaping of gender roles must show social and historical resonance to the collective *kulturpsyche* of the Muslim and local political and social organization of the Pakistani society. The failure of certain policies on gender issues can be partly attributed to the tailor-made gender programmes of the establishment and international development agencies to force change and transformation in the current social states of affairs.

Literature review

Currently, gender studies have assumed a significant position in the sociological research. Initially, a western social scientific concern has now become a mainstream arena of intellectual, social and moral engagement throughout the world (Pearson and Jackson, 1998). Feminism in this connection has been extremely influential in redefining the culturally established notions about the nature, status, and role of gender (particularly womenfolk) throughout the global societies (Awan *et al.*, 2005; Dankelman, 2004; Dixon-Muller, 2003; James and Etim, 1999; Roy, 2003). Gender gap or gender inequality is a globally encountered social phenomenon perceived and interpreted differently. Nelson and Bridges (1999), for example, speak of "inequality/wage gap in gender" in American society. Rives and Yousafi (1997) have further argued that, "evidence of gender inequality remains prevalent throughout the world. Even in advanced industrial nations, women's share of the labor force is lower and their unemployment higher than for men." Bussemaker and van Kersbergen (1999) have further explored the notion of gender inequality and have stated that, "political institutions and mechanisms of a welfare state regime govern patterns of social inequality to a considerable extent." The cultural forms of gender inequality are also partially shaped by the early family life experiences. According to Kane and Sanchez (1994):

It is within the family that many aspects of gender inequality are produced and reproduced. Economic and interpersonal dependence of women on men and in some cases more brutal forms of subordination, are typical components of marriage and family.

This earlier cultural form of social inequality between men and women is further augmented by the cultural shaping of the behavior at the school. Arnot (2002) in her book, *Reproducing Gender* explores how educational system transmits and sustains gender inequality. She emphasizes that we need to investigate and expose the, “ways in which the educational system transmitted and sustained gender inequalities and the ways in which male dominance of educational privileges related to the forms of social class dominance reproduced through the school system.”

In addition to the cultural notions about gender inequalities, biological factors also play important role in the composition of male and female segments of the population as well as femininity ratios of the human society. Pakistan has been no exception to this biological factor. The Federal Bureau of Statistics (2004, p. 2) states that:

During the post-independence period capped by census 1998, the gender make-up of population has proceeded as expected biologically. However, the population of women has increased more than fourfold whereas that of men slightly lesser during the same period, which is in consonance with the inherent survivability of females.

Although the femininity ratios of women per 100 men as obtained from the past five population censuses indicate that there has been less number of women than men in each period. However, there has been a progressive convergence towards better gender poise due perhaps to faster decline in the level of female mortality. Nonetheless, the femininity ratio at birth has generally been between 105 and 107 males per 100 females in the country (Federal Bureau of Statistics, 2004, p. 2). However, rural-urban difference is quite obvious in the composition of femininity ratio, partly explainable due to the migration of men to urban centers in search of jobs and better life leaving women behind in the rural areas. Crude death rates (CDRs) and infant mortality rates (IMRs) are showing as the Compendium of Gender Statistics data demonstrates better futures from a gender-specific point of view. Both nature and social environment are consistently favoring the survival of the female child more than their male counterparts (pp. 10 and 11). The improved demographic indicators on CDRs and IMRs are also partially explainable due to better census reporting and data gathering.

Health, being an important social sector concern has gained new significance in the policy vision of the Government of Pakistan (GOP). The statistics given by the Economic Advisors' Wing (2005-2006, p. 181) on the total expenditure on health is estimated at Rs40 billion, of which Rs16 billion allocated for development expenditure and Rs24 for current expenditure. These figures show an increase of 5.3 percent over the last year and work to be 0.1 percent of gross domestic product. The major chunk of health development expenditure is currently being spent on to gender-specific related to the improvement of woman and girl child health. These programmes are; the lady health worker (LHW) program and the national maternal and child health care (MCH) program (pp. 181 and 182). The GOP started “The LHW Program” in 1994 with the objective to provide basic health care services to the communities at their doorstep and bridge the gap between communities and static healthcare services. It has been reported in the Economic Advisors' Wing (2005-2006, p. 181), that the GOP has planned to recruit around 100,000 LHWs by the end of financial year 2005. The program has been able

