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Emblem of Socio-Economic Empowerment of Women

ICWPD 2026

International Conference
on Women in Policy
Development





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International Conference on Women in Policy Development (ICWPD 2026)

Empowering Youth & Advancing Gender Equity in Health and Economic Policy

ICWPD-2026

International Conference on Women in Policy
Development

Abstract Book

Conference Organized by:

The Begum Nusrat Bhutto Women University Sukkur

Emblem of Socio-Economic Empowerment of Women

In Collaboration With:

Sindh Higher Education Commission

Patron-in-Chief

Prof. Dr. Tehmina Mangan

Vice Chancellor



International Conference on Women in Policy Development (ICWPD 2026)

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Introduction

This Abstract Book brings together a wide range of scholarly submissions presented at the International Women Conference on Policy Development (ICWPD 2026). It serves as a curated record of ongoing academic inquiry into issues that shape women's lives across social, legal, economic, and institutional contexts. In response to increasingly complex global challenges, this collection reflects a shared commitment to advancing inclusive policy frameworks and fostering dialogue that contributes to gender equity, social justice, and sustainable development in alignment with global priorities.

The contributions included in this volume reflect diverse methodological approaches and thematic concerns, addressing areas such as representation, access, rights, governance, and structural inequalities. Each abstract offers a focused exploration of a specific issue, collectively illustrating the depth and breadth of current research in the field.

By compiling these works, the conference provides a platform for the exchange of ideas and the dissemination of research that engages with real-world challenges. The emphasis throughout remains on generating knowledge that is relevant, grounded, and capable of informing future academic and professional work.

This volume stands as both a documentation of the conference proceedings and a resource for scholars, policymakers, and practitioners interested in advancing informed discussions on women-related policy concerns. It reflects a shared commitment to rigorous research and meaningful academic engagement.



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Message from Patron-in-Chief

It is a matter of great pleasure to welcome you to the International Conference on Women in Policy Development (ICWPD 2026), organized by The Begum Nusrat Bhutto Women University, Sukkur. This conference represents a significant and timely initiative, offering a valuable platform to reflect upon and critically engage with the role of women in shaping inclusive and effective policy frameworks.

Despite their longstanding and meaningful contributions to governance, decision-making, and policy development, women's voices remain underrepresented. ICWPD 2026 seeks not only to recognize these contributions but also to foster dialogue that advances gender-responsive policies, equity, and sustainable development.

I extend my sincere appreciation to the scholars, practitioners, policymakers, and participants for their valuable contributions. The research presented here reflects diverse perspectives and will undoubtedly enrich meaningful discourse and inspire innovative policy approaches.

I also commend the organizing committee for their dedication and efforts in successfully compiling this publication. I hope that this conference will serve as a valuable resource for knowledge exchange and future research and will continue to inspire progress in this vital field.

Prof. Dr. Tehmina Mangan

Patron-in-Chief, ICWPD 2026

Vice Chancellor

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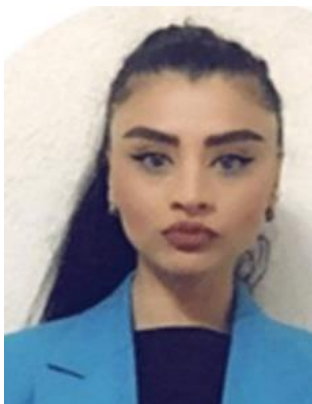
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Empowering Youth & Advancing Gender Equity in Health and Economic Policy

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Abstracts



International Conference on Women in Policy Development (ICWPD 2026)

Empowering Youth & Advancing Gender Equity in Health and Economic Policy

REF: ICWPD-001

Advancing Gender Equity through Health and Economic Policies in Pakistan

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Abstract

In the context of the development agenda, the concept of gender equity has been recognized as a critical element of the policy process, especially with respect to health and economic policies. Women comprise almost half of the total population of Pakistan, yet there are still many gaps in the health, economic, and other opportunities provided to them. It has been observed that health policies related to the care of mothers, reproductive health, and access to healthcare facilities are critical determinants of the well-being of women. Similarly, it has been emphasized that economic policies related to the development of women's participation in the labour force are critical determinants of the development agenda.

In spite of the fact that the importance of gender equity has been recognized at the policy level, there are still many gaps and obstacles that hinder the development of women's participation in health and economic activities. The limited availability of health facilities in rural areas, a lack of awareness about reproductive and mental health issues, and differences in accessing health services also impact the health status of women. Likewise, economic issues such as a lower rate of labour force participation, wage differentials, and limited opportunities for leadership and economic empowerment also impact the economic empowerment of women.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of gender-sensitive health and economic policies on gender equity in Pakistan. To conduct the analysis, the current policies and their impact on the health and economic empowerment of women in Pakistan are reviewed through a qualitative analysis of existing research and policy interventions and development reports. The findings of the analysis suggest that making health services accessible to women and creating economic opportunities for them are important steps toward achieving gender equity in society. Supporting gender-sensitive health and economic policies not only promotes the empowerment of women but also contributes to social and economic progress in a country.

Keywords: Gender Equity, Gender-Sensitive Policies, Women's Empowerment, Health Policy, Economic Policy, Pakistan



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Empowering Youth & Advancing Gender Equity in Health and Economic Policy

REF: ICWPD-002

The Role Of Instructional Leadership In Promoting Quality And Equitable Education In Schools

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Abstract

Instructional leadership is a significant factor in determining the quality and equity of schools. This research adopts a mixed-methods approach to understand the impact of instructional leaders on teaching, learning, and equity in diverse school settings. The research aims to understand the complexities of leading for equity and excellence. The research identifies the strategies that effective instructional leaders use to enhance teaching and learning. The strategies include data-driven instruction, teacher development, community engagement, and the promotion of a collaborative school culture. Effective instructional leaders also encourage reflective practices in the classroom. Additionally, they address the barriers to equity and maximize resources to support marginalized students.

The results show that these practices have a profound impact on improving educational outcomes and closing gaps in achievement. The study presents the best practices and challenges in the implementation of instructional leadership. The study offers insights that can help policymakers and educators in achieving excellence and equity in the educational sector. The study is important as it presents some key findings that show how instructional leaders can make effective changes in their practices by being flexible in their approach, empowering teachers, building community partnerships, and developing a growth mindset. The study contributes to the development of the capabilities of leaders who focus on quality and equity in the educational sector. The study offers insights that can help policymakers and educators improve the quality and outcomes in different schools. The study explores the relationship between instructional leadership and learning and presents recommendations for school leaders and policymakers worldwide. The study can benefit students and schools globally and contribute to a more equitable and just society.

Keywords: Instructional Leadership, Quality Education, Equity, Educational Leadership, School Improvement, Inclusive Schools



International Conference on Women in Policy Development (ICWPD 2026)

Empowering Youth & Advancing Gender Equity in Health and Economic Policy

REF: ICWPD-003

Impact of HRM Practices On Employee Performance and Employee Engagement Among Women in The Banking Sector

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Abstract

This paper will focus on investigating the effect of HRM practices, in particular, training and development, performance appraisal, and compensation, on employee performance and employee engagement of women in the commercial banking industry of Sukkur, Pakistan. It utilizes a quantitative research design by use of a structured questionnaire on a five-point Likert scale. The tool has 25 items, five of which quantify each of the five variables of training and development, performance appraisal, compensation, employee engagement, and employee performance. Random sampling will be used to get 150 women employees who work in different commercial banks in Sukkur city. SPSS version 27 will be used to analyze the collected data, and reliability analysis (Cronbach's alpha), Pearson correlation, and linear regression analysis will be used to test the hypothesized relationships. It is hoped that the study will show positive significant relationships between the three HRM practices and employee engagement, as well as employee performance in women bankers in Sukkur. The factors of training and development, fair performance appraisals, and equitable compensation are expected to become decisive predictors of the improvement of engagement and performance results in this under-researched geographical and demographic setting. This study fills a major research gap in the existing literature by directly targeting the women employees working in the commercial banking industry of the Sukkur area, where cultural norms, socio-economic factors, and institutional activities may distinctly temper the efficacy of HRM interventions. The research is also very timely, considering that the Sukkur region is currently in the implementation processes of the Banking on Equality policy initiatives that have been established by the State Bank of Pakistan. The results will present evidence-based information to the bank management and policymakers to formulate gender-sensitive HRM that promotes inclusive and productive working environments in the secondary cities of Pakistan.

Keywords: HRM practices, women bankers, employee engagement, employee performance



International Conference on Women in Policy Development (ICWPD 2026)

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REF: ICWPD-004

Who Dares to Act? Gendered Image Risk, Psychological Safety, and Leadership Emergence in Organizations

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Abstract

Contemporary organizations increasingly emphasize employee proactivity, voice behavior, and leadership initiative as drivers of organizational effectiveness. However, emerging research indicates that the opportunity to act agentially is not equally distributed across employees. Gendered organizational norms often shape how proactive behaviors are interpreted, creating unequal interpersonal risks associated with speaking up, feedback seeking, and leadership claiming. Despite growing attention to psychological safety, limited research explains how gender-based image risk influences leadership emergence, particularly within hierarchical organizational systems and manufacturing environments. This study investigates how gender norm expectations influence perceived image risk and psychological safety, and how these mechanisms shape agentic behavior and leadership emergence among employees working in organizational teams.

A quantitative research design using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is proposed to test the Gendered Agency Framework. Data were collected from employees working in manufacturing organizations using validated measurement instruments. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) will be employed to examine mediation and moderation effects, including multi-group analysis to assess gender-based differences in agency pathways. The proposed model anticipates that gender norm expectations significantly increase perceived image risk, which negatively influences psychological safety and reduces agentic behavior. Psychological safety is expected to function as a critical mediating mechanism enabling leadership emergence. Findings suggest that disparities in leadership outcomes are driven less by competence differences and more by structurally embedded risk perceptions affecting willingness to act. The study contributes theoretically by re-conceptualizing organizational agency as a gendered and structurally conditioned process. Practically, the findings guide organizations seeking to strengthen inclusive leadership pipelines through psychologically safe and gender-responsive work environments. Future research may extend the framework across cultural and industrial contexts to advance equitable organizational participation.

Keywords: Gendered Agency, Psychological Safety, Image Risk, Leadership Emergence, Organizational Proactivity



International Conference on Women in Policy Development (ICWPD 2026)

Empowering Youth & Advancing Gender Equity in Health and Economic Policy

REF: ICWPD-005

Deep fake Media Detection Using Convolutional Neural Networks (CNN)

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Abstract

The rapid rise of deepfake technology has created a major crisis in digital security and social trust. Historically, synthetic media started with simple face-swapping, but with the development of Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs), these fakes are now hyper-realistic. The central research question of this study is: *Can standard CNN architectures effectively distinguish between authentic and AI-generated media under real-world conditions?* The primary objective is to evaluate the performance of different deep learning models and identify which specific patterns or "digital traces" are most reliable for forensic detection in a society where fake news is spreading fast. This research employs a deep learning methodology using Convolutional Neural Networks (CNN). I specifically implemented and compared three well-known architectures: VGG16, ResNet50, and XceptionNet. The process involved pre-processing video frames into individual images, followed by feature extraction to find anomalies in facial textures, lighting, and pixel frequency. Using Transfer Learning, these models were trained to look for tiny "glitches" that are invisible to the human eye, such as unnatural skin smoothing or mismatched shadows. The findings show that while VGG16 is effective for basic feature detection, XceptionNet provides superior accuracy by analyzing deep spatial textures. However, all models face challenges with low-quality, compressed social media videos. From a policy perspective, this research suggests that social media platforms should implement automated "authenticity labels" to warn users. Stronger regulations are needed to govern the use of AI generators to prevent fraud and identity theft. This work contributes to the conference theme of "Digital Media Integrity and Cybersecurity." By providing a comparative analysis of CNN models, this study offers a practical baseline for developers building real-time verification tools. It highlights the technical necessity of robust AI forensics in protecting public discourse from synthetic misinformation.

Keywords: Deep fake Detection, Convolutional Neural Networks (CNN), XceptionNet, ResNet50, VGG16, Digital Forensics, Artificial Intelligence, Deep Learning, Image Forgery, GANs.



International Conference on Women in Policy Development (ICWPD 2026)

Empowering Youth & Advancing Gender Equity in Health and Economic Policy

REF: ICWPD-006

Social Justice in Pakistan: A Critical Analysis of Legal Frameworks Promoting Women's Equality and Fair Distribution of Rights

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Abstract

Women's rights in Pakistan have taken a central position at both the national and international levels for many decades, so the violence against women is a silent issue in Pakistan. Historically, in the legal framework, Pakistan protected the rights of women as well as enacted several legislations to safeguard women's rights and social justice, but it still eludes significant contests in achieving equality and accessing justice. This research paper aims to address these issues under criminal law and judicial decisions. The core objective of this study is to examine the many acts of violence against women that have been disclosed as a crime, concentrating on the challenges and possible solutions to enhance gender equality and protection for women.

This study employs qualitative and quantitative research methodology involving a combination of primary and secondary data to provide an understanding of women empowerment. This paper also highlights a landmark judgment of the Government of the Punjab, Secretary Home Department vs Qanoot Fatima. This paper examines how Pakistan's legal framework aligns with global standards and addresses challenges faced by females because Pakistan ranked 145th out of 146 countries on the Global Gender Gap Index 2024 and 130th out of 139 nations in terms of social justice. It is directly proportional to women empowerment because it requires more attention due to diverse and multidimensional concepts. Empowerment is linked with the social well-being of women, such as health, education, justice and diversity. The Conclusion states that to provide access to legal information and justice must be ensured in the rural areas, and increase public awareness campaigns, promoting women's education, and economic empowerment in order to overcome hurdles and upgrade laws on women's rights and their effective implementation.

Keywords: Women's Rights, Social Justice, Empowerment, Pakistan's Legal Framework, Violence



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Empowering Youth & Advancing Gender Equity in Health and Economic Policy

REF: ICWPD-007

Tele-Rehabilitation as a Solution to Gender Gaps in Physiotherapy Access in Rural Pakistan: A Narrative Review

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Abstract

In rural Pakistan, gender-based disparities and workforce inequality still impede fair access to physiotherapy services. Financial dependence, limited mobility, sociocultural norms limiting interactions with male healthcare practitioners, and a shortage of female physiotherapists are some of the additional obstacles faced by women in conservative rural areas. However, Pakistan's rehabilitation efforts continue to be mostly focused on urban areas, underserving rural communities. Tele-rehabilitation has become a viable digital health strategy to increase rehabilitation coverage and enhance service delivery in settings with limited resources on a global scale. With a focus on clinical efficacy, digital readiness, financial implications, and health system integration, this narrative review critically assesses tele-rehabilitation as a gender-responsive health approach to increase access to physiotherapy in rural Pakistan. Major electronic databases were used to undertake a systematic narrative synthesis of peer-reviewed literature published between 2010 and 2024. A gender and digital health lens was used to assess and conceptually analyze studies that addressed the efficacy of tele-rehabilitation, gender differences in healthcare access, rural service delivery, and adoption of digital health in low- and middle-income countries. According to the data, tele-rehabilitation can considerably lower indirect expenses and travel burden while producing clinical results for many musculoskeletal diseases that are on par with traditional in-person physiotherapy. Through the facilitation of remote gender-concordant service delivery and home-based care, the concept shows significant promise for enhancing access among rural women. However, ongoing issues like the gender digital divide, inconsistent internet access, weak regulatory frameworks, and inadequate provider training could hinder widespread adoption in Pakistan. In rural Pakistan, tele-rehabilitation is a viable and policy-relevant approach to lessening gender differences in access to physical therapy. Coordinated investments in digital infrastructure, gender-inclusive telehealth regulations, workforce capacity building, and hybrid community-supported implementation strategies are all necessary for sustainable uptake.

Keywords: Tele-rehabilitation; Gender equity; Rural Pakistan; Physiotherapy access; Digital health; Rehabilitation services



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Empowering Youth & Advancing Gender Equity in Health and Economic Policy

REF: ICWPD-008

Community-Based Rehabilitation for Women with Disabilities in Pakistan: Policy Challenges, SDG Linkages, and Future Directions – A Narrative Review

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Abstract

Community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR) is internationally recognized as a strategy for promoting inclusive development and improving the quality of life of persons with disabilities. In Pakistan, where disability intersects with poverty, gender inequality, and limited access to health services, women with disabilities face compounded structural disadvantage. Despite Pakistan's commitments under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), gender-responsive rehabilitation remains inadequately institutionalized. This narrative review critically examines the policy landscape of community-based rehabilitation for women with disabilities in Pakistan, identifies structural and governance challenges, and explores future directions aligned with SDGs 3 (Good Health and Well-being), 5 (Gender Equality), 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and 10 (Reduced Inequalities). A narrative synthesis approach was adopted, drawing on peer-reviewed literature indexed in PubMed and Scopus, WHO policy documents, national disability legislation, and global frameworks. Emphasis was placed on gender-disaggregated evidence and rehabilitation system strengthening. Five interlinked policy challenges were identified: fragmented integration of rehabilitation into primary healthcare, gender-blind implementation of CBR frameworks, workforce shortages and limited gender-sensitive training, weak disability-disaggregated data systems, and insufficient cross-sectoral governance. In Pakistan, socio-cultural norms, rural-urban disparities, and poverty further constrain women's access to community-based rehabilitation services. Strengthening CBR for women with disabilities in Pakistan requires integrating rehabilitation within universal health coverage frameworks, adopting gender-transformative policies, investing in workforce development, and enhancing participatory governance. Rehabilitation must be recognized not merely as a clinical service, but as a strategic instrument for advancing gender equity and inclusive development under the SDGs.

Keywords: Community-based rehabilitation; Women with disabilities; Pakistan; Gender equity; SDGs; Disability policy; Inclusive development



International Conference on Women in Policy Development (ICWPD 2026)

Empowering Youth & Advancing Gender Equity in Health and Economic Policy

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Youth, Women and Diverse Leadership: Strengthening Governance through Inclusive Representation.

