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The Manifestation of Gender Inequality in Pakistan

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The Manifestation of Gender Inequality in Pakistan

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Abstract

Women in Pakistan are raised with one sole purpose in mind: to become mothers and wives. In doing so, regardless of class status, women are often denied their right to an education, their right to enter the workforce, and their right to be independent, self-sufficient humans. It not only takes a social toll but also a physical and mental toll on the individual facing this prejudice. The purpose of this research is to better understand how gender inequality manifests itself in everyday life for women in Pakistan and how it not only affects the particular individual but it also affects the future generations, the economy, and the politics of the country as a whole. To achieve this, the project will take a qualitative research approach and employ an in-depth interview methodology. Existing literary work will be examined thoroughly, followed by analyzing survey data on the current workforce in Pakistan. In addition to that, face to face interviews with notable feminist scholars will be conducted. The project will produce a multimethod analysis of gender inequality and how deeply it is rooted in the society of Pakistan. This research aims to raise conscious awareness among Pakistan as a developing country, as well as other countries where gender inequality is not discussed in public fora.

Acknowledgment

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Special thanks to my parents who supported me throughout my academic accomplishments.

This research would not be complete without the utmost help and support from my sister, Mahoor Khalid.

Introduction to the Project

As a male poet in Pakistan, Allama Mohammad Iqbal is widely recognized for his role in the making of the country. He used his poetry as a tool for political influence. Muslims used Iqbal's poetry as a sacred document that would lead to their independence, nationally and internationally. Iqbal used his poetry to challenge political notions that were used to oppress Muslims in India and for his work, Iqbal is still referred to as the "Father of the Nation" (Qazi, 2013). Iqbal has a unique educational journey in that he received a Master's Degree of Arts in 1899 and then worked as a professor for philosophy in Lahore, Pakistan. He then went on to pursue higher education in England and when he returned, he started practicing law in Chief Court Lahore along with continuing teaching philosophy and English literature. It wasn't until he was forty-five years of age that he started pursuing his passion for writing which was majorly focused on Islam. Different interpretations of his work were seen after his famous Allahabad Address (Chand, 2013).

In comparison to Iqbal, the impact of the work of Naheed presents a very different perspective of Pakistan. Specifically, this occurred when Pakistan went through an unstable and transformative period during the military dictatorship of General Zia-ul-Haq from 1977-1988. In 1977, Zia introduced a new law, *Zina Hudoood* Ordinance. This law criminalized extra-marital sex, making no distinction between consensual sex and rape. Further, the Law of Evidence states that the testimony of a female is considered half that of a man's in a Pakistani court of law. The administration's introduction of such laws involved a step-by-step reduction of women's power in matters of economic, legal, and educational representation (Imran & Munir, 2018). This gender-discriminatory law caused an uproar but in those times to speak up against the State was

deemed illegal and punishable by imprisonment or by hanging. For example, Kishwar Naheed, a journalist, and poet initiated her poetry to support women and challenge these gender-biased political systems in the only way she could. Naheed expressed through poetry how women were also part of the Independence Movement for Pakistan and then proceeds to question her audience, “where is the freedom that we were promised” (Anantharam, 2019)? For expressing her views, Naheed was put under constant police surveillance from Zia-ul-Haq and unable to leave her house. She reflected on this experience years later, saying that when the police stopped following her around, she stated that “she actually felt lonely” (Anantharam, 2009)!

Women have been restricted in politics, as well as in the job industry since Pakistan appeared on the map (Roomi, 2008). The above scenario portrays the extent of gender inequality that women face while bystanders looked upon it as something that is justified. I plan to further develop these ideas of gender inequality in the context of Pakistan through the examination of current literary work specifically building on the work of Iqbal and Naheed. Furthermore, the summer research project will address the role of the workforce in Pakistan and conduct in-depth interviews with feminist scholars.

Research Objectives and Questions

I propose to explore the influence of authors and their treatment based on their gender, in Pakistan specifically. In particular, I want to research the following questions: 1) Beginning with the works of Iqbal and Naheed, I will examine what other authors are important to examine and analyze to understand gender inequality in Pakistan? 2) Does the gender of the author matter while examining gender inequality? 3) Are there current workforce implications of gender inequality in the context of Pakistan?

The goal of this project is to understand the different ways women in Pakistan are oppressed and to recognize how overtime women are still not given the same opportunities and value as men of their stature, especially in their careers or in politics. If they try to fight, they are threatened with laws tailored specifically to silence them. Shedding light on this issue and exploring gender inequality in a developing country, can help achieve rights for women in other countries across the globe. The research can make women provide contextual background on their situation without reaching a point where they have to speak up for basic human rights.

Methodology and Final Product

To research gender inequality, I used a multi-method research approach since the topic requires a thorough inspection of past and present patterns of society and its behavior. I explored what causes and further encourages those behaviors and patterns, even now, through employing this multi-method research approach.

Research Plan:

- 1) Extensively analyzing past research and scholarly sources to find connections between gender inequality and its impact over time.
- 2) Finding and analyzing two current cases where the gender of the author plays a role in the suppression and backlash they receive from the patriarchal society of Pakistan today.
- 3) Analyzing data from a national survey on women and men in Pakistan's workforce participation today from the World Bank database for insights on the current implications of gender inequality in society.

- 4) Structuring the interview questions with the help of Dr. Griffith to display the struggle of a woman in Pakistan.
- 5) I interviewed Kishwar Naheed who is currently located in Lahore, Pakistan. Interviewing helped in developing my research as I obtain a perspective that she narrated to me regarding her journey in the fight for gender equality. I further interviewed an International Squash player known for her feminist fight in the sports industry, Noorena Shams, along with three other extensive interviews.
- 6) Prepare a final paper of at least 15 pages, plus appendices of data, to explore and draw initial conclusions about gender inequality and how deeply it is rooted in the society of Pakistan.