to recruit more than 95,000 LHWs by the end of November 2005, thus making the target of recruiting 100,000 LHWs and coverage of 80 percent of the population achievable. The GOP has recently launched the, "national MCH program," in order to improve the accessibility of high quality and effective MCH services for all, particularly the poor and the disadvantaged women through the development and implementation of sustainable MCH program at all levels of health care delivery system (p. 182). These programs would reduce the gender gap in the health care sector to the women and girl infants. *The National Feedback Report 2006*, on National Health Management Information System, published by the Ministry of Health, GOP (2006, pp. 13-14) reports that gender gap in the use of health institutions is drastically on the reduction and today more percentage of woman visits health institutions throughout Pakistan than man with only exception of northern areas and Balochistan. The demographic indicators also show that the life expectancy of woman at birth is higher than the male population of the country (Economic Advisors' Wing, 2005-2006, p. 189).

Education constitutes the bedrock of any civilized society. The literacy and education of woman in particular can make fundamental difference in the realization of a nations' economic, scientific and cultural potential. In order to achieve the dream of a fully developed society, GOP has taken up the issue of gender disparities very seriously since 1999. The efforts of the GOP have resulted in significant progress and socio-economic and demographic indicators show a steady and slow improvement in the ratio of girls to boys at all levels of education, the ratio of female literate to males, share of women in urban employment (as proxy indicator for share of women in wage employment in non-agricultural sector) has improved marginally and improvement in participation of women in national decision-making process (Economic Advisors' Wing, 2005-2006, p. 165). In order to enhance the gender participation and empowerment of women in the financial and administrative spheres of Pakistani society, poverty reduction strategy paper (PRSP), Ministry of Finance (2003a, p. 94) stresses the importance of governments' strategic vision to use and implement gender responsive budgeting initiative in analyzing the federal, provincial, and district government budgets to determine the extent to which resources are allocated to address gender inequality and impact of budgetary expenditures on different gender groups. Dixon-Mueller (2003, pp. 11 and 19) and Dankelman (2004, pp. 13 and 15) have shown the linkages of gender with the changes in the composition of labor market (demand and supply for labor force, employment opportunities, etc.), environment and sustainable development of human societies. Agarwal (1998 cited in Dankelman (2004, p. 16)) and Rocheleau (cited in Dankelman (2004, p. 17)) have underscored the significance of gender-orientations of both environmental and developmental efforts of the human societies. They conclude that material relations (use of environmental resources and economic exchanges) are overwhelming influenced and shaped by the dynamics of, "gender and politics" (p. 19).

"Gender and politics" is also patently reflected in the socio-cultural and moral structure of the Pakistani society. The symbolic-social extremes of Mukhtaran Mai and Benazir Bhutto are classic representative of socially disharmonious and culturally divisive society. Moreover, women belonging to elite feudal and political families of Pakistan are given socially differential role, compared to women of less privileged strata of the society. There exist different manifest and latent causes of this sharp social polarization between the privileged woman and the underprivileged and common woman. The study commissioned by the JICA (1992, pp. 11 and 12), entitled, *Pakistan*

Women in Development: Government Policy and Foreign Assistance have identified several socio-historical forces to be responsible for the present status of the woman in Pakistan. The study observes that:

The present status of women in Pakistan is an outcome of several interactive forces: the repressive socio-cultural law prescribed by the Hindu religion, the Islamic social norms, and perhaps, the failure of policy to provide opportunities for improvement. In conservative families, there is no need felt to educate her beyond the very initial levels. Giving education to a daughter usually implies that she leaves the "protection" of the home. Also, there is a fear of her getting influenced by the "modern" thoughts that can be taught in the schools and thus becoming rebellious towards the social status quo. Finally, an educated daughter, being not allowed to work, becomes a liability as she may not fare too well in the marriage market, partly because she will require a more educated groom and partly because many future in-laws do not prefer educated daughters-in-laws. Also, for marriage of a daughter, it requires not only the arranging of a husband but also the provision of an adequate dowry, a practice which has no support in religion.