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Abstract

Inclusive governance and diversity in leadership have gained prominence as essential elements of effective policymaking. Despite global recognition of the importance of equitable participation, youth, women, and diverse social groups remain significantly underrepresented in policy leadership. This underrepresentation weakens democratic legitimacy, reduces policy responsiveness, and limits public trust in governance institutions. Structural barriers, cultural norms, and limited access to political networks continue to impede the meaningful participation of these groups in decision-making processes. The study aims to examine how inclusive representation of youth, women, and diverse groups in policy leadership strengthens governance quality and policy effectiveness. It also seeks to identify barriers to participation and highlight the contributions of diverse leaders in shaping responsive, equitable, and innovative policies. A qualitative-descriptive approach was adopted, drawing on secondary literature, policy documents, and selected comparative case studies at national and sub-national governance levels. This approach allowed for an in-depth understanding of the relationship between diverse leadership and governance outcomes. The findings indicate that inclusive leadership enhances policy innovation, accountability, equity, and institutional legitimacy. Youth bring future-oriented thinking and technological adaptability, women strengthen collaborative and equity-focused decision-making, and diverse representation improves cultural competence, social inclusion, and conflict-sensitive policymaking. Persistent structural and cultural barriers, however, continue to limit effective participation. The study recommends institutional reforms, inclusive leadership development programs, mentorship initiatives, and transparent selection and appointment mechanisms to mainstream diversity in policy leadership. Inclusive representation is not merely symbolic but a functional requirement for resilient, effective, and democratic governance.

Keywords: Youth leadership, Women leadership, Inclusive governance, Policy diversity, Democratic accountability



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Empowering Youth & Advancing Gender Equity in Health and Economic Policy

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Investigating the Effectiveness of CHATGPT in Improving Students' Achievement

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Abstract

The rapid integration of artificial intelligence in education has generated significant interest in understanding its potential to enhance student learning outcomes. Among AI-based tools, ChatGPT has emerged as a widely used platform offering instant, personalized academic support. This study investigates the effectiveness of ChatGPT in improving student achievement while also examining associated challenges related to its educational use. Adopting a mixed-method research design, the study combines quantitative survey data with qualitative insights to provide a comprehensive understanding of students' experiences with ChatGPT.

The quantitative phase involved a structured questionnaire administered to secondary and higher education students to measure frequency of use, academic purposes, perceived impact on achievement, and attitudes toward AI-assisted learning. Descriptive and inferential statistical analyses were employed to identify trends and relationships between ChatGPT usage and academic performance. The qualitative phase consisted of open-ended survey questions and semi-structured interviews, which explored students' perceptions, learning behaviors, and concerns regarding reliance on AI tools. Thematic analysis was used to interpret qualitative responses.

Findings indicate that ChatGPT positively contributes to students' comprehension, assignment completion, and academic confidence, particularly in writing, problem-solving, and concept clarification. However, the qualitative results reveal concerns related to over-dependence, reduced critical thinking, and potential threats to academic integrity. Students emphasized the importance of guided and ethical use rather than unrestricted reliance on AI-generated content. The study concludes that while ChatGPT can be an effective educational support tool, its impact largely depends on responsible integration within instructional practices. The findings offer practical implications for educators, policymakers, and institutions seeking to balance technological innovation with pedagogical integrity. Recommendations are proposed for developing AI literacy, promoting critical thinking, and establishing ethical guidelines for AI use in educational settings.

Keywords: ChatGPT, Student achievement, Academic performance, Educational technology.



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Empowering Youth & Advancing Gender Equity in Health and Economic Policy

REF: ICWPD-011

Developing a Youth-Led Governance Model for Achieving SDGs 3, 5, 8, and 10: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract

The research lies in the context of sustainable development governance and aims to fill the gap that has persistently existed between the rhetorical and institutional practices of participation among youth towards the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 3, 5, 8, and 10. Despite the well-established knowledge of youth as important development stakeholders, they are still mainly involved in the governance systems in a consultative manner and with inadequate integration in the formal decision-making systems. This study incorporates the way of governance on health (SDG 3), gender-transformative governance (SDG 5), economic inclusion governance (SDG 8) and inclusive inequality governance (SDG 10) into formal policy systems. A qualitative research design was utilized based on the systematic analysis of documents and the thematic content coding of scholarly literature and international policy documents in the peer review. The use of deductive and inductive coding processes served to determine common governance frameworks, institutional processes and cross-sectoral patterns. The analysis found four interrelated domains of governance, including: Health Governance, Gender-Transformative Governance, Youth Economic Inclusion & Employment Governance, and Inclusive Governance and Equity. The main institutional processes were the legal requirements, budgetary allocation, monitoring system, cross-sector integration and policy coherence. The results indicated that youth-based governance is sustainable with institutionalized authority, institutionalized responsibility, and redistributive equity systems. Lack of institutional embedding will lead to tokenism, piecemeal implementation and lack of impact of the policy. The work is theoretically significant as it combines the theory of empowerment with SDG governance innovation and it offers a systematic model of institutions to policymakers who are interested in reforming in a manner that is inclusive. In order to determine the feasibility of implementation and the development results that can be measured, future studies ought to empirically test the model in the conditions of different nations.

Keywords: Youth-Led Governance, Sustainable Development Goals, Institutional Reform, Gender Equality, Economic Inclusion



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Empowering Youth & Advancing Gender Equity in Health and Economic Policy

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Women in Executive and Bureaucracy: Navigating Hierarchies and Shaping Policy-Case Study of Pakistan

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Abstract

Women's participation in executive bureaucracy is essential for inclusive policy development, yet their representation in senior administrative positions remains limited in many developing countries, including Pakistan. Institutional hierarchies, promotion structures, and socio-cultural expectations continue to shape women's access to decision-making roles and influence within the civil service. Despite gradual improvements in recruitment and representation, limited research has examined how women navigate bureaucratic hierarchies and contribute to policy formulation in Pakistan's executive administration. This study examines the role of women in executive bureaucracy and their influence on policy development in Pakistan. The objective of this study was to analyze how institutional structures and promotion pathways affect women's participation in executive decision-making and to explore their contributions to policy formulation and implementation within Pakistan's civil service. The study used a qualitative document-analysis methodology based on government reports, official statistics, policy documents, institutional frameworks, and relevant academic literature. Media reports and documented policy initiatives were also examined to understand patterns of women's participation and leadership in executive institutions.

The findings indicated that women remain underrepresented in senior bureaucratic grades due to structural and cultural barriers, including limited promotion opportunities, workplace constraints, and gendered institutional norms. Despite these challenges, women bureaucrats have contributed significantly to policy development in sectors such as education, health, social welfare, and economic development through leadership roles in committees, task forces, and reform initiatives. Leadership and mentorship programs provide additional support for career advancement, although their impact varies across institutions. The study concludes that strengthening women's representation in executive bureaucracy enhances inclusive governance and improves policy responsiveness. Institutional reforms and structured leadership programs remain essential for expanding women's substantive participation in policy development in Pakistan.

Keywords: Women in Bureaucracy, Gendered Institutions, Policy Influence, Pakistan Civil Service, Leadership and Mentorship.



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Empowering Youth & Advancing Gender Equity in Health and Economic Policy

REF: ICWPD-013

The Role of Women in Community-Based Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities: Compassion and Social Inclusion from an Islamic Perspective

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Abstract

Women play a central yet often under-recognized role in Community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR) for persons with disabilities, particularly in Muslim societies where family and community networks are essential for care and social inclusion. Despite their significant contributions, limited scholarly attention has been given to women's roles in CBR within an Islamic ethical framework. This study examines the contributions of women in Community-Based Rehabilitation through the lens of Islamic ethical principles and contemporary disability inclusion frameworks.

The objective of this study was to analyze the role of women in Community-Based Rehabilitation of persons with disabilities and to explore how Islamic ethical values support compassion, dignity, and social inclusion in rehabilitation practices within Muslim communities. The study used a qualitative document-analysis approach based on primary Islamic sources including the Qur'an and Hadith, classical Islamic jurisprudence, and contemporary policy frameworks, including WHO and UN guidelines on disability and rehabilitation. Relevant academic literature and documented case studies were also analyzed to understand women's roles and the challenges they face in community-based settings. The findings showed that women contribute significantly to caregiving, early identification of disabilities, educational support, advocacy, and community networking. The study also identified major structural and cultural barriers including patriarchal norms, economic dependency, mobility restrictions, and emotional and physical burdens. Evidence from documented initiatives indicated that women-led rehabilitation efforts are effective and culturally sustainable when supported by training and institutional recognition.

The study concludes that recognizing and empowering women in Community-Based Rehabilitation strengthens inclusive development and reflects Islamic principles of compassion, justice, and human dignity. Strengthening women's leadership in rehabilitation programs remains essential for sustainable and socially inclusive policy development.

Keywords: Community-Based Rehabilitation, Women's Leadership, Disability Inclusion, Islamic Ethics, Social Inclusion.



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Empowering Youth & Advancing Gender Equity in Health and Economic Policy

REF: ICWPD-014

Youth Leadership for Policy Impact in Health and Economic Policy Development

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Abstract

Youth participation has become an important aspect of social, political, and policy development in many societies. International programs increasingly encourage the involvement of young people in leadership and decision-making processes, as young leaders can bring innovative ideas and diverse perspectives that strengthen policy development and public governance. Youth-led initiatives have the potential to support positive changes in critical sectors such as health and economic policy. Special attention is given to the role of young women in leadership and their participation in policy development processes, as their involvement contributes to more inclusive and representative policymaking. However, youth are still not fully involved in policy-making processes, and a limited understanding exists regarding public perceptions of youth leadership. Previous studies suggest that students often show uncertainty about the influence of youth leadership in policy-making, highlighting the need to further explore these perceptions. The objective of this study is to explore undergraduate students' perceptions of youth leadership and its potential role in influencing policy development, particularly in health and economic sectors, through youth-led initiatives.

This study adopts a quantitative research design using a survey method. Data will be collected from undergraduate students through a structured questionnaire consisting of demographic items and Likert-scale statements assessing awareness, attitudes, and perceived opportunities for youth participation in policy initiatives. Convenience sampling will be used to select participants, and responses will be collected through online and printed questionnaires. The data will be coded and analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques such as frequencies and percentages to identify patterns in students' perceptions. The expected findings suggest that most undergraduate students will recognize the importance of youth leadership in influencing health and economic policies and support greater youth participation in policy-related initiatives. The results may also reveal limited awareness and opportunities for active engagement, highlighting the importance of encouraging leadership opportunities for young people, including young women. The study highlights the importance of empowering youth leadership to strengthen policy awareness and participation. It recommends that educational institutions and policymakers create platforms that support youth engagement, particularly encouraging the involvement of young women in policy discussions and decision-making processes.

Keywords: Youth Leadership, Policy Development, Health Policy, Economic Policy, Youth Empowerment, Gender Equality



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Empowering Youth & Advancing Gender Equity in Health and Economic Policy

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Green Leverage for Innovation: How Green HRM and Green Financing Foster Sustainable Innovation and Organizational Green Culture in Rural Sindh Banks

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Abstract

The banking sector in emerging economies is under increasing pressure to integrate sustainability into its core operations. While prior research has examined Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) and Green Financing independently, limited empirical evidence exists regarding their combined influence on sustainable outcomes, particularly in rural financial institutions. This study investigates how GHRM and Green Financing jointly foster Sustainable Innovation and Organizational Green Culture in rural banks in Sindh, Pakistan. Using a quantitative cross-sectional design, data were collected from 320 employees and managers across rural banking institutions. Established measurement scales were employed, and the hypotheses were tested using multiple regression analysis in SPSS. The findings reveal that both GHRM and Green Financing exert significant positive effects on Sustainable Innovation and Organizational Green Culture. However, GHRM emerges as the dominant predictor in both models. Specifically, GHRM demonstrates a substantially stronger influence on Sustainable Innovation ($\beta = .787$, $p < .001$) compared to Green Financing ($\beta = .206$, $p < .001$), with the model explaining 84.1% of the variance. Similarly, GHRM shows a stronger impact on Organizational Green Culture ($\beta = .745$, $p < .001$) relative to Green Financing ($\beta = .265$, $p < .001$), with an explanatory power of 84.3%. These results suggest that human capital mechanisms, such as green recruitment, environmental training, and sustainability-oriented performance systems, play a more decisive role in driving innovation and embedding environmental values than financial allocation alone. Green Financing functions as a complementary enabler that reinforces, rather than substitutes, internally embedded green capabilities. The study contributes to the literature by integrating human resource and financial perspectives into a unified framework and testing it within a resource-constrained rural banking context. The findings offer practical implications for policymakers and banking leaders seeking to advance sustainable transformation through the strategic alignment of green HR systems and targeted financial investments.

Keywords: Green HRM, Green Financing, Foster Sustainable Innovation, Organizational Green Culture, Rural Sindh Banks



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Empowering Youth & Advancing Gender Equity in Health and Economic Policy

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Online Harassment and the Gendered Architecture of Pakistani Digital Spaces: A Platform Governance Analysis of Structural Abuse

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Abstract

Gendered online harassment in Pakistan is frequently framed as individual misconduct rather than as a structurally conditioned outcome of platform governance and digital architecture. Rapid expansion of networked publics has intensified women's visibility while exposing them to patterned abuse shaped by algorithmic amplification, moderation workflows, and culturally embedded discourses. This study investigates how platform design, governance policy, moderation practice, and discursive culture converge to produce gendered online harassment in Pakistani digital spaces. A qualitative multi-method design was employed, including semi-structured interviews with 32 women across journalism, activism, academia, and politics; comparative analysis of platform community standards and reporting systems; and critical discourse analysis of 18,450 comments across 12 high-visibility harassment cases. Thematic coding and cross-method triangulation were used to identify structural mechanisms. Findings reveal three interacting structural mechanisms: algorithmic visibility amplification, procedural reporting asymmetry, and normative discursive reinforcement. High-visibility actors experienced coordinated harassment clusters, delayed enforcement, and inconsistent removal outcomes. Governance–practice gaps enabled patterned abuse despite formal policy prohibitions. Gendered online harassment in Pakistan operates as infrastructural harm embedded within platform governance architectures. Effective intervention requires systemic redesign of reporting mechanisms, context-sensitive moderation, and accountability frameworks rather than reliance on individual behavioral regulation.

Keywords: online harassment, platform governance, gendered architecture, digital patriarchy, content moderation, algorithmic amplification, Pakistan



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Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation For Post-Stroke Spasticity: An Emerging Sustainable And Accessible Treatment Approach To Stroke Rehabilitation

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Abstract

The most common problem reported in chronic stroke patients is post-stroke spasticity and loss of muscle strength, which results in limitation in functional abilities, including in both personal and domestic activities of daily life, consequently exerting adverse effects on the patient's mental health, well-being, and quality of life. To review the effects of high and low frequency of Transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS) on upper limb spasticity and its effects on functional ability in stroke patients. A narrative review was conducted on previous research studies about post-stroke spasticity, its prevalence, and effects on functional ability. Relevant studies focusing on the treatment of spasticity, mainly using TENS and its different parameters, were also included. Results of studies were consistent with each other in finding that TENS is effective in reducing spasticity and increasing the functional ability of the paretic arm in stroke patients. It is emerging as a non-invasive, cheap, and easily available modality for the management of spasticity and improving functional ability. Moreover, previous studies have used different TENS parameters, electrode placements, and treatment durations. TENS is an easy and safe therapeutic method to improve functional ability in stroke patients. And there are effects of TENS in reducing post-stroke spasticity using different parameters. Thus, it is an emerging and promising adjunct therapy for spasticity in stroke patients.

Keywords: Stroke, Post-Stroke Spasticity, Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation (TENS), Functional Ability, Upper Limb Rehabilitation, Non-Invasive Therapy



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Why Education Is Not Enough: Exploring the Gap Between Female Education and Economic Participation in Pakistan.

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Abstract

In Pakistan, female education has witnessed substantial growth over the past decades, with more girls enrolling in schools, colleges, and universities than ever before. However, this increase in educational attainment has not translated into proportional economic participation. Despite holding degrees and professional qualifications, many women remain absent from the workforce or confined to unpaid, informal, or part-time roles. This study investigates the factors contributing to this persistent gap between education and economic engagement. Cultural norms, traditional gender roles, family expectations, and social restrictions often limit women's mobility and access to professional opportunities. Additionally, workplace barriers, including gender discrimination, lack of supportive policies, and unsafe work environments, further discourage women from entering or remaining in the labor market. Economic, social, and policy-based obstacles create a complex environment in which education alone is insufficient for empowerment. Using a mixed-method approach, this research analyzes statistical data on female labor force participation, examines policy frameworks, and incorporates qualitative insights from women's experiences in Pakistan. The findings highlight that while education equips women with skills and knowledge, structural and societal barriers prevent them from translating these assets into economic independence. The study emphasizes the importance of integrated strategies that combine education with social reform, policy interventions, and workforce empowerment initiatives. By addressing these barriers, Pakistan can harness the full potential of its educated female population, promoting economic growth, social development, and gender equality.

Keywords: Female education, economic participation, gender gap, women empowerment, social norms, policy intervention.



