

Role of Legislation in protecting Women Rights in South Punjab, Pakistan

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Abstract

This research study explored the role of legislation in protecting women’s rights in South Punjab, focusing on two district Multan and Lodhran. The key variables were legislation and women’s rights, with a particular emphasis on how legal provisions and their enforcement impact women’s safety, equality, and access to justice. A mixed-method approach, combining quantitative (statistical) and qualitative (theoretical) research design was used for data collection to provide a comprehensive understanding. Quantitative data were collected from 550 women participants through a structured questionnaire, while 50 in-depth interviews conducted from both male and female. The study considered demographic variables to assess how these factors shape perspectives of women’s rights and access to legal remedies. A Likert-scale questionnaire was used to measure awareness and perceptions of legislation. The outcomes showed insignificant variations were found in the perspectives of rural and urban women while there were a significant differences between the opinions of married and unmarried women and among studying and not studying female as well. Furthermore, highly significant variations were also analyzed in the perceptions of employed and unemployed female. Outcomes of qualitative data showed that legislative frameworks exist to protect women’s rights, their implementation remains inconsistent, especially in rural areas where societal biases, ignorance and inadequate institutional mechanism hinder effectiveness. The study emphasizes the demand for policy reforms, more effective institutional structures, and legal literacy drives to bridge the gap between legislation and practice.

Keywords: Legislation; Women’s Rights; Legal Protection; Women’s Empowerment; South Punjab; Legal Awareness

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INTRODUCTION

Legal access defined as the ability of individual to obtain the resolution by official and unofficial organizations of justice. Legal access is the basic right of every citizen free from any social class, color, belief etc. Women empowerment has substantial impact on access to institutional and non-institutional legal systems including authorities, rules and regulations, legal forum and informal justice system (Cherayi and Jose, 2016). Legal reforms or actions significantly affected on economic security and financial prospects of female. Laws and acts which are powerful tool to support empowerment of women that assure gender equality and non-discrimination mainly focus on forbidding work place intimidation and bullying, equivalent compensation and maternal rights. In multiple countries, female do not have professional equality and inclusion and they do not achieve the rank of authority than male (Evagora-Campbell et al., 2024). Female encounter more challenges as compared to men in the domestic as well outdoor activities. Access to justice become challenge for those who live in poverty (Kenya, 2011).

Pakistan reflects the history of legislations about women's rights and empowerment with complicated patterns and efforts of the state to protect rights of women, balancing diverse views on women's roles in society. Pakistani women face major barriers and obstacles to justice and equality despite multiple legislation regarding women's protection. Setbacks and progress in legislation to protect women and their rights were well analyzed by Weiss (2012) in the article "Moving Forward with the Legal Empowerment of Women in Pakistan". Early progress regarding women was made through the constitution of 1956 under which a Muslim family law ordinance was given to protect the rights of women. Under General Zia ul Haq's tenure, the Hudood Ordinance curtailed women's rights by confining them to particular domains, but General Parvez Musharraf's regime (1999) brought notable reforms to women's rights, presenting a better image of Pakistan at the international level. Revision of a Hudood ordinance in 2006 resulted in the Protection of Women Act to reserve the damages. The legislation made under Musharraf made way for progress to empower women. These laws deal with acid throwing, harassment at the workplace and practices against women to provide them with legal protection. Despite the legislative policies' implementation gaps, opposition to reforms and the informal justice system undermine legal protection. Real change relies on effective enforcement of the law by improving institutional capacity and changing societal attitudes.

Violence and injustice towards women are common in the world and Pakistan is not an exception. Violence is a criminal activity that needs to be addressed at the root level. Rizvi et al. (2024), in "Combating violence against women in Pakistan: Legal framework and policy recommendations", investigated the causes and effects of unequal treatment of women as well as the role of multiple legislatures in protecting women against violence in Pakistan. The qualitative research relied on reports, laws and articles using primary and secondary data. Pakistan is presented with multiple legal measures to protect women, but the existence of several challenges resist implementation of these laws without discrimination. The paper found poverty, low literacy rate, dowry and inheritance issues, social customs, birth of daughters and patriarchy were among the root causes of violence. To break cultural norms about treatment, attitude and behavior towards women, strict laws are needed to minimize challenges to women's security and protection. Legal reforms are crucial, but without institutional improvement and community engagement for cultural change, improvement is difficult.

