

AURAT MARCH: PERSPECTIVES, PROSPECTS AND PROPOSALS CASE STUDY OF BALOCHISTAN

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ABSTRACT

In public debate there is controversy regarding Women's rights and "Aurat March" in Pakistan. This article endeavor was directed to find out different perspectives, prospects and proposals about Aurat March. Prime objectives of the article were to find out the opinion of university female students about Aurat March, to explore the impacts of Aurat March on the ordinary women of Balochistan and to analyze the predictive outcomes of Aurat March. Mixed method was used to explore different opinions about Aurat March. Key informants were interviewed, 150 female students from five largest universities of Balochistan were selected and data was collected through questionnaire, further personal observation was used as a tool for data collection. It was found that variety of reasons have brought decline in the negative thinking of women in Balochistan about Aurat March and Women's rights including legal, social, educational aspects and social media as well. But there is a gap present in the thoughts of female university student and the active members of Aurat March about Aurat March, Women's rights and women related issues. The study suggests the masses in general and educated segment of society in particular to understand and support Aurat March and women's rights as well as Women's Organizations and engage in respectful dialogues with women's rights activists being their allies. The study also suggest government to ensure safety and security at Aurat Marches, to implement legislation for women's rights, to promote women's education and economic empowerment, to encourage gender equality in the workplace and to address cultural norms and practices that perpetuate gender inequality in the society.

Keywords: Gender, Aurat March, Women, Women's Rights, Pakistan, Quetta, Women's International Day

Introduction:

There is a serious need to explore the way women activists in Pakistan observes women's rights, gender role and their relationship with religious society where presence of hardliner cannot be underestimated. Freshly youth females drive "the legislative issues of sexuality over the roads" along with extraordinary outcomes. The females in

Pakistan appeared to acquire strengthening by taking part in socio-political movements of women, so in Pakistan they started "Aurat March initially in 2018" to observe "the women's international day". 'Aurat March' is alluding to a progression of missions proposed for improving the issues like reproductive rights of women, women's suffrage, abusive behavior at home, and

equivalent compensation in the working environment, maternity leave and sexual harassment. In 2018, youthful women's activists in Karachi, led (it might be second form of lead, which led) in starting and arranging the first "Aurat March" under the umbrella of, "Hum Aurtein" (We the Women). Some old women's activists assisted and the group was a cross segment of ages just along with transsexual and Rainbow Activists Alliance (RAA). At the same time, a enormous walk was arranged in Lahore. It was organized, to feature females as not so much advantaged in the society.

Females in Pakistan stay subject to an expansive scope of segregations forced over them by the conspiracy of ancestral traditions, strict interpretations of religious groups, and a settled feudal setting. Women have been depicted as 'an image of contrast' regarding varying levels of income and work status. In this regard, Pakistani society in general portrayed an opposing image of sexual orientation value for women dependent on their schooling and financial status. Appeared differently in relation to the exceptionally impeded situation of under-educated women from needy economic background, talented females in metropolitan settings of Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi have work permission. Pakistani government and private territories rank (equal employment opportunities EEO) low in the index of needs; even now there is no impressive model for gender equality in Pakistani organizations.

Background of Study:

For a long time, women in Pakistan are experiencing the matter of gender gap and in spite of specific enactments to empower the women, the problem remained unresolved. "The Global Gender Gap Index Report 2023" issued by World Economic Forum (WEF), positioned Pakistan fifth most exceedingly terrible, 142nd out of 146 developing nations following by Iran, Algeria, Chad and Afghanistan. The present circumstance in this manner drives that there are some significant imperfections in the current social and cultural framework and in the religious guidance as a result the situation come to be

quandary for both, the society and country. In this particular situation from few years a prominent voice for women empowerment and against gender discrimination has been raised in the form of "Aurat March" at women's international day 8th March. Apart from Quetta large and small rallies are organized in many cities of Pakistan. The issue needs scientific investigation in Quetta Balochistan to know basic demands of "Aurat March" and its impacts of on the women of the province and its predictive multifaceted expected outcomes.

