

Contemporary Global Feminism Trends and Cultural Barriers to Women's Empowerment in Pakistan: An Islamic Perspective

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Abstract:

This research examines the intersection of global feminist trends with Pakistan's sociocultural landscape, considering the implications for women's empowerment from an Islamic perspective. Despite Pakistan's diverse culture and complex socioeconomic structures, the study investigates how feminist movements respond to global trends while aligning with Islamic values. It acknowledges the challenges faced by women in Pakistan and explores strategies for empowerment that respect Islamic principles. Employing qualitative analysis, the research reviews existing literature and case studies through an Islamic lens. It finds that global feminism can inspire activists in Pakistan to challenge traditional norms and advocate for gender equality while adhering to Islamic ethical guidelines. The study identifies socioeconomic and cultural barriers within an Islamic framework and uncovers initiatives rooted in Islamic ethics to overcome them. Recognizing the unique challenges women face in Pakistan within an Islamic context is highlighted. In Pakistan, women's empowerment is significantly influenced by global feminist trends while incorporating Islamic principles. This research underscores the resilience of feminist activists operating within this dual framework. Understanding the interplay between global feminism and the Pakistani context from an Islamic perspective can inform more effective empowerment strategies, contributing to a more inclusive and equitable society that respects both global feminist ideals and Islamic ethics.

Keywords: *Contemporary global feminism trends in Pakistan, Socioeconomic barriers, Cultural barriers, Women's empowerment analysis. Women in Islam*

Introduction:

Allah says in Holy Qur'ān:

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*"And do not wish for that by which Allah has made some of you exceed others. For men is a share of what they have earned, and for women is a share of what they have earned. And ask Allah of His bounty. Indeed, Allah is ever, of all things, knowing."*⁴

Women make up approximately 50% of the world's population.⁵ Women in Pakistan play diverse roles in society, with their participation spanning various fields, from politics and education to business and healthcare.⁶ While progress has been made in recent years to enhance gender equality, challenges persist, including gender-based violence and limited access to opportunities in some regions.⁷ Efforts are underway to empower women through education, economic opportunities, and legal reforms. Women's contributions to Pakistan's social and economic development are increasingly recognized, and they continue to work towards greater equality and representation in all spheres of life.⁸

"Feminism" and "feminist activists" are widely debated terms in Pakistan. Feminism advocates for complete social, political, and economic equality for women, striving for equal rights and opportunities.⁹ The latest wave of feminism in Pakistan is distinctive as activists not only demand equal rights but also challenge patriarchal norms in private life domains. While social media platforms have enabled rapid dissemination of their messages, effective engagement with mainstream media remains crucial. Additionally, understanding the significance of engaging with the state, where political power resides, is vital.¹⁰ Women's rights are an integral part of human rights, and democratic values call for women's involvement at all decision-making levels. Providing equal opportunities for women to utilize their full potential in society is essential. To

⁴ An-Nisā, 4:32

⁵ Soares, Sadé E., and Nancy M. Sidun. "Women leaders during a global crisis: Challenges, characteristics, and strengths." *International Perspectives in Psychology: Research, Practice, Consultation* 10, no. 3 (2021): 130.

⁶ Shafiq, M. U. H. A. M. M. A. D. "Analysis of the role of women in livestock production in Balochistan, Pakistan." *Journal of Agriculture & Social Sciences*, 4 (2008): 18-22.

⁷ Roomi, Muhammad Azam, and Guy Parrott. "Barriers to development and progression of women entrepreneurs in Pakistan." *The Journal of Entrepreneurship* 17, no. 1 (2008): 59-72. p.69

⁸ Syed, Farzana Zaheer, and Humaira Masood Dar. "Women Political Participation in Pakistan: Steps towards Reshaping the Political Environment." *Orient Research Journal of Social Sciences (ORJSS)* 2, no. 2 (2017). p.156

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Saud, Muhammad, Rachmah Ida, and Musta'in Mashud. "Democratic practices and youth in political participation: a doctoral study." *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth* 25, no. 1 (2020): p.801

achieve true liberation from oppression, patriarchal systems must be dismantled. The current fourth wave of Pakistani feminism is a relatively new phenomenon and faces criticism from conservative circles as well as traditional feminists. Nevertheless, it warrants in-depth analysis and public discourse.