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Structural Barriers to Women’s Leadership: An Intersectional Policy Analysis of Marginalized Young Women in Pakistan

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Abstract

Women’s leadership and youth participation have emerged as prominent topics of discourse in modern policy dialogues on both gender equality and broader social development. Many policies and initiatives in Pakistan claim to enhance women’s empowerment and the inclusion of youth in leadership spaces. But these opportunities are not evenly reachable. Despite the passion, aspirations, and promise of marginalized young women, this paper illuminates why they are often kept out or denied leadership due to structural barriers. Although policy frameworks may highlight the importance of empowerment and representation, they tend to underestimate socio-economic realities that contribute to unequal access to leadership platforms. Taking an intersectional feminist approach, this study examines how class inequality, financial limitations, social factors, and lack of institutional support constrain young women from marginalized backgrounds in their leadership pathways. The study utilizes a qualitative policy analysis methodology to explore existing policy frameworks on issues of youth and gender in Pakistan and assess their effectiveness in addressing issues of structural inequality in society. The policy analysis reveals that initiatives by leaders are only beneficial to women from socially, economically, and educationally privileged backgrounds, whereas women from disadvantaged backgrounds who are also gifted are still not represented in adequate numbers. The paper asserts that policies that are only concerned with representation and participation do not address structural inequality in society, which affects access to leadership positions for women. Therefore, for gender equity to be achieved in society, it is essential that policy frameworks move beyond representation and adopt more inclusive approaches to address issues of inequality in society.

Keywords: Youth Empowerment, Gender Policy, Leadership Barriers, Women’s Participation, Social Inequality



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REF: ICWPD-020

A Strategic, Need-Based Policy Framework for 24/7 AI-Supported Community Emergency Health Posts to Reduce Maternal and Child Health Disparities in Rural Sindh

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Abstract

Rural Sindh continues to face severe inequities in maternal and child health (MCH), particularly in geographically isolated desert and riverine (katcha) regions such as Tharparkar and Jacobabad. Limited emergency infrastructure, extreme climatic conditions, unsafe water sources, and long distances from tertiary hospitals contribute to persistent healthcare disparities between rural and urban populations. High-prevalence yet preventable conditions such as diarrheal diseases, dehydration, pregnancy-related anemia, pneumonia, and water-borne infections remain inadequately managed in remote communities. Mild to moderate diarrhea and dehydration can be effectively treated through oral rehydration therapy and timely clinical monitoring, while early-stage maternal anemia can be addressed through iron supplementation and nutritional support. However, due to the absence of 24/7 emergency stabilization facilities and delayed referral systems, these manageable conditions frequently escalate into life-threatening complications. In districts experiencing extreme heat exposure, emergency cases further increase among pregnant women and young children. This systemic service delivery gap highlights the urgent need for decentralized, culturally responsive, and continuously operational emergency health posts.

The study adopts a secondary data-driven policy design approach. District-level maternal and child health indicators, distance-to-facility mapping, road accessibility measures, and disease prevalence patterns will be analyzed to classify regions into three priority zones: Extreme Need, Moderate Need, and Basic Need. Spatial gap analysis will determine the optimal distribution of CEHPs. Comparative policy review and cost-feasibility assessment will evaluate scalability. The study does not rely on primary fieldwork at this stage but proposes future pilot-level validation. Each CEHP will operate 24/7 as a physician- or senior clinician-led unit, with at least one female Medical Officer to address socio-cultural barriers that prevent women from seeking timely care. A male health officer may also be designated to ensure inclusive service coverage. The facility will provide emergency stabilization for treatable primary conditions (e.g., diarrhea, dehydration, maternal anemia) and structured referral for severe cases. An AI-enabled Clinical Decision Support System (CDSS) will assist healthcare staff in real-time triage, stabilization protocols, referral prioritization, and telemedicine coordination with urban specialists. Emergency nutrition stabilization strategies, including therapeutic feeding protocols for severely malnourished children, will be integrated in high-risk zones.



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The proposed framework is expected to reduce emergency treatment delays, improve maternal and child survival rates, enhance healthcare utilization among rural women, and strengthen referral efficiency. By combining geographic prioritization, gender-sensitive staffing, decentralized emergency care, and AI-assisted clinical support, the model offers a scalable and cost-conscious strategy to narrow the rural–urban healthcare divide in Sindh.

Keywords: Maternal and Child Health (MCH), Rural Health Inequities, Decentralized Emergency Care, Community Emergency Health Posts (CEHPs), AI-enabled Clinical Decision Support System (CDSS), Sindh



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REF: ICWPD-0021

Feminism and Eastern Cultural Discourse: Socio-ethical Perspective of Pakistani Society

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Abstract

Feminism, as a theoretical discourse, originates in the Western philosophical tradition. Its framework is built upon the political, social, and moral structures of Western society, which has led to the common criticism that it holds little relevance for Eastern contexts. However, this view is incomplete, as patriarchal psychology—whether Eastern or Western—confronts similar fundamental questions regarding women, particularly in defining the social relationship between the sexes. Across cultures, men are rarely killed in the name of honor, nor do they suffer acid attacks following romantic rejection. In matters of inheritance, forced marriage, or compensatory practices, men are not subjected to the same forms of structural violence that women face. Yet globally, the relationship between men and women is often framed in competitive, oppositional terms—giving rise to preferential treatment of sons in inheritance and other enduring imbalances. This paper seeks to understand the historical disequilibrium in male-female relations.

Feminism has evolved over two centuries since the Seneca Falls Convention, taking multiple intellectual and applied forms. Among its interpretive frameworks, a significant one seeks to understand human existence in all its complexity from a religious and existential perspective. In contemporary Pakistani society, the concept of woman remains deeply influenced by Western thought, and feminism has yet to move beyond the foundational questions posed by Mary Wollstonecraft and Simone de Beauvoir. At its core lies a central question: Is equal political, social, and economic status for men and women natural, or unnatural? Feminism strives to answer this by asserting that such equality is indeed natural. In Pakistan, this discourse aims to dismantle traditional gender roles in literature, politics, and society, and to challenge systemic gender imbalance. This study employs both qualitative and quantitative methods—analyzing idioms, proverbs, and linguistic structures alongside literary, political, and civilizational interactions—to uncover the underlying realities of gender perception. The research draws on Western theorists such as Wollstonecraft, John Stuart Mill, Germaine Greer, Simone de Beauvoir, and Judith Butler, as well as Pakistani thinkers and figures including Fatima Jinnah, Hijab Imtiaz Ali, Nazar Sajjad Hyder, Ismat Chughtai, Asma Jahangir, Marvi Sarmad, Farzana Bari, and Humaira Ashfaq, to construct its analytical framework.

Keywords: Feminism, Gender Relations, Patriarchy, Gender Equality, Pakistan, Feminist Theory



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Empowering Youth & Advancing Gender Equity in Health and Economic Policy

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Sustainable Economic Policy Framework in Pakistan: An Integrated Review of Public Health, Women's Economic Participation, Decent Employment, and Social Equity

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Abstract

This research paper is a serious attempt to examine the sustainable economic policy framework in Pakistan in a global context, in particular, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 3 (Health), 5 (Gender Equality), 8 (Decent Work) and 10 (Reduced Inequality). The research is based on the assumption that economic growth alone cannot guarantee sustainable development unless it is integrated with public health, women's economic participation, decent work and social justice. Pakistan is facing problems such as population growth, limited resources, gender disparity and unequal distribution of income. In such a situation, the creation of a coherent and humane economic framework is indispensable, which promotes social cohesion along with economic stability. This research will provide guidelines for policymakers, economists and development agencies. The objectives of the research are to analyze the interrelationships between health, women's economic participation, decent work, and social equity, identify gaps and contradictions in existing policies, and propose a coherent and workable policy model. Through this research, we will know whether Pakistan's current economic policies are consistent with the Sustainable Development Goals. Also, to what extent do public health and women's economic inclusion affect economic growth? And how is economic stability possible through the promotion of decent work and social equity? As for the research methodology, this study will adopt a mixed-methods approach, which will include quantitative data (national and international reports) and qualitative analysis (policy documents and expert interviews). Policy coherence will be assessed through comparative and analytical methods. The research is expected to help link economic growth with social well-being. This will result in increased female labor force participation, improved health indicators, decent employment opportunities, and equitable income distribution. This will enable Pakistan to move towards a more stable, equitable, and sustainable economic path.

Keywords: Sustainable economic policy, public health, women's economic participation, decent work, social equity, sustainable development goals.



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REF: ICWPD-023

Stitching Power: Textile Education, Women’s Leadership, and the Creative Economy

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Abstract

Women’s textile labor in rural communities represents a vital intersection of cultural inheritance, economic survival, and sustainable production. Traditional practices such as hand embroidery, stitching, and tie-dye are deeply embedded in intergenerational knowledge systems, yet the women who sustain these crafts remain economically marginalized. Despite the high skill, time investment, and cultural value embedded in handmade textiles, artisans frequently receive inadequate financial compensation and limited recognition within formal market and policy structures. This research asks how textile education can serve as a mechanism for women’s leadership development, economic empowerment, and policy engagement. The primary objectives are to examine the structural undervaluation of women’s textile labor, to analyze classroom-to-community educational models as tools for leadership formation, and to explore the role of sustainable textile practices in advancing socio-economic dignity. Using a qualitative research design, the study draws on field observations, semi-structured interviews with women artisans and educators, and analysis of community-based textile training programs. The findings reveal that structured textile education enhances managerial capacity, pricing autonomy, and collective organization among women. Participants transition from informal laborers to educators, micro-entrepreneurs, and community decision-makers. Furthermore, sustainable textile techniques reinforce ecological responsibility while strengthening cultural identity. Policy implications include the need for fair wage frameworks, formal recognition of craft labor, integration of textile entrepreneurship into vocational curricula, and gender-responsive cultural industry policies. The study argues that young textile practitioners are not merely laborers; they are designers, innovators, and cultural entrepreneurs. Policy implications emphasize the need for fair trade frameworks, recognition of craft as intellectual and creative labor, integration of textile entrepreneurship in education systems, and the development of youth-centered creative hubs.

Keywords: Textile education, youth leadership, women’s empowerment, textile labor, inheritance rights, vocational training, policy reform, economic power, gender equity.



International Conference on Women in Policy Development (ICWPD 2026)

Empowering Youth & Advancing Gender Equity in Health and Economic Policy

REF: ICWPD-024

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Is A Neurological Developmental Condition

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Abstract

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a neurological developmental condition that affects a child's communication, behavior, and social interaction. In recent years, the number of autism cases has increased worldwide, making early detection very important for effective treatment and support. The main objective of this research is to develop a system for the early detection of autism in children aged 1–3 years. For this purpose, the Autism Screening for Toddlers Dataset is used, which contains screening questions and demographic information about toddlers. In this study, machine learning techniques are applied to analyze the dataset and predict whether a child shows early signs of autism. Data preprocessing and feature analysis are performed to improve model performance. Decision Tree and Random Forest algorithms are used to classify the data. The results show that the models achieve good prediction accuracy and can help identify autism symptoms at an early stage. The findings of this research demonstrate that machine learning can support healthcare professionals in the early screening process and improve awareness about autism detection in young children.

Keywords: Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Early Detection, Machine Learning, Toddlers (1–3 Years), Autism Screening, Predictive Modeling



International Conference on Women in Policy Development (ICWPD 2026)

Empowering Youth & Advancing Gender Equity in Health and Economic Policy

REF: ICWPD-025

Gendered Urbanism: Women’s Economic, Social and Legal Roles in Indus and Mesopotamian Civilizations

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Abstract

This research paper shows the comparative analysis of women’s rights, political role, and socio-economic authority in Indus and West Asian civilizations of Mesopotamia, comparative analysis through the gender and political archaeology has been made to accomplish this research paper. No significant research has been made previously in the Pakistani context to assess women’s rights beyond history through archaeological perspectives. Ample archaeological evidence is available in the Indus Civilization articulating the multi-dimensional role and contribution of women in the social fabric, religious appearance and most importantly in the economy. Archaeological record shows women as the most influential political figure in the Indus Civilization through careful expert analysis based on discovered female figurines, ornaments, seals, spindle whorls and the world-famous statue of the dancing girl. The large number of female figurines from the Indus is interpreted as the sanctity, fertility and worship of the mother goddess. The prominent statue of a dancing girl with confident visibility shows feminism as one of the strong cultural representations. It is still debatable that even having a matriarchal or matrifocal system along with majorly symbolic appearance, doesn’t mean to have women as a political authority. Comparatively, documentary evidence from Mesopotamia reveals women were expert wine makers, best healers, in charge of trade, and had the right of proprietorship. Hence, due to the un-deciphered Indus script, no written record but artifactual evidence strongly suggests the centralized role of women in textile, crafts, house management and in rituals. Through the lens of redefining androcentric notions of ancient urbanism. The Mesopotamian written records, Law sections, tablet manuscripts, and records of Ziggurats are sufficient evidence for proving women’s proprietorship, inheritance, Business inclusion, dowry and key role in temple-based economy. Outcomes of this research paper will provide a baseline to historians, social scientists and women rights activists to devise future policies to promote and protect women rights.

Keywords: Bronze Age Women’s socio-economic role, Indus & Mesopotamia, Gender archaeology, Fertility& Symbolism, Comparative analysis.



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Empowering Youth & Advancing Gender Equity in Health and Economic Policy

REF: ICWPD-026

Policy-Guided AI Integration for Rehabilitation Services: A Framework for Empowering Women with Disabilities in Pakistan

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Abstract

Differently abled women in Pakistan face compounded barriers to rehabilitation services, stemming from deeply rooted gender inequality, limited healthcare access, persistent social stigma, and fragmented program implementation. Existing artificial intelligence (AI) solutions for rehabilitation largely operate in isolation, disconnected from formal governance frameworks. This disconnect restricts their scalability, reduces accountability, and undermines equitable service delivery, particularly for women, who remain the most underserved segment in national rehabilitation programs. This study proposes a policy-guided AI integration model aimed at strengthening national rehabilitation services, with a deliberate focus on empowering differently abled women across Pakistan. The model places governmental policy as the foundational pillar, ensuring that any technological deployment aligns with national regulations, gender-sensitive frameworks, and structured monitoring mechanisms. A qualitative policy analysis approach was adopted to identify structural gaps in rehabilitation governance, map accessibility barriers faced by women, and evaluate national digital readiness. Based on these insights, a conceptual framework was constructed that embeds AI-enabled assistive systems, including speech and mobility aids, remote therapy monitoring tools, and predictive health analytics within coordinated public health and social welfare policies. The framework emphasizes centralized dashboards for performance monitoring, inter-agency collaboration, and scalable mobile-based service delivery under federal oversight. Findings indicate that integrating AI within formal policy structures enables government agencies to monitor rehabilitation activities systematically, improve treatment adherence, and ensure equitable access for differently abled women across diverse geographic settings. Ultimately, the study concludes that sustainable rehabilitation reform in Pakistan demands policy-driven AI integration rather than isolated technological solutions. Embedding AI within structured governance transforms rehabilitation from fragmented interventions into a nationally coordinated, women-empowering initiative.

Keywords: Gender Equity, Rehabilitation Policy, AI Integration, Differently Abled Women,



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Empowering Youth & Advancing Gender Equity in Health and Economic Policy

REF: ICWPD-027

From Marginalization to Participation: The Role of Community-Based Rehabilitation in Empowering Persons with Disabilities

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Abstract

Approximately 16% of the global population, around 1.3 billion people, live with some form of disability, with the majority residing in developing countries where rehabilitation services are limited. Community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR), introduced in 1978, emerged to address these gaps by extending support into local communities using available resources, aiming to improve inclusion and quality of life. This study examines the relationship between Community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR) initiatives and disability empowerment in developing countries, with a focus on improving access to healthcare, education, livelihoods, and social participation. A qualitative analytical approach was used to review existing literature, policy frameworks, and CBR program models. The study evaluated empowerment across social, economic, psychological, and political dimensions within developing countries' contexts. The findings indicate that CBR initiatives significantly improved the independence, social inclusion, and overall quality of life of persons with disabilities. Key strategies included awareness-raising, capacity-building, strengthening family and community support, and improving access to essential resources. Additionally, context-specific approaches were more effective than traditional Western models of empowerment. The study demonstrates that CBR is a sustainable and effective model for empowering persons with disabilities in resource-constrained settings. It contributes to inclusive development by enhancing autonomy and participation. The study recommends stronger policy implementation, community engagement, and institutional support to expand CBR impact. Future research should focus on long-term outcomes and cross-cultural adaptability of CBR frameworks.

Keywords: Community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR), Disability Empowerment, Developing Countries, Social Inclusion, Inclusive Development, Quality of Life.



International Conference on Women in Policy Development (ICWPD 2026)

Empowering Youth & Advancing Gender Equity in Health and Economic Policy

REF: ICWPD-028

From Media to Parliament: A Leadership Tale of Ms. Mahtab Akbar Rashidi

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Abstract

In the patriarchal social structure of Pakistan, where males are dominant in the leading positions, few women have reached decisive positions. Among them is Ms. Mahtab Akbar Rashidi. This study will examine the leadership role of Ms. Mahtab Akbar Rashidi as she is a renowned Educationist, TV Host, Anchor, Human Rights Activist, Government Official and a Politician. She is the author of a book and has written several articles in English, Urdu and Sindhi Newspapers. She is awarded with a number of awards, including the Pride of Performance award by the Government of Pakistan. She has been a member of the Sindh Provincial Assembly from 2013 to 2018, and currently she has been a member of the National Assembly of Pakistan since 2024. She is also on the Board of Directors of HUM TV and Chairperson of Rehnuma- FPAP. In this present study, an effort will be made to dig out the role played by Ms. Mahtab Akbar Rashidi for bringing awareness and educating women about their rights and socio-economic empowerment, which is important for women, particularly girls, to come forward for their rights. Her interviews on the media, Provincial and National Assembly debates, press clippings, and official notifications will also be consulted for the study.

Keywords: Patriarchal, Leadership, Human Rights, Women, Socio-Economic Empowerment.