Women are vital and fundamental elements for the country's progress as half population of the world consist of women. Without the complete engagement of women in any sector,

any step is unsuccessful because women play an important role in their societies achieving nourishment protection, family task, enhancing family's living, taking care of their child and elders and overall prosperity of humanity. SDG5 took steps to reduce the diversity, abuse and oppression contrary to girls and female, forced marriages, and enhance legislation (Global goals of SD, 2015). Pakistan also have different projects, plans of actions, acts, principles, and protocols to secure the rights of female and to ensure the growth and development of women. Instead of all these, female in Pakistan experience almost all type of abuse, discriminations, disparities, stagnations etc. Discrimination against of female begin at home. In Pakistan, the behavior of family and society mostly at the time of birth of a baby girl is not embracing. However, there is no end of Hardships of women such as unequal treatment, insecure workplace, biased educational assets and prospects, various type of violence and harassments, inadequate health resources, forced marriages, unfair working environment. As a result limited resources, ineffective law implementation, poor administration and poor strategies which seek no praise from religious instructions (Arif et al., 2022).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Although Pakistan has enacted various laws to protect women's rights, their implementation in South Punjab remains poor due to patriarchal traditions, socio-economic disparities and lack of legal awareness. Despite constitutional guarantees and legislative measures, including laws addressing domestic violence, harassment and inheritance rights many women in this region continue to face widespread discrimination, violence, and systemic barriers to justice. Large portion of empirical literature has disclosed the determinants of women empowerment with diverse findings. But the current literature explained the impactful role of legislation in protecting womens' rights especially focusing on South Punjab. The findings aim to guide policy-makers and legal institutions in strengthening laws, enhance women's legal literacy and ensure meaningful protection for women in South Punjab.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Research questions of this research study were following:

1. How does legislation impact womens' rights in South Punjab, Pakistan?
2. What is comparison among rural and urban women opinions regarding legislation role in protecting womens' rights?
3. What is comparison among married and unmarried women perspectives about legislation role in protecting womens' rights?
4. What is comparison among employed and unemployed women perceptions regarding legislation role in protecting womens' rights?
5. What is comparison among studying and not studying women opinions about legislation role in protecting womens' rights?

LITERATURE REVIEW

ROLE OF LAWS AND POLICIES IN PROTECTING WOMEN RIGHTS

A qualitative research on "Women's Rights Laws in Pakistan: Challenges and Solutions" by Gondal and Hatta (2024) presented the challenges faced by women for their protection due to the gap between ground realities and legal reforms in Pakistan. Primary and secondary data was utilized, including semi-structured interviews with lawmakers and solicitors. Pakistan has enacted multiple pieces of legislation, such as the anti-rape ordinance (2020) and the Women's Protection Act against violence (2016) to protect women's rights, but challenges are still there, confirming only legislation is not enough. The analysis explored that societal and cultural norms, inadequate execution of laws, less awareness and limited

education about their rights brings resistance to the way of empowering women. It was suggested that legislative changes could improve the implementation of women's rights. Creating special institutions, updating laws and legal structures, more awareness and the rule of law can bring positive change towards women's empowerment by protecting their rights in Pakistan.

Islam et al. (2024) presented a comparison between the USA, Europe and Pakistan in terms of legislation implemented for the protection of women in an article titled "Women's Rights and Gender Equality in Islamic and Western Legal Systems: A Comparative Analysis between Pakistan, the USA, and Europe". The study aimed to assess the role of social factors, cultural influence and legal approaches in shaping women's rights in western and Islamic legal systems by employing comparative legal analysis and feminist legal theory. Laws provide protection to women in social, political, economic and other spheres. Islam pays more attention to women's rights as the Holy Quran discusses marriage, mehar, respectful divorce, inheritance and other affairs to protect and empower women. The Islamic legal structure comprises Sharia law based on the Quran and Hadith, while the legal systems of the USA and Europe talk about secular values that include freedom of the individual, legal equality and separation between religion and state.