Theoretical Framework:

One theory that is relevant to the topic of "Analyzing Contemporary Global Feminism Trends in Pakistan and Socioeconomic and Cultural Barriers to Women's Empowerment" is the "Intersectionality Theory. "Intersectionality Theory, originally developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw, acknowledges that individuals can experience multiple, interconnected forms of oppression and discrimination based on various aspects of their identity, such as gender, race, class, sexuality, and more. In the Pakistani context, this theory can assist researchers and policymakers in comprehending the intricate dynamics through which women's experiences and obstacles to empowerment are shaped. These dynamics are a result of a multifaceted interplay of factors, encompassing gender, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and regional circumstances.

Applying Intersectionality Theory in the analysis allows for a more nuanced understanding of the challenge's women face. It recognizes that women from different backgrounds may encounter unique obstacles to empowerment and that a one-size-fits-all approach to gender equality may not be effective. This theory encourages a more inclusive and holistic approach to addressing the specific needs of women in Pakistan, considering the diverse factors that shape their experiences and opportunities for empowerment.

Research Objectives:

1. To analyze the influence of contemporary global feminism trends on feminist movements in Pakistan.
2. To identify and understand the socioeconomic barriers hindering women's empowerment in Pakistan.
3. To explore the cultural norms and traditions that act as barriers to women's empowerment in the Pakistani context.
4. To examine the strategies and initiatives employed by feminist activists in Pakistan to address and overcome socioeconomic and cultural barriers to women's empowerment.

Research Questions:

1. How have contemporary global feminism trends impacted the feminist movements in Pakistan?

2. What are the specific socioeconomic barriers that impede women's empowerment in the Pakistani context?
3. How do cultural norms and traditions act as barriers to women's empowerment in Pakistan?
4. What strategies and initiatives have feminist activists in Pakistan employed to address and overcome the socioeconomic and cultural barriers to women's empowerment, and what has been their effectiveness?

Contemporary Global Feminism Trends:

It encompasses a wide range of issues and movements. Some key trends and focal areas include. Contemporary feminism recognizes that gender inequality intersects with other forms of discrimination, such as race, class, sexuality, and disability. Activists work to address these intersecting inequalities and promote inclusivity.¹¹Me Too and Time's Up movements have drawn attention to issues of sexual harassment, assault, and gender-based violence. They emphasize the importance of speaking out and holding perpetrators accountable. Reproductive Rights significant global trend is the ongoing struggle for women's reproductive rights.¹²This includes access to safe and legal abortion, contraception, and comprehensive sexual education. Gender Pay Gap Activists continue to push for equal pay for equal work. They seek to close the gender pay gap and promote transparency in salary structures.

Political participation is a growing emphasis on increasing women's political representation, both in elected offices and in decision-making roles. The push for gender-balanced governments and leadership is a prominent trend. Many feminist activists are highlighting the impact of climate change on women, particularly in vulnerable communities. They advocate for environmental justice and the inclusion of gender perspectives in climate policies. The internet and social media have become powerful platforms for feminist activism.¹³Online movements and campaigns raise awareness, mobilize support, and provide spaces for marginalized voices. There is a growing rejection of rigid traditional gender roles and stereotypes. Movements work to challenge harmful

¹¹ Baksh-Soodeen, Rawwida, and Wendy Harcourt, eds. *The Oxford handbook of transnational feminist movements*. Oxford Handbooks, 2015. p.99

¹² Ferree, Myra Marx, and Carol M. Mueller. "Feminism and the women's movement: A global perspective." *The Blackwell companion to social movements* (2004): 576-607.