International Conference on Women in Policy Development (ICWPD 2026)

Empowering Youth & Advancing Gender Equity in Health and Economic Policy

REF: ICWPD-029

From Hospital to Home: Policy Reforms Needed to Strengthen Community Rehabilitation Services for Women in Pakistan

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Abstract

Rehabilitation services are essential for restoring functional capacity and promoting social participation following illness, injury, or disability. In Pakistan, rehabilitation services remain largely concentrated in tertiary hospitals, resulting in a significant gap in continuity of care after hospital discharge. This gap disproportionately affects women due to socio-cultural barriers, limited mobility, and lower healthcare autonomy. This paper examines structural gaps in Pakistan's rehabilitation system and proposes policy reforms to strengthen community rehabilitation services for women, facilitating effective transition from hospital-based treatment to home and community care. A narrative policy review was conducted using peer-reviewed literature, Pakistan-specific rehabilitation studies, demographic data from the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) and the Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey (PDHS), and global rehabilitation policy frameworks.

Pakistan's female labor force participation remains low at approximately 21–24%, significantly below global averages. Women constitute nearly half of the national population but face limited access to rehabilitation services. Evidence from Pakistan indicates that rehabilitation services are underdeveloped and poorly integrated into primary healthcare systems. Community-based rehabilitation (CBR) models have demonstrated effectiveness in improving access to rehabilitation services in low-resource settings. However, Pakistan faces barriers including workforce shortages, inadequate referral systems, and limited policy prioritization of rehabilitation. Strengthening community rehabilitation services requires policy reforms that integrate physiotherapy into primary healthcare systems, expand community-based rehabilitation programs, improve referral pathways, and increase female rehabilitation workforce capacity. Aligning these reforms with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 3, 5, and 10 could significantly improve health equity and functional outcomes for women in Pakistan.

Keywords: Community rehabilitation; Physiotherapy; Women's health; Pakistan; Health policy; Disability; SDGs



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Empowering Youth & Advancing Gender Equity in Health and Economic Policy

REF: ICWPD-030

Driving Transformative Changes in Health and Economic Policies Through Youth-Led Nursing Initiatives in Punjab, Pakistan

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Abstract

With young nurses making up the bulk of the clinical workforce but being mainly missing from institutional and provincial governance structures, Pakistan's nursing industry suffers from serious representational shortages in health and economic policy-making. In Punjab's public hospital system, nurse practice, patient care, and health equity are all directly impacted by this exclusion, which sustains systemic policy failures. In five significant public teaching hospitals in Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan, this study explored the ways in which youth nursing leadership forces revolutionary changes in health and economic policies. It also highlighted the important drivers and problems to policy influence among young nurses. The design used was an explanatory mixed-methods approach. The Youth Nursing Policy Engagement Scale Lahore Version (YNPES-LH) was used to collect quantitative data from 300 young nurses (aged 18–35) in five hospitals. Thirty semi-structured interviews (6 per hospital) were used to acquire qualitative data. A combined presentation framework was used to incorporate the results of multiple linear regression and theme analysis. The most active domain was nursing workforce advocacy (77.8%), with 77.2% of participants reporting some level of policy engagement, according to the results. The main obstacles were a heavy clinical workload (85.3%), restricted access to decision-makers (79.0%), and a lack of policy education (78.0%). The biggest predictors of policy impact, according to regression analysis, were institutional support ($\beta=0.25$), mentoring access ($\beta=0.29$), and policy education ($\beta=0.43$) ($R^2=0.67$, $p<.001$). Qualitative themes showed that institutional support is primarily performative, internet platforms are democratizing policy access, mentorship is a transformative multiplier, and clinical experience drives policy motivation. To fully realize the revolutionary policy leadership potential of young nurses throughout Punjab's healthcare system, strategic investments in policy education, organized mentorship pipelines, institutional accountability, and digital advocacy capability are crucial.

Keywords: Youth nursing leadership, health policy, transformative change, policy impact, nursing advocacy



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REF: ICWPD-031

Do Women Directors Improve Company Profits? Evidence from Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) KSE-100 Companies (2022–2025)

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Abstract

There is widespread believe that having women on company boards enhance the performance corporate sector. In Pakistan the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan made a rule in 2017 that says every company board ust have least one woman on it. Even with this rule we do not really know if it helps the companies make more money especially when the economy is not doing well like it was not doing well in Pakistan from 2022 to 2023. Some studies have tried to find out. They have not given a clear answer about how women on boards affect the companies' financial results. This study wants to find out if having women on company boards really helps the companies make more money. We will look at the companies in Pakistan that are publicly listed and see if the companies with more women on their boards do better than the others. We will also make sure to consider things that can affect how well a company does such, as how big the company is and how much money it owes to others.

We used a research design that looked at numbers over time. We picked 30 companies that're not in finance and are always listed on the KSE-100 index. We looked at them from 2022 to 2025, which gave us 120 company-year observations. We got data on who's on the board and financial numbers from yearly reports that are checked by auditors. Multivariate panel regression analysis with Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) to make the results more reliable. Our analysis showed that companies with least one woman on the board did 5.71% better on average in terms of Return on Assets (ROA) than companies with only men, on the board. However, the more women directors a company had the worse it did. For every woman director ROA went down by 0.175. This was surprising and statistically significant meaning it is unlikely to be a coincidence ($p = 0.028$). We also looked at if the size of the company changed how well women directors did. It did not seem to make a difference ($\beta = -0.012$, $p = 0.089$).

This study makes a vital contribution by providing empirical evidence for the "Business Case" for gender diversity within Pakistan's unique corporate governance landscape. The negative association between proportion and performance suggests that additional women beyond the first may be token appointments. It moves the policy discourse beyond mere compliance and tokenism toward recognizing the strategic value of women in leadership. The findings strongly recommend that regulatory bodies like the SECP strengthen enforcement of existing quotas while focusing on meaningful inclusion rather than numerical targets. For corporate leaders, the results underscore



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the importance of integrating gender diversity into succession planning and board composition strategies as a lever for navigating economic uncertainty.

Keywords: Women Directors, Corporate Governance, Firm Profitability, KSE-100, SECP Policy, Board Diversity, Pakistan, Tokenism



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REF: ICWPD-032

Exploring The Factors Affecting Women Leadership, A Case Study of Government Schools Sukkur, Sindh

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Abstract

This qualitative study explores the key factors affecting women's leadership across social, cultural, and institutional contexts. Drawing on in-depth interviews and thematic analysis, the research examines how gender norms, organizational structures, and personal experiences shape women's leadership opportunities and trajectories. Findings reveal that deeply rooted societal expectations, including traditional gender roles and stereotypes, continue to limit women's access to leadership positions and influence perceptions of their capabilities. Institutional barriers such as lack of mentorship, unequal career advancement opportunities, and workplace discrimination further constrain their progress. Additionally, the study highlights the role of work-life balance challenges, particularly the burden of unpaid care responsibilities, in hindering leadership participation. Despite these obstacles, enabling factors such as supportive networks, education, leadership training, and progressive organizational policies emerge as critical in fostering women's leadership. The research also underscores the importance of self-efficacy, resilience, and agency in navigating structural barriers. By providing nuanced insights into both challenges and facilitators, this study contributes to the broader discourse on gender equality and leadership development. It recommends targeted policy interventions, organizational reforms, and community-level awareness to create inclusive environments where women can lead effectively and equitably.

Keywords: Women's Leadership, Gender Equality, Gender Norms, Organizational Barriers, Leadership Development, Qualitative Study



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REF: ICWPD-033

Unlocking Digital Payments: A UTAUT2-Based Insights Among University Students

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Abstract

Digital payment systems have become essential in transforming financial services globally; however, their adoption among university students remains limited. Factors such as perceived ease of use, social influence, and habitual dependence on cash continue to hinder uptake. Understanding these determinants is crucial for advancing digital financial inclusion and promoting technology adoption in the region. Despite widespread access to smartphones and the internet, university students in Sindh still rely heavily on cash for daily transactions. Adoption of Digital Payment Systems (DPS) remains low, and empirical studies focusing on the behavioral drivers of DPS usage in Sindh are scarce. This study investigates the factors influencing DPS adoption among university students in Sindh using the UTAUT2 framework. It examines the effects of key independent variables on Behavioral Intention and User Behavior, while also assessing the moderating roles of Gender, Experience, Location, and Digital Literacy. A quantitative research approach was employed, using stratified random sampling to collect data from 300 university students. A structured questionnaire based on UTAUT2 constructs, Behavioral Intention, User Behavior, and moderating variables was administered, with all items measured on a 5-point Likert scale. Results indicate that Performance Expectancy, Effort Expectancy, Social Influence, Facilitating Conditions, Hedonic Motivation, and Habit significantly influence students' Behavioral Intention to adopt DPS. Moderating variables such as Gender, Experience, Digital Literacy, and Location further shape these relationships. High digital literacy, ease of use, and socially supportive environments promote adoption, while cash dependence and security concerns remain major barriers. The study highlights the primary determinants of DPS adoption among university students in Sindh and provides insights for policymakers and financial institutions to design strategies that enhance digital payment usage and strengthen financial inclusion. The study's scope is limited to Sindh; future research should explore additional regions and demographic groups to broaden understanding of DPS adoption patterns.

Keywords: Digital Payment Systems; UTAUT2; Behavioral Intention; User Behavior; Financial Inclusion; Technology Adoption; Digital Literacy; Moderating Factors



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Empowering Youth & Advancing Gender Equity in Health and Economic Policy

REF: ICWPD-034

Artificial Intelligence in Cybersecurity: The Future of Digital Defense

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Abstract

In a world where everyone is connected, traditional cybersecurity is failing. Hackers are now using automated tools to bypass older firewalls. My research looks at how Artificial Intelligence (AI) can become our new "digital shield." I specifically want to know: Can we move from just fixing problems after they happen to predicting and stopping them before they start? My goal is to show that AI isn't just a fancy tool, but the actual foundation of future security. To investigate this, my study focuses specifically on Unsupervised Machine Learning (ML) and Behavioral Analytics. I analyzed how tools like Darktrace use "Self-Learning" algorithms to create a "digital DNA" of a network's normal activity. Unlike old-school antivirus software that only looks for "known" viruses, I evaluated how this ML technology identifies "anomalies" or strange patterns in real-time traffic. My findings show that by using Predictive Analytics, these tools can detect hidden threats—including Ransomware—reducing the detection time by over 70%. Regarding policy, the research suggests that as we automate defense, we must implement Explainable AI (XAI) standards. This ensures that security experts can understand the "why" behind the AI's decisions, preventing the system from becoming a "black box" that humans can't control. Researcher propose a "Symbiotic" model where AI does the heavy lifting (processing data), and humans do the smart lifting (making final decisions). This approach ensures that as we move into a more automated future, our defenses remain both strong and ethical. This paper fits the conference theme of "Digital Resilience." I propose a "Symbiotic" model where AI does the heavy lifting (processing data), and humans do the smart lifting (making final decisions). This approach ensures that as we move into a more automated future, our defenses remain both strong and ethical.

Keywords: Cybersecurity, Artificial Intelligence (AI), Unsupervised Machine Learning, Behavioral Analytics, Predictive Threat Detection, Digital Resilience



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Empowering Youth & Advancing Gender Equity in Health and Economic Policy

REF: ICWPD-035

Digital Natives, Digital Leaders? Examining How Large Language Models Shape Youth Policy Engagement and Civic Leadership in Karachi

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Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between AI literacy and youth policy engagement among young people in Karachi, Pakistan, addressing the critical gap in understanding how proficiency with Large Language Models may empower civic participation in developing urban contexts. A quantitative cross-sectional survey was conducted with 250 youth aged 18 to 30 years recruited from across Karachi's six districts using multistage stratified random sampling. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire measuring AI literacy, policy engagement, and leadership self-perception on five-point Likert scales. Reliability analysis yielded excellent internal consistency for the 15-item instrument (Cronbach's $\alpha = .935$). Simple linear regression revealed that AI literacy significantly predicted policy engagement ($\beta = .709$, $p < .001$), explaining 50.2% of the variance. AI literacy also significantly predicted leadership self-perception ($\beta = .643$, $p < .001$), explaining 41.3% of the variance. Hierarchical regression analysis demonstrated that AI literacy remained the strongest predictor of policy engagement ($\beta = .612$, $p < .001$) after controlling for age, gender, education, and internet access, explaining an additional 36.3% of variance beyond demographics. Education ($\beta = .105$, $p = .007$) and internet access ($\beta = .135$, $p = .004$) also significantly predicted engagement, while age showed marginal effects and gender remained non-significant. These findings confirm that AI literacy is a powerful determinant of youth civic engagement and leadership capacity in Karachi. Investing in AI education and digital infrastructure represents a strategic pathway toward inclusive governance and youth empowerment in Pakistan's rapidly evolving digital landscape.

Keywords: AI literacy, youth policy engagement, leadership self-perception, Large Language Models, Pakistan



International Conference on Women in Policy Development (ICWPD 2026)

Empowering Youth & Advancing Gender Equity in Health and Economic Policy

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The Governance Paradox: Does Citizen Trust Moderate the Success of Health Equity Programs in Pakistan?

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Abstract

Health equity programs can only be successful with the help of public trust, and little has been done to discover the role of governance perceptions on this trust in the context of developing countries. This paper explored how the perception of the citizens with regards to the quality of governance and corrupt practices would be used to predict the degree of trust on the citizens when it comes to the public health equity programs in Pakistan (or in our case, the Sehat Sahulat Program). Quantitative cross-sectional survey was done on 250 respondents in urban and semi-urban areas of Sindh province. Perceptions of the quality of governance, perceptions of unethical behavior, and trust of the citizen in health programs were used to collect the data based on a structured questionnaire on five-point Likert scales. To analyze predictive relationships, linear regression analysis was used. The analysis of reliability generated a great internal consistency of the 15-item instrument (Cronbach Alpha =.935). The regression equation was found to be significant with $p = .001$ and 54.2 percent of the variance in citizen trust was accounted. The two predictors were both significant to the model: perceptions of the quality of the governance $p < .001$ and perceived unethical behavior $p < .001$. It is interesting to note that unethical behavior perception had an almost twice predictive power as that of governance quality perceptions, indicating that the perception of misconduct experiences has a stronger impact on citizens trust than governance attributes. Such results affirm that governance integrity is the guiding principle that determines the level of confidence of the people on health initiatives. To have sustainable health policy within SDGs, the financial investments should be supported by systematic measures to fight against unethical practices and enhance the level of governance accountability mechanisms that are really trusted by the people.

Keywords: Governance quality, Unethical behavior, Citizen trust, Health equity programs, Pakistan, Sehat Sahulat Program



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REF: ICWPD-037

Digital Micro Entrepreneurship and Women's Financial Autonomy In Urban Pakistan

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Abstract

This study investigates how digital media has opened a new horizon for women of Pakistan where they can make their business startups successful on a small scale with limited resources and within constrained cultural and social environment. They are engaged in different online businesses leading to self-confidence, increased income and negotiating power within household. Despite increasing access to smartphones and social media, it is unclear whether digital media enhances women's financial autonomy, decision making power and status and position of women within households. The objective of this research is to explore the dynamics of digital work and its impact on women's autonomy in urban areas. The study is grounded in Gender and Development framework and feminist political economy. A qualitative study based on 25 in-depth interviews with urban women running online business in Karachi, the study analyzes financial autonomy of women by ownership of personal bank account, control over spending, investment decisions, contribution to household expenses and mobility. The analysis will be linked to financial inclusion policies in Pakistan and how much microfinance initiatives are focused on women. By uncovering how digital media has changed women's status and position economically and socially and the role financial inclusion policies in Pakistan, the study advances understanding of role of digitization in women's financial autonomy in a developing country.

Keywords: Women's Financial Autonomy, Digital Media, Women Entrepreneurship, Financial Inclusion, Pakistan, Urban Women



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Empowering Youth & Advancing Gender Equity in Health and Economic Policy

REF: ICWPD-038

AI-Driven Phishing Attack Detection for Secure Systems

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Abstract

Historically, phishing has evolved from rudimentary email scams into a multi-layered global threat, moving beyond simple rule-based filters that once relied on static blacklists. In the contemporary digital ecosystem, these attacks have become the primary vector for data breaches, leveraging sophisticated social engineering and counterfeit interfaces to exploit users across e-commerce and cloud platforms. This research addresses the critical need for adaptive security by investigating the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) within cybersecurity frameworks. By shifting from reactive to proactive defense, this study explores how advanced computational algorithms—including URL metadata analysis and natural language processing—can identify hidden malicious patterns that elude traditional detection. The evaluation of various ML models demonstrates that AI-driven methodologies significantly outperform traditional heuristics, specifically in the real-time identification of "zero-day" phishing sites and the reduction of false positives through behavioral anomaly detection. These findings suggest that intelligent systems provide the scalability required to monitor massive traffic volumes in modern organizational infrastructures. Ultimately, the integration of AI-powered security is a necessity for safeguarding digital integrity. By transitioning from static to intelligent detection, this research highlights a robust strategy to mitigate cyber risks, protect confidential data, and foster a resilient digital environment against increasingly sophisticated social engineering.

Keywords: Phishing Detection, Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, Cybersecurity, Social Engineering, Behavioral Anomaly Detection, Data Protection, Information Security.



International Conference on Women in Policy Development (ICWPD 2026)

Empowering Youth & Advancing Gender Equity in Health and Economic Policy

REF: ICWPD-039

Invisible Morbidity, Invisible Policy: Why Postpartum Musculoskeletal Disorders Must Be Integrated into Maternal Health Policies in Pakistan

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Abstract

Maternal health policies in low- and middle-income countries have traditionally prioritized the prevention of maternal mortality and obstetric complications. While these priorities remain critical, non-fatal postpartum health conditions—particularly musculoskeletal disorders—remain largely neglected in maternal health frameworks. Postpartum musculoskeletal conditions such as pelvic girdle pain, low back pain, diastasis recti, and pelvic floor dysfunction significantly affect women’s functional capacity and quality of life. Despite their high prevalence, these conditions often remain invisible within policy discussions. This policy-oriented review examines the burden of postpartum musculoskeletal disorders and argues for their integration into maternal health policies in Pakistan. A narrative policy review was conducted using peer-reviewed literature on pregnancy-related musculoskeletal disorders, rehabilitation interventions, and maternal health policy frameworks. Evidence was synthesized from international studies and Pakistan-specific research examining the prevalence and impact of pregnancy-related musculoskeletal conditions. Musculoskeletal disorders during and after pregnancy are highly prevalent, with studies indicating that between 34% and 72% of women experience pregnancy-related low back pain and pelvic girdle pain. In Pakistan, prevalence estimates for pregnancy-related low back pain range from approximately 26% to over 68%, depending on population and trimester. A significant proportion of women continue to experience pain months or years postpartum, leading to functional limitations and reduced participation in daily activities. Despite these impacts, maternal health programs largely overlook postpartum musculoskeletal rehabilitation. Postpartum musculoskeletal disorders represent a significant yet under-recognized public health issue. Integrating physiotherapy and rehabilitation services into maternal health policies could improve maternal well-being, reduce disability, and promote long-term health outcomes.