Kaushik and Garg (2024), in their article "Role of the Indian Judiciary in the Empowerment of Women: An Analysis through Case Laws", offered an examination of the effective role of the Indian judiciary in advancing women's empowerment, which has assisted in achieving equality and opportunity for women. The study used primary and secondary data for better understanding. The data was received from a survey on Google form with 108 responses from different ages and backgrounds, while secondary data was collected through journals, articles and blogs. The study highlighted the intervention of the legal framework in addressing issues including gender disparities, harassment and domestic violence. Outcomes revealed that uplifting a woman has helped to transform old and traditional thinking about women and their rights in India. Gender discrimination is rooted in Indian society, but laws and orders in favor of women have changed the situation by providing equal pay for the same work, gender quality, equal opportunities and treatment at the place of work. Strict and successful practice of laws to protect women, the promotion of women's reservations, providing legal assistance, equal participation in all areas of life and financial independence of women were recommended in study.

A study "Sexual harassment and women seafarers: The role of laws and policies in ensuring occupational safety and health" by Caballo Pineiro and Kitada (2020) deals with a socio-legal approach to observing whether laws are effective or whether more action is needed to prevent sexual harassment in the maritime sector. Women are underrepresented in seafaring roles and face harassment due to a male-dominated and isolated work environment. It was found that police action and laws about sexual harassment are fragile, presenting a non-satisfactory situation. By putting the issue on the agenda, sexual harassment laws have been evolved and implemented in many nations. The United Nations Committee General recommendation 19 in 1992 about the elimination of discrimination against women discussed sexual, mental or physical harm against women and expanded the international legal foundation to tackle harassment in the workplace. The International Labor Organization (ILO) approved a convention on violence and harassment by an analysis of legislation in domestic affairs covering about 80 countries around the world. World Bank also collaborated with an extensive analysis of legislation adopted in 114 countries out of 173, including all regions accepting North Africa and the Middle East. In 2008, a gender and development protocol in South Africa was added to

promote legislation. The amendment of the Maritime Labor Convention (MLC) in 2016 is about the elimination of shipboard bullying and harassment, which was effective from 2019 to fight against gender discrimination and to provide legal protection for women. Although these frameworks provide protection, a tailor-made approach is needed to ensure safety in the maritime industry.

In addition, Asghar and Hussain (2022) discussed challenges faced by Pakistan in the way the implementation of laws regarding women's rights, despite legal modernization. Law making and law implementation are two different things. Difficulties come at the implementation level. Difficulties in Pakistan regarding the enforcement of policies include cultural and societal norms, lack of education and patriarchy. The situation can be improved by reducing misconceptions. Access to education, cultural change and political structure play a role in the empowerment of women, introducing new laws and strengthening present ones.

Sardinha et al. (2022) provided a comprehensive regional, national and global view of physical and sexual violence against women in the article "Global, regional, and national prevalence estimates of physical or sexual, or both, intimate partner violence against women in 2018". The WHO global database highlighted profound implications for the physical and mental health of women due to intimate partner violence. The researchers performed studies in 61 countries at National and sub-National levels over the period from 2000 to 2018. A Bayesian multilevel model was used for the analysis of the estimation of partner violence. The study found responses from 2 million women all over the world aged 15 or above to reveal that about 27% of women faced sexual, physical or both forms of violence. It was indicated that low-income countries had high levels of violence. All this reflects that the government is not on the way to reducing violence against girls and women and even sustainable development goals aiming to end violence against women seem insufficient. There is an urgent need for investment in multisectoral interventions, including support services, gender equality and law enforcement mechanisms to respond to intimate violence.

The article "Critical Analysis and Breeches in the Legislation addressing Domestic Abuse against Women" by Zahoor et al. (2022) examined the effectiveness and gaps of the legal framework on domestic violence in Pakistan. Primary and secondary sources of data, including posts, books, journals, observations and official records, were utilized as sources of data that confirmed the abolition of an ordinance in 2016, which was enforced by General Zia-Ul-Haq in the name of Islamization, through an act that provided protection to women in Pakistan. The Women Protection Act (2006), Criminal Law Amendment Act (2010) to deal with sexual harassment, act against harassment at the workplace, Domestic Abuse Legislation (2012) and the Sindh Domestic Violence Act (2013) are present to provide legal protection to women in Pakistan. Despite these acts, violence and restricting women from work are common in Pakistan. Current ordinances and laws need implementation in the true sense in Pakistan. Action in acts is crucial to secure women's safety in the future.