¹³ Syed, Farzana Zaheer, and Humaira Masood Dar. "Women Political Participation in Pakistan: Steps towards Reshaping the Political Environment." *Orient Research Journal of Social Sciences (ORJSS)* 2, no. 2 (2017), p.175

expectations placed on individuals based on their gender. Indigenous and women from the Global South are playing an increasingly prominent role in the global feminist movement, offering unique perspectives and solutions.

Contemporary feminism is more inclusive of trans and non-binary individuals. Activists advocate for transgender rights and work to create welcoming spaces within the feminist movement.¹⁴ Feminists around the world are connecting and collaborating on shared goals. This international solidarity strengthens the global feminist movement. These trends demonstrate the dynamism and adaptability of contemporary global feminism. Activists are working on multiple fronts, advocating for changes in policies, laws, societal norms, and cultural attitudes to advance gender equality and empower women worldwide. Historical Perspective on the feminist movement in Pakistan. The women's activist development in Pakistan has a huge verifiable foundation, set apart by the battles and accomplishments of Women activists who have worked eagerly to challenge man centric standards and promoter for orientation fairness.

Women in Pakistan:

In Pakistan, women constitute 48.76% of the population, as indicated by the 2017 census. Throughout the nation's history, women have played pivotal roles, having secured the right to vote in elections since 1956.¹⁵ Notably, they have also attained high-ranking positions, including the Prime Minister, Speaker of the National Assembly, Leader of the Opposition, federal ministers, judges, and roles within the armed forces. An exemplar of this progress is Lieutenant General Nigar Johar, who reached the highest military rank attainable by a woman. On December 2, 1988, Benazir Bhutto was sworn in as Pakistan's first female Prime Minister.¹⁶

However, the status of women in Pakistan exhibits significant variations, primarily influenced by factors such as class, regional disparities, and the rural-urban divide. These disparities largely stem from uneven socioeconomic development and the impact of tribal and feudal social structures on women's lives. Gender Concerns International has reported an overall improvement in women's rights in Pakistan, marked by an increasing number of

¹⁴ Nicholas, Lucy, and Sal Clark. "Leave those kids alone: On the uses and abuses and feminist queer potential of non-binary and genderqueer." *INSEP—Journal of the International Network for Sexual Ethics and Politics* 8, no. SI (2020): 7-8. p.8

¹⁵ Sultana, Razia. "Main streaming of Women in Khyber Pakhtunkhawa: An Overview." *Editorial Board FWU Journal of Social Sciences*. (2017) p.33

¹⁶ Gull, Wardah, and Shehryar Qaisar. "Female Labour Force Participation: The case of women in armed forces of Pakistan." *SADIQ Journal of Pakistan Studies* 2, no. 2 (2022). p.12

educated and literate women. Nonetheless, Pakistan faces challenges, particularly in education, where women often lag behind. This issue is compounded by inadequate government funding, a shortage of schools and colleges for women, and low enrollment rates, often due to limited awareness of women's rights in some areas. Also, Pakistan grapples with various pressing concerns, including rape, honor killings, murder, and forced marriages, predominantly in less developed regions.

These issues are intricately linked with barriers arising from a lack of education, poverty, a disrupted judicial system, governmental negligence in enforcing laws, and a pervasive underperformance of law enforcement agencies, including the police.¹⁷ Despite, approximately half of women in Pakistan have lack access to basic education. Moreover, women in Pakistan experience lower levels of health and nutrition. Additionally, a significant portion of women is confined to their homes, often with limited or no autonomy to make choices, judgments, or decisions that directly impact their living conditions and family matters. This situation stands in stark contrast to the prevailing societal norms, where men are generally perceived as dominant. The subordination of women has detrimental effects on various aspects of women's lives throughout different stages.