Review of Literature

Rahman and Chaudhary (2007) explore the impact of gender inequality on education in rural and urban areas of Pakistan. Pakistan, set as a patriarchal society, prepares women to be good mothers and wives thus limited options to make choices for themselves are given. This results in the lack of educational and workforce opportunities resulting in discrimination, specifically in low social, economic, and political status in the society. Through logit regression analysis, the authors conclude that gender inequality leads to making poverty worse in rural areas which develop a bad economy as a whole for Pakistan. This study sheds light on how much gender inequality there is to make the economy take a negative shift.

Another author, Bari (2010), addresses women in politics from the very start of the fight of wanting a separate state now known as Pakistan. The quote from Mumtaz & Shaheed (1987) states that “women were allowed to participate in the nationalist struggle and pushed back to their homes as soon as the struggle was over” and displays the unjust use of women’s voices for independence for men. Prime Minister Musharraf was the first to reserve 17% of women representation in the national and provincial assembly. Bari (2010) provides a descriptive representation through gender quotas in the government, which are more than unfair, and suggest that does not lead to the substantive representation of women in the political or social sector of Pakistan.

Moving on from women in politics, Nasrullah and Bhatti (2012), explain posits that gender inequality in Pakistan leads to women having worse health. Despite various efforts, there is still a large gap between education, paid work, health access, and health outcomes between men and women. Women are married off at a very young age which makes them economically and socially dependent on male counterparts. This is the primary reason as to why women are so casually domestically abused. Getting pregnant at a young age has shown that women develop anemia, hypertension, osteoporosis, and get more prone to tuberculosis, also contributes to the overall health deterioration of women in addition to the domestic abuse. This study shows how deep-rooted the issue of gender inequality in Pakistan is as to the extent where it is affecting the health of young women.

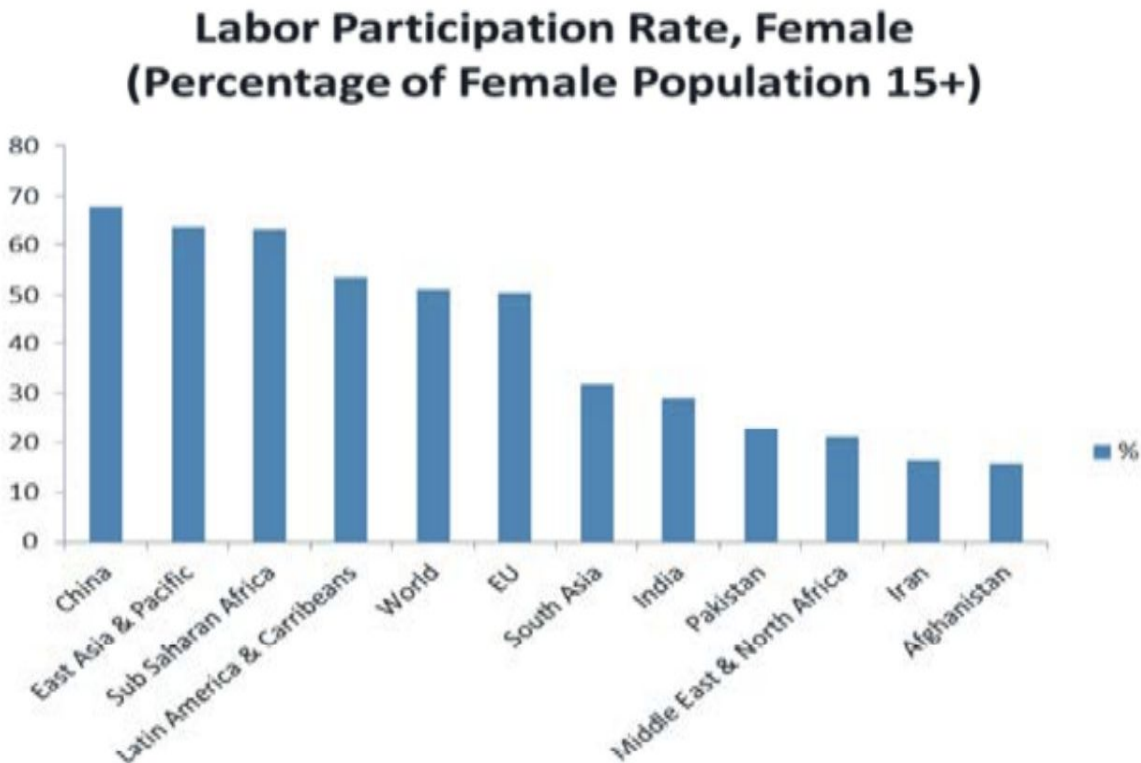
Health reasons aside, women are also not prominent in any professional field. For example, Roomi and Parrott (2008), conducted a study to examine why women do not do as well in the business in Pakistan. The study shows that gender-neutral constraints like a lack of access

to land, technology, training as well as gender-related constraints of being a woman are what makes women more susceptible to failure in the entrepreneurial world. This study supports my research by displaying how women are bound by their social roles as “protecting their family’s honor” where banks were unlikely to loan start-up money to women without a male cosigner

Hussain (2008) talks about how Benazir Bhutto was the first female Prime Minister of a Muslim state and a patriarchal society. Bhutto came to power in 1988 after the end of General Zia ul Haq’s dictatorship. She found herself in court fighting off several misconduct charges while still in office and was exiled for corruption in 1999. After returning to Pakistan in 2007 and once again running an election campaign, Bhutto was assassinated while returning from her campaign. The history narration supports my research in showing the extreme lengths were taken to remove a woman from power.