Review Literature:

In spite of the staggering media consideration regarding the rise of fundamentalism, Pakistani feminists have stayed concealed and unanalyzed. Violence against women is vital to the plan of the feminism, in view of the significant infringement of women's common liberties to life and safety. Critelli & Willett, (2013)

'Aurat March' in Pakistan and the resistance faced by organizers and allies from the general population on account of its ridiculous slogans and somewhat strange play cards have now become a controversial event almost everywhere, particularly amongst so-called clergies and unschooled audiences across provinces. Likewise, it has also been noticed the clergies and somewhat semi-tribal segment of society have associated "Aurat March" with adaptation of western women culture and viewpoint of freedom of thoughts, expressions followed by family breakdown that still exist and is endangered in urban set up of the country. Contrary to this out fashioned perception, the organizers and participants of Aurat March believed to strive for uplift of women status with regard to their deteriorating social status and uplift their productive role and contributions into society and country's socio-economic standing among international community,. Khushbakht & Sultana, (2020)

Pakistan can be considered as a country which does not view more resilience regarding women's rights and viewing "Aurat March" as an idea developed and nurtured in West which is pointless in a state with Islamic ideologies. After

9\11 Muslim women with bogus ideas, begun to be viewed as misled and persecuted while the Muslims turned into the middle phase of international politics. International media has assumed a significant part depicting the women picture. With the changing media talks, the insights in regards to women's role likewise changed. Fatima et al., (2017)

Research Methodology:

Mixed method was opted to conduct the study. Key informants, the organizers and participants

of Aurat March were individually interviewed through snowball sampling technique which included Lawyers, Educators, NGOs Employees and Human Rights Activists, further primary data was collected through questionnaire from 150 female students of five largest universities of Quetta Balochistan through simple random sampling, and personal observation was implied as part and parcel of data collection and mustering of information. For data analysis SPSS software was implied to avoid human errors.

Results and Discussion:

Table 1. Sampling Layout

After drawing the sampling, questionnaire was prepared as most suitable tool of data collection as almost every respondent was adequately educated.

Table 1. Sampling Layout

| Sr. No | Name of the University | Number of respondents |
|--------|---|-----------------------|
| 1 | Sardar Bahadur Khan Women University | 40 |
| 2 | University of Balochistan | 38 |
| 3 | BUITMs University Quetta | 32 |
| 4 | Govt Law College University Quetta | 20 |
| 5 | Balochistan Agriculture College University Quetta | 20 |

Table 2 Demographic Information of Respondents

| Variables | Categories | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------------------------|--------------|-----------|------------|
| Age of the respondents | 18-20 years | 65 | 43.3 |
| | 21-23 years | 68 | 45.5 |
| | 24-26 years | 9 | 6.0 |
| | 27-29 years | 2 | 1.3 |
| | 30 and above | 6 | 4.0 |
| | Total | 150 | 100 |
| Marital Status | Married | 16 | 10.7 |
| | Engaged | 23 | 15.3 |
| | Unmarried | 107 | 71.3 |
| | Divorced | 4 | 2.7 |
| | Total | 150 | 100 |
| Residence of Respondents | Urban area | 111 | 74.0 |
| | Rural area | 39 | 26.0 |
| | Total | 150 | 100 |
| Ethnic group of respondent | Pashtun | 39 | 32.7 |
| | Baloch | 41 | 27.3 |
| | Hazara | 29 | 19.3 |
| | Bhiravi | 14 | 9.3 |
| | Punjabi | 17 | 11.3 |
| | Total | 150 | 100 |

| | | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|-----|------|
| University or respondents | SBK University | 40 | 26.7 |
| | University of Balochistan | 38 | 25.3 |
| | BUIITEMS Quetta | 32 | 21.3 |
| | Law College Quetta | 20 | 13.3 |
| | Agriculture college Quetta | 20 | 13.3 |
| | Total | 150 | 100 |
| Faculty of respondents | Arts | 51 | 34.0 |
| | Science | 44 | 29.3 |
| | Engineering | 15 | 10.0 |
| | Agriculture | 20 | 13.3 |
| | Law | 20 | 13.3 |
| | Total | 150 | 100 |

Table 2 shows the frequency distribution of the respondents with respect to their age, Marital Status, Residence, Ethnic Group, University and Faculty. According to this table maximum 45.3% respondents told that their age was 21-23 years and minimum 1.3% respondents said that their age was 27-29 years.