The issue of dowry leads to many post-marital conflicts for the woman. One of these issues is the domestic violence against the woman. Although violence against women has many forms in Pakistani society, nonetheless, she is terribly harassed due to inadequate legal and social loopholes. Stove burning is very common form of domestic violence against the woman. There is also early marriages and sexual abuse of the underprivileged woman of the rural areas. Awan *et al.* (2005, pp. 9-10) have traced the roots of this repression of woman in Pakistani society partly to the British colonial rule of sub-continent and partly to the narrow cultural values. They assert that, "Gradually, the notion of woman being subordinate became so deeply entrenched in the social psyche that even where religion and formal laws gave certain rights to women, the sheer force of customs and traditions has denied them the same. These attitudes not only affected woman participation in various fields, but also undermined their potential power to contribute to society." They also contend that poverty is being, "feminized" and that violence and discrimination against woman is a part of the, "global culture" and that western society is also not above the exploitative and discriminatory treatment of the woman (p. 10). The statistic provided by Awan *et al.* (2005, pp. 12 and 13) on violence against woman are stunning, and show to the extent the moral and social fabric of the society have declined. The report states that, 1,030 rapes took place during 2004, some 1,600 cases of injury and torture, about 310 cases of burning, and 870 incidents of honor killing. These figures also reveal the decline state of law and governance in the country. This situation is in particularly impacting the lives of woman in Pakistan.

Population

The problem of over-population becomes even more serious in context of the developing countries like Pakistan. The population boom has not only resulted in an economic upheaval in developing countries rather it is also the primary cause of environmental degradation. The biological threat of ever increasing population has ushered in an era of shortage of safe drinking water, diminishing forest resources, climate change due to depletion of ozone layer among other things (Economic Advisors' Wing, 2005-2006, pp. 187-8).

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has increased more than fourfold whereas that of men slightly lesser during the same period, which is in consonance with the inherent survivability of females (Federal Bureau of Statistics, 2004, p. 2).

The femininity ratios of women per 100 men as obtained by the last five censuses indicate that there has been less number of women than men in each period. However, there has been progressive convergence towards better gender poise due perhaps to faster decline in female mortality. Nonetheless the femininity ratio at birth has generally been 105-107 males per 100 females in the country. As far urban-rural difference, the lower femininity ratio in urban areas is not surprising because men, while moving to urban areas for job and other work leave generally, womenfolk behind in the rural areas (Federal Bureau of Statistics, 2004, p. 2). Better conditions in mortality for females as well as increase in reporting of females over the period of time are shown in Tables I and II. Even in the most recent population census of Pakistan (1998) under reporting of females age 15-29 is evident (data not shown).

Gender specific CDRs influence the age-specific femininity ratio and, by the same token, the entire range of socio-demographic factors. Save the period of early childhood and that of child bearing age, female mortality in the later years is lower as compared to men's. This is an indication of women's inherent resilience in the nature's scheme of ensuring the continuity of human race (Federal Bureau of Statistics, 2004, p. 10) (Table III).

IMR is one of the best indicators to reflect upon the state of general welfare. The IMRs exhibit a mildly decreasing trend through the cyclical curvature. The profile of rural

Table 1.4 Women-men population, 1947-1998

Year	Women (000)	Men (000)	Both Sexes (000)	Proportion of women
1947	15,100	17,400	32,500	45.5
1951	15,593	18,147	33,740	46.2
1961	19,920	22,960	42,880	46.5
1972	30,476	34,833	65,309	46.7
1981	40,021	44,233	84,254	47.5
1998	63,478	68,874	132,352	48.0

Table I.

Sources: Population censuses 1951, 1961, 1972, 1981, and 1998; estimates for 1947

Table 1.5 Sex ratio by area, Pakistan, 1951-1998

Year	Women per hundred men		All areas
	Urban	Rural	
1951	78.6	87.2	85.9
1961	79.6	88.9	86.8
1972	83.6	88.8	87.5
1981	86.7	92.0	90.5
1998	89.2	93.7	92.2

Table II.

Source: Population censuses 1951, 1961, 1972, and 1998

Table III.

Table 2.9 CDRs by gender, urban-rural area, Pakistan

CDRs per 1,000 population

Year	All areas			Urban area			Rural area		
	Both sexes	Male	Female	Both sexes	Male	Female	Both sexes	Male	Female
1996	8.8	9.3	8.2	7.1	8.0	6.1	9.6	10.0	9.2
1997	8.9	9.5	8.3	7.3	7.7	6.9	9.6	10.3	8.9
1999	8.3	8.9	7.7	7.1	7.6	6.6	9.2	9.9	8.5
2000	7.8	8.2	7.4	6.7	7.0	6.3	8.8	9.2	8.3
2001	7.2	7.4	6.9	6.3	6.6	6.0	7.6	7.9	7.3
2003	7.0	7.3	6.6	6.2	6.8	5.6	7.4	7.9	6.9

IMRs adumbrates onset of an inclusive paradigm of social amelioration (Federal Bureau of Statistics, 2004, p. 11) (Table IV).