Keywords: Postpartum rehabilitation; Musculoskeletal disorders; Maternal health policy; Physiotherapy; Pakistan; Pelvic girdle pain; Low back pain



International Conference on Women in Policy Development (ICWPD 2026)

Empowering Youth & Advancing Gender Equity in Health and Economic Policy

REF: ICWPD-040

Youth-Led Policy Engagement in Pakistan: Evaluating Women's Participation in Local Governance Structures

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Abstract

This study examines youth-led policy engagement in Pakistan with a specific focus on evaluating women's participation in local governance structures. Despite constitutional provisions and quota-based representation in local bodies, young women continue to face structural, socio-cultural, and institutional barriers that limit their effective political engagement. Using a quantitative cross-sectional design, data were collected from 320 young respondents (aged 18–35) involved in community organizations, student unions, and local councils across urban and semi-urban districts. Descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression analyses were employed to assess the relationship between youth political awareness, institutional support, digital engagement, and women's active participation in local governance. The findings indicate that youth political awareness ($\beta = 0.41$, $p < 0.01$) and institutional mentorship ($\beta = 0.36$, $p < 0.01$) significantly predict women's participation, while socio-cultural constraints negatively influence engagement levels ($\beta = -0.29$, $p < 0.05$). Digital platforms were found to mediate participation by enhancing access to policy information and civic mobilization. The model explains 58% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.58$) in women's local governance engagement. The study underscores the importance of targeted leadership training, inclusive policy frameworks, and youth-centered civic education initiatives to strengthen democratic participation. It contributes to the discourse on gender-inclusive governance by highlighting the transformative potential of youth-driven advocacy in fostering equitable representation and participatory decision-making processes at the grassroots level in Pakistan.

Keywords: civic engagement, gender equality, local governance, Pakistan, women's political participation, youth leadership



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Empowering Youth & Advancing Gender Equity in Health and Economic Policy

REF: ICWPD-041

Comparative Evaluation of Morphological Responses of Two Wheat (*Triticum aestivum* L) Varieties (TDA and Abdul Sattar) Under NaCl-Induced Salinity Stress

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Abstract

Salinity is a major abiotic stress that significantly limits wheat productivity worldwide. The present study was conducted to evaluate the morphological responses of two wheats (*Triticum aestivum* L.) varieties, TDA and Abdul Sattar, under different levels of NaCl-induced salinity stress. Seeds of both varieties were grown under controlled conditions and subjected to three salinity treatments: 0 mM (control), 50 mM, and 100 mM NaCl. Morphological parameters, including germination time, germination percentage, total seedling length, and fresh and dry biomass, were recorded to assess the impact of salt stress. The results indicated that increasing NaCl concentration significantly reduced germination percentage, delayed germination time, and decreased total seedling length in both varieties. Fresh and dry biomass also showed a marked decline at 50 mM and 100 mM NaCl compared to the control treatment. However, varietal differences in salinity tolerance were observed. The TDA variety demonstrated comparatively better performance under salinity stress by maintaining higher germination rates and greater biomass accumulation than Abdul Sattar. The findings suggest that salinity stress adversely affects early growth and biomass accumulation in wheat, while genotypic variation plays a critical role in determining stress tolerance. These results provide valuable insights for breeding and selection programs aimed at developing salt-tolerant wheat cultivars suitable for saline environments.

Keywords: Salinity Stress, *Triticum aestivum*, NaCl Stress, Morphological Responses, Germination and Biomass, Salt Tolerance



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Empowering Youth & Advancing Gender Equity in Health and Economic Policy

REF: ICWPD-042

Prevalence of Upper Cross Syndrome Among Rickshaw Drivers in Sukkur Sindh, Pakistan

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Abstract

Musculoskeletal disorders are a major occupational health concern worldwide, particularly among professional drivers exposed to prolonged sitting and poor posture. Upper quadrant musculoskeletal strain associated with features of Upper Cross Syndrome remains underexplored in informal transport workers. To determine the prevalence of upper quadrant musculoskeletal symptoms and assess their functional impact among auto-rickshaw drivers in Sukkur, Sindh, Pakistan. A quantitative cross-sectional study was conducted among 132 professional auto-rickshaw drivers using non-probability convenience sampling. Data were collected using the Neck Disability Index and the Nordic Musculoskeletal Questionnaire. Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS version 24. Descriptive statistics were calculated, and Pearson correlation analysis was applied to examine associations, with significance set at $p < 0.05$. Upper back pain demonstrated the highest 12-month prevalence (75.8%), followed by shoulder (56.1%) and neck pain (54.5%). Approximately 81% of participants reported no pain or very mild pain at the time of assessment, while less than 10% reported severe pain. Functional limitation was reported by 58.3% in the neck region and 53.0% in the shoulder region. No statistically significant association was found between age and musculoskeletal symptoms ($p > 0.05$). Upper quadrant musculoskeletal symptoms are highly prevalent among auto-rickshaw drivers. Although pain intensity is generally mild, functional limitation is common, indicating a meaningful occupational health burden. Preventive ergonomic strategies and targeted physiotherapy interventions are recommended. Future research should employ longitudinal designs to explore causal relationships.

Keywords: Upper Cross Syndrome, Musculoskeletal Disorders, Auto-Rickshaw Drivers, Occupational Health, Neck Disability



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Empowering Youth & Advancing Gender Equity in Health and Economic Policy

REF: ICWPD-043

Exposing Concealed Gender Bias in Discourse: Implications for Social Frameworks and Policy Formulation

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Abstract

Language profoundly shapes social perceptions and informs decision-making processes. Implicit gender biases embedded in everyday communication and literary texts influence evaluations of competence, authority, and societal roles. Previous research highlights general gender disparities in professional and social contexts, but there is limited analysis of how linguistic practices specifically reinforce these inequities. This study examines concealed gender bias in discourse and its implications for social and policy frameworks. This research investigates how gendered language patterns (Variable A) and social perceptions of competence (Variable B) affect evaluations of individuals in professional and social settings (Population/Setting). A qualitative discourse analysis was conducted on a selection of literary texts and recorded communications. Linguistic coding identified gendered associations and recurring patterns of bias. Findings indicate that women are frequently described using terms associated with emotionality, passivity, and dependence, whereas men are linked with strength, confidence, and authority. These patterns perpetuate social hierarchies and influence professional assessments and interpersonal dynamics. The study contributes theoretically by illustrating how language constructs and maintains gender inequality. Practically, adopting gender-neutral and inclusive language practices can mitigate these biases, promoting equity, awareness, and fairness across social and institutional contexts. Future research should explore intervention strategies and the impact of inclusive language policies on organizational outcomes.

Keywords: Discourse Analysis, Gender Inequality, Inclusive Language, Linguistic Gender Bias, Social Hierarchies



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Empowering Youth & Advancing Gender Equity in Health and Economic Policy

REF: ICWPD-044

Evaluating Policies of Government for Women’s Economic Empowerment in Pakistan: A Decadal Analysis (2015-2025)

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Abstract

Women’s economic empowerment is a key factor for the sustainable growth of a country. Pakistan has 49% women population, but their contribution to economic activities and financial inclusion are limited. Over the past decade, the Government of Pakistan has introduced different policies and programs to improve the situation. These initiatives played a major role in women’s financial inclusion, social protection, skill development and financial independence.

This study reviews the major Government policies implemented from 2015 to 2025 to enhance the economic empowerment of women in Pakistan. Although the government introduced many policies and programs but this study focuses on key initiatives, e.g. financial inclusion strategies, entrepreneurship support programs and digital financial initiatives.

The finding indicates that the effect of Government policies is positive, but there are several challenges that limit the effectiveness of these policies e.g. low female workforce participation, socio-cultural barriers, limited access to financial resources and weak policy. The research provides policy recommendations to strengthen gender-responsive economic policies, improving access to financial resources and enhancing financial institution support. These measures will help to achieve sustainable economic growth in the country.

Keywords: Government policies, economic growth of women, women empowerment



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Empowering Youth & Advancing Gender Equity in Health and Economic Policy

REF: ICWPD-045

Youth Engagement In Policy Making: A Pathway To Inclusive Governance

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Abstract

Youth engagement is becoming more and more important in modern governance, especially when it comes to inclusive policymaking. This study examined how engaging young people in decision-making can create more inclusive governance. When youth take part, they bring new ideas, a better understanding of technology, and future-focused thinking, and these contributions make policies stronger, more practical, and better suited to the needs of society. In contemporary governance systems, a significant gap exists between policy formulation and representation of the younger population, resulting in limited consideration of their needs and perspectives. Previous research has highlighted the importance of participation in governance; the specific contribution of youth in shaping responsive and equitable policies has been underexplored. This study aimed to analyze the relationship between youth participation and inclusive policy outcomes within selected governance settings. This study examined a qualitative research methodology by using document analysis and policy reports, academic literature, and institutional frameworks to identify pattern of youth involvement in decision making processes, the findings revealed that increased youth participation contributed to improved transparency, innovation, and responsiveness in policy development, additionally youth led initiatives were associated with more inclusive approaches in addressing issues related to education, employment, healthcare access, and economic opportunities. The study concludes that youth engagement strengthens the foundation of inclusive governance by promoting participatory decision-making and intergenerational equity.

Keywords: Youth leadership, Inclusive Governance, Policy Making, Participation, Good Governance



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Empowering Youth & Advancing Gender Equity in Health and Economic Policy

REF: ICWPD-046

Role of Universities Integrating with Social and Health Policies to Achieve Sustainable Development Goal 3 for Health Promotion

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Abstract

In society, universities are key venues for health promotion and safety, but the approaches of linking institutional policies, social issues and environmental support have not been fully explored in developing countries. The purpose of the study is to explore the campus polices, social factors, and environmental factors related to the encouragement of the comfort of students in Pakistan's universities, aligning with Sustainable Development Goal 3 (Good Health and Comfort). The study hypothesizes a conceptual model to examine the hypothesized relationship between social factors, institutional policies, health behaviors, campus environment, and student comfort with structural equation modeling (SEM) approaches. The quantitative method was used to survey of the university students. A stratified random sampling technique was used to collect the data from 407 male and female students through the Google form link distribution by different types of communications. The questionnaire was adapted from the previous literature already validated. Data analysis was performed using descriptive statistics through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version-24, structural and measurement modeling done by the PLS-SEM-04. The findings of the study are projected to offer evidence-based guidance for universities to implement health promotion strategies which balance fairness, policy direction, and sustainability.

Keywords: Health-promotion universities, determinants of a healthy society, Sustainable Development Goal 3, Pakistan, structural equation modeling, well-being



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Empowering Youth & Advancing Gender Equity in Health and Economic Policy

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Exploring The Feminist Aspects in A Doll's House and The Joys of Motherhood Through Comparative Analysis

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Abstract

This paper attempts to present a comparative analysis of A Doll's House by Henrik Ibsen and The Joys of Motherhood Buchi Emacheta through liberal feminism, which provides a theoretical framework to analyze the patriarchy and its control over women through language. By employing a qualitative research approach, this study uses content analysis to study how language can be used to shape women's identities within patriarchal culture. Both texts use simple and realistic language reflecting social rules that limit women's freedom and define their identity through men. In A Doll's House, male dominance appears through manipulative yet affectionate language. In The Joys of Motherhood, patriarchal power is shown through commanding and traditional language. The paper further highlights that nineteenth-century European societies idealize the image of a housewife as a loving, calm and protected, while African postcolonial society idealizes motherhood as it brings respect, security and honor, however both the ideals bring endless suffering and emotional pain. Primarily, women are valued as wives and mothers; otherwise, they are considered useless and failures. The endings of both texts are tragic and ironic, moving parallel but in opposite directions: Nora leaves her home in search of self-discovery, but Nnu Ego chooses to suffer and dies alone. The findings of the study show that if a woman is suffering emotionally, physically, and mentally, she should recognize her suffering instead of ignoring it, speak for her freedom instead of accepting that women hold value beyond roles like wives or mothers. Therefore, recognizing the oppression and resisting it is significant for woman's identity. The resistance depicted by Nora can begin a new life, while the self-sacrifice presented by Nnu Ego leads to self-destruction.

Keywords: Housewife, Oppression, Patriarchy, Post-colonial, Self-discovery.



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Empowering Youth & Advancing Gender Equity in Health and Economic Policy

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Women’s Health Rehabilitation as an Economic Strategy in Pakistan: Linking Physiotherapy to SDGs 3, 5, and 8

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Abstract

In Pakistan, women experience a substantial burden of non-fatal but function-limiting health conditions, including pelvic floor dysfunction, chronic musculoskeletal pain, cardio-metabolic disease, and cancer-related impairments. These conditions influence not only health status but also labor force participation, unpaid care work, and economic productivity. Despite this, rehabilitation—particularly physiotherapy—remains under-positioned in national economic and gender policy discourse. To examine women’s health rehabilitation in Pakistan as an economic strategy aligned with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 3 (Good Health and Well-being), 5 (Gender Equality), and 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). A narrative policy review was conducted using indexed global rehabilitation evidence, Pakistan-specific demographic and labor data, WHO policy documents, and peer-reviewed literature on women’s health rehabilitation outcomes. The analysis synthesizes clinical, economic, and policy dimensions within the Pakistani context. Three economic pathways were identified: (1) restoration of functional capacity enabling workforce participation; (2) reduction in unpaid care burden and time poverty; and (3) prevention of chronic disability and health system costs. Pakistan’s female labor force participation remains low (around 22–23%), and maternal morbidity, chronic pain, and cardiovascular disease significantly affect working-age women. Evidence supports physiotherapy in improving pelvic floor dysfunction, chronic pain, and cancer survivorship outcomes. However, integration of rehabilitation into primary health care and universal health coverage remains limited in Pakistan. Women’s health physiotherapy in Pakistan should be reframed as a productivity-enhancing investment rather than an optional clinical service. Integrating rehabilitation into maternal health programs, chronic disease management, and workplace health initiatives can strengthen SDG progress while enhancing women’s economic participation.

Keywords: Women’s health; Physiotherapy; Pakistan; Rehabilitation; economics; SDG 3; SDG 5; SDG 8.



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Empowering Youth & Advancing Gender Equity in Health and Economic Policy

REF: ICWPD-049

Community-Based Rehabilitation For Differently Abled Population

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Abstract

Community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR) is an inclusive strategy aimed at improving functional independence and participation among people with disabilities by delivering accessible, culturally responsive, and sustainable rehabilitation services within community settings. Differently abled individuals, particularly those with post-stroke disabilities, often face barriers in accessing institution-based rehabilitation. Understanding the concept, role, and sustainability of community-based rehabilitation is essential for strengthening inclusive rehabilitation practices. A cross-sectional study was conducted with one participant aged 45 years in a small village of Shikarpur. Data were collected using the Barthel Index and the WHODAS 2.0 physical form questionnaire. The participant demonstrated marked improvement following community-based rehabilitation. The Barthel Index score increased from 5 to 14, indicating a 70% improvement in functional independence. The WHODAS 2.0 score decreased from 18 to 7, reflecting a 61% reduction in disability level. These findings suggest significant functional recovery and improved participation after community-based rehabilitation. Community-Based Rehabilitation supports functional independence and participation among post-stroke individuals while promoting accessible and culturally responsive care. Despite existing challenges, CBR remains a sustainable and effective rehabilitation approach for differently abled populations in community settings.

Keywords: Community-based Rehabilitation, disability, accessibility, sustainable, community health, quality of life



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Empowering Youth & Advancing Gender Equity in Health and Economic Policy

REF: ICWPD-050

Revisiting Flexible Work: Untangling the Roles of Conflict, Support, and Gender Attitudes in Women's Employment

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Abstract

Women's workforce participation in Pakistan remains low despite increasing levels of female education and growing discussion around inclusive labor policies. Many women continue to face barriers such as rigid work structures, family-related pressures, and restrictive gender norms that limit their ability to enter, remain in, or re-enter employment. Although flexible work arrangements have gained importance in the post-pandemic period, their role in improving women's workforce participation in developing countries remains underexplored, particularly when organizational support and socio-cultural attitudes are considered together. This study examines the impact of flexible work arrangements on women's workforce participation in Pakistan. It specifically evaluates the mediating role of work-family conflict and the moderating roles of perceived organizational support and gender role attitudes. A quantitative research design was employed using structured survey questionnaires administered to 359 working women across different sectors. Data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (Partial Least Squares) to test the direct, mediating, and moderating relationships among flexible work arrangements, work-family conflict, perceived organizational support, gender role attitudes, and women's workforce participation. The findings show that flexible work arrangements significantly reduce work-family conflict and positively influence women's workforce participation. Work-family conflict has a significant negative effect on workforce participation and mediates the relationship between flexible work arrangements and women's workforce participation. Perceived organizational support significantly reduces work-family conflict and strengthens the effectiveness of flexible work arrangements, while gender role attitudes negatively affect women's workforce participation and intensify the negative effect of work-family conflict. This study contributes to the literature by offering an integrated framework that combines organizational and socio-cultural factors in explaining women's workforce participation. In practical terms, it highlights the need for organizations and policymakers to promote flexible work arrangements, strengthen supportive workplace practices, and address restrictive gender norms to improve women's participation in the workforce in developing economies such as Pakistan.