Behan et al. (2024), in his article "A Critical Examination of The Persistent Fight for Women's Rights in Pakistan", analyzed the ongoing cultural and legal struggle for women's rights. Historical legacies, patriarchy and colonial laws are deeply rooted even after the constitutional guarantee of equal rights for women. The courts play a vital role in protecting weak and less empowered sections of society that include women, religious groups and the poor. When justice is expensive and delayed, the weak are unable to access justice. In Pakistan, women face limited economic freedom, and are denied rights of property, education and healthcare, especially in remote areas. This could be improved via

strengthening actions against legal pressure (due to political interference) on women. In addition, promotion of human rights, simple legal access, institutional collaboration and judicial independence were recommended.

Javed et al. (2024), in "Promoting social justice and women's rights: Mitigating the negative impacts of large hydropower projects on tribal women in the Hindu Kush Himalaya region", observed the effect of systemic inequalities and social justice on tribal women in 11 villages with different social, cultural and economic background in Diamer district, Pakistan in terms of reducing negative influence on hydropower projects in Hindu Kush Hamalyian region. Some of them include Geenah Chilas, Chilas Bazar, Khinar, Khurbanabad, Gains Balla, Gonar Farm and Gains Pain Gonar Farm. The quantitative research utilized responses from 511 questionnaires using a Likert scale with five points and applying partial least square structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) for descriptive analysis. Theory of social justice with empirical evidence disclosed that tribal affiliation of women influenced the association between social equality and sustainability. Social justice recognition showed a positive impact on women's sustainability in these villages. According to the empirical findings of research procedures, distributive, recognition and substantive justice for women presented a positive connection with social progress. The research recommended a gender-sensitive approach in programs and policymaking to meet the challenges and needs of women from tribal communities.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN

To get detailed information about legislation and women rights that give their contribution to great extent to women empowerment were explored by using both quantitative and qualitative method in South Punjab. This study used mixed approach including both quantitative (numerical data) and qualitative (in-depth personal experiences) method in South Punjab. Using quantitative approach, 550 questionnaire were filled by women of South Punjab while using qualitative approach, 50 interviews were arranged for both male and female including main bodies regarding legislation and empowerment of women.

POPULATION OF THE STUDY

The population that targeted for this research study was two district of South Punjab including Multan and Lodhran. All females with age 20+ having different socio-economic background including demographic information with age, job status, marital status, qualification, education type and residence.

SAMPLE OF RESEARCH

Two cities Multan and Lodhran were randomly selected from South Punjab. 550 women participants and 50 respondents for in-depth interview were selected as sample for this research study using convenient sampling technique to observe the role of legislation in protecting women rights in South Punjab.

INSTRUMENTS OF RESEARCH

The study used two significant tools for data collection. First instrument used in study was standardized questionnaire. The second instrument was interview from various socio-economic background and contributing to women empowerment.

DEVELOPMENT OF TOOLS

First section of both questionnaire and interview protocol were demonstrated demographic information with age, gender, job status, marital status, current position, qualification, education type, occupation, residence, and district. Second section of both research tools includes statements regarding legislation of women. The questionnaire was based on five points Likert Scale e.g. 1 (Not at all) to 5 (Extremely) related to legal

protection of women. Questionnaire with six questions each statement with five options for female response.

DATA COLLECTION

Before data collection ethical approval was acquired. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained throughout the study process. By using quantitative research design, data were collected from questionnaire filled by 550 female participants of South Punjab. By qualitative research method, empirical data were used for data collection from 50 women and men who were interviewed from two district of South Punjab, Pakistan: Multan and Lodhran. A face to face semi-structured interview method was used for data collection form the respondents for this study.

For this research, questionnaire was given to female (having different status) and sufficient time was given so that they can answer all question in accurate way. It was hard work to collect data because most of the time female were unwilling to fill questionnaire and give answer of any question. Situation became disappointing when some female cared nothing giving random and inaccurate data while filling questionnaire.

DATA ANALYSIS

Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) was used for analysis of quantitative data. Mean and standard deviation were measured for descriptive statistics. T-test were applied in this study to measure the difference between respondents regarding legislation and women's rights by locality, marital, job and study status. Cronbach's Apha was also used to measure reliability of all items.

For qualitative analysis, all interviews were audio-recorded with the informed consent of respondents, converted into written format/typed out and then translated the audio-recordings into English. This keen knowledge enabled the researcher to start the process of coding where of writing's sections related to research question were noted. However, these codes were accurately evaluated. This phase showing consideration including relative analysis of themes, codes and primary data that are significant for research purposes. Researcher started each interview with the clarification of the research's purpose. Interviews consisted general questions to gain insight into thinking of respondents such as their views about legislation and women rights.