Health profile

The targets of the health sector during 2005-2006 included the establishment of 20 rural health centers (RHCs), 50 basic health units (BHUs), upgradation of 21 RHCs and 53 basic health centers. The manpower targets cover the addition of 4,000 new doctors, 270 dentists, 2,500 nurses, 5,000 paramedics, and 500 traditional birth attendants. Under the preventive program about 8.0 million children are targeted to be immunized and 22 million packets of oral rehydration syrup are to be distributed during 2005-2006. The current data on health facilities shows a gradual rise in terms of trained human resources in health sectors as well as accessibility of health facilities to woman and girl child (Economic Advisors' Wing, 2005-2006, p. 180).

The health program during the current fiscal year has realized on average 80 percent of its physical targets. The highest achievement of 100 percent has been obtained in the trained LHWs category followed by the immunization coverage (94 percent). The sub sector wise achievement of program has been recorded as 70 percent for RCHs and 84 percent for BHUs. The overall picture of health sector in improving the lot of woman

Table 2.11 IMRs by urban rural area and sex, Pakistan 1990-2001

Year	Urban			Rural		
	Female	Male	Both sexes	Female	Male	Both sexes
1990	62.7	84.9	74.3	116.6	115.4	116.0
1991	62.0	75.4	68.9	114.5	116	115.3
1992	76.4	66.7	71.4	114.1	109.2	111.6
1993	65.5	80.5	73.5	108.2	116.7	112.7
1994	62.7	53.8	58.1	117.3	114.3	115.7
1995	65.5	75.4	70.6	102.0	107.1	104.6
1997	68.4	76.6	72.7	81.2	96.6	89.2
1999	62.0	80.8	71.8	73.9	101.5	88.3
2000	57.0	80.9	69.3	84.3	89.1	86.8
2001	69.2	68.3	68.9	82.3	82.8	80.9
2003	61.4	69.7	67.2	74.1	85.6	80.6

Source: Pakistan demographic surveys

Table IV.

and girl child is quite encouraging and progressive as revealed by the available data (Economic Advisors' Wing, 2005-2006, p. 180).

Education sector

Pakistan has committed to all international declaration to extend the agenda of providing the basic right of education to all its citizens. She is also a signatory to millennium development goals (MDGs) as well as the Dakar World Education Forum 2000. All new policy initiatives by the GOP, which include such programs as Education Reform Action Plan, National Education Policy 1988-2010 and PRSP, aim at the overall restructuring of the stagnant educational sector, which could in turn produce a highly trained human resources in all spheres of social life and well responsive to the needs of the emerging globalized society and economy (Economic Advisors' Wing, 2005-2006, p. 159). The educational vision of the GOP also aims at integrating the traditional Madrassah education as well improve basic education and literacy with particular focus of alleviating the social lot of the women and girl child, in order to reduce the gender gap in the society.

The overall adult literacy rate of Pakistan for the fiscal year 2004-2005 is 53 percent against the ambitious target (according to the Education Reform Action Plan 2001-2005) of increasing it from 45 percent in 2001-2002 to 60 percent in 2004-2005. The MDG target is to reach 80 percent literacy till 2015. The literacy rate increased at an average of 2 percent per annum in the past four years and with this rate it is highly unlikely that Pakistan would be able to reach MDG target unless there is a major change in the policy and implementation framework.

The discrepancies at the provincial level persist ranging from Sindh with highest literacy rates at 55 percent and Balochistan at 37 percent. Overall adult female literacy increased from 32 percent in 2001-2004 to 40 percent in 2004-2005. The corresponding change in male literacy rate is from 58 to 65 percent. However, the data in Table V show that there is a slow yet consistent increase in female literacy rate both at the national and provincial levels (Economic Advisors' Wing, 2005-2006, p. 160). For the first time, the GOP has reported through social and living standards measurement survey (PSLM) 2004-2005 district level data for the major indicators in the education sectors. This (PSLM) district level data show a more detailed picture of the level of education in different districts within the provinces and also indicates the areas that require special attention.