Sarwar and Abbasi (2013) address the labor force participation of women in Pakistan. Research shows that female employment can stir economic growth as well as help women’s wellbeing. Pakistan’s percentage of women in the workforce is below par when compared to other developing countries according to the statistics of the World Bank. Apart from labor force discrimination, women also face discrimination in other domains. A major portion of poverty is women which also includes access to other facilities except for finances such as accessing education, training opportunities, and social services. Due to the lack of education, women enter the labor force to feed their families by working in the largest industry in Pakistan; agriculture. Sarwar’s and Abbasi’s (2013) research further shows women’s labor force participation in Pakistan in comparison to the rest of the world. Women are more than half of the population in Pakistan and yet they only make one-fourth of the labor force. Women are 49.1% of the total

population and they make up 21.6% of the labor force. Pakistan belongs to those few developing nations of labor where labor force participation (LFP) of women is lowest in the world and less than the world average of 51.2% as shown in the figure below:



Female Labor Force Participation, selected regions, and countries of the world,
Source: World Development Indicator, World Bank 2011

Sathar, Crook, Callum, and Kazi (1998) talk about how women's role is as mother and wife only in Pakistani society. Women are considered the property and the economic responsibility of a man and receive their status via marriage and the ability to reproduce. Even though religion requires women to receive the utmost respect, women are barely given the ability to make any of their own choices; whom to marry, to reproduce or not, whether to work. The education of these women depends on whether their parents are educated; though the

discrimination against girls' education is diminishing in urban areas. Yet after completing their degree, many women will be married off and not given the chance to join the labor force. Raza (2007) gives an insight as to why women are not prominent in the workforce. One of the most apparent reasons for women working is the direct disapproval of the senior members of the family. Lack of education does play a part but research shows that the disapproval of the head figures of the family leads to a generation of uneducated, dependant women with no autonomy.

Baxi, Rai, and Ali (2006) discuss the use of *Zina Ordinance* (extra-marital offenses) as a way to punish errant daughters and to justify crimes in the name of 'honor'. One of the many dismaying aspects of Zina is when a woman gives testimony of rape and is prosecuted for adultery because of a lack of evidence. The testimony of rape is treated like a confession of adultery. Moreover, pregnancy is treated as proof of adultery: used as 'physical confession'. A consensual sexual relationship in a marriage of choice can be converted into a Zina offense by establishing that a marriage of choice is invalid or by producing 'proof of an earlier marriage through forged documentation. Further, bail cannot be assumed; women (and men) who are arrested can simply be left in prison for years without any legal assistance. Other than that, the government refuses to step in to protect a woman who is being abused by a man in the name of honor because it is a 'personal' matter. Violence used to 'discipline' a wife is not considered violence and is silenced when brought in light of legal actions due to the assumption that it is inappropriate to interfere between family matters.

Imran (2005) investigates how the Zina Ordinance is a sexist law used to favor men in all situations. Men not only saw this as a way to do as they please to any women, but the amount of domestic violence to "discipline" women in the house also increased significantly. He further

reports that the Human Development in South Asia 2000 reports that before the promulgation of the Zina, when only men could be punished for adultery, there were only two reported cases. After Zina was introduced, it became a tool for subjugating women, and now more than half of the women in Pakistani jails awaiting trial have been falsely accused under the Zina Hudood Ordinance. Further, the human rights groups report a rape charge every two hours on juveniles, where then women are imprisoned. 72% of the imprisoned women are sexually and physically abused in jail cells by the police.

Imran (2005) further describes the case of Safia Bibi:

“A sixteen-year-old blind girl, Safia Bibi, was raped by her landlord and his son in Sahiwal, eighty kilometers away from the Punjab capital of Lahore in 1983. A case was registered against the culprits in July 1983, and the court asked the blind girl to identify the rapists. As she failed to identify them, Bibi's consequent pregnancy was treated as evidence of fornication (as if pregnancy can only result from consensual sex), and therefore she was sentenced to three years in prison, fifteen lashes, and a fine of 1,000 rupees. The judge said the sentence was light because she was young and disabled.”

The case of Safia shows how a woman seeking justice from the government is punished for doing so in the light of the Zina Ordinance and The Law of Evidence.

Another case of Zainab Noor was not only treated as a joke but also resulted in more harm to the one seeking justice. The Qari (head of the mosque), Zainab's husband, not only committed marital rape but proceeded to do irreversible damage to the victim. The victim narrates:

“Then he (Qari) took me to bed, tied my hands and legs with a rope, inserted two iron rods in my vagina and anus, attached two electric wires with each of the two iron rods and connected them with the switchboard. There was no electricity due to load shedding. The moment electricity was restored, he switched it on and played havoc with my body.”

Although the Zainab's husband was sentenced, due to the hue of media supporting gender discrimination, his sentence was reduced from 30 years to only 6 years. Zainab, on the other hand, had lost three of her organs and was going extensive reconstructive surgery to go back to normal bodily functions.

Fariha Chaudhary (2013) talks about how [current] authors found themselves under different measures of patriarchy that hindered and suppressed their works. Bapsi Sidhwa left her own country, Pakistan, so she could write more freely about the issues that women face and to explore women's sexuality via writing. She uses characters to talk about the important issues that women are captives to in Pakistan, "rebellion is not in their nature. They try to cope with the parental, societal and cultural pressures in their life as much as they can but when they find their very life and identity are in danger they throw off all shackles and fight with full force to foil the foul attempts of their adversary".

Umera Ahmed, another feminist writer, is also criticized for standing up to the patriarchal system. Both Sidhwa and Ahmed are the victims of an unjust society where male members exploit religious values to gain secular and materialistic gains. Whilst both of them wrote about it, many shut down their 'absurd' ideas of feminine sexual exploration and political, and gender equality.

Significance of the study

Growing up in Pakistan as a woman, you begin to look at all the inequalities just as a "way of life". Moving to Denison, taking diverse courses such as racial inequality and issues in feminism, sparked my interest and curiosity as to how deeply the patriarchal society had integrated into women's minds that inequality is justified in every part of life. What I will be

gaining from researching this is 1) learn from a professor who has expertise on race relations, has spent time in Pakistan, understands research methodology 2) research experience in social sciences 3) add to my knowledge base on gender inequality in Pakistan 4) possibly meet one of the most renowned feminists in Pakistan since the very first days.

I specifically want to spend time conducting a multi-methodological summer research project on gender inequality in Pakistan because 1) I believe that my generation and as a student of a liberal arts college, I will have a unique and interdisciplinary approach to this research 2) I have grown up in Pakistan and I have spent time studying gender inequality from a global perspective here in Denison. However, this summer I would like to investigate gender inequality and capture what is happening in my home country.