The Evolution of Women's Activism in Pakistan:

The Evolution of Women's Activism in Pakistan has seen remarkable growth and transformation over the years. Beginning as a response to systemic gender inequalities and societal norms, it has developed into a multifaceted movement that encompasses diverse issues. Women's activists in Pakistan have not only advocated for women's rights, education, and workforce participation but have also played a pivotal role in legal reforms, addressing gender-based violence, and challenging discriminatory laws. While the movement has faced resistance from conservative quarters and even encountered criticism from within, it has persisted, adapting to changing dynamics and emphasizing intersectionality, recognizing the multifaceted nature of women's experiences. Contemporary feminist activism in Pakistan is more connected to global movements, contributing to the ongoing global dialogue on gender equality and women's empowerment.

- **Early Activism (1940s-1950s):**

In the formative years following Pakistan's independence in 1947, influential women activists, notably figures like Begum Ra'ana Liaquat Ali Khan and Begum Shaista

¹⁷ Adil, Farah, Shehla A. Yasin, and Sarah Shahed. "Challenges for Women Empowerment in Pakistan: Archival Data." *Pakistan Vision* 22, no. 1 (2021), p. 214

Ikramullah, assumed pivotal roles in championing women's rights. They ardently advocated for women's education, social reforms, and political participation. During this period, women's organizations, exemplified by the All Pakistan Women's Association (APWA), emerged with a dedicated focus on enhancing women's welfare and advocating for their rights.¹⁸

Women Organizations (1970s-1980s):

The 1970s and 1980s marked a significant period in the growth of women's organizations as essential drivers of the feminist movement in Pakistan (Kabeer, 1988). Entities like the Women's Action Forum (WAF) and Aurat Foundation played pivotal roles in raising awareness about women's issues, advocating for legal reforms, and providing assistance to women facing gender-based violence and discrimination. They organized protests, public campaigns, and engaged in advocacy efforts to promote gender equality.¹⁹

- **Zia-ul-Haq Era (1980s):**

The strategic regime of General Zia-ul-Haq in the 1980s posed significant challenges to the feminist movement in Pakistan. Zia-ul-Haq's administration imposed conservative and repressive regulations, such as the Hudood Ordinance and Qisas and Diyat laws, which had a detrimental impact on women's rights. Feminist activists and organizations actively resisted these regressive policies and advocated for their repeal.²⁰

- **Grassroots Activism and Legal Reforms (1990s-2000s):**

In the 1990s and 2000s, feminist activism in Pakistan expanded to grassroots levels, with women-led associations and organizations working to empower women and address gender-based inequalities.²¹ The establishment of the National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) in 2000 marked a significant milestone in institutionalizing gender equality and women's rights in the country. Legal reforms were also pursued, leading to the enactment of laws against domestic violence, honor killings, and sexual harassment.²²

¹⁸ Jamal, Amina. "Feminist 'selves' and feminism's 'others': feminist representations of Jamaat-e-Islami women in Pakistan." *Feminist Review* 81, no. 1 (2005): 52-73. p.61

¹⁹ Jamal, Amina, *Feminist 'selves' and feminism's 'others': feminist representations of Jamaat-e-Islami women in Pakistan*, p.52-73.

²⁰ Imran, Rahat, and Imran Munir, *Defying Marginalization: Emergence of Women's Organizations and the Resistance Movement in Pakistan: A Historical Overview.* *Journal of International Women's Studies* 19, no. 6 (2018): 132-156. p.62

²¹ Moghadam, Valentine M. *Globalizing women: Transnational feminist networks.* JHU Press, 2005

²² Curtis, Carey, and Nicholas Low. *Institutional barriers to sustainable transport.* Routledge, 2016

Current Trends in Feminist Movements:

In recent times, Pakistan has witnessed the emergence of vibrant feminist movements. The Aurat March, held annually on International Women's Day since around 2018, has become a prominent platform for feminist activism, raising awareness about women's issues and challenging gender inequality. Digital activism has also gained momentum, with online advocacy campaigns amplifying feminist voices and garnering support for gender equality.²³ The historical perspective on the feminist movement in Pakistan underscores the resilience and determination of women activists as they persist in their pursuit of gender equality. Despite challenges posed by conservative forces and patriarchal norms, feminists in Pakistan have made significant strides in raising awareness, advocating for legal reforms, and empowering women. The movement continues to evolve, with ongoing efforts to address complexity, inclusivity, and the unique challenges faced by marginalized women in Pakistan.