The gross enrollment rate (GER) for the primary schools (age five-nine) has increased from 72 percent in 2001-2002 to 86 percent in 2004-2005. Narowal district in Punjab, Karachi in Sindh, Abbotabd in North Western Frontier Province (NWFP) and Ketch in Balochistan with GER of 130, 111, 117, and 110 percent, respectively, have been ranked as top districts within the provinces. On the other hand, district Muzzafargarh with 66 percent in Punjab, Jacobabad with 43 percent in Sindh, Kohistan with 52 percent in NWFP, and Jaffarabd with 33 percent in Balochistan were ranked at the bottom in GER within provinces (Tables VI-X).

Gender disparity in literacy and enrollment is one of the key concerns of the GOP. Statistics show that gender disparity has been declining since 1998-1999, however the recent decline is only marginal from 26 percent in 2001-2002 to 25 percent in 2004-2005. Reducing gender gap in education at all levels will ensure equality of opportunity and economic participation for females. Gender disparity in literacy is lower in urban areas

Table 11.1 Literacy rates (ten years and above): Pakistan and provinces (%)
1998-1999 Pakistan
integrated household
survey (PIHS)

Province/area	1998-1999 Pakistan integrated household survey (PIHS)			2001-2002 PIHS			2004-2005 PSLM		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Pakistan	45.0	59.0	31.0	45.0	58.0	32.0	53.0	65.0	40.0
Rural	36.0	52.0	20.0	36.0	51.0	21.0	44.0	58.0	29.0
Urban	65.0	73.0	56.0	64.0	72.0	56.0	71.0	78.0	62.0
Balochistan	36.0	54.0	16.0	36.0	53.0	15.0	37.0	52.0	19.0
Rural	33.0	51.0	12.0	32.0	49.0	11.0	32.0	47.0	13.0
Urban	56.0	72.0	39.0	54.0	71.0	36.0	60.0	74.0	42.0
NWFP	37.0	56.0	20.0	38.0	57.0	20.0	45.0	64.0	26.0
Rural	34.0	54.0	16.0	35.0	55.0	16.0	41.0	61.0	23.0
Urban	53.0	66.0	40.0	56.0	70.0	41.0	61.0	75.0	47.0
Punjab	46.0	57.0	34.0	47.0	57.0	36.0	55.0	65.0	44.0
Rural	38.0	52.0	24.0	38.0	51.0	26.0	47.0	59.0	35.0
Urban	64.0	71.0	58.0	66.0	71.0	60.0	72.0	78.0	68.0
Sindh	51.0	65.0	35.0	46.0	60.0	31.0	56.0	68.0	41.0
Rural	35.0	53.0	15.0	33.0	51.0	14.0	38.0	56.0	18.0
Urban	69.0	79.0	58.0	64.0	74.0	54.0	72.0	80.0	62.0

Source: Pakistan social and living measurement survey 2004-2005

Table V.

Table 11.2 Literacy rates (ten years and above) for Pakistan and provinces 2004-2005 (%)

Province/area	Total	Male	Female
Pakistan	53	65	40
Punjab	55	65	44
Sindh	56	68	41
NWFP	45	64	26
Balochistan	37	52	19

Source: PSLM 2004-2005

Table VI.

Table 11.3 Education statistics 2004-2005

Level	Institutions	Enrollment	Teachers
Primary	157,158	21,333,206	450,136
Middle	30,418	4,550,473	246,666
Secondary	16,590	1,880,021	282,113
Higher secondary/inter colleges (nine-12)	1,604	268,595	44,663
Secondary Technical/vocational institutions	747	113,664	7,356
Degree colleges	677	422,931	15,653
Universities	103	520,666	60,633

Source: Ministry of Education 2004-2005

Table VII.

Table 11.4 Gross enrolment rate at the primary level (age five-nine) by provinces and region (excluding kachi class)

Region/province	Total	2001-2002		Total	2004-2005	
		Male	Female		Male	Female
Urban areas	91	94	87	104	107	100
Punjab	94	95	93	110	111	108
Sindh	84	91	78	99	103	94
NWFP	93	100	86	92	100	84
Balchistan	88	98	75	94	101	86
Rural areas	66	80	52	79	89	68
Punjab	70	80	61	89	96	82
Sindh	53	69	37	58	70	44
NWFP	74	96	52	78	92	62
Balchistan	57	73	38	61	79	41
Pakistan	72	83	61	86	94	77
Punjab	76	84	69	95	100	89
Sindh	63	76	51	75	84	65
NWFP	77	97	56	80	93	65
Balchistan	62	77	44	67	83	49

Table VIII.