Results

According to the World Bank, women's labor force participation is less than average in Pakistan and yet the women are the ones being educated for the most prestigious fields like medicine. Mahoor, a young woman pursuing a degree in medicine, when asked about why her parents felt the need to educate her replied, "have a 'good' marriage prospect, that is, to find a better eligible partner." This further goes hand in hand with Sathar, Crook, Callum, and Kazi's (1998) research about how women are seen as the property of men and vessels to carry their offspring. Women are not permitted to work after marriage and their degrees are mere decoration. When asking Abida on why the field of education when she has a master's degree in English literature, she replied, "He [her husband] emphasized to be a teacher and be directly involved with education and kids as well."

Abida further says, “People ask their women to join the profession in which they have to deal mostly with women rather than men. By heart, I never dreamt of becoming a teacher. Yeah, I’m in this profession because of gender hierarchy because society has chosen this profession for me being a woman.” Abida’s statement shows how women cannot make their own choices about career fields. This further supports the fact that women’s degrees are just decorations and are only there to help find a suitable husband.

Kishwar Naheed, a renowned poet, talks about how her poetry was criticized because she wrote about more important issues than romance, which is all that men wrote about. When writing about obscenity and sex, Mahoor, a young writer, says “[It is all passive hatred towards my poetry] I may have gotten more open hatred because as a guy I can perhaps take it like a man.”

Progressing into the reality about sexual abuse 20 years from now and how it differs from today, Kishwar Naheed describes the situation:

“In my time, if we said, “He touched me” or this happened or that happened, we’d get slapped on the wrist by our elders and ordered to be quiet and told: “Nothing happened. I’m warning you don’t say anything to anyone”. Now parents hardly, in rare cases, take it to a court or the police station. Before in the police stations, if a woman was to come forward with a report of harassment, the police would verbally abuse the woman to a point where she was so broken and she enjoyed the ridicule. Now the police are more aware. In Zia-ul-Haq’s time, the police officers would not register cases and the women who were in jail for rape, their families would refuse to help them out or acknowledge their existence. Now it depends on the situation but in light of what happens, it does end up hurting the woman whether she comes forward or not.”

In light of that, multiple cases are still only seeking justice when social media blasts it and demands justice as in the case of Zoya, who accidentally let the parrot out, was beaten to death by her parents for that mistake.

Kishwar Naheed further describes how the situation has changed for this generation.

When asked the question of generational differences, she goes on to say that:

“You guys have more problems now. The thing is when I used to walk to school alone, no guy used to follow me around, and even if they did, I would tell them off myself or a nearby elder would scold them. Now, even if an elderly woman is walking and wearing gold bangles, they’re taken off. Young girls are catcalled so much that is despicable. Here and even India, there has been an increasing rate of girls/women getting raped in a taxi.” This statement is further validated by the interviewee, Mahoor, who says. “Yes, as a woman, I have been denied to travel or go out alone on many occasions even though I am an adult. As a woman, I have to avoid going out at night for the fear of harassment and rape...”

Mahoor further elaborates on the situation of women’s rights which corresponds to Imran’s (2005) research on how violence used to ‘discipline’ a wife:

“Women’s rights in Pakistan are far from what they are supposed to be. From inequality in job positions, salary to being denied education even in the 21st Century, everything still happens in Pakistan. Women are abused, raped, unsafe to stay alone even in the comfort of their own houses, harassed especially if they are unmarried, butchered if they stand up for themselves, or sometimes just because they were born, and are exposed to many other forms of violence and misogyny in day to day life in a patriarchal Pakistani society.”

It is of no question that men dominate the world and there is patriarchy in every corner of the world. Many female interviewees replied that their life would be much better if they were a man. Abida Faisal goes on to describe why that might be the case:

“I could have a better life and a job if I was a man. I could have a lot of opportunities that are considered only for men in our society. I could have a better job. Not only a job but also a better status, mobility, decision making, access to education, inheritance, property ownership, right to contract, and choice of profession. Since childhood, it has been inculcated in my mind that women should stay at home and focus on households. Yeah, of course, if I was supposed to be a man, I would have had better opportunities to study, to attain my desired degree, and to in result my desired or dream job.”

Gender discrimination is not only seen in wages but also in the sports industry for professional female players. Noorena Shams, a professional squash player, not only had to disguise herself as a boy to play but was further put down by her coach via verbal harassment. Noorena was denied training like ‘men’ because of her gender. Sports were taken lightly for women because of how ‘weak women are’. Noorena fought with the mindset of, “My gender and I are strong enough.” She is currently one of the very best international players who still fight misogyny in her sports career.

This is a pristine example of how Mahoor describes generational differences, “...the older generations still teach the younger ones to stay quiet! They support the patriarchy! While the younger generation is resilient, brave, and harder to walk all over. Let’s hope we keep up our tenacity.”

That is what Noorena represents, “I don’t care if I win or lose. It is more of the fact that I am in the game.”

Conclusions and Discussion

Gender inequality is still deeply rooted in Pakistan. After conducting interviews, and hearing broader perspectives, research from 20 years ago on gender inequality shows the same issues that are faced even now. There have been changes but the fact that interviews describe not being able to walk alone, as a woman, dangerous, shows the work that still needs to be done to further improve the gender hierarchy in Pakistan.

Situations are improving but only on paper and where it helps keep someone silent. Now with growing technology, social media has been a platform to seek justice for people, and silence is not easily achieved. There have been political reforms to make women more equal but they are also the least amount of human decency. Pakistan is still very much a male-dominant country where the power of gender is abused.

This research topic is a goto for all developing countries where gender hierarchy and gender inequality are still prominent. It is a platform to open up new discussions and help improve situations that are swept under the rug. It serves as a way to self educate and educate others to further be more aware of what is equality and work in that direction.