VALIDITY OF TOOLS

The research tools (questionnaire and interview questions) was developed by researcher of this study. Questionnaire and interview protocol was approved and refined by recommendation and suggestions given by supervisor. The research tools were recertified and all the shortcomings were eliminated. Finally organized by removing all possible defects making it complete for practical procedure.

RELIABILITY OF TOOL

Reliability is relevant to consistency or correctness in determining the relationship between components (Heale and Twycross, 2015). Reliability assessed using Cronbach's Alpha with SPSS on six items.

TABLE 1: RESULTS OF CRONBACH'S ALPHA

No	Variable	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
1	Legislation	6	.637

Outcomes of Cronbach's alpha testing of this study is given in above table 1. Legislation is the factor that contains 6 items with Cronbach's Alpha .637. The data implications reported high reliability with Cronbach's alpha at larger than 0.6. Therefore, the data were valid and could be used for theory testing.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Primary aim of study was to explain the role of legislation in protecting women rights in South Punjab. For data analysis, data were inserted into SPSS. First, mean value and standard deviation were determined for descriptive analysis. The research was conducted to examine difference about legislation in urban and rural women, employed and unemployed female, married and unmarried female and studying and not studying women by using independent sample t-test. The study applied thematic analysis to evaluate people's perception regarding the women rights and legislation in South Punjab. Quantitative and qualitative approaches resulted in different analysis.

TABLE 2: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF OVERALL DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Descriptive Statistics				
No.	Demographic Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
1.	Age	1.35	.780	550
2.	Gender	2.00	.000	550
3.	Job Status	1.85	.360	550
4.	Marital Status	1.77	.424	550
5.	Current Position	1.23	.422	550
6.	Qualification	3.09	.769	550
7.	Education Type	1.50	.932	550
8.	Residence	1.60	.491	550

For the collected data descriptive statistics were measured. For the demographic information mean and standard deviation were calculated. Mean value for the age, gender, job status, marital status, current position, qualification, education type, residence and district were 1.35, 2.00, 1.85, 1.77, 1.23, 3.09, 1.50 and 1.60 respectively. Measurement of standard deviation presented for demographic information were .780, .000, .360, .424, .422, .769, .932 and .491 for age, job status, marital status, qualification, education type, residence and district. All values are presented in table 2.

WOMEN PERSPECTIVES REGARDING "LEGISLATION"

TABLE 3: FEELING PROTECTED WITH LAWS CONCERNING WOMEN'S RIGHTS

		Frequency	Percentage	Mean	SD
1.	Not at all	64	11.6	3.1855	1.27972
2.	To some extent	109	19.8		
3.	Moderately	145	26.4		
4.	Considerably	125	22.7		
5.	Extremely	107	19.5		
	Total	550	100.0		

Table 3 shows female respondents' perceptions regarding feel protected with laws concerning women's rights. Data indicates 19.5% women told that they extremely feel protected with laws concerning women's rights. Contrary, 22.7% participants answered considerably, 26.4% moderately, around 20% to some extent while 11.6% not at all about this question. The mean significance (3.18) which reveals that respondents gave positive opinion on this item.

TABLE 4: FEELING SAFE IN PURSUING EDUCATION AS A WOMAN

		Frequency	Percentage	Mean	SD
1.	Not at all	24	4.4	3.7073	1.16089
2.	To some extent	65	11.8		
	Moderately	135	24.5		

3.	Considerably	150	27.3
4.	Extremely	176	32.0
5.	Total	550	100.0

Table 4 presents women views related to feeling safe in pursuing education as a woman. It is clear from the findings 32% respondents said that they extremely feel safe in pursuing education as a woman. However, 27.3% respondents answered considerably, 24.5% moderately, approximately 12% to some extent while 4.4% not at all regarding this aspect. The mean value was (3.70) which indicates that female gave favorable response on this question.