Islamic Concept of Women Empowerment:

From an Islamic perspective, analyzing contemporary global feminism trends in Pakistan and the socio-economic and cultural barriers to women's empowerment involves a nuanced evaluation.

Alignment with Islamic Values: Islamic teachings emphasize the dignity and rights of women. Islam promotes the idea of women's empowerment within the framework of Islamic principles. This includes access to education, economic participation, and social involvement. Any contemporary global feminism trends that align with these values are likely to be viewed positively from an Islamic perspective.

Cultural Sensitivity: The socio-cultural fabric of Pakistan is deeply influenced by Islamic traditions. Therefore, any feminist movements should be sensitive to these cultural norms and values. Islam encourages modesty and respect for women, and any feminist initiatives that respect and incorporate these values are more likely to gain acceptance.

Economic Empowerment: Islam encourages economic participation for both men and women. Analyzing economic barriers to women's empowerment aligns with Islamic ideals. The Islamic concept of "Mahr" (dower) and women's right to own and manage property are examples of this empowerment.

²³ Shaheed, Farida. "The women's movement in Pakistan: challenges and achievements." *Women's Movements in the Global Era, Boulder* (2010): 1-26. p.23

Education: Islam places a strong emphasis on seeking knowledge. The Prophet Muhammad said, "Seeking knowledge is a duty upon every Muslim." Therefore, any feminist trends that advocate for women's education align with Islamic values.

Gender Equity: While some aspects of contemporary global feminism may align with Islamic principles, the Islamic perspective also highlights the importance of gender equity rather than gender equality. Islamic teachings recognize the unique roles and responsibilities of men and women.

Family and Social Cohesion: Islam places a strong emphasis on family and social cohesion. Any feminist trends that promote these values while empowering women to make choices within these frameworks are more likely to be seen positively from an Islamic viewpoint.

The Islamic perspective on analyzing contemporary global feminism trends in Pakistan involves evaluating the compatibility of these trends with Islamic values, cultural sensitivities, and the principles of equity, education, and economic empowerment. It emphasizes the importance of empowering women within the framework of Islamic teachings and the broader cultural context of Pakistan.

Initiatives for Overcoming Socio-economic and Cultural Barriers to Women's Empowerment in Pakistan:

In Pakistan, addressing the multifaceted barriers to women's empowerment is a complex and ongoing process that involves the implementation of a variety of strategies and initiatives. These efforts aim to overcome both socioeconomic and cultural obstacles that hinder women's progress and equal participation in society.

- **Economic Empowerment Programs:**

Several government and non-governmental organizations have introduced initiatives to enhance women's economic participation. Microfinance schemes, vocational training programs, and support for female entrepreneurs are helping women gain financial independence and contribute to their families' well-being.²⁴

- **Legal Reforms:**

Pakistan has made significant strides in implementing legal reforms to protect women's rights. Laws addressing domestic violence, honor killings, and sexual harassment

²⁴ Choudhry, Abubakar Nazeer, Rozita Abdul Mutalib, and Nur Syakiran Akmal Ismail. "Socio-cultural factors affecting women economic empowerment in Pakistan: A situation analysis." *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences* 9, no. 5 (2019): 90-102.

have been enacted. Legal changes provide a framework for addressing gender-based issues and ensure that perpetrators are held accountable.²⁵

- **Education Initiatives:**

Access to quality education is a critical component of women's empowerment. Various programs have been launched to increase female enrollment in schools and colleges, with a particular focus on rural and marginalized areas. Scholarships and incentives are provided to encourage girls to pursue higher education.²⁶ Pakistan has implemented various initiatives to promote women's education and improve their access to quality education. Some of these initiatives include:

Benazir Income Support Program (BISP):

The BISP provides financial assistance to women in low-income households. This program not only aims to alleviate poverty but also encourages women's participation in education by offering cash incentives to families if their children, particularly girls, attend school regularly.