To further this research, the next steps would be to go into the depth of reforms that have been made and further hear the voices of the people who have been oppressed through gender discrimination. Interviewing the people who live in rural areas and do not have access to the internet and education will give this research a whole new perspective. Since Pakistan is a developing country, most of the population still resides in areas where one has to go in person to have contact with anyone. Technology is not prominent in those regions and to fully understand how deeply this problem is rooted, in the future, gathering information in person is needed to gain the whole perspective of gender inequality in Pakistan.

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Appendix A

Interviews

Kishwar Naheed - Jun 9, 2020

Q. Why did you use poetry out of everything to get your feminist message out?

I'm a poet first and a feminist second. I became a feminist through poetry. I've seen it all around the world; whether you're in Africa, America, Australia, or in a small village in Pakistan, the mistreatments that women endure is not easily describable. I have my son in Spain and relatives in Europe and they're all talking to me about how divorce rates have gone up since the lockdowns have gone in effect. The problem is that women have had some success but men, still, characterwise, in literature, in society, in psychology, and reality, are looked upon as a superhero. They're given such high stature that they are deserving of a prostration (bowing in front of as you do for God) and everything that women say is bullshit and is not given any weightage what so ever. So I've spent my life resolving issues, fighting for rights, banging my head against walls, and when I couldn't do anything more... writing poetry. That's why poetry is my life. I don't have any jewelry, silk gowns, I have nothing, but what I do have are my poetry and my books.

Q. Do you think women have accomplished anything since you started this fight years ago or do you think we're in the same place still?

Look, this is a two-sided sword. Women have marched since the time of Asif Zardari to get equality and some laws have been passed out of shame. Now there's a budget coming up, in a day or two, to pay women the same wages and to make sure that women have the same treatment as men. Talking is good, they're like dreams, but the actual thing, the reality is following through with it. You can see in reality that a little girl like Zoya, who accidentally let the parrot out, was beaten to death by her parents for that mistake. Or what happened with Zainab. Or what happens every other day with another girl. These things then again take me back, to the reality that is.

Q. Do you think they increased the seats in parliament for women to quiet them by giving them something little?

No look, whether seats are increased or decreased, wolves walk in packs. When inquiring about letting women in the parliament, they replied, I've never gotten educated, I've never learned about it, I don't know what this is. There are a lot of women who wear the best clothes, makeup, and perfumes but until they get their heads straight about what issues to talk about, me alone or a

single wolf from a pack can't change anything. It is the individual development of one's psychology.

Q. Do you think your generation perceives women differently than my generation?

You guys have more problems now. The thing is when I used to walk to school alone, no guy used to follow me around, and even if they did, I would tell them off myself or a nearby elder would scold them. Now, even if an elderly woman is walking and wearing gold bangles, they're taken off. Young girls are catcalled so much that is despicable. Here and even India, there has been an increasing rate of girls/women getting raped in a taxi. Before things were hidden, now things are more transparent, they get out easily. Women now speak up for themselves but some things are too hard to talk about and women are blackmailed and threatened to remain silent.

Q. Do you think if a woman comes forward about being raped in Pakistan, she loses all respect in society? If so, what is your view on that?

In my time, if we said, "He touched me" or this happened or that happened, we'd get slapped on the wrist by our elders and ordered to be quiet and told: "Nothing happened. I'm warning you don't say anything to anyone". Now parents hardly, in rare cases, take it to a court or the police station. Before in the police stations, if a woman was to come forward with a report of harassment, the police would verbally abuse the woman to a point where she was so broken and she enjoyed the ridicule. Now the police are more aware. In Zia-ul-Haq's time, the police officers would not register cases and the women who were in jail for rape, their families would refuse to help them out or acknowledge their existence. Now it depends on the situation but in light of what happens, it does end up hurting the woman whether she comes forward or not.

Q. Do you think if you were a man writing this poetry, you'd have the same reaction/backlash? Like Zia-ul-Haq treated you?

First, men always just do romantic poetry. Second, they don't like a woman talking about serious topics. They used to question my poetry repeatedly like, "What are you writing? Why are you writing about this?". Everything that men were focused on was about how a woman looked into his eyes and love sparked. Very rarely, you'd see a man talk about a daughter or a child in their poetry. In Saudi Arabia and other countries, I see women's poetry about actual things. Those women got imprisoned but they wrote. We can't do it here still but we tried to sneak in poetry by translating Palestine's poetry and saying we were just translating it. That was our excuse; we did not write it. We're merely translating scripts from 50 years ago.

Abdullah Memon - Jun 9, 2020

Q. What industry do you work in?

Currently, I am a senior with a computer science major and am working as a college manager at NUST.

Q. Do you think you're in this industry because of the gender hierarchy in this country?

When I joined this field I did it because of my passion for it. As I moved forward, I did realize there are gender biases in this industry but that is not why I am in it.

Q. Do you think you could've had the advantage of working in a different industry if you were a man/woman? For example, would it have been easier to reach a management position or a higher role in a company if you were a man/woman?

Yes, I feel so especially if you're talking about computer science since I've never seen a woman in a management position or a technical position. So I do believe that men in this industry reach a higher position more easily.

Q. What level of education have you completed?

I'll be done with my bachelor's degree in the next two weeks.

Q. Why did your parents put importance on education?

Well, that's pretty straightforward. It's a capitalistic system; everything is a competition and the market is collapsing so people who do not have a good level of education, they're left out/left behind and do not get the same privileges as other people or opportunities.

Q. Will you be working after marriage?

Yes. If my wife doesn't earn enough. Just kidding, I will be.

Q. Just because you said that, do you think you'd let your wife work if you are earning enough money for the whole family?

It's up to her. I will be okay either way because it's a personal decision.

Q. How many female coworkers do you have?

In my particular office, we have 29 women in total, and in my deposit team, we are two guys and two girls.

Q. Have you ever written/published anything such as poetry, articles, etc.? If so:

Yes, I continuously do. I have a blog and I publish my writings over there.

a. What were the reactions you got?

Mostly the responses I get are overwhelmingly positive.

b. Did you get any backlash?