TABLE 5: CAPABILITY TO RESIST CYBERCRIME AS EMPOWERED WOMAN

	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	SD
1. Not at all	50	9.1	3.3182	1.21865
2. To some extent	89	16.2		
3. Moderately	156	28.4		
4. Considerably	146	26.5		
5. Extremely	109	19.8		
Total	550	100.0		

Table 5 indicates women participants' perspectives about their capacity to resist cybercrime as empowered women. The study highlighted around 20% respondents told that they extremely have capacity to resist cybercrime as empowered women. Meanwhile, 26.5% female indicated considerably, 28.4% moderately, nearly 16% to some extent and 9.1% female participants claimed not at all. The mean significance (3.31) which shows that respondents gave positive opinion on this aspect.

TABLE 6: EASILY REPORT HARASSMENT/VIOLENCE IN EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS

	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	SD
1. Not at all	46	8.4	3.4145	1.22342
2. To some extent	89	16.2		
3. Moderately	123	22.4		
4. Considerably	175	31.8		
5. Extremely	117	21.3		
Total	550	100.0		

Table 6 presents the respondents' perceptions regarding easily report their harassment/violence in educational settings. The results shows 21.3% female answer that they extremely can report harassment/violence in educational settings. However, the respondents who considerably were 31.8%, moderately were 22.4%, 16.2% to some extent While 8.4% answered not at all about the item. The mean value (3.41) which indicates that women gave favorable response on this statement.

TABLE 7: CONFIDENT IN JUSTICE SYSTEM'S ABILITY TO PROTECT WOMEN RIGHTS

	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	SD
1. Not at all	75	13.6	3.2018	1.3
2. To some extent	116	21.1		
3. Moderately	106	19.3		
4. Considerably	129	23.5		
5. Extremely	124	22.5		
Total	550	100.0		

Table 7 indicates participants' views pertaining to confident in the justice system's ability to protect women rights. Data highlighted 22.5% women told that they extremely confident in the justice system's ability to protect women rights. Furthermore, 23.5% participants were considerably, 19.3% moderately, 21.1% to some extent and 13.6% female reported not at all. The mean score (3.20) which shows that respondents gave positive opinion on this feature.

TABLE 8: LAWS HELPED IN PREVENTING CHILD MARRIAGE AND PROMOTING GIRLS' EDUCATION

	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	SD
1. Not at all	53	9.6	3.4164	1.28012
2. To some extent	80	14.5		
3. Moderately	146	26.5		
4. Considerably	127	23.1		
5. Extremely	144	26.2		
Total	550	100.0		

Table 8 presents the women respondents' opinions regarding laws helped in protecting girls from early marriages and empowering female through learning. It is clear from the data approximately 26% women said that laws extremely helped in protecting girls from early marriages and empowering female through learning. However, 23.1% participants answer considerably, 26.5% moderately, 14.5% to some extent and 9.6% not at all about the statement. The mean value was (3.41) which shows that women gave positive opinion on this aspect.

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF INDEPENDENT SAMPLE T-TEST

TABLE 9: INDEPENDENT SAMPLE T-TEST TO MEASURE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN URBAN AND RURAL FEMALES' PERSPECTIVES REGARDING ROLE OF LEGISLATION IN PROTECTING WOMEN RIGHTS

Variable	Factors of Residence	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-test	Sig.
Legislation	Rural	329	3.3075	.76681	2.594	.010
	Urban	221	3.4729	.70944		

Table 9 exhibits the comparison of female respondent's perceptions relating to role of legislation in protecting women rights in South Punjab by residence, which was executed considering the objectives of study. After comparison, the following t-test conclusions were drawn. It is clear that p-value (0.01) which is lower than 0.05 level of significance. It means that there was a significant difference regarding legislation that effect women's rights between opinions of rural female (M=3.3075, SD=.76681) and urban female (M=3.4729, SD=.70944); $t(548) = 2.594$, $p = 0.01$. While mean value of urban women was greater than that of rural women. It means that urban areas woman had given more favorable responses as compared to a rural areas woman.

TABLE 10: INDEPENDENT SAMPLES T-TEST TO MEASURE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MARRIED AND UNMARRIED FEMALES' PERSPECTIVES REGARDING ROLE OF LEGISLATION IN PROTECTING WOMEN RIGHTS

Variable	Factors of Marital Status	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-test	Sig.
Legislation	Married	129	3.2313	.79585	-2.488	.013
	Unmarried	421	3.4177	.72818		

Table 10 shows the comparison of female respondents' perspectives regarding role of legislation in protecting women rights in South Punjab by marital status, which was carried out keeping in view the objectives of study. After comparison, the following t-test results came out. It is clear that p-value (0.04) which is lower than 0.05 level of significance. It means that there was a significant difference about legislation that effect women's rights between the opinions of married women (M=3.2747, SD=.51236) and unmarried women (M=3.3741, SD=.46981); t (548) =-2.058, p= 0.04. While mean value of unmarried women was greater than that of married women. It means that unmarried woman had given more favorable responses as compared to a married women.