Girls' Stipend Program:

Several provincial governments in Pakistan have introduced stipend programs specifically for girls. These programs provide financial incentives to girls who enroll in and regularly attend school. The goal is to increase girls' enrollment and retention in schools.

Establishment of Girls' Schools:

The government has taken steps to build and maintain more girls' schools, particularly in rural and underserved areas. This helps provide a conducive learning environment for girls, making it more accessible for them to receive an education.

Conditional Cash Transfers:

In collaboration with international organizations, Pakistan has implemented conditional cash transfer programs that provide financial assistance to poor households, with a condition that their children, especially girls, attend school regularly.

Educational Reforms:

Various educational reforms have been introduced to make the education system more inclusive and girl-friendly. These reforms include changes in curricula to reduce gender bias, as well as the provision of gender-sensitive teaching materials.

²⁵ Weiss, Anita M. *Moving forward with the legal empowerment of women in Pakistan*. Washington: US Institute of Peace, 2012. p.3

²⁶ Malik, Samina, and Kathy Courtney. "Higher education and women's empowerment in Pakistan." *Gender and education* 23, no. 1 (2011): 29-45.

Support for Female Teachers:

Efforts have been made to hire and retain female teachers in schools, especially in rural areas. Having female teachers can encourage the enrollment of girls and provide them with role models.

Girls' Education Campaigns:

Numerous NGOs and government agencies have launched awareness campaigns that emphasize the importance of girls' education. These campaigns aim to change cultural attitudes and encourage parents to send their daughters to school.²⁷

Scholarships for Girls:

Several scholarship programs are available to support girls' education at higher levels. These scholarships cover tuition fees and other educational expenses, making higher education more accessible to women²⁸.

Women's Vocational and Technical Training:

Apart from traditional education, Pakistan also offers vocational and technical training programs specifically designed for women. These programs equip women with practical skills that can lead to employment opportunities²⁹.

Public-Private Partnerships:

The government has collaborated with private sector organizations and NGOs to expand access to education, particularly for girls. These partnerships have resulted in the establishment of additional schools and the provision of quality education services³⁰.

Women Universities:

Government has established many women universities to educate women who are not allowed to enroll in co-education institutes for higher education. Although these endeavors have achieved substantial progress in advancing women's education in Pakistan, challenges such as cultural norms, security concerns, and economic constraints persist, affecting girls' access to education. Sustained efforts and policy adaptations are essential to further enhance the accessibility of quality education for women in Pakistan.

²⁷ Syed, Farzana Zaheer, and Humaira Masood Dar. "Women Political Participation in Pakistan: Steps towards Reshaping the Political Environment." *Orient Research Journal of Social Sciences (ORJSS)* 2, no. 2 (2017),p,71