Well obviously. Whatever you write or whatever opinion you express, you always find someone who doesn't particularly agree with you. Especially if you're talking about controversial topics like women's rights. There will be people who disagree with it and thus respond accordingly.

c. What role do you see of poetry in understanding gender inequality?

Well growing up with 5 brothers, there is a particular overflowing tradition of masculinity which is "all men should be strong and unemotional and just provide". Words are a very powerful medium; they can be both oppressive and liberating. Since the time of the ancient Greeks, poetry has been one of the most chosen means of expression, delivering messages, especially of equality.

d. Do you think you would've had different responses to your writing/poetry had you been of the opposite gender?

All of this depends on personal opinions but as far as I've noticed on social media like Instagram, female writers do not get much attention or acknowledgment as we (men) do. There are always people who are "mansplaining" to women that their level of education and understanding is lower than theirs and tell them they shouldn't talk about serious things that they don't know about. They are told to talk about things that are more "women's topics". So yeah.

Q. What is your perspective on women's rights in Pakistan?

The state of women's rights is always questioned here. It is seen as women have no rights here in Pakistan and women do complain constantly about not having any rights in this society and they're being maltreated by the male-dominant setup. All offices claim strongly that if given the chance, they can work strongly on all social rights but our society does adopt a hostile attitude towards this woman who is trying to get her rights. Rural areas which are 70% of the population do have to put up with this smothering male dominance. Women can be highly qualified but they don't get as much support or it's not easy for them as a male in their position.

Q. Do you think things are changing for women in Pakistan?

Well on paper they are. Classes, urban divide, uneven social development, tribal development; all of these things affect women a lot. But the overall improvement and the issue of women's rights are spreading. The amount of educated, literate women is increasing. The society is more aware of the violence against women and people are more aware. Even the Pakistan Ulama Council has issued a fatwa against killings, child marriages, and all that. The Supreme Court and the Lahore Court have answered the call for women's rights advocates for the country and delivered harsher punishments against violent crimes and domestic abuse. But these are all again on paper. Some laws make you see that people have started to take notice but again, the situation itself hasn't improved that much.

Q. Have things ever worked in your favor as a man? If so, can you give an example?

Looking back and talking to women about this particular topic, I realize yes maybe I have received a lot of privilege without even realizing it. That's because the system trains us to think that this is normal. I can't remember any of those times but if you're talking about little things then yeah. In a recent sports event for the presidency, I was competing against a woman for the title, and when the results were announced after the elections; I won. I realized most of the neutral people voting for me because I was a guy and thus would have more experience in sports supposedly. I had the support from admin due to the same reason; believing that men are better equipped to hold positions (in sports).

Q. Have things ever not worked in your favor as a man/woman? If so, can you give an example?

Very little things happen around. For example, this notion of ladies first, you'd have to give up your seat, on a bus, to a woman who is standing. People say it's because of chivalry but I think it's a way of further exerting control like, we're giving this as a favor to women. Also in concerts or events, they won't let you in without a woman plus one.

Q. Do you see a generational divide in how women are treated or looked upon as? For example, do 20 years olds have a different perspective on the matter than 40 years olds?

Obviously, from generation to generation, the roles given to women have changed. You can see that you have your father, mother on one side and then you have you and your cousins. You can see the difference in the mindset. You can see a father agreeing to marry their daughter to someone for a business advantage in the old days because that's how it was done. Now obviously it's considered very wrong. So there is a huge difference. Family to family it differs. Teachings of parents go down from generation to generation, wrong or right. You can call this a generational curse if you must. Some things are teachings that are not made public. They have the same mindsets. Yes, this woman is a maid, not a daughter or wife, but a slave that is there to please me. Now there's also media that can blow up something around the world to seek justice and raise awareness; something that wasn't there before. It causes backlash in the media and people to seek justice.

Q. Do the different generations have different expectations for women?

Yes, different generations see women differently. The older generations saw women more as accessible tokens that are there to serve and to bear children. Now women are still treated somewhat the same but are fighting more towards having equal rights and getting an education and equal pays, etc.

Mahoor Khalid - Jul 8, 2020

Q. What industry do you work in?

As of right now, I am a medical student and not yet employed.

Q. Do you think you're in this industry because of the gender hierarchy in this country?

I wouldn't say so for myself as I have always wanted to be a doctor, but yes, a lot of females choose this profession in Pakistan as it is considered a more respectable profession for women according to our societal norms.

Q. Do you think you could've had the advantage of working in a different industry if you were a man/woman? For example, would it have been easier to reach a management position or a higher role in a company if you were a man/woman?

If I was a man, it would have opened up a chance for a higher success rate in other fields, and even in medicine for example, to this day, male surgeons are preferred over females because of a gender bias that males somehow are more competent surgeons. As for other fields, a female

architect, engineer, lawyer or chemist, etc, in Pakistan will have lesser chances to flourish than let's say a doctor, as here it is considered a more respectable profession as I mentioned before, and also because fewer resources are available to even encourage women to go into fields which are more 'male' oriented.

Q. What level of education have you completed?

I am enrolled in a 5-year medicine program in Pakistan, currently in my 3rd year.

Q. Why did your parents put importance on education?

For me to grow as a person, to be able to support myself, and have a 'good' marriage prospect, that is, to find a better eligible partner.

Q. Why didn't you work after marriage? / Will you be working after marriage?

Yes, I will be working after marriage.

Q. Have you ever written/published anything such as poetry, articles, etc.? If so:

a. What were the reactions you got?

I have written several articles and poetry. Most responses are positive, encouraging, and inspire me to continue.

b. Did you get any backlash?

Not per se, but people do avoid some of my more sexual poetry as well as those expressing bitter realities with somewhat obscenity. Conservative people also don't like my broad perspective on God in my poetry, especially the older generation, find me a little too liberal.

c. What role do you see of poetry in understanding gender inequality?