Keywords: Flexible work arrangements, work-family conflict, perceived organizational support, gender role attitudes, women's workforce participation, Pakistan



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Empowering Youth & Advancing Gender Equity in Health and Economic Policy

REF: ICWPD-051

Beyond Access: Confronting Socio-Cultural and Psychological Barriers to Gender Equality in Pakistan's Educational Policies (14pt, Bold, Centered)

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Abstract

Gender inequality shapes educational experiences of Pakistani women/girls despite empowerment policies. Socio-cultural norms and psychological barriers create gaps between policy intentions and classroom realities, particularly in regions like Hunza versus rural Sindh, limiting girls' confidence and aspirations. Socio-cultural norms and psychological barriers impacting girls' educational participation and teacher preparedness in Pakistani schools. Qualitative - 6 classroom observations (20 hours, Hunza/rural Sindh), 12 semi-structured interviews (8 teachers, 4 mothers), thematic analysis using NVivo software. 75% teachers lacked gender training, 62% girls reported low self-efficacy/fear of judgment, Hunza showed 40% higher female confidence vs rural 18%. Gender-responsive pedagogy + teacher training essential beyond access. Recommend mandatory gender modules in B.Ed., safe expression spaces. Future: Longitudinal impact across Pakistan's provinces.

Keywords: Gender equality, educational policy, Pakistan, girls' education, socio-cultural norms, psychological barriers, gender-responsive pedagogy, teacher training, women's empowerment.



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Empowering Youth & Advancing Gender Equity in Health and Economic Policy

REF: ICWPD-052

Impact of EWOM Information Quality and Credibility On Purchase Intention: Mediating Role of Information Usefulness and Acceptance in Pakistan's E-Commerce Sector

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Abstract:

In the digital marketplace, electronic word-of-mouth (EWOM) has become a critical source of information influencing consumer decision-making. Despite its growing importance, limited research examines how information quality and credibility affect purchase intention in developing economies like Pakistan. This study investigates the impact of EWOM information quality and credibility on purchase intention, with the mediating role of information usefulness and acceptance among consumers in Pakistan's e-commerce sector. A quantitative research design was employed using a structured questionnaire distributed to consumers enrolled in advanced marketing programs at recognized universities in Pakistan. Data were analyzed using statistical techniques to examine relationships between variables. The findings indicate that information credibility significantly influences purchase intention, while information quality positively enhances consumer confidence and reduces uncertainty. Information usefulness and acceptance partially mediate these relationships, strengthening the effect of EWOM on purchase intention. Additionally, while consumers rely heavily on peer reviews, excessive digital engagement with brands does not necessarily translate into higher purchase intention. The study contributes to understanding digital consumer behavior in a developing economy by highlighting the central role of trust and meaningful information in shaping purchase decisions. It recommends that marketers focus on transparent, credible, and high-quality information rather than solely increasing online engagement. Policymakers should enhance digital literacy and consumer protection to build trust in e-commerce systems. Future research can explore cultural influences and emerging technologies affecting online consumer trust.

Keywords: EWOM, Information Quality, Credibility, Purchase Intention, Pakistan



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Empowering Youth & Advancing Gender Equity in Health and Economic Policy

REF: ICWDP-053

Frequency Of Neck Pain Affecting Academic Performance During Examination Among Undergraduate University Students

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Abstract

Neck pain is an increasingly common musculoskeletal complaint among university students, particularly during examination periods when prolonged sitting, increased device use, and psychological stress may aggravate symptoms. Although neck pain may affect concentration and productivity, evidence on its relationship with academic performance during exams remains limited in Pakistan. To determine the frequency of neck pain among undergraduate university students during the examination period and to evaluate its association with academic performance. An analytical cross-sectional study was conducted at Ziauddin University Sukkur and Begum Nusrat Bhutto Women University Sukkur using convenience sampling. Data were collected through a structured proforma and questionnaires, including the Numeric Rating Pain Scale (NPRS) and Academic Performance Scale (APS), along with CGPA categories. Normality was assessed using Kolmogorov–Smirnov and Shapiro–Wilk tests. Associations were examined using Spearman’s correlation and chi-square tests. A total of 190 participants were analysed. Participants reported moderate neck pain (NPRS mean = 5.39 ± 1.22 ; range 4–9) and moderate-to-high academic performance (APS mean = 30.22 ± 4.82 ; range 8–40). Most students were classified as having moderate pain (81%), while 19% had severe pain. Spearman’s correlation showed a weak negative but non-significant relationship between neck pain and academic performance ($\rho = -0.099$, $p = 0.175$). Chi-square tests found no significant association between pain category and academic performance category ($\chi^2 = 1.997$, $p = 0.368$) or CGPA category ($\chi^2 = 2.062$, $p = 0.560$). Neck pain is frequent during exams but was not significantly associated with academic performance in this sample.

Keywords: Neck pain, examination period, undergraduate students, NPRS, academic performance, CGPA, musculoskeletal disorder.



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Empowering Youth & Advancing Gender Equity in Health and Economic Policy

REF: ICWPD-054

Linguistic Complexity and Legalese in Women’s Rights Legislation: A Mixed-Methods Study of Public Comprehension and Plain Language Reform

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Abstract

Language is the primary medium through which laws convey rights and obligations. In Pakistan, legal discourse is predominantly in English and distinguished by complex features such as archaic vocabulary, specialized terminology, doublets and triplets, nominalizations, passive constructions, embedded clauses, and layered modal verbs. While such complexity traditionally guarantees legal precision, it may hinder comprehension among lay citizens. For women's rights legislation like the Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act 2010, where comprehension of statutory provisions directly impacts empowerment and enforcement, this issue is especially crucial. Despite existing feminist and legal scholarship, empirical research linking linguistic complexity with public comprehension remains limited, particularly in semi-urban contexts like Sukkur District. The study uses a mixed-methods design combining qualitative linguistic analysis with quantitative comprehension testing. Complex features of the Act were systematically identified, and plain-language versions were developed following established principles of the plain language movement. A structured questionnaire was administered to 100 adult participants to measure comprehension of original versus simplified statutory clauses. Qualitative analysis revealed extensive use of archaic and specialized terms, syntactic embedding, nominalization, passive constructions, and impersonal style, all contributing to reduced accessibility. Quantitative findings demonstrated that comprehension significantly improved with simplified texts: 72% of respondents reported high clarity for plain-language clauses compared to 36% for the original legal text. Simplifying language improves comprehension of women's rights laws and advances gender equity, participatory justice, and legal empowerment. The study emphasizes linguistic accessibility as a crucial element of fair law enforcement in Pakistan and offers empirical evidence for incorporating plain language norms into legislation design.

Keywords: Linguistic complexity, Legalese, Women’s rights legislation, Plain Language Movement, Legislative reform.



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Empowering Youth & Advancing Gender Equity in Health and Economic Policy

REF: ICWPD-055

Edge AI for Women's Education and Empowerment in Remote or Restricted Areas

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Abstract

In the past few years, AI has become a major technology in many sectors such as academics and security. but, most AI systems rely on online servers and continuous internet. In remote or isolated areas, there is limited or unstable internet connectivity and this prevents individuals, especially women from taking advantage of digital technologies. To solve this problem a new method Edge AI has appeared. Edge AI allows AI models to operate locally instead of cloud servers, allowing offline use and offer new opportunities to help women in remote places by giving them access to study resources. This topic was selected because Edge AI can empower women by giving access to education in remote places. It breaks geographic and social obstacles, letting women achieve knowledge and self-reliance keeping privacy.

This system involves energy efficient gadgets (such as Raspberry Pi) along with small AI models and NLP to translate and voice based learning. Local storage encryptions ensure that the personal user data is secured. Additionally, AI applications are capable of identifying suspicious behavior of security mechanisms, and it makes the platform educational and protective. Results show that Edge AI helps women acquiring skills, build abilities, and makes women safer in remote locations. The system was effective in encouraging empowerment as the users were able to learn independently without any use of the internet. In conclusion, Edge AI acts is a new technology helps in addressing difficulties experienced by women in limited or remote areas. Such integration of the current AI features with the offline mode allows the system to not only make education more accessible but also improve personal security and privacy. This study has shown that technology can be an empowerment and community development tool when it is rightly designed.

Keywords: Edge AI, offline learning, women empowerment, AI, Technology accessibility.



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Empowering Youth & Advancing Gender Equity in Health and Economic Policy

REF: ICWPD-056

Preparing Future Physiotherapists for Gender-Responsive Practice in Pakistan: An Educational Policy and Curriculum Reform Perspective

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Abstract

Gender inequities significantly influence rehabilitation access, adherence, and outcomes. In Pakistan, socio-cultural norms, economic dependency, and health system limitations intersect to shape patient experiences in physiotherapy. Despite the expansion of the Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) program nationwide, gender-responsive competencies are not systematically embedded within curricula. To synthesize evidence supporting gender-responsive rehabilitation practice and propose curriculum reforms aligned with Pakistan's DPT framework and Higher Education Commission (HEC) policy directions. A narrative review and educational policy analysis were conducted using peer-reviewed literature on sex and gender in health, implicit bias, rehabilitation disparities, and health professions education, alongside Pakistani curriculum framework documents. Evidence demonstrates that sex and gender influence pain assessment, rehabilitation participation, and clinical decision-making. Implicit bias among healthcare professionals affects treatment pathways. Cardiac rehabilitation participation differs by gender globally. Educational research indicates that integration of sex- and gender-based analysis must be longitudinal and assessed to influence practice. Mapping these findings onto Pakistan's standardized five-year DPT curriculum reveals clear opportunities for structured competency integration. Embedding gender-responsive practice within Pakistan's DPT curriculum is both clinically justified and policy-aligned. Formalizing measurable competencies, faculty development, and assessment reforms can strengthen equitable rehabilitation delivery in Pakistan.

Keywords: Gender-responsive care; DPT Pakistan; Physiotherapy education; Curriculum Reform, Health equity; Competency-based education



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Empowering Youth & Advancing Gender Equity in Health and Economic Policy

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Women, Law and Social Justice: Closing the Gap between Rights and Reality

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Abstract

Notwithstanding constitutional guarantees and modern legal reforms, social justice results for women remain confined. In Pakistan, entrenched patriarchal norms and cultural practices continue to restrict women's access to rights and possibilities, developing a persistent gap between legal provisions and lived realities. This study examines the interaction between legal frameworks and socio-cultural structures in shaping women's access to education, inheritance, and marital rights, with a focus on identifying barriers to effective policy implementation. The research adopts a qualitative, socio-legal, and governance-based approach, combining policy analysis with the examination of social norms and institutional dynamics that influence gendered outcomes. The findings show that while comprehensive legal rights for women exist, their effectiveness is substantially limited by means of patriarchal social structures, vulnerable institutional enforcement, and the dominance of informal practices. The analysis, in addition, suggests that the difference between formal law and social attractiveness results in the symbolic as opposed to the considerable implementation of rights. The examine argues that achieving social justice requires a multi-layered policy approach that integrates legal reform with social transformation and institutional responsibility. It highlights the need for gender-responsive policies that address both structural inequalities and cultural barriers. Strengthening enforcement mechanisms and promoting social awareness are critical to bridge the distance between rights and reality. Future studies may explore practical policy models and empirically validate these reforms.

Keywords: Social Justice, Policy Development, Women's Rights, Gender Equality, Legal Framework, Patriarchy,



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Empowering Youth & Advancing Gender Equity in Health and Economic Policy

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Breaking the Chains of Dependence: Anowa's Resistance as a Postcolonial Blueprint for Women's Empowerment in Gender-Equal Policy Development

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Abstract

This paper analyzes Ama Ata Aidoo's play *Anowa* as a literary framework through which the economic marginalization of women in postcolonial African societies can be understood and connected to contemporary gender-equal policy development. Set in nineteenth century Ghana, the play depicts *Anowa* as a woman who strongly challenges financial dependency, questioning the intersecting structures of post colonialism and patriarchy that made women economically invisible. Through qualitative analysis and close reading, this paper applies two theoretical frameworks – postcolonial feminist theory and the Capabilities Approach proposed by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum – to show that *Anowa*'s resistance reflects not a personal rebellion but a structured denial of basic human autonomy and capabilities. The study indicates that colonial and patriarchal structures collectively created conditions of economic invisibility for women, conditions that still shape gender inequalities in present-day frameworks. By linking Aidoo's literary perspective to the objectives of SDG5 and SDG8, this paper addresses a significant gap in earlier studies, which has analyzed *Anowa* mainly as a tragic figure without associating her economic resistance to practical policy implications. This paper concludes that *Anowa* acts as a timeless literary blueprint for what gender-equal policy must aim to accomplish, highlighting that Aidoo's work stays as relevant to policy discussions today as it was decades ago.

Keywords: *Anowa*, Ama Ata Aidoo, Capabilities Approach, Postcolonial Feminism, Colonial Structures, Gender-Equal Policy, SDG5, SDG8.



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The Smart Healthcare Appointment System

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Abstract

The rapid growth of digital technologies has transformed many fields, including healthcare, by improving efficiency and quality of services. This research presents the development of mobile app based Smart Healthcare Appointment System. An intelligent and user-friendly platform developed to simplify and optimize the process of booking and management of medical appointments. Traditional appointment method often involves long waiting time, manual record keeping and overcrowding in hospitals. The proposed smart system aims to address these challenges by providing automated and efficient solution.

The Smart healthcare appointment system enables Patients to book online appointments easily without physically visiting hospital. The system provides list of hospitals and allow patients to explore a list of doctors categorized according to their specializations that help patients find the most suitable healthcare professionals. After the selection of doctor, Patient can check the availability of doctor and confirm appointment. In addition, the system incorporates a Queue Management System that reduce the waiting time of patients and updates regarding their position of queue that improves the patient experience and hospital workflow. The system also integrates Online Payment System that allow secure and convenient digital payment for consultations.

Furthermore, the platform helps hospitals administration scheduling appointments and doctor availability. The system rises the standards of medical care by facilitating better communication between patients, doctors, and hospital management. Overall, the smart healthcare appointment system shows how digital technologies can modernize hospital operations, offers convenient healthcare access and improve the satisfaction of patients. The system offers one solution of all the operations like multiple hospitals, appointments with concerned doctors, online safe payment, and queue tracking system.

Keywords: Healthcare, Appointment system, track, online application.



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Female Socialization and Patriarchal Subjectivity: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Fatima Bhutto's Songs of Blood and Sword

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Abstract

This study examines how patriarchal constraint is reproduced not only through institutional structures but also through intimate intergenerational processes of female socialization, where gendered norms are transmitted as embodied and affective common sense within the family. Focusing on Fatima Bhutto's memoir *Songs of Blood and Sword* (2010), it employs Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough-inspired) to examine how mother–daughter relationships construct femininity as inherited discipline, emotional regulation, and normalized political marginality in elite Pakistani family structures. The analysis is grounded in Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity and Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus, extended through feminist affect theory, particularly Sara Ahmed's affective orientation and Lauren Berlant's cruel optimism. These frameworks show that patriarchal continuity functions not only as structural constraint but also as an affective pedagogy through which women internalize care, loyalty, and endurance as ethical selfhood. Through close textual analysis of maternal instruction, honor discourse, and intergenerational political silencing, the study argues that patriarchal ideology becomes naturalized as habitus, where subordination is misrecognized as moral agency and familial duty. It further demonstrates that maternal figures act as complex mediators of cultural reproduction who unintentionally sustain gendered discipline. The study contributes to feminist debates on everyday patriarchy, affective governance, and gendered subject formation in postcolonial contexts.

Keywords: CDA, female socialization, Habitus, affective orientation, cruel optimism, Fatima Bhutto, *Songs of Blood and Sword*



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Empowering Youth & Advancing Gender Equity in Health and Economic Policy

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Developing Digital Skills for the Future Workforce in Higher Education

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Abstract

The rapid advancement of digital technologies has transformed the nature of work and the skills required in contemporary labor markets. As industries increasingly depend on digital tools and technological innovation, higher education institutions are expected to prepare students with the competencies necessary for a digitally oriented workforce. This study explores the role of universities in developing digital skills that enhance students' readiness for future employment. The research adopts a qualitative research design to examine how higher education institutions contribute to the development of digital competencies among students. Data for the study is collected through semi structured interviews with university educators and students, allowing the researcher to understand their experiences, perceptions, and challenges related to digital skill development, and the responses are analyzed using thematic analysis to identify major patterns and insights. In addition, curriculum documents and institutional policies related to digital education are examined to understand how digital competencies are integrated into academic programs. The findings reveal that digital literacy, technological problem-solving, online communication, and information management are among the most essential skills required for the future workforce. The study also indicates that the integration of digital tools, interactive learning environments, and technology-based assignments can significantly enhance students' digital abilities; however, challenges such as limited digital infrastructure and inadequate training opportunities may hinder effective implementation. The study concludes that strengthening digital skill development in higher education can improve students' employability and readiness for a rapidly evolving digital workplace.

Keywords: Digital Skills, Higher Education, Future Workforce, Digital Literacy, Employability, Technology Integration.



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REF: ICWPD-062

Determinants of Sustainable Consumption Behavior among Gen Z Consumers

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the factors influencing sustainable consumption behavior among consumers. Specifically, the study investigates the effect of environmental awareness, social influence, and perceived consumer effectiveness on sustainable consumption behavior. A quantitative research approach was adopted to examine the proposed relationships. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire from 300 consumers. The study used a convenience sampling method to gather responses from individuals who were easily accessible and willing to participate in the survey. A cross-sectional research design was employed. The independent variables of the study include environmental awareness, social influence, and perceived consumer effectiveness, while sustainable consumption behavior was treated as the dependent variable. The collected data were analyzed using statistical techniques such as descriptive statistics, correlation, and multiple regression analysis to determine the relationship between the variables. The results reveal that environmental awareness, social influence, and perceived consumer effectiveness have a significant positive influence on sustainable consumption behavior. Consumers who are more aware of environmental issues and believe that their actions can contribute to environmental protection are more likely to adopt sustainable purchasing and consumption practices.

