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## **Marginalisation to Gender Justice and Achievement of SDG5: A Pathway to Encounter Socio-Cultural Barriers for Strengthening Rural Women in Pakistan**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Gender disparity and inequality is very common now a days specially in rural areas that's is because of cultural and societal norms cordons to women authorization. The objective of this research is to analyze reasons that results in gender inequality and ways to marginalize the gender justice with SDG 5 initiatives.. Islamic supportive and conductive attitude towards gender justice and women empowerment is discussed in this research. The qualitative and analytical methodology is adopted for this research .By investigating the primary and secondary data as well; it can be observed that Islam is the religion promoting rights for all human beings on equal level. Women. Islam promote justice and equality. Poverty, cultural infrastructure of societies, precedence of men over women and dearth of education are main reasons to lack of objectives and indicatives of SDG5 specially in rural areas. Islam is the religion which raised women status in societies by promoting rights and justice. The study suggested recommendations for encouraging the dignity, equality ,protection, dignity and justice towards women especially in rural areas on legislative level. It should be deliberately a universal humanitarian mission.

**Keywords:** Islam, Gender, Rights, Discrimination, women

### **Introduction**

In Pakistan Many families despite of their financial strength do not give women their legal property. Instead, wealth and land just retained by the male family members. Young girls in village areas are often force for marriage at a very early age without concerning their willing and choice. This thing stops them to do work outside home or to continue their educational duration. Many cultural societies consider women as totally dependent on men to fulfill their needs and other financial essentials and

are not having enough strength to make their own decisions. These are such beliefs and barriers stop women to choose their educational fields, career, professional life and most importantly can't even able to take control of their health. Health inequalities also subsidize to the relegation of rural women. Women had limited access to healthcare services, mainly maternal health facilities, results in high maternal death rates. Women's reproductive health affects by cultural taboos and dejects them from pursuing timely medical assistance. Additionally, women's access to basic medical services limited due to the shortage of female healthcare sources in rural areas. Women even not able to get proper medical treatment due to cultural restrictions on visiting male doctor and lack of availability female doctor. This leads to high maternal death rates and poor health care.

To achieve Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5) and get rid of such cultural and tradition barriers we need a proper plan regarding our Islamic Principles, that includes practical laws for women education, community support, and programs to help women for their financial development and contribution in professional field work. According to Islam women are treated with equal rights and justice as men. Both men and women have rights to education, social, political and economical. As compare previous studies ,this research aimed to examine problems suffering women in rural areas and initiatives to achieve goals of SDG5 IN Islamic perspective.

NGOs, Government, and local communities must work together to change traditional dogmas and create opportunities for rural women for their nurturing and development. By taking these steps, Pakistan can build an impartial society where women get their domestic, professional and inheritance rights. They are able to even contribute in country progress and development.

#### **Aims of the Research:**

1. To analyze the main socio-cultural barriers that contributes to the demotion of rural women in Pakistan.
2. To examine how these barriers, avoid rural women from accessing their basic rights quality education, and healthcare facilities.
3. To advocate for the enforcement and implementation of legal frameworks and gender-responsive policies to strengthen and protect rural women.
4. To align initiatives with SDG 5 to eliminate gender disparities and ensure measurable progress in endowing rural women.

**Methodology:** A combination of descriptive and exploratory research design will be used. The descriptive approach will help in understanding

the existing gender inequalities, while the exploratory approach will allow for an in-depth examination of the barriers faced by rural women and potential solutions to address them.

## **Literature review**

### **1.1 Overview of Gender Inequalities**

In Worldwide view, it has seen that gender disparity produces various inequalities for both men and women. Especially women are facing issues and disparities based on the gender gap in every private, public, domestic, political or legal sector. They are limited to perform as wife, mother, sister or daughter<sup>1</sup>. Patriarchal traditional system and conservative cultural norms embedding the view of subordinate the women's in public domains as compare to men due to her powerless sensitivity. Gendered stereotypes and social pressures not encouraging women's to participate in public sphere as well women in rural areas not allowed to attain education ,which create big disparity between urban and rural women. A woman contribution as a valuable human resource and in progress of society is reduces<sup>2</sup>.