Poetry is a very delicate form of art. Writing it myself, I recognize the emotion, the strength, the courage, and the long thought process that goes into forming words that flow easily so that the reader can connect. I think poetry on gender inequality related subjects is touching, powerful, and provides hope to continue struggling for our rights.

d. Do you think you would've had different responses to your poetry had you been of the opposite gender?

Oh yes, definitely. I may have gotten more praise for my obscenity or at least less criticism because for a guy it would have made more sense to talk openly about sex or

other such conflicting issues, but it is also possible that I may have gotten more open hatred because as a guy I can perhaps take it like a man?

Q. What is your perspective on women's rights in Pakistan?

Women's rights in Pakistan are far from what they are supposed to be. From inequality in job positions, salary to being denied education even in the 21st Century, everything still happens in Pakistan. Women are abused, raped, unsafe to stay alone even in the comfort of their own houses, harassed especially if they are unmarried, butchered if they stand up for themselves, or sometimes just because they were born, and are exposed to many other forms of violence and misogyny in day to day life in a patriarchal Pakistani society.

Q. Do you think things are changing for women in Pakistan?

Very slowly and in a way that one insignificant issue is solved so that many significant issues are ignored.

Q. Have things ever worked in your favor as a man/woman? If so, can you give an example?

Yes, as a woman, I have seen my professors be kinder while taking verbal examinations. When tasked with a responsibility, I am preferred over perhaps a 'careless' male classmate. As a woman, I have never been asked to help out with any chore that involves greater strength.

Q. Have things ever not worked in your favor as a man/woman? If so, can you give an example?

Yes, as a woman, I have been denied to travel or go out alone on many occasions even though I am an adult. As a woman, I have to avoid going out at night for the fear of harassment and rape, and as a woman, I have to work twice as hard as males to be recognized in my field as competitive.

Q. Do you see a generational divide in how women are treated or looked upon as? For example, do 20 year olds have a different perspective on the matter than 40 year olds?

Oh yes, definitely. The older generation was more forgiving and adapting to whatever conditions they were forced to live in. Many of them did not recognize the patriarchy they were enveloped in and quite frankly, still don't. Many women live in abusive households; hide being raped by especially a family member, and countless other violent and aggressive tortures inflicted by men. And the worst of all is that a lot of the women from the older generations still teach the younger ones to stay quiet! They support the patriarchy! While the younger generation is resilient, brave, and harder to walk all over. Let's hope we keep up our tenacity.

Q. Do the different generations have different expectations for women?

Older generations want women to have respectable jobs and built a family and be slaves of the repetitive cycle of just bearing children and spoon feeding their husbands, while the new

generation has a different expectation for women: they want to climb every mountain that they were told was impossible to, reach heights of success and not be defined by their husbands or families, but by their impact and footprint on the world. We want to make a difference.

Abida Faisal - Jun 20, 2020

Q. What industry do you work in?

I'm in the education department. I have been working as a PYP teacher for the last 5 years.

Q. Do you think you're in this industry because of the gender hierarchy in this country?

In a country like Pakistan, people have set their norms that these fields are for women especially teaching and gynecology. People ask their women to join the profession in which they have to deal mostly with women rather than men. By heart, I never dreamt of becoming a teacher. Yeah, I'm in this profession because of gender hierarchy because society has chosen this profession for me being a woman. It is also considered as one safety measure too.

Q. Do you think you could've had the advantage of working in a different industry if you were a man/woman? For example, would it have been easier to reach a management position or a higher role in a company if you were a man/woman?

I often think about this. I could have a better life and a job if I was a man. I could have a lot of opportunities that are considered only for men in our society. I could have a better job. Not only a job but also a better status, mobility, decision making, access to education, inheritance, property ownership, right to contract, and choice of profession. Since childhood, it has been inculcated in my mind that women should stay at home and focus on households. Yeah, of course, if I was supposed to be a man, I would have had better opportunities to study, to attain my desired degree, and to in result my desired or dream job.

Q. What level of education have you completed?

I did my Master's degree in English Literature.

Q. Why did your parents put importance on education?

My father and mother both were educationists. My father was the first man who sent his girls to college in our whole family. He faced a lot of criticism for that. Right now, at this age, now I realize how much he was teased for sending us to educational institutes.

Q. If you are married, when and why did you start working?

Yeah, I'm married. It's been 12 years. I have 3 kids. I started a job when all my kids started school and I was free then my husband motivated me to do a job. He emphasized to be a teacher and be directly involved with education and kids as well.

Q. How many female coworkers do you have?

Almost 25 female staff and 11 male staff.

Q. Have you ever written/published anything such as poetry, articles, etc.? If so:

Might I have written a few verses in my teen ages but I was not having any source to get it published.

Q. Do you think things are changing for women in Pakistan?

I think in Pakistan people living in Cities are modern and aware of their rights and responsibilities.

A new generation of women and men have grown up with different mind-sets and aspirations than those of their parents and their communities, shaped by newly acquired education, new job prospects. Ten years ago, we were not aware of our basic rights. Now we know how to work for our own choices.

But still, in rural and tribal areas, a tough situation exists. They are still suffering from honor killing, Vani, female infanticide, and not even basic human rights.

Q. Have things ever worked in your favor as a man/woman? If so, can you give an example?

When I was searching for a job 5-6 years back so my goal was to get a female-oriented job. I gave an interview in a renowned school and was appointed immediately then I felt to be blessed as a woman.

Q. Have things ever not worked in your favor as a man/woman? If so, can you give an example?

You can't always go anywhere. You can't go to your friends. You can't study in co-education. You can't do your dream job. The answer is always that we trust you, but we do not trust society.

Q. Do you see a generational divide in how women are treated or looked upon as? example, do 20 years olds have a different perspective on the matter than 40 years olds?

10-15 years back, we were a silent generation. Women are better off today, but still far from being equal with men. Now the young generation in modern cities is enjoying equality and discrimination is very less so things are changing in educated people.