Furthermore, social influence from peers, family members, and media also encourages consumers to engage in environmentally responsible behavior. The findings suggest that policymakers, marketers, and environmental organizations should focus on promoting environmental awareness and encouraging positive social norms related to sustainability. Awareness campaigns and green marketing strategies can motivate consumers to adopt sustainable consumption practices. This study contributes to the literature on sustainable consumption by empirically examining the role of environmental awareness, social influence, and perceived consumer effectiveness in shaping sustainable consumption behavior. The findings provide useful insights for developing strategies to promote environmentally responsible consumer behavior.

Keywords: Sustainable consumption behavior, Environmental awareness, Social influence, Perceived consumer effectiveness, Green consumer behavior.



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Empowering Youth & Advancing Gender Equity in Health and Economic Policy

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Beyond Barriers: Designing Culturally Rooted Rehabilitation for the Differently Abled

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Abstract

The existing disability rehabilitation systems in the world find it challenging to achieve high rates of adoption in traditional societies because of a poor top-down approach that fails to acknowledge local belief systems. The proposed research is a revolutionary change in favor of culturally rooted community-based rehabilitation (CBR), namely, the use of Islamic teachings as an agent of social inclusion and long-term care. The differently abled are not perceived as a community with a lack in Islam but as a challenge to overall community responsibility (Fard al-Kifayah). This paper presents the argument that rehabilitation should be a moral duty and not a clinical burden by incorporating the Quranic concepts of human dignity (Karamah) and the concept of equity (Adl). It investigates the potential of structurally directing Islamic notions of Sadaqah Jariyah (perpetual charity) toward funding sustainable and village-level physiotherapy facilities and assistive technology centers.

In addition, the study discusses the concept of the marginalization of disabled women twice by pointing out the fact that the Sunnah emphasizes caring and education for everyone. This paper presents the roadmap that guides policymakers to develop interventions that are medically sound and spiritually and culturally appealing by mapping Islamic ethics to SDG 3 (Health) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities). The results indicate that community involvement rates are higher, stigma levels are reduced, and the so-called barriers to inclusion are removed internally when rehabilitation is presented as something that is based on faith and justice.

Keywords: community-based rehabilitation, Islamic ethics, gender equity, social justice, ICWPD-2026, disability policy.



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Empowering Youth & Advancing Gender Equity in Health and Economic Policy

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Widening Economic Collaborations of Pakistan: Opportunities and Challenges

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Abstract

Pakistan's quest for improving its economic structure through addressing potential geo-economics challenges has resulted in the formulation of an updated framework of multidimensional trading collaborations. It has resulted in the creation of a few mini-lateral alliances in which Pakistan's growing trading connections with the territorially adjoining nations could be treated as appropriate measures. In this regard, multistate transport corridors towards Central Asian nations are important steps. These proposed corridor projects have revealed the trading potential of Pakistan in the shadows of the Chinese broader transcontinental trade networking plans internationally. Pakistan's decision to join Beijing's global trade networking through signing a mega corridor project has further augmented Islamabad's efforts to diversify its economic collaboration in the world. Moreover, Pakistan-Saudi Arabia-Turkiye and Pakistan-Azerbaijan-Turkiye trilateral strategic alliances contain substantial potential for improving the existing economic conditions of these countries. Based on these descriptions, the upgrading of Pakistan's trading approaches is designed to empower the country's standing in the changing geo-economics structure of the international system. The growing significance of the economy in the existing priorities of the country's national security can be measured in the recently released government's national policy framework. Therefore, the paper's central theme seeks to provide an updated account of various mini-lateral agreements of Pakistan beyond the traditional bilateral and multilateral domains. It is an academic endeavor to analyze the potential security challenges and tremendous opportunities linked with growing trading collaborations of Pakistan with the outside world beyond its conventional approaches.

Keywords: Economic Collaboration, Trade Cooperation, Cross-border Trade, Pakistan's Economy, Trading Connectivity.



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Forecasting USD/PKR Exchange Rate Dynamics: An Empirical Application of the Box-Jenkins ARIMA Model

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Abstract

This study investigates the dynamics and forecasting performance of the USD/PKR exchange rate using the Box–Jenkins Autoregressive Integrated Moving Average (ARIMA) modeling framework. The research uses monthly exchange rate data from January 2021 to March 2026 to capture recent trends and volatility patterns in Pakistan's foreign exchange market. The empirical methodology follows a systematic ARIMA modeling approach, including identification, estimation, diagnostic checking, and forecasting. Stationarity tests are conducted to determine the appropriate differencing order, followed by model selection based on information criteria and residual diagnostics to ensure robustness and reliability of the forecasting model. The results indicate that the USD/PKR exchange rate exhibits significant time-series dependence and persistence, making ARIMA a suitable tool for short-term forecasting. The selected optimal ARIMA specification effectively captures the underlying stochastic behavior of the exchange rate series, providing an accurate in-sample fit and reliable out-of-sample forecasts. The study contributes to the literature on exchange rate modeling in emerging economies by demonstrating the applicability of the Box–Jenkins methodology in forecasting USD/PKR dynamics. The findings offer valuable insights for policymakers, financial analysts, importers, exporters, and investors engaged in foreign exchange risk management and economic planning.

Keywords: Exchange rate, USD, PKR, ARIMA



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The Impact of Selected Macroeconomic Indicators on Stock Returns

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Abstract

This study examines the impact of selected macroeconomic indicators, specifically inflation and interest rates, on stock returns. Using monthly data from 2010 to 2024, the research aims to analyze how key macroeconomic forces influence stock market performance over time in an emerging-market context. The empirical investigation employs a multiple linear regression model to estimate the relationship between the independent variables—inflation and interest rates—and the dependent variable, stock returns. The dataset is compiled from reliable secondary sources, ensuring consistency and robustness in measurement. The model enables the assessment of both the direction and magnitude of macroeconomic effects on equity market performance.

The results indicate that inflation and interest rates significantly influence stock returns, though their effects vary in direction and intensity. Inflation generally exhibits a negative relationship with stock returns, reflecting reduced purchasing power and increased uncertainty in financial markets. Similarly, higher interest rates tend to exert downward pressure on stock performance by increasing the cost of capital and reducing investment attractiveness. The study contributes to the existing literature on macro-financial linkages by providing empirical evidence on how inflationary pressures and interest rate movements shape stock market behavior. The findings offer valuable implications for investors, policymakers, and financial analysts in understanding market sensitivity to macroeconomic conditions and in formulating informed investment strategies.

Keywords: macroeconomic indicators, stock returns, regression



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The Impact of Money Supply, KIBOR, and Foreign Direct Investment on the Stock Market Performance in Pakistan

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Abstract

This study investigates the impact of key macroeconomic variables—money supply, Karachi Interbank Offered Rate (KIBOR), and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)—on stock market performance in Pakistan. Using monthly data spanning from 2018 to 2025, the research aims to examine both short-run dynamics and long-run equilibrium relationships between macroeconomic indicators and equity market returns. The empirical analysis employs the Autoregressive Distributed Lag (ARDL) modeling approach, which is well-suited for capturing relationships among variables with different integration orders. Stock market performance is measured using market index returns, while data on the money supply, KIBOR, and FDI are obtained from reliable secondary sources, ensuring the dataset's consistency and robustness.

The findings offer important implications for investors, policymakers, and financial analysts in formulating investment strategies and macroeconomic policies. The results indicate that macroeconomic factors significantly influence stock market performance in Pakistan. Money supply and foreign direct investment are found to have a positive relationship with stock returns, reflecting liquidity expansion and investment inflows into the economy. In contrast, KIBOR exhibits a negative relationship, suggesting that higher borrowing costs tend to dampen market performance. The study contributes to understanding macro-financial linkages in emerging markets by providing empirical evidence of how monetary conditions, interest rates, and foreign investment jointly shape stock market dynamics in Pakistan.

Keywords: KIBOR, FDI, Stock Returns, ARDL



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Gauging Causality among Oil, Gold, and Stock Returns

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Abstract

This study examines the dynamic causal relationships among oil prices, gold prices, and stock market returns using monthly data from 2018 to 2025. The objective is to explore how movements in global commodity markets, particularly oil and gold, interact with equity market performance and whether these variables exhibit predictive causal linkages. The empirical analysis employs the Granger causality framework to test the direction and significance of causality among the three variables. Stock returns are derived from relevant market indices, while oil and gold price series are obtained from secondary financial databases. The methodology enables the identification of short-run predictive relationships and interdependencies within the global financial system.

The findings indicate significant causal linkages among oil prices, gold prices, and stock returns, suggesting that shocks in commodity markets can transmit to equity markets with varying degrees of influence. The results also highlight gold's potential role as a safe-haven asset and oil's key role as a driver of market volatility, with differential impacts on stock returns over time. The study contributes to the literature on commodity–financial market integration by providing empirical evidence on the direction of causality among oil, gold, and stock markets. The findings offer valuable implications for investors, portfolio managers, and policymakers in designing hedging strategies and improving market risk assessment.

Keywords: Oil Price, Gold Price, Stock Returns, Granger Causality



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Investigating Causality among Workers' Remittances, Inflation, and Stock Returns in Pakistan using the Granger Model

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Abstract

This study investigates the dynamic causal relationship among workers' remittances, inflation, and stock market returns in Pakistan using monthly data spanning from January 2018 to January 2026. The primary objective is to examine whether changes in remittance inflows and inflation have predictive power for stock market performance, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of macro-financial linkages in an emerging economy context. The empirical analysis employs the Granger causality framework to test the direction and significance of causal relationships among the selected variables. Stock returns are computed from market index data, while remittances and inflation series are obtained from relevant official and secondary databases. The model allows for the identification of short-run predictive causality and interdependencies among the variables.

The findings reveal significant causal linkages among the variables, indicating that both workers' remittances and inflation play important roles in influencing stock market returns in Pakistan. The results also suggest varying degrees of feedback effects, highlighting the interconnected nature of macroeconomic conditions and financial market performance. The study contributes to the literature on macro-financial linkages in emerging markets by providing empirical evidence on the predictive relationships among remittances, inflation, and stock returns. The findings offer important implications for investors, policymakers, and financial analysts in understanding market behavior and formulating economic and investment strategies in Pakistan.

Keywords: Worker Remittance, Inflation, Stock Returns, Granger Causality



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REF: ICWPD-070

Volatility Comparison: An Empirical Investigation from South Asian Stock Markets

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Abstract

This study conducts a comparative analysis of stock market volatility across selected South Asian economies, focusing on Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh. Using daily closing price data spanning seven years (January 1, 2018, to December 31, 2025), the study examines the dynamics of return volatility to assess market stability and efficiency. The data is obtained from secondary sources, including Yahoo Finance, Investing.com, and the official websites of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX), Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE), Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE), and Colombo Stock Exchange (CSE), ensuring broad market coverage and data reliability. Daily stock returns are computed from closing prices, and volatility is modeled using Generalized Autoregressive Conditional Heteroskedasticity (GARCH) models to capture time-varying volatility clustering. The analysis further evaluates the speed of mean reversion across markets to identify differences in volatility persistence and stability.

Empirical findings indicate notable variation in volatility behavior among the selected South Asian stock markets. The results suggest differences in the degree of volatility clustering and the speed at which shocks dissipate, allowing markets to be classified into relatively high- and low-volatility regimes. These differences reflect varying levels of market maturity, liquidity, and macroeconomic sensitivity. The study contributes to the literature on emerging market volatility by providing updated evidence on South Asian stock markets using advanced econometric techniques. The findings offer valuable implications for investors, portfolio managers, and policymakers concerned with risk management and regional financial integration.

Keywords: Volatility, GARCH, Stock market, South Asia



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Profitability Comparison: Empirical Investigation between Islamic and Conventional Banks

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Abstract

This study provides an empirical comparison of profitability between Islamic and conventional banks using annual financial performance data. The analysis focuses on three key profitability indicators: Return on Assets (ROA), Return on Capital Employed (ROCE), and Return on Equity (ROE). Data were collected for a balanced sample of four Islamic and four conventional banks from 2012 to 2025, enabling a systematic evaluation of performance differences between the two banking systems. The empirical results indicate that conventional banks consistently outperform Islamic banks across all three profitability measures. Specifically, conventional banks exhibit significantly higher ROA, ROCE, and ROE, suggesting greater efficiency in asset utilization, capital deployment, and shareholder returns. These findings remain consistent across the sample period, highlighting a persistent profitability gap between the two banking models.

The study discusses possible underlying reasons for these differences, including variations in operational structures, funding mechanisms, risk-sharing arrangements, and market participation constraints faced by Islamic banks. While Islamic banking is grounded in ethical and asset-backed financing principles, these structural characteristics may influence short-term profitability outcomes relative to conventional banking practices. The study contributes to the ongoing debate on banking system efficiency by providing empirical evidence that conventional banks exhibit stronger profitability. The findings offer useful insights for policymakers, financial analysts, and banking sector stakeholders in evaluating performance dynamics across different banking frameworks.

Keywords: ROA, ROE, ROCE, Banking Performance



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Stress Testing Islamic Versus Conventional Banks: An Empirical Analysis of Non-Performing Loans Resilience

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Abstract

This study examines the resilience of Islamic and conventional banks under stress conditions, with a particular focus on the behavior of non-performing loans (NPLs). Using an empirical comparative framework, the research evaluates how both banking systems respond to financial stress and economic shocks, highlighting differences in credit risk absorption and portfolio quality. The analysis is based on bank-level panel data and stress-testing techniques designed to simulate adverse macroeconomic scenarios. The findings indicate that Islamic banks exhibit significantly lower levels of non-performing loans compared to their conventional counterparts across stress periods. This suggests that the asset-backed and risk-sharing principles inherent in Islamic banking contribute to greater credit discipline and reduced default exposure. In contrast, conventional banks exhibit greater sensitivity to economic downturns, as reflected in a more pronounced increase in NPL ratios under stress. The study further explores structural and operational factors underlying this divergence, including differences in financing modes, risk management frameworks, and borrower screening mechanisms. The results remain robust across multiple stress scenarios and model specifications.

Keywords: NPLs, Banking sector, Islamic Banks, Conventional Banks



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Exploring the Importance of Psychological Factors in the Development of Education Leadership: Evidence from Higher Education Sector of Karachi

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Abstract

Effective leadership is a need of every industry. Hence, the need is also valid for the higher education sector of Pakistan. Moreover, leadership development must be conducted in line with the needs of the country and society. Previous studies in this regard have identified multiple factors that play an important role in the development of educational leadership. However, there is a need for a comprehensive framework that may assess effective leadership development in the developing sides of the world. Hence, this study integrated work from diverse parts of the world to develop a systematic framework that may assist in the development of efficient leadership. Hence, this study is one of the correlational designs that is based upon the non-proportionate quota sampling and analysis that has been made through SMART-PLS in order to signify the impact of different psychological factors on the development of leadership in the higher education industry. Findings of the study affirms the importance of psychological factors in the development of leadership in the higher education industry. However, some of the psychological factors are not found consistent with the development of leadership in the higher education sector of Karachi. Findings of the study may be used for efficient resource grooming and succession planning that is required to achieve excellence and objectives of higher education sector. This study is specifically focused on the higher education sector of Pakistan and might require some modification in the framework for the effective leadership development in developed countries. Therefore, future studies must be conducted in order to study the differences in the preference and use of psychological factors in leadership development in developing sides and developed sides of the world.

Keywords: Psychological Factors, Higher Education, Higher Education Sector, Leadership & Leadership Development



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REF: ICWPD-074

Female Attitude Towards Islamic Mobile Banking: A Tam Based Quantitative Analysis

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Abstract

There is a substantial lack of studies that highlight the factors related to female preference for Islamic Mobile Banking. Especially with the context of Pakistan studies that may explore female opinions that are very rare. Therefore, this study has been conducted purposively with reference of female of urban areas of Pakistan to understand their attitude and factors predicting their preference of Islamic Mobile Banking. Data for this study were collected through a multi-stage sampling that was a hybrid of purposive and convenience sampling. The study sample comprised 384 respondents, and the analysis was conducted using structural equation modeling in SMART-PLS. The study indicated a definite association between TAM and female preference for Islamic Mobile Banking. However, some of the factors do not appear to have an impact on female attitudes towards Islamic Mobile banking. Findings of this study may be used to improve marketing strategies of Islamic Mobile Banking in Pakistan, which may not only foster sales but will also improve revenue and brand image of Islamic Banks. The findings of this study are limited to developing and Islamic Countries. Hence, it cannot be generalized to the developed and non-Muslim Countries due to the differences in religiosity, ethnicity and demographic factors, etc. This study has been conducted among the urban and educated females of Pakistan. However, mobile banking is now accessible to every female. Hence, there is a need to conduct a comparative study related to the perception of females from urban and rural areas of Pakistan. Moreover, studies may also be conducted to understand the differences in female attitudes with reference to mobile banking from conventional and Islamic Banks.

Keywords: Mobile banking, Islamic Mobile Banking, Sharia –Compliant Mobile Banking, Female, Female Attitude, Female Intention to adopt Islamic Mobile Banking.



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Risk and Return Analysis: Investigation from the Pharmaceutical Sector

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Abstract

Investment decision-making fundamentally involves a trade-off between risk and return, particularly in equity markets, where higher expected returns are typically associated with greater uncertainty. Among various sectors, the pharmaceutical industry has attracted considerable investor attention due to its structural resilience, continuous demand, and critical role in global healthcare systems. This study examines the risk–return dynamics of selected pharmaceutical companies over the period 2015–2025. The analysis is based on secondary data obtained from publicly available financial sources. Standard quantitative techniques, including descriptive statistics and risk–return measures, are employed to evaluate the performance of the selected firms. The findings reveal significant heterogeneity across companies: while certain firms demonstrate higher return potential accompanied by elevated volatility, others exhibit relatively stable, predictable returns with lower risk. These results highlight the importance of sector-specific analysis and portfolio diversification when investing in pharmaceutical equities. The study contributes to the existing literature by providing empirical insights into the risk–return profile of the pharmaceutical sector, thereby assisting investors in making informed and rational investment decisions.