TABLE 11: INDEPENDENT SAMPLES T-TEST TO MEASURE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN EMPLOYED AND UNEMPLOYED FEMALES' PERSPECTIVES REGARDING ROLE OF LEGISLATION IN PROTECTING WOMEN RIGHTS

Variable	Factors of Job Status	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-test	Sig.
Legislation	Employed	84	3.3869	.81287	.172	.863
	Unemployed	466	3.3716	.73667		

Table 11 reveals the comparison of female respondents' views pertaining to role of legislation in protecting women rights in South Punjab by job status, which was performed considering the objectives of study. After comparison, the following t-test findings were revealed. It is clear that p-value (0.00) which is lower than 0.05 level of significance. It means that there was a significant difference related to legislation that effect women's rights between the perceptions of employed (M=3.4763, SD=.50679) and unemployed woman (M=3.3281, SD=.47384); t (548) =2.609, p= 0.00. While mean value of employed women was greater than that of unemployed women. It means that employed woman had given more favorable responses as compared to a unemployed women.

TABLE 12: INDEPENDENT SAMPLES T-TEST TO MEASURE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN STUDYING AND NOT-STUDYING FEMALES' PERSPECTIVES REGARDING ROLE OF LEGISLATION IN PROTECTING WOMEN RIGHTS

Variable	Factors of Current Position	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-test	Sig.
Legislation	Studying	423	3.4275	.73244	3.088	.002
	Not studying	127	3.1955	.77440		

Table 12 presents the comparison of female participants' opinions about role of legislation in protecting women rights in South Punjab by current position, which was conducted taking into account the objectives of study. After comparison, the following t-test outcomes emerged. It is clear that p-value 0.02 which is lower than 0.05 level of significance. It means that there was a significant difference regarding legislation that effect women's rights between the perspectives of studying (M=3.3770, SD=.46797) and not studying female (M=3.2634, SD=.51644); t (548) =2.341, p= 0.02. While mean value of studying women was greater than that of not studying women. It means that studying woman had given more favorable responses as compared to a not studying women.

THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEW DATA

WOMEN'S LEGAL AWARENESS AND PROTECTION ENHANCED THROUGH EFFECTIVE LEGISLATION

In response to question "Do you think women's legal awareness and protection enhanced through effective legislation?", the interview disclosed multiple perspectives. When

women were asked about women's legal awareness and protection enhanced through effective legislation, almost 32% narrated that:

"Women protected under the effective and adequate legislation and have power to easily handle the crisis or bad situations confidently and in better ways. I observed women become good and responsible citizen. Their self-esteem rise as they never feel themselves inferior to men in society. Women also respect social norms, know about herself, aware of their legal rights and protections and are able to distinguish between right and wrong."

About 68% respondents said:

"Woman feel sense of confidence, empowered and independent through legal protection. Educated women are aware of their rights, receive more respect and show high level of self-respect. Legal awareness helped to improve their status in society."

By elaborating their opinions male respondent also highlighted that:

"Legislation makes women aware of their legal rights, which boosts their sense of security and self-worth."

ROLE OF EDUCATION IN PROTECTING WOMENS TO ACCESS JUSTICE/LEGAL PROTECTION

Participants highlighted importance of education in terms of assess to justice and legal protection. Observation of 38% respondents presented that:

"Educated female are well aware of laws, rules and regulations about their protection. They have more potential to raise voice for their rights. They speak against violence, can take initiative and are source of motivation for other victim female."

Views of other male and female making about 32% can be displayed as:

"An educated woman are not familiar with the legal rights of women. They face discrimination even from family in terms of inheritance, marriage and basic rights. Educated women can easily approach justice and legal protection. They can easily report complain like harassment without any fear and break silence against violation of their rights."

But 30% respondents told that education is unable to help women in multiple respects. Their views were:

"Level of education does not matter a lot, it is financial condition that can help to empower women. If economic status of women is good she can report any type of harassment or violence and can take an action."