Moreover, women are facing gender based ferocity as a part of their life without raising any voice. This increases rape cases, harassment and domestic violence due to stereotypical conduct of society. Rape victims considered as sullied and causing dearth of her family honor or respect. In all over world about 5000 women are killed on the name of honor, from which 1000 women annually killed in Pakistan. This shows that honor or rape killing exceeded in Pakistan about 25 percent of all over the world.<sup>3</sup> All this is due to unequal treatment with women, early marriages and gender based violence.

From the very beginning, Islam not criticized women as the lesser gender than men but it eradicated this discrimination of genders. In fact, when western civilization influence Islamic rules and Shariah perspective, western culture started criticizing rules, rights and responsibilities of men and women based on Islamic laws. Then the voices of gender inequalities and discriminatory issues arise. Their main purpose is liberty or freedom of women in all affairs of life.

### **1.2 SDG5 and Gender Justice:**

Sustainable Development Goals established by United Nations ,adopted by all members states in 2015.SDG5 is one of the 17 these goals, focuses on aceiving women rights, equality and empowering women. It identifies that gender inequality is a major hurdle to sustainable development. Even though global progress, women's are still facing violence, unequal, discrimination and violence. They are not able to

access education, resources, decision making roles and health care. These inequalities are specially pronounced in underdeveloped regions and rural areas of Pakistan. SDG5 objective is to address these challenges under a comprehensive framework. Which aimed to end all forms of violence and gender based discrimination. Ensuring rights on equal bases to economic resources, education and participation in outdoor activities. SDG5 intended to eliminate all harmful cultural practices and gender-based stereotypes.

Achievement of this Sustainable Development Goal is not only a matter of social justice but essential for the success of other SDGs and progress of the whole community.

### 1.3 Gender Justice and its Relevance in Islamic perspective

Islam is the religion which recognizes gender mental and physical nature as well as allied differences in their activities; it conserves equality for men and women in regarding responsibilities and rights. Allah Almighty said in Quran:

﴿فَأَسْتَجَابَ لَهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ أَنِّي لَا أُضِيعُ عَمَلَ عَمَلٍ مِّنْكُمْ مِّنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَىٰ بَعْضُكُمْ مِّنْ بَعْضٍ﴾<sup>4</sup>

“Never Will I suffer to be lost the work of any of you, be he male or female :ye are members, one of another”

But by the traditions introduced by some of feminists and liberalists, leading towards earlier jahiliyyah perceptions. This results in relegation of women status and position. They actually want to enforce western culture which nurture lack of religious norms and values, far away from the righteous path of Allah Almighty and decadence of respect, honor and reverence of women.<sup>5</sup>

In Quran definite text regarding teachings on several issues regarding gender identity, equality, rights, responsibilities, sexual needs and relation is founded. For instance there are many surahs of Quran **Al Nisa**, **Al Noor**, **Al Talaq** and **Al Ahzab** etc.. dedicated to women comprehensive issues, depicting the importance of women in Islam. Women's relevance in Islam is depicting through the following view points:

- Every human being is equal in front of God Almighty irrespective of their gender, race and color. The preferences are based on the piety. One who is most pious, most beloved to Allah. An objective of men's life is to worship Allah and live according to His directives and orders. Allah said in Quran:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ﴾<sup>6</sup>

“O humanity! Indeed, We created you from a male and a female and made you into peoples and tribes so that you may get to know one

another .Surely the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous among you.”

The one who is most forbearance of Allah is most nearest to Allah. The preferences among mankind is based on devotion, piety and **Taqwa**.<sup>7</sup>

- In Quran the linguistic way of expression and terminologies used for men and women is showing highest level of equivalence, uniformity and parity.. For instance, the term human is used in different places more than **830 times** for both male and female. Allah said:

وَحَمَلَهَا الْإِنْسَانُ إِنَّهُ كَانَ ظَلُومًا جَهُولًا<sup>8</sup>

But man carried it. Surely he is wrong-doing, ignorant.