Source: PSLM 2004-2005

Table 11.6 Gross enrolment rate at the middle level (age ten-12) by provinces and region

Region/province	Total	2001-2002		Total	2004-2005	
		Male	Female		Male	Female
Urban areas	63	58	68	64	63	64
Punjab	65	56	74	66	64	68
Sindh	59	56	62	61	64	58
NWFP	62	73	49	63	71	54
Balchistan	61	70	50	53	57	49
Rural areas	32	41	21	38	46	29
Punjab	36	42	28	42	47	36
Sindh	21	31	8	25	34	13
NWFP	35	49	19	44	59	27
Balchistan	28	41	11	25	33	14
Pakistan	41	45	35	46	51	40
Punjab	45	46	43	49	52	45
Sindh	34	40	28	42	47	35
NWFP	38	52	23	47	61	31
Balchtstan	33	45	18	30	37	21

Table IX.

Source: PSLM 2004-2005

where it is 16 percent, as compared to 29 percent in rural areas in 2004-2005. In fact there has been no progress in reducing the gender gap either between the urban and rural areas or between genders in both areas (Economic Advisors' Wing, 2005-2006, p. 165).

There are several explanations for this persistent gap in literacy. A recent World Bank Country Gender Assessment Report 2005 highlights the two most important

constraining factors that impede female access to education. Distance from school and physical costs of attending schools for girls affect their enrollment. The latest PRSP-2 2004-2005 also indicates lack of access of girls to education facilities. Only 46 percent of the sample villages in Sindh and Punjab had a girls' elementary school inside the village. In contrast, 87 percent had a boys' elementary school within the village. According to Ministry of Finance (2003b), in the northern areas poor households consider investment in a girls' education to be pointless, as they have to get married and go to another house (Economic Advisors' Wing, 2005-2006, p. 165) (Tables XI and XII).

Labor force, employment, and women political participation

In Pakistan, labor force participation is estimated on the basis of the crude activity rate (CAR) and the refined activity rate (RAR). The CAR is the percentage of the labor force in the total population while RAR is the percentage of the labor force in the population of persons 10 years of age and above. The figures both for CAR (32.8 percent) and RAR (46.9 percent) for the first half of 2005-2006 fare higher than labor force survey (LFS) for

Table 11.7 Secondary/high secondary institutions (2004-2005)

Level	Urban	Rural	Total
High schools	8,207	8,383	16,590
Higher secondary schools	715	701	1,416
Total	8,922	9,084	18,006

Source: Ministry of Education

Table X.

Table 11.8 Gender gap in overall literacy, GER and NER at the primary level (%) 2004-2005

Region/province	Gender gap in literacy (%)		Gender gap in NER at the primary level		Gender gap in GER at the primary level	
	2001-2002	2004-2005	2001-2002	2004-2005	2001-2002	2004-2005
Urban areas	16	16	3	3	7	7
Punjab	11	12	-1	1	2	3
Sindh	20	18	6	5	13	9
NWFP	29	28	8	6	14	16
Balchistan	35	32	14	6	23	15
Rural areas	30	29	10	11	28	21
Punjab	25	24	6	7	19	14
Sindh	37	38	16	16	32	26
NWFP	39	38	16	15	44	30
Balchistan	38	34	15	17	35	38
Pakistan	26	25	8	8	22	17
Punjab	21	21	4	5	15	11
Sindh	29	27	12	11	25	19
NWFP	37	38	15	13	41	28
Balchistan	38	33	15	15	33	34

Source: PSLM 2004-2005

Table XI.

2003-2004 (30.4 and 43.7 percent). This phenomenon is more obvious for rural areas and women. Augmentation of the rates for the set of economic activities carried out within the house precincts also depicts the same scenario (42.8 percent vs 38.5 percent) (Economic Advisors' Wing, 2005-2006, p. 193). The relevant figures are presented in Table XIII.