NECESSARY CHANGES TO CREATE SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR PROTECTING WOMEN'S RIGHTS

In response to question "What changes do you think are necessary to create more supportive environment for protecting womens' rights?", the interview disclosed multiple perspectives. These perspectives are following:

18% respondents narrated that provide secure environment to women at workplace and educational institutes. About 22% respondents said that reduce gender inequality and provide economic opportunities.

By elaborating their opinions 26% male respondent also highlighted that implementation of strong laws regarding women protection. Almost 34% respondents presented that give respect and confidence to women.

FINDINGS

On the basis of data analysis, following major findings were indicated that, there were total 550 respondents making total 100% and there were all females. Among the 550 respondents, female having age between 20 to 29 were 80.0%, 30 to 39 were 10%, 40 to 49 were 5.5% and more than 50 years age were 4.5% with mean value (1.35) and standard deviation (0.78). Employed and unemployed women were 15.3% and 84.7% respectively

with mean value for job status was (1.85) and standard deviation (0.36). Married and unmarried women were 23.5% and 76.5% with mean value for marital status was (1.77) and standard deviation (0.42). Studying and non-studying female were 76.9% and 23.1% with mean value for current position was (1.23) and standard deviation was (0.42). Approximately 5% enrolled in secondary school, 10.4% in higher secondary school, bachelor's qualification were 55.5% while post graduate were 29.1% with mean value (3.09) and standard deviation (0.76). Around 71% for accessing professional education, 13.1% vocational education, 6% technical education while 9.8% female commerce education with mean value (1.50) and standard deviation (0.93). Nearly 60% were belong to rural areas and 40.2% urban areas with mean value for residence was (1.60) and standard deviation was (0.49). Approximately 72% were belong to Multan while 28% Lodhran.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The study has investigated the role of legislation in protecting womens' rights in South Punjab. The research findings underscores the positive role of legislation in protecting womens' rights in South Punjab. The outcomes showed that insignificant variations were found in the perspectives of rural and urban women while there were a significant differences between the opinions of married and unmarried women and among studying and not studying female as well. Furthermore, highly significant variations were also analyzed in the perceptions of employed and unemployed female. A thematic analysis was conducted to interpret data. For both male and female the researcher performed semi structured interviews based on standardized interview frameworks. The researcher reviewed the data to familiarize with the transcript and then developed preliminary codes. After coding data the researcher identified codes which are identical and combined them together. As data analysis continued the researchers categorized these codes into the comprehensive initial themes. After reviewing the themes the researchers named and explained each theme. These themes were revised and presented into logical order to well-defined the research objectives. Lastly, in results section the researcher discussed each theme, examined how the themes arose, and incorporated the excerpts of transcripts from data. The first question of each interview consist of demographic characteristics about the respondents age, gender, qualifications, education type, marital status, job status, residence and district.

Qualitative data analysis provides comprehensive insight of how legislation influences women's rights in South Punjab. Its purpose is to illustrate respondents' perspectives, recognize themes, and show deeper understanding of the complex mechanisms of women empowerment in the region. It was observed that more investment on legislation can result in more women empowerment. The outcome also revealed that implementation of comprehensive strategies to investment in women's rights and legislation are tools for promoting women empowerment in South Punjab. These strategic interventions should be supported by at root level to ensure effective and impactful outcomes. By focusing on addressing the vital domains, South Punjab can foster its resistance to these problems by enhancing inclusive development, and empowering the women.

RECOMMENDATIONS

While legislative frameworks exist to protect women's rights, their implementation remains inconsistent, especially in rural areas where societal biases, ignorance and inadequate institutional mechanism hinder effectiveness.

1. Demand for policy reforms, more effective institutional structures, and legal literacy drives to bridge the gap between legislation and practice.

2. Legal reforms should also be made to ensure that women have equal rights in marriage, inheritance, and employment, and these rights are protected and strictly follow.
3. Strengthening legal protections for women, including laws against domestic violence, equal pay for equal work, and protection from harassment, is essential for ensuring women's safety and economic independence.
4. Ensuring better implementation of these laws and educating women about their legal rights will go a long way in enhancing empowerment.
5. Strengthening law enforcement, offering gender-aware legal assistance, and raising community consciousness were recommended to ensure women's rights are entirely secured and empowered in South Punjab.

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