The term used Al Insan used in this verse addressing both masculine and feminine regardless of their gender perspicacity. Similarly many other terms as **Al Nas, Al Bashar, Al Ins and Khalifa** etc used in Quran designates the message of equality without any gender discernment<sup>9</sup>:

- At the time of jahiliyyah , son had given more respect, love ,priorities and affection as compare to daughters. Instead daughters were subordinated, and killed. But after the revelation of Quran it was strictly prohibited to kill daughters. Holy Prophet(PBUH) teachings give equal treatment with both son or daughter with love, compassion, affection and kindness and affection.

Moreover, Women before Islam were strictly abused and beaten. Islam warned and destined against women beating. According to Islamic teachings, man has strictly restricted to evade any form of beating that causes scars on her body. Allah Almighty said:

وَالَّذِي تَخَافُونَ نُشُوزَهُنَّ فَعِظُوهُنَّ وَأَهْجُرُوهُنَّ فِي الْمَضَاجِعِ وَأَضْرِبُوهُنَّ<sup>10</sup>

“As to those women on whose part ye fear disloyalty and ill-conduct, admonish them (first),(next),refuse to share their beds,(and last)beat them (lightly)

According to Allah Almighty commandments to treat a rebellion woman; first step is just is to warn them ,secondly is to put a distance not share your bed with her and in the last step when all methods fail then Allah has granted permission to apply thrashing but with boundaries that this (darab) not causes marks on any part of body. The purpose of this permission is to save their relation from collapsing<sup>11</sup>.

- Allah has given both men and women different responsibilities and duties based on their creation and nature. Men are more strong and powerful in nature as compare to women who is sensitive, delicate and profound. That’s the reason men has given the role of Qawamah:

□الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ<sup>12</sup>

“Men are qawwamun in relation to women, according to what God has favored some over others”

Men has given responsibility of protection, support and maintenance of women in their means as He is created with more strength .The righteous women always shows obedience and loyalty to his husband. This obedience is due to his heavy obligation and not indicating any predilections<sup>13</sup>.

- According to the Holy Prophet (PBUH) teachings both men and women without any discrimination will be equally responsible for their deeds and acts. They were equally punished and rewarded based on their conducts without any gender discernment. A hadith Narrated:

«أَلَا كَلُّكُمْ رَاعٍ، وَكَلُّكُمْ مَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ، فَالْأَمِيرُ الَّذِي عَلَى النَّاسِ رَاعٍ عَلَيْهِمْ، وَهُوَ مَسْئُولٌ عَنْهُمْ،

وَالرَّجُلُ رَاعٍ عَلَى أَهْلِ بَيْتِهِ، وَهُوَ مَسْئُولٌ عَنْهُمْ، وَالْمَرْأَةُ رَاعِيَةٌ عَلَى بَيْتِ بَعْلِهَا وَوَلَدِهِ، وَهِيَ مَسْئُولَةٌ عَنْهُمْ، وَالْعَبْدُ

رَاعٍ عَلَى مَالِ سَيِّدِهِ، وَهُوَ مَسْئُولٌ عَنْهُ، فَكَلُّكُمْ رَاعٍ، وَكَلُّكُمْ مَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ»<sup>14</sup>

“Each of you is a shepherd and each of you is responsible for his flock. The ruler who is over the people is a shepherd and is responsible for his flock ;a man is shepherd in charge of the inhabitants of his household and he is responsible for his flock ;a woman is a shepherdess in charge of her husband’s house and children ,and she is responsible for them ;and a man ‘s slave is a shepherd in charge of his master’s property and he is responsible for its each of you is a shepherd and each of you is responsible for his flock.”

- Holy Prophet (PBUH) encouraged women to seek education, participate enthusiastically in social and outdoor activities.