71.3% of the respondents were unmarried, 15.3% respondents were engaged, respectively 10.7% of the respondents were married, while 2.7% of the respondents were divorced in their relation.

74.0% respondents belong to urban area while 26.0% respondents belong to rural area.

32.7% respondents belong to Pashtun ethnic group, 27.3 respondents told belong to Baloch ethnic group, 19.3% respondents belong to Hazara ethnic group, while 11.3% respondents

answered that their ethnic group was Punjabi, respectively 9.3% respondents belongs to Bhiravi ethnic group.

26.7% respondents were students in SBK women university Quetta, 25.3% respondents were students in University of Balochistan, 21.3% respondents were students in BUIITEMS University Quetta, respectively 13.3% respondents were students in Govt Law College Quetta and 13.3% respondents were students in Agriculture College University Quetta.

34.0% respondents were from faculty of Arts, 29.3% respondents were from faculty of Science, 13% respondents were from faculty of Agriculture, respectively 13.3% respondents were from faculty of Law and 10.0% respondents were from faculty of Engineering.

Bi-Variate Analysis

Table 3

There Is a Correlation Between Participation in The Aurat March as an Activist and Promoting Gender Equality in Society.

| | Promotion of gender equality in society | |
|---|---|---------|
| Participation in the Aurat March as an activist | Pearson Correlation | 0.352** |
| | Significance Level | 0.000 |
| | Total Number (N) | 150 |

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 3 presents the results of a correlation analysis between participation in the Aurat March as an activist and promoting gender

equality in society. In this case, the correlation coefficient, 0.352, lies in the range of moderate positive correlation, suggesting the statistically

significant positive relationship between the variables. The significance level, 0.000, represents the probability value. This means that there is less than one in thousand chance that the observed correlation coefficient is due to chance alone. The total number (N) of observations used in the analysis is 150. This sample size provides sufficient power to detect a significant

relationship. This table demonstrates a moderate positive correlation between participation in the Aurat March as an activist and promoting gender equality in society. This finding suggests that individuals who actively participate in the Aurat March are more likely to advocate for gender equality in their society.

Table 4.

There Is a Correlation Between the Participation in Aurat March as an Activist and Improvement in The Awareness of Women in Terms of Health, Education, and Finance.

| Participation in the Aurat March as an activist | Improvement in the awareness of women in terms of health, education, and finance | |
|---|--|---------|
| | Pearson Correlation | 0.253** |
| Significance Level | 0.002 | |
| Total Number (N) | 150 | |

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 4 presents the results of a correlation analysis between participation in the Aurat March as an activist and improvement in the awareness of women in terms of their health, education and finance. In this case, the correlation coefficient, 0.253, lies in the range of moderate positive correlation, suggesting the statistically significant positive relationship between the variables. The significance level, 0.002, represents the probability value. The significance level of 0.002 indicates that the relationship is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). This means that there is less than a one in a thousand chance that the observed correlation

coefficient is due to chance alone. The total number (N) of observations used in the analysis is 150. This sample size provides sufficient power to detect a significant relationship. This table demonstrates a moderate positive correlation between participation in the Aurat March as an activist and improvement in the awareness of women in terms of health, education and finance. This finding suggests that individuals who actively participate in the Aurat March activists are more likely to advocate for the awareness of women in terms of health, education and finance.