The employment statistics show that employees and self-employed, respectively, account for 38 and 34 percent of the total work force followed by unpaid family helpers (27 percent) and employers (1 percent). Of the unpaid family helpers, females account for 56.9 percent and males account for 19.8 percent. More male workers are engaged in the category of self-employed employees and employers.

Agriculture still accounts for the largest source of employed workforce as is evident from Table XIV. The share of the agriculture in employment has increased from 43 percent in 2003-2004 to almost 45 percent by mid of 2005-2006. The share of the remaining sectors has remained more or less stagnant with minor fluctuations by both ways. On the whole, an increase has been observed in almost all major industries/sectors for both genders. Sector wise breakup of employed labor force shows that female labor force participation is on the rise for most sectors especially agriculture, fishery and telecom sectors. It is important to note that the employment of the rural females increased despite a considerable rise in female labor force participation rate. The increase in rural female employment was mainly in the category of unpaid family helpers, which may be due to the enhanced growth rates in agriculture in recent years or due to the combined efforts of various non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The distribution of female labor force by major sectors also supports the view that employment gains are concentrated in female unpaid workers, as the largest increase in the female employment is seen in the agriculture and allied industries (Economic Advisors' Wing, 2005-2006, pp. 194-5).

Unemployment rate has decreased from 8.3 percent in 2001-2002 to 7.7 percent in 2003-2004 and further to 6.5 percent in 2005-2006 (July-December), due mainly to steeper decline in womens' unemployment from 12 to 13 percent during the inter survey period. The decline in female unemployment in both rural and urban areas can be attributed to two reasons. Females were able to get job opportunities or they withdrew from the labor force mainly because of "discourage phenomenon" But female participation in the labor force increased considerably between 2001-2002 and 2005-2006 in rural areas. It thus appears that female unemployment reduced primarily due to expansion in job opportunities for females. Table XV shows that womens' unemployment has consistently been on decline across the constituent age intervals means' unemployment

Table 11.9 Gender disaggregated enrollment at middle level (2004-2005)

Sector	Urban		Rural		Total	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Pubic	634,353	5,945,900	1,321,252	656,052	1,955,605	1,250,952
Private	494,690	429,020	194,917	152,423	689,607	581,443
Other public sector	40,858	29,137	-	-	40,858	29,137
Total	1,169,901	1,053,057	1,516,169	808,475	2,686,070	1,861,532

Table XII.

Source: Ministry of Education

Table 13.7 Labour force participation rates by area and gender

Reference year	Population (million)		Labor force (million)	Participation/activity rate (%)					
	Total	10 + years		Total	CAR		RAR		Male
1990-1991	111.16	72.03	31.09	27.97	46.36	8.23	43.16	71.27	12.76
1991-1992	114.08	74.70	32.07	28.11	46.05	9.15	42.93	70.27	13.98
1992-1993	117.02	76.99	32.61	27.86	45.87	8.59	42.35	69.24	13.15
1994-1995	119.99	79.62	33.45	27.88	45.74	8.86	42.01	69.07	13.32
1995-1996	122.99	81.87	33.77	27.46	45.93	7.59	41.25	69.10	11.39
1996-1997	129.04	86.07	37.02	28.69	46.96	9.04	43.01	70.01	13.63
1997-1998	131.78	89.34	38.72	29.38	47.98	9.40	43.34	70.48	13.92
1999-2000	137.53	93.08	39.84	28.97	47.63	9.29	42.80	70.39	13.72
2001-2002	143.17	97.80	42.39	29.61	48.04	9.86	43.34	70.32	14.44
2003-2004	148.72	103.40	45.23	30.41	48.74	11.16	43.74	70.61	15.93
2005-2006 (July-December)	155.4	108.6	50.89	32.8	50.7	14.1	46.9	72.7	20.2

Source: LFS (July-December) 2005-2006

Table 13.9 Employed labour force by sectors (%)

Industry/sector	Total	2003-2004		2005-2006 (July-December)		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Agriculture, forestry, hunting, and fishing	43.1	38.1	67.3	44.8	38.4	69.9
Manufacturing	13.7	13.5	14.7	13.6	13.4	14.0
Construction	5.8	7.0	0.3	5.9	7.4	0.3
Wholesale and retail trade	14.8	17.5	1.7	14.1	17.3	1.8
Transport, storage, and communications	5.7	6.9	0.1	5.8	7.2	0.3
Community, social, and personal services	15.0	14.8	15.8	13.8	13.9	13.5
Others	1.9	2.2	0.1	2.0	2.4	0.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table XIV.