طَلَبُ الْعِلْمِ فَرِيضَةٌ عَلَى كُلِّ مُسْلِمٍ<sup>15</sup>

“Seeking knowledge is compulsory foe every muslim

Both men and women permitted to contribute in battles, join his lectures, religious commandments and socialize with public. . Holy Prophet (PBUH) said:

عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: إِذَا اسْتَأْذَنَتِ امْرَأَةٌ أَحَدَكُمْ فَلَا يَمْنَعُهَا<sup>16</sup>

“The prophet said: If the wife of any one of you asks permission(to go to the mosque) do not forbid her”

The wives of Holy Prophet (PBUH) are best examples for other women, who performed impeccably in indoor and outdoor activities. They opened classes for knowledge, ran businesses, participated in battle field and involved in leadership line etc..<sup>17</sup>

#### 1.4 Socio-Cultural Barriers Confronted by Rural Women

Socio-cultural barriers impede the empowerment of rustic women in Pakistan and contribute significantly to the dissertation on gender equality. By considering Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5 ) that

emphasizes gender equality and the authorization of all women and girls, this study will provide acumens into the structural challenges that encompass gender-based inequalities. Understanding these barriers is vital for scheming effective policies and mediations that endorse women's rights and social enclosure.

Although Islamic teachings based on equality and human rights and there are human rights clusters working for egalitarianism but women are still not accessing their basic essential rights. Despite of human rights NGOs and commissions efforts for women privileges, they have lack of access to education, inheritance rights, healthcare, and marriages rights.. Many social and cultural barriers stop women from attaining their privileges.

1. Society cultural based traditions mostly uphold and favor men, making it hard for women to prerogative what is rightfully theirs.
2. It is the vision of most of the families that giving women their inheritance rights will reduce their wealth.
3. In some rural cultures, women's health needs and their educational rights are often neglected.
4. Forced Marriage without concerning their willing and consents are prevailed in rural areas that take away their rudimentary rights.

To get rid of these social barriers and to change this situation, we must need to spread awareness. One important step is to educate people by Islamic and legal teachings about women's rights. To preclude these injustices, communities need to work together and sturdier laws should be implement practically. Empowering women will be beneficial for everyone in a society and create an unbiased, fair and just world.

### **1.5 Approaches to practice women rights**

Now a days, It is needed to improve gender rights in all spheres of life according to Islamic principles. Islam give equal rights to women at political. social, educational and economic level. This revolutionary change of women prestige admitted even western scholars as **John Esposito** stated:

“Women were not accorded ever with such legal status in other cultures until centuries later”<sup>18</sup>

To promote equality and gender justice women rights needed to be raised in the following ways:

#### **Women's Economic Empowerment:**

Women has right of individual property endorsement. Women has specified sharing in her spouse and Father's property. Women by their own can trade, contract, or purchase and sell their properties. This right of

honor ship is given by Islam. The purpose of this right is to assure financial maintenance and protection of women in her all stages of life. Allah said in Quran:

﴿وَاللِّسَاءُ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا تَرَكَ الْوَالِدَانِ وَالْأَقْرَبُونَ مِمَّا قَلَّ مِنْهُ أَوْ كَثُرَ نَصِيبًا مَّفْرُوضًا﴾<sup>19</sup>

“And for women there is a share in what their parents and close relatives leave, whether it is little or small, these are obligatory shares”. Islam has specified quantity of sharing property for both men and women .The sharing part of men and women is different but this difference doesn’t means the precedence or priority of men over women, instead this variation based on responsibilities, rights and obligations of both..<sup>20</sup> She has right to get take care of child deportment even in case of living with him or in case of death. Woman can attains her maintenance in situation of divorce ,or death of her husband( at the time period of iddat).

### **Employment rights and Enforcement:**

Women prior responsibility is holding her home duties and training her child on righteous ways. With this indoor obligations Islam allowed her to get employment and work outside. Women is allowed to get income and earn money while working outside but with some religious norms and restrictions. These restrictions are necessary This employment rights with some restrictions and by following religious norms. She allowed earning income after her prior responsibilities.