Table 5:

There Is a Correlation Between the Women Politically Unaware and Aurat March Activists Are More Aggressive than Other Women.

| Women politically unaware | Aurat March activists are more aggressive than other women | |
|---------------------------|--|---------|
| | Pearson Correlation | 0.246** |
| Significance Level | 0.002 | |
| Total Number (N) | 150 | |

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 5 presents the results of a correlation analysis between women politically unaware and Aurat March activists are more aggressive than other women. In this case, the correlation

coefficient, 0.246**, lies in the range of moderate positive correlation, suggesting that there is a statistically significant positive relationship between the variables. The significance level,

0.002, represents the probability value. The significance level of 0.002 indicates that the relationship is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). This means that there is a less than a one in a thousand chance that the observed correlation coefficient is due to chance alone. The total number (N) of observations used in the analysis is 150. This sample size provides sufficient power to detect a significant

relationship. This table demonstrates a moderate positive correlation between Women politically unaware and Aurat March activists are more aggressive than other women. This finding suggests that individuals who are politically unaware are more likely to think that Aurat March activists are more aggressive than other women.

Table 6:

There Is a Correlation Between Improvement in Women’s Participation in Politics and Insurance of Women’s Inheritance Rights.

| | | Insurance of women’s inheritance rights |
|--|---------------------|---|
| Improvement in women’s participation in politics | Pearson Correlation | 0.341** |
| | Significance Level | 0.000 |
| | Total Number (N) | 150 |

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 6 presents the results of a correlation analysis between Improvement in women’s participation in politics and Insurance of women’s inheritance rights. In this case, the correlation coefficient, 0.341, lies in the range of moderate positive correlation, suggesting that there is a statistically significant positive relationship between the variables. The significance level, 0.000, represents the probability value. The significance level of 0.000 indicates that the relationship is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). This means that there is a less than a one in a thousand chance that the observed correlation coefficient is due to chance alone. The total number (N) of observations used in the analysis is 150. This sample size provides sufficient power to detect a significant relationship. This table demonstrates a moderate positive correlation between Improvement in women’s participation in politics and Insurance of women’s inheritance rights. This finding suggests that individuals who want improvement in women’s participation in politics are more likely to advocate insurance of women’s inheritance rights.

Conclusions and Suggestions:

Conclusion:

Since variety of reasons including social, legal, educational aspects as well as social media have brought decline in the negative thinking of women in Balochistan about Aurat March and Women’s rights. But again there is a gap present in the thoughts of female university student in Balochistan and the active members of Aurat March about Aurat March, Women’s rights and women related issues. Female university students who are politically unaware are more likely to think that Aurat March activists are more aggressive than other women. The individuals who need opportunities to get out for work are more likely to demand control over sexual harassment at work places. And the individuals who want improvement in women’s participation in politics are more likely to advocate for insurance of inheritance rights of women, right to education and rights of decision making. The individuals who actively participate in the Aurat March are more likely to advocate for gender equality in the society, for reduction of domestic violence in the society and for awareness of

women in terms of health, education and finance rather than the individuals who doesn't participate in activities of Aurat March.

Suggestions for People Regarding Aurat March and Women's Rights in Pakistan:

Learn about its history, its goals, and the diverse range of women and organizations involved. Be open to understanding the different perspectives and experiences of women in Pakistan. Support the right to peaceful assembly and expression.

Support legislation that protects the rights of women, including the constitutional reforms against domestic violence, sexual harassment, and discrimination. Donate to or volunteer with organizations working to advance women's rights in Pakistan. Challenge discriminatory behavior and language whenever you encounter it.

Support initiatives that empower women through education, skills development, and access to economic opportunities. Speak out against injustice and advocate for women's rights.

Be mindful of your own biases and actively challenge harmful stereotypes and prejudices against women. Acknowledge the important role that women's organizations play in promoting gender equality. Promote a culture of respect and equality in your own community.

If you have concerns or disagreements, approach the conversation with respect and a willingness to listen to different viewpoints. Instead of focusing on criticism, engage in constructive dialogue that seeks to find solutions to address the challenges faced by women in Pakistan. Emphasize the importance of