²⁸ Ibid,p.75

²⁹ Ibid, p.74

³⁰ Ibid, p72

TABLE:01 Higher Education Institutes for Women in Pakistan

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| <p>Fatima Jinnah Women University, Rawalpindi: This university is one of the most well-known women's institutions in Pakistan. It offers programs in various fields, including social sciences, natural sciences, humanities, and more.</p> |
| <p>Lahore College for Women University (LCWU), Lahore: LCWU is one of the oldest and most prestigious women's universities in Pakistan. It offers a wide range of programs in fields like arts, science, technology, and social sciences.</p> |
| <p>Sardar Bahadur Khan Women's University, Quetta: Located in Quetta, Balochistan, this university provides opportunities for women to pursue higher education in various academic disciplines.</p> |
| <p>Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women University, Peshawar: This women's university in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa offers undergraduate and postgraduate programs across different fields.</p> |
| <p>Kinnaird College for Women, Lahore: Although not a university, Kinnaird College is a well-respected women's institution in Lahore. It offers a wide range of undergraduate programs.</p> |
| <p>Karachi University for Women, Karachi: This university, located in Karachi, offers undergraduate and postgraduate programs in various disciplines.</p> |
| <p>Jinnah College for Women, Karachi: Another prominent women's institution in Karachi, it provides higher education opportunities for female students.</p> |
| <p>Sindh Women University, Jamshoro: Located in Sindh, this university focuses on providing education and research opportunities for women in the region.</p> |
| <p>Government College Women University, Sialkot: This institution in Sialkot, Punjab, offers various undergraduate and postgraduate programs for women.</p> |
| <p>Women's University, Multan: This women's university in Multan, Punjab, offers a range of academic programs.</p> |
| <p>Home economics University Lahore: This institute is located in Lahore and established to offer degree in textile, interior designing etc.</p> |

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Women%27s_universities_and_colleges_in_Pakistan

- **Awareness and Advocacy Campaigns:**

Civil society organizations and women's groups actively engage in advocacy and awareness campaigns. These initiatives aim to challenge harmful cultural norms, raise

awareness about women's rights and encourage gender parity.

- **Women's Participation in Politics:**

Efforts are actively underway to augment women's presence in political and decision-making capacities. The implementation of quotas for women in local government bodies and reserved seats in parliament has proven pivotal in augmenting female political engagement.³¹ According to the Global Gender Gap Report 2020, Pakistan was ranked 93rd out of 153 countries in terms of women's political empowerment. The report revealed that 20.2% of legislators in Pakistan were women. Furthermore, 12% of ministerial positions in the country were held by women. This data serves as a testament to the state of gender equality and the level of women's representation in political roles in Pakistan as of the year 2020.

- **Cultural Sensitization Programs:**

To address deeply rooted cultural barriers, cultural sensitization programs are conducted to challenge stereotypes and discrimination. These initiatives encourage critical thinking about traditional gender roles and norms.

- **Media and Digital Activism:**

The role of media and digital platforms in women's empowerment is significant. Women's voices are amplified through online activism, providing a space for discussions on gender equality, women's rights, and empowerment.

- **Gender Sensitization in the Workplace:**

Initiatives are taken to sensitize workplaces to gender issues. Training and policies are introduced to combat sexual harassment and promote equal opportunities for women in the professional sphere.³² On January 14, 2022, the Pakistani Parliament approved the Protection against Harassment of Women at the Workplace (Amendment) Act 2022, which modifies the Protection against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act of 2010. This amendment broadens the scope of workplace definitions to encompass both formal and informal work settings.

³¹ Syed, Farzana Zaheer, and Humaira Masood Dar. "Women Political Participation in Pakistan: Steps towards Reshaping the Political Environment." *Orient Research Journal of Social Sciences (ORJSS)* 2, no. 2 (2017).p.76

³² Rashid, Saddia, Izhar Ahmad Khan, Ashfaq Ahmad Maan, and Babar Shahbaz. "Promoting Gender Sensitization: A Comparative Study of Socio-Cultural and Economic Constraints Countered by Women in Rural Areas of the Punjab, Pakistan" *Journal of Agricultural Research (03681157)* 58, no. 2 (2020).p.134

While these strategies and initiatives represent significant progress, there is still much work to be done in addressing the multifaceted challenges to women's empowerment in Pakistan. A coordinated effort involving government, civil society, and the international community is vital to create a more inclusive and equitable society for women.