Now a days women outside at work place treated as minorities and men are benefitted more in case of laws, wages and social status. Income disparity is most challenging aspect for women in contemporary world. Beside this the women are working side by side with men.

### **Women’sParticipation in Political Affairs:**

Islam titled to parity and justice for both male and female gender without any percipience. Women can participate and work with men in communal and political affairs without profaning religious values of dignity,virtue, modesty and honor. In Quran:

﴿وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ﴾<sup>21</sup>

“The believers, men and women ,are protectors one of another ;they enjoin what is just, and forbid what is evil”

For instance women have right to working at administrative levels, to vote for the selection of ruler, teaching, policies making, and scholarship rivalries etc...

### **Legal Reforms and Enforcement**

Women active contribution in all human areas is not evident due to poverty, the cultural belongings, and lack of awareness and education. Women are suffering problems, violence and discrimination issues due to

weakness of laws enforcement on authoritative level. It is needed to strengthen laws against domestic violence, early marriage, and discrimination.

Islam own women working, social, economic. and political rights because of its intrinsic faithfulness<sup>22</sup>. In modern globalize civilization, if the actual values and principles of Islam is practiced in every sphere of life then maltreatment of rights and gender discernment issues can be decreased and society will be befitted. Today, it has been seen that 50% of population is representing by women, if this 50% portion of nation not embolden to contribute enthusiastically in all societal domains, then a country can't step towards growth and development and growth<sup>23</sup>.

### **Conclusion:**

This study helps in understanding the social and cultural challenges that stop rustic women in Pakistan from getting their rudimentary rights, such as healthcare, education, and inheritance. By detecting these issues, this research explore how these issues create gender discernment and keep women from developing.

One major outcome of this study is to give awareness about the difficulties rustic women are facing now days. It help human rights groups, Government officials, , and public to learn about the actual problems and reasons behind gender inequality in rural areas. The findings provide valuable information to create programs and policies that support women's privileges and their presence in society. Another key result is the preferment of education and cognizance campaigns. This study highlights the significance of Islamic teachings and laws that protect women's privileges. It will embolden efforts to educate communities about gender equivalence.. Local leaders, religious scholars and teachers can use this information to defy unfair traditions and create an unbiased society. The study also help to improve policy changes and legal enforcement .By presenting where decrees are not being followed appropriately, it drive authorities to take harsh action against denial of inheritance, forced marriages, and restrictions on women's freedom. The research call for sturdier laws to ensure women attaining their legal share in possessions, proper education, and right to healthcare.

In the future, this study aid to develop programs that encourage gender egalitarianism. By encouraging positive change and identifying cultural fences, it will support efforts to create a society in Pakistan where women are valued, empowered, and can actively contribute in the country's development.

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## **1.6 Parameters to incorporate comprehensive rights of women in rural areas:**

Additional considerations can be the study of Policy Institutional & Interventions. It may comprise:

1. Community-Led & NGO Efforts: Measure the role of non-governmental organizations in encouraging gender equality.
2. Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 5) Progress: Analyze Pakistan's alignment with international gender egalitarianism pledges.
3. To promote fairness and justice, media campaigns can also give awareness to the people regarding women privileges. Educating men about women rights and encouraging Women to fight for their rights can leads towards justice and equality in a society.
4. Providing training programs can assist women to understand their position in a society and how to access their rights. Workshops and seminars should be held for teachers, community leaders, Schools, colleges, religious figures, and local communities should organize cognizance lectures on women's rights.
5. Social media can also be a influential tool to bring attention to these problems and inspire action.
6. By enforcing laws educating people, and raising awareness, we can develop a society where women will able to get their education , healthcare, rightful inheritance and marriage rights.
7. By incorporating these parameters, the study can provide a data-driven and well-structured analysis that supports active policy interventions and recommendations.

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