Source: LFS (July-December) 2005-2006

Table 8.1 Registered voters by sex and province, Pakistan, 2002

Pakistan/province	Registered voters (in million)			Total voters (%)	
	Women	Men	Total	Women	Men
Pakistan	33.16	38.71	71.86	46.1	53.9
Punjab	19.38	21.87	41.24	47.0	58.0
Sindh	7.41	8.77	16.17	45.8	54.2
NWFP	3.92	4.93	8.85	44.3	55.7
Balochistan	1.80	2.12	3.93	45.9	54.1
Islamabad	0.18	0.20	0.38	47.0	53.0

Table XV.

Source: Election Commission of Pakistan, Islamabad

rate increased for youth, 20-24 years old, and for those aged 40 years and older. Micro-finance facilities focusing on women particularly in rural areas may be the major contributing factor for reduction in female unemployment rate.

Although the data on voters registration shows a slight favorable balance towards men and women are catching up with them (Table XV). Similarly number of women seats to national, provincial, and senate has substantially been increased by the GOP in 2002 general elections. There are 73 (21 percent) women members in national assembly *vis-à-vis* 269 men members. Whereas in senate the number of women members has risen to 18 (18 percent) *vis-à-vis* men member of the senate. The Federal Bureau of Statistics (2004, p. 66) contends that “the womens’ representation in all walks of the life can only be realized if their access to the pivotal equalizers, i.e. education and health is ensured across time and space” (Tables XVI and XVII).

The data on woman’s enhanced representation in political bodies at national and local levels reveal one common pattern; the increase in political representation is mostly nominated proportionate to the electoral strength of each political party represented in the parliament. However, it is positive social indicator of steady reduction of gender gap in political empowerment of Pakistani woman.

Table 8.3 Elected members to the national assembly by gender

Election year	Total no. of seats	Number of elected members of national assembly			
		No. of women	Total (%)	No. of men	Total (%)
1990	217	2	0.9	215	99.1
1993	217	4	1.8	213	98.2
1997	217	6	2.8	211	97.2
2002	342	73	21.0	269	79.0

Source: National Assembly Secretariat Parliament House, Islamabad

Table XVI.

Table 8.4 Number of senators to the senate by gender

Election year	Total no. of seats	Number of elected senators			
		Women		Men	
		Number	%	Number	%
1990	87	1	1.1	86	98.9
1993	87	1	1.1	86	98.9
1997	87	2	2.3	83	97.3
2003	100	18	18.0	82	82.0
2004	100	18	18.0	82	82.0

Source: Senate Secretariat, Parliament House, Islamabad

Table XVII.

Concluding discussion and policy implications

The available socio-demographic data from different governmental and non-governmental sources reveal mixed trend regarding the bridging up the gender gap in Pakistan. Certain social indicators in the field of health, education and employment indicate a gradual decline in gender gap. While in areas of social and political empowerment, particularly the issue of violence and honor-killing of women require further action and policy restructurings to improve the lot of the women. In the light of foregoing socio-demographic statistics, following suggestions are made to improve further the social condition of women in Pakistan:

- The GOP and other related agencies, such as international donors and NGOs need to develop a more in depth understanding of the cultural barriers/cultural taboos which work against the effective role of the women in society, to formulate policies which are relevant, effective and result oriented.
- The cultural mindset of parochialism, narrow-mindedness and suppression of womenfolk needs to be addressed through more awareness of the status of woman in Islam and her role in a contemporary society.
- The traditional values and perceptions about the role and status of women must be given due consideration, so as to make effective policy frameworks to improve the social status of women.
- Communities at the local level both in urban and rural areas need to be integrated into the policy and implementation strategies regarding the uplift of female population in Pakistan.

- Education and literacy of girl child must be accessible and community-based, so that its reach and benefits could be felt at the grassroots levels.
- The conceptual restructuring, through curricula and media show casing is a prerequisite to any lasting social change in the new definition of gender equality in Pakistan.
- Communities at the local levels, both in rural and urban areas needs to be integrated in terms of planning and execution of gender policies with, district provincial and federal tiers of administrative decision-making mechanism.

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