Conclusion:

The analysis of contemporary global feminism trends in Pakistan, from an Islamic perspective, and the associated socioeconomic and cultural barriers to women's empowerment reveals a dynamic and complex landscape where progress coexists with challenges. Pakistan has witnessed the emergence of dynamic feminist movements that are strongly influenced by global trends while seeking to align with Islamic values. These movements have been instrumental in challenging established norms and actively advocating for gender equality within the framework of Islamic ethics.

The cultural and socioeconomic obstacles that hinder women's empowerment in Pakistan, rooted in traditional gender roles, discrimination, and limited access to resources, are intricate and deeply ingrained. Despite significant strides in legal reforms, education, and awareness campaigns, comprehensive strategies that respect Islamic principles and address the multifaceted nature of these barriers are still needed. The resilience and determination of women activists in Pakistan, who operate within both global feminist ideals and Islamic values, continue to stand out. They make significant progress in raising awareness, advocating for legal reforms, and empowering women while adhering to Islamic ethical guidelines. The rich cultural diversity and complex socioeconomic structures of Pakistan present both challenges and opportunities for innovative solutions, always in harmony with Islamic values.

Recognizing the unique challenges faced by marginalized women in Pakistan and the interplay between global feminism, Islamic principles, and the local context is crucial. A multifaceted approach involving government, civil society, and international stakeholders remains essential in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment in Pakistan and beyond, all with the overarching aim of forging a more inclusive, equitable, and Islamic society where women can actively engage and flourish.

Recommendations:

Empowering women in Pakistan requires a multi-faceted approach involving policy changes, awareness campaigns and targeted programs. Here are some key recommendations for policymakers to empower women in Pakistan:

- **Ensure Gender Equality in the Constitution:** Amend the constitution to explicitly guarantee gender equality and prohibit discrimination based on sex.
- **Strengthen Laws Against Gender-Based Violence:** Enforce and strengthen laws related to domestic violence, sexual harassment, and honor crimes. Create a comprehensive legal framework that protects women from violence.
- **Girls' Education:** Promote girls' education and work towards achieving gender parity in schools. Provide financial incentives and scholarships for girls to encourage enrollment and completion of education.
- **Adult Literacy Programs:** Implement adult literacy programs to empower women who missed out on education.
- **Healthcare:**
Improve access to maternal healthcare services, especially in rural areas, to reduce maternal mortality rates.
- **Family Planning and Reproductive Health:** Promote family planning and reproductive health services to enable women to make informed choices about their reproductive health.
- **Economic Empowerment:**
Support microfinance initiatives and skill development programs that empower women to start their businesses or gain employment.
- **Quotas and Affirmative Action:** Implement quotas for women in government jobs, corporate boards, and public office to increase their representation in decision-making roles.
- **Access to Justice:**
Establish legal aid services to help women access justice and protect their rights. Create fast-track courts to expedite cases related to gender-based violence and women's rights violations.
- **Awareness and Education:**
Initiate public education campaigns that question detrimental gender clichés and endorse gender equity.
- **Gender Sensitization Programs:** Enact gender awareness initiatives in educational institutions and workplaces to foster a transformation in attitudes and conduct.

- **Political Participation:**
Encourage women's participation in politics by providing training, financial support, and reserved seats for women in local government and national assemblies.
- **Support Women Candidates:**
Support and mentor women who aspire to enter politics and hold public office.
- **Community Engagement:**
Collaborate with religious and community leaders to promote gender equality and challenge harmful traditions.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:**
Establish mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of policies and programs aimed at women's empowerment to make necessary adjustments.
- **International Collaboration:**
Collaborate with international organizations and NGOs to access resources and expertise in advancing women's rights and empowerment.

Policymakers should work in collaboration with civil society, NGOs, and women's organizations to ensure the successful implementation of these initiatives. It is essential to approach women's empowerment as a holistic, cross-cutting issue, addressing cultural, social, economic, and political dimensions.