Keywords: Risk, Returns, Pharmaceutical Sector



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From Stunting to Growth: Public Perception of the Link Between Early-Childhood Health and Long-Term Economic Productivity

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Abstract

This paper sought to explore the links between the level of public awareness on the economic implications of child stunting and the support to have greater government investment on maternal and child health interventions in Pakistan. The survey was done on 250 parents and young adults in the urban and rural districts of Sindh province including Karachi and Hyderabad by conducting a quantitative cross-sectional survey. The structured questionnaire was used to gather data on awareness of economic relationship between early childhood health and long-term productivity and support of the investment of public health, which were measured on a five-point Likert scale. To analyze predictive relationships, linear regression analysis was used. Analysis of reliability brought outstanding internal consistency of the 10-item instrument (Cronbachs alpha =.912). The regression model was found to be statistically significant $p < .001$ and it explained 50.4 percent of the support of the public health investment. Recognition of the economic connection was a major predictor of investment support ($p = .001$), and it means that the degree of awareness of how childhood malnutrition impacts future earning potential and national productivity relates to the extent of support of the increased government expenditure on maternal nutrition, child vaccination, and prenatal care programs. The results substantiate the argument that the determinant of policy preference when it comes to early childhood health investment is the level of public awareness. The findings highlight the need to have strategic communication campaigns that can transform evidence on returns to human capital into explicable messages to different audiences. Meaningful progress in fighting with the stunting crisis in Pakistan needs financial resources as well as long-term efforts to create an understanding of the population and the political will towards the long-term investment in early childhood development.

Keywords: Child Stunting, Public Awareness, Economic Productivity, Maternal and Child Health, Health Investment, Pakistan, Early Childhood Development



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International Conference on Women in Policy Development (ICWPD 2026)

Empowering Youth & Advancing Gender Equity in Health and Economic Policy

REF: ICWPD-077

The Price of Health: Analyzing the Impact of Out-of-Pocket Expenditure on Household Economic Vulnerability

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Abstract

Health out-of-pocket expenditure is a huge financial burden to families in developing nations, but few studies have been done on the dynamics in Pakistan. This paper examined the connection between out-of-pocket spending on health and household economic vulnerability in low to middle-income urban households in Pakistan. The survey was conducted as a quantitative cross-sectional survey on 200 low- and middle-income urban localities households in Karachi and Hyderabad districts. The questionnaire to be used in the collection of the data was structured to measure out-of-pocket health spending and household economic vulnerability on five-point Likert scale. To analyze predictive relationships, linear regression analysis was used. The reliability test provided a high internal consistency (Cronbach alpha =.898). The regression equation was estimated to be statistically significant $p < .001$ and explained 41.3 percent of the out-of-pocket health expenditure. Household economic vulnerability was found to be a significant predictor of out-of-pocket health spending (Beta = -.643, $p = .001$), which means that vulnerable households incur a larger health cost burden. Household economic vulnerability is greatly correlated with out-of-pocket health spending among Pakistani urban households, and has an inverse relationship, which supports the hypothesis that healthcare expenses are regressive to economically vulnerable populations. These results highlight that there is a dire need to implement policy measures that would widen the financial protection infrastructures and curtail the overdependence on out-of-pocket payments to ensure universal health coverage in line with Sustainable Development Goals.

Keywords: Out-of-Pocket health expenditure, Household economic vulnerability, Healthcare financing, Pakistan, Catastrophic health expenditure, Universal health coverage



International Conference on Women in Policy Development (ICWPD 2026)

Empowering Youth & Advancing Gender Equity in Health and Economic Policy

REF: ICWPD-078

Women's Political Engagement and its Effects on Empowerment in Pakistan: A Quantitative Approach

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Abstract

The research will analyze the influence of political engagement on women's empowerment in Pakistan in the context of the political scene of the 21st century. Over the last twenty years, women have become more politically active owing to changes such as gender quotas and reserved seats. Nevertheless, there are still structural impediments, including patriarchy and discrimination against women in education, the job market, and financial markets. That is why there remains a discrepancy between the political activity and empowerment of females. Thus, studying this problem seems timely.

Secondary data on the variables women's political participation, proportion of females in parliament, and their share among voters has been used to make this empirical analysis, where the data has been taken from multiple sources i.e., Pakistan Economic Survey, World Bank, and Election Commission of Pakistan. The proxy of women's empowerment is denoted by the share of female workers and the literacy rate. This time series data has the interval from 1997 to 2025 on annual basis. Autoregressive Distributed Lag Model (ARDL) has been used to check the short-run as well as the long-run impact of the political participation on women empowerment in Pakistan. The impact of political participation on the empowerment of women has a strong positive impact. However, because of deeply entrenched social factors, the magnitude of this association is likely to be affected. From a policy standpoint, these results will underscore the importance of implementing comprehensive reforms beyond political participation.

Keywords: Women's Empowerment, Political Participation, Female Representation, Gender Quotas, ARDL Regression Model, Female Labor Force Participation, Literacy Rate.



International Conference on Women in Policy Development (ICWPD 2026)

Empowering Youth & Advancing Gender Equity in Health and Economic Policy

REF: ICWPD-079

Assessing the Economic Impact of Artificial Intelligence Adoption on the South Asian Trade System

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Abstract

This study analyzes the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on trade performance and economic growth in the South Asian region. With increasing digitalization, AI is expected to enhance trade efficiency and productivity, yet its role in developing regions remains underexplored. The research focuses on countries including Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Nepal. It investigates whether AI-driven technological progress contributes to improved trade outcomes and overall economic performance. The study is grounded in theories of endogenous growth and technology diffusion.

The research adopts a quantitative approach using secondary panel data from multiple sources such as the World Bank, UNCTAD, ITU, WIPO, and IMF. AI is proxied by indicators like ICT development, internet penetration, and patent applications. Trade performance is measured through trade openness and exports, while economic impact is captured using GDP growth and GDP per capita. Control variables include human capital, FDI, infrastructure, and institutional quality. It ensures a comprehensive empirical framework. In the regression analysis, the study employs the panel data techniques with Fixed Effects and Random Effects models. Such models are specified to examine the impact of AI on trade, its effect on economic growth, and the interaction between AI and trade. A positive and moderate relationship was found among AI, trade, and growth. The findings highlight the importance of supportive policies to maximize the economic benefits of AI in South Asia.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, South Asian Economy, Trade Efficiency, Digital Transformation, Regional Integration, Supply Chain Resilience.



International Conference on Women in Policy Development (ICWPD 2026)

Empowering Youth & Advancing Gender Equity in Health and Economic Policy

REF: ICWPD-080

Analyzing the impact of Health Investment, Gender Equality, and Income Inequality on sustainable Economic Growth in Pakistan: A Multivariate Approach Incorporating COVID-19 Effects

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Abstract

This study focuses on sustainable economic growth in Pakistan by integrating health, equity, and economic strategies aligned with SDGs 3, 5, 8, and 10. The main objective is to examine how health expenditure, gender equality, income inequality, and employment influence economic growth. The research is based on Sustainable Development Theory, Human Capital Theory, and Inclusive Growth Theory, which emphasize that investment in human well-being leads to higher productivity. Secondary time-series data from 1995 to 2025 has been collected from reliable sources such as the Pakistan Economic Survey, World Bank, United Nations, and International Monetary Fund. GDP growth rate has been used as the dependent variable, while health expenditure, gender equality index, Gini index, and employment rate have been independent variables. The multiple regression model has been used to make the statistical analysis. Moreover, the ANCOVE model has been used to accommodate the COVID_19 impact in this analysis. The study described that higher health investment and improved gender equality positively affect economic growth in Pakistan. It concluded that reducing income inequality and increasing employment opportunities support sustainable development. The findings of this research help policymakers in designing effective and inclusive economic policies. Overall, the study highlights the importance of combining social and economic factors to achieve long-term sustainable growth in Pakistan.

Keywords: Sustainable Economic Growth, Health Expenditure, Gender Equality, Income Inequality, COVID-19



International Conference on Women in Policy Development (ICWPD 2026)

Empowering Youth & Advancing Gender Equity in Health and Economic Policy

REF: ICWPD-081

Digital Financial Control and Women’s Health Autonomy: A Policy Framework Linking Mobile Banking Access to Reproductive Health Decision-Making in Rural Pakistan

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Abstract

In rural Pakistan, women often face limited authority in making decisions about their reproductive health due to financial dependency and restricted access to financial resources. At the same time, the growth of digital financial services, particularly mobile banking, offers new ways for women to gain financial independence and participate more actively in household decisions. This study describes how access to mobile banking supports women’s financial agency and contributes to their ability to make informed choices regarding family planning, maternal healthcare, and household health priorities.

Using a qualitative, policy-focused approach, the research analyzes existing financial inclusion initiatives and discusses their role in promoting women’s health autonomy. It also highlights challenges faced by women in rural areas, including limited digital literacy, social and cultural barriers, and unequal access to mobile technology. Based on these observations, the study presents a policy framework that links digital financial inclusion with women-centered health strategies to enhance both economic participation and health empowerment.

The findings offer insights into how improving access to mobile banking can strengthen women’s decision-making power and support better reproductive health outcomes. This research emphasizes the importance of gender responsive policies that prioritize both financial and health empowerment for women in underserved communities.

Keywords: Digital Financial Inclusion, Mobile Banking, Women’s Health Autonomy, Reproductive Health, Rural Pakistan



International Conference on Women in Policy Development (ICWPD 2026)

Empowering Youth & Advancing Gender Equity in Health and Economic Policy

REF: ICWPD-082

The Perceptions of Graduates About Their University Support in Job Hunting

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Abstract

This study investigates the perceptions of recent university graduates regarding institutional support for job hunting in the context of higher education in Pakistan. Amidst rising graduate unemployment rates nationally and globally—exacerbated by post-pandemic economic shifts—universities are increasingly expected to facilitate graduates' transition into the workforce. However, empirical evidence on the effectiveness and perceived adequacy of such support remains limited in the Pakistani context. Using a quantitative cross-sectional survey design, data were collected from 103 graduates of public sector universities in Sukkur District via the Perceived University Employment Support Scale (PUESS), which measures four dimensions: informational, instrumental, emotional, and policy support. Descriptive analysis revealed moderate perceptions across all support types, with emotional support rated the lowest. Independent samples t-tests indicated no significant gender differences in perceptions. Confirmatory factor analysis validated the unidimensional structure of PUESS in Pakistan, explaining 85.43% of the variance. The findings highlight a critical gap in emotional and mentorship support and underscore the need for universities to adopt integrated, policy-driven employability frameworks. Recommendations include enhancing psychological support services, expanding career resources, and implementing regular graduate feedback mechanisms. Limitations related to sample size and gender imbalance are noted, suggesting directions for future research.

Keywords: Graduate employability, university support, job hunting, perceived support scale, Pakistan, higher education, career services, emotional support.



International Conference on Women in Policy Development (ICWPD 2026)

Empowering Youth & Advancing Gender Equity in Health and Economic Policy

REF: ICWPD-083

Bridging Rights and Reality: Legal Awareness and Economic Autonomy among Young Women in Northern Sindh

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Abstract

Despite the presence of legal protections, a persistent gap between formal rights and their practical realization continues to limit women's economic empowerment globally and in Pakistan. Women hold only 64.2% of the legal rights available to men, while enforcement mechanisms remain insufficient. In Pakistan, low female labor force participation and restricted access to inheritance reflect deep-rooted socio-cultural barriers, particularly in regions such as Northern Sindh, highlighting a clear disconnect between legal entitlement and actual economic agency. This study examines the relationship between awareness of inheritance-related legal rights (Variable A) and economic autonomy, including financial decision-making confidence (Variable B), among young women in Northern Sindh, Pakistan. A quantitative, cross-sectional research design was employed. Data were collected from a pilot sample of 75 female university students in Sukkur and surrounding regions using a structured questionnaire. Statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS to examine relationships and patterns between variables. The findings indicate a positive association between legal awareness and indicators of economic autonomy. Respondents with higher levels of awareness tended to report greater confidence in financial decision-making, although variations suggest the continued influence of socio-cultural constraints. The study demonstrates that legal awareness plays an important role in translating formal rights into economic agency. It recommends strengthening legal literacy initiatives and integrating rights-based education into academic and policy frameworks. Future research should include more diverse populations to improve the generalizability of findings.

Keywords: Legal awareness, inheritance rights, economic autonomy, financial decision making, women empowerment



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Empowering Youth & Advancing Gender Equity in Health and Economic Policy

REF: ICWPD-084

Addressing Healthcare Disparities through Health and Economic Policy Frameworks: An Equity-Based Analysis

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Abstract

Background: Global health disparities remain a significant issue in public health and development studies. Inequitable access to healthcare services is mainly driven by economic hardship, high treatment costs, and insufficient policy frameworks. Despite previous efforts, gaps still exist in ensuring fair healthcare access for vulnerable and marginalized populations. This study examines healthcare disparities by analyzing the influence of health and economic policy frameworks on access to healthcare services among vulnerable and marginalized populations. This research adopts a qualitative approach based on policy analysis and secondary data review. It evaluates existing health and economic policy frameworks and their effectiveness in addressing healthcare inequalities. The findings indicate that economic barriers and weak policy implementation significantly contribute to unequal healthcare access. Vulnerable populations are disproportionately affected by limited resources and high healthcare costs. The analysis also shows that fragmented policy systems reduce the effectiveness of healthcare delivery. The study concludes that integrated and equity-focused health and economic policy reforms are essential to reduce disparities. Strengthening coordinated policy frameworks can improve healthcare accessibility and promote social equity. Future research should focus on empirical validation of policy interventions across different regions.

Keywords: Healthcare disparities, health policy, economic inequality, equity, vulnerable populations



International Conference on Women in Policy Development (ICWPD 2026)

Empowering Youth & Advancing Gender Equity in Health and Economic Policy

REF: ICWPD-085

Studying Personal Factors Hindering the Way of Women Entrepreneurship: A Quantities Analysis Based on Young Females from Karachi

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Abstract

Pursuing Entrepreneurship is always difficult for females. According to research obstacle in the way of female entrepreneurship are created by multiple factors and their presence cause glass ceilings in the way of women. Hence, this study is purposively conducted to understand the personal factors that are the major reason for lack of female motivation towards entrepreneurship. Through this study policy makers and authorities may become able to develop policies, practices and procedures to motivate female to pursue entrepreneurship. Data for this study has been collected from educated females having age group of 25 to 45 years. Closed-Ended Questionnaire has been used as the data collection instrument and sample size for the study was 384 respondents. Sampling type was non-probability sampling and sampling method was convenience sampling. Findings of the study reveals that there are multiple factors that make women unformed of opportunities and also diminish their motivation towards entrepreneurship. However, every personal factor does not affect educated female in drastic way. Findings of the study may be used for improve female participation in entrepreneurial education and also for improving polices related with female entrepreneurship and development etc. This study is specifically focused on the educated females from Karachi. Hence, the findings cannot be generalized to the uneducated segment. Therefore, to understand the limiting factors of female entrepreneurship from uneducated and less privileged segments there is a need of other research that may address the relevant research problem and questions.

Key Words: Women, Women Entrepreneurship, Personal Factors, Women Empowerment and Karachi



International Conference on Women in Policy Development (ICWPD 2026)

Empowering Youth & Advancing Gender Equity in Health and Economic Policy

REF: ICWPD-086

Enhancing Food Diversity and Land Use Efficiency through a 5-Color, 3-Layer Cropping System in Pakistan

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In smallholder farming systems, persistent malnutrition is largely driven by low agricultural productivity and monocropping practices, which limit crop diversification and reduce access to nutrient dense foods, thus limiting dietary diversity. Worldwide, 150.2 million children are stunted and 42.8 million are wasted; in Pakistan, approximately 10 million children are stunted and 2.1 million are wasted, reflecting the consequences of low productivity, cereal dominated production systems.

A critical gap exists in integrating nutrition sensitive agriculture with multi-layer cropping, with limited empirical evidence comparing these systems in terms of land use efficiency (LUE), income, and production diversity.

This study evaluated a diversified nutritious food cultivation novel model, the 5-Color Nutrition Sensitive Agricultural Approach (5-CNSAA) which integrates color-based crop diversification, representing different nutrient groups, with a 3-layer cultivation system. The approach aims to increase the production, income and availability of a range of nutrient rich foods which may contribute to better household dietary diversification.

For current study field experiments were conducted in 2024 across the three agroecological zones of Sindh. One district per zone and two villages per district were randomly selected, and one farmer per village practicing raised bed vegetable mono crop cultivation was purposively chosen, yielding a sample of 06 farm households.

Results indicate that the 5-CNSAA, 3-layer cropping system outperformed sole muskmelon cultivation across all six sites, achieving 299.2% LUE versus 100% in controls, while increasing total yield from 21,584 kg to 37,966 kg and gross income from PKR 1,567,822 to PKR 2,125,261. It also raised crop diversity from 1 to 7 crops, showing that layered cultivation improved land-use intensity, productivity, profitability, and food diversity on the same physical area.

The findings demonstrate that integrating multilayer cropping with diversified, color-based crop selection can improve productivity and income while enhancing the availability of diverse, nutritious food groups at the farm level. The proposed framework offers a practical and scalable approach for promoting nutrition-sensitive agricultural systems that can help prevent malnutrition through the production of diversified, nutritious foods while also increasing the productivity, profitability, and LUE of smallholder farming systems.

Keywords: Multi-layer cropping, 5-CNSAA, nutrition, productivity, malnutrition, LUE

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