Q. Do the different generations have different expectations for women?

Attitudes towards gender have changed substantially since the mid-twentieth century. Traditional gender role ideologies reinforce a family ideal where men were expected to be the primary breadwinners in the family while women were expected to remain in the home as caretakers and mothers but things are changed in today's scenario. Alongside few changes in family structure, societal perceptions of gender role ideologies have changed; the proportion of individuals who are supportive of women working outside the home and contributing as equal breadwinners has increased over time, while support for "traditional" gender ideologies has decreased. Yeah, expectations also change with generation. Now women are working side by side and are better managers than men. I notice that the young male generation is more cooperative and supportive as compared to the last one.

Noorena Shams - Jun 7, 2020

Q. What industry do you work in?

I work in sports (Professional Squash Player) but at the same time, I work in the business industry as well.

Q. Do you think you're in this industry because of the gender hierarchy in this country?

I mean I never thought of it that way. I've been in the sports industry for 11 years. It was never that men do it so I can too. It was my passion and I followed it. I realized it was a men's industry later on. When I was 15 years old, I had to disguise myself as a boy to play in a cricket team. I went from Dir to Peshawar to play cricket and I couldn't find an academy. I was 15 and of course, at that age, you don't know things. I was too young to discover an academy in Peshawar where they'd take girls in for the team. I found this academy that was only for boys and the coach decided to cut my hair to make me a guy, disguise me as a guy. I didn't understand at that point why he was doing that to me. In my mind I was like I can do that; not thinking much about it. For a year and a half, I was disguised as a boy. My name was Noor Islam and I was coach son.

I used to play with them and no one used to recognize me because my face had gotten tan and since these are the pre-puberty years, my voice was also disguised. So I was like the dog between wolves and no one could tell. And I played; I remember sneaking out of school to play longer and lying to my aunt to just go play. Then there came a point where I started periods and my voice wasn't getting heavier. The shocking part was that when I had to tell them, they accepted me as I was. They were surprised how I was a girl; I run like them and I play like them. That's when I realized that I didn't have to disguise myself. There was no need. I still went to nationals, even though it was a first-ever, they let me play. They didn't tell anyone but I knew. I felt like I was lying to myself. Why am I doing it? For a 15-year-old to realize it, for me, it was a big deal. I knew I had grown mature before my time. When I got into training with girls, I realized it was a man's sport and it's a man's world and industry. I saw the major difference in training. They didn't take girls' training as seriously as they took boys. They weren't pushed as much as boys and they always used to say that women aren't as tough so this training is enough. If we used to play 5 hours in the boy's academy, for girls it was just 2 hours and that was also very non-serious. That used to bug me so much. When my mother found out, she felt that I shouldn't play and just focus on my studies because we can't afford it. I remember having the feeling that I can't play, which ruined my middle school grades. I tried to focus in school but I was bullied. On top of that, I was a bit famous. People took advantage of me and it became hard to see who my real friends were. I was in a private 'rich kid' school but people looked down on me because I wasn't a rich kid. When I went to high school, I found this academy and I wanted to join SOMETHING. I realized it was more of a private club and is very expensive for me. My father used to have a membership to one of those clubs but then, of course, he was dead. I was again distraught about what I should do now. I was walking one day and I found this squash academy and it was a huge coincidence that I found that place. It was hard since it was an Air Force Academy and I got in using favors from my friend. Further, the athletes there were already professional athletes. I was a 17-year-old nobody. I was told repeatedly that I joined too late and at 17 kids became champions. I was seen as the new meat for guys and coaches and everyone else. I couldn't understand how people say some things. The harassment. I realized how much this world is a man's world. I'd have to face criticism if I was a minute late to come home. Comments were passed because people would see my racket sticking out of my bag. Cars would stop by to pass rude comments even though I was in an abaya.

There were girls who trained with the boys but that was only because they had a man to support them; a brother, a father. I didn't. That's the time where I started fighting because what does it mean it's for boys! It's for girls! Everyone in the academy started calling me a rebel and a person who was looking for attention. It was a test to see if I was brave enough to get through it or not. It felt like one of those cartoons that push you to be brave like Pocahontas. This was the time I realized if I wanted equal rights, if I had all these demands, I can't cut my hair like a guy or dress

like a guy; basically, I can't hide the fact that I am a woman. I didn't have to disguise myself, or my gender, to show people that I'm strong. My gender and I are strong enough.

You realize that people will say everything they want to say behind your back but the thing is, what makes the difference is, they don't have the guts to say it to your face. Because they know they can't walk all over you. Thus, I chose to stay in this industry but it was later on that I recognized the gender hierarchy. I still chose to stay because if I don't step up, or try to step up, it's not gonna change for decades. Some girls have fought before me but the biggest difference was they had a father. A male who could still be a protector.

I don't care if I win or lose. It is more of the fact that I am in the game.

Appendix B

Interview Questions

Before beginning, please know that the responses to these questions are being used for research purposes in the Denison Summer Scholars Research Program. You have the right to stop and/or refuse input to any questions that are triggering and/or you do not wish to answer.

1. What industry do you work in?
2. Do you think you're in this industry because of the gender hierarchy in this country?
3. Do you think you could've had the advantage of working in a different industry if you were a man/woman? For example, would it have been easier to reach a management position or a higher role in a company if you were a man/woman?
4. What level of education have you completed?
5. Why did your parents put importance on education?
6. Why didn't you work after marriage? / Will you be working after marriage?
7. If you are married, when and why did you start working?
8. How many female coworkers do you have?
9. Have you ever written/published anything such as poetry, articles, etc.? If so:
 - a. What were the reactions you got?
 - b. Did you get any backlash?
 - c. What role do you see of poetry in understanding gender inequality?
 - d. Do you think you would've had different responses to your poetry had you been of the opposite gender?
10. What is your perspective on women's rights in Pakistan?
11. Do you think things are changing for women in Pakistan?
12. Have things ever worked in your favor as a man/woman? If so, can you give an example?
13. Have things ever not worked in your favor as a man/woman? If so, can you give an example?
14. Do you see a generational divide in how women are treated or looked upon as? For example, do 20 years olds have a different perspective on the matter than 40 years olds?
15. Do the different generations have different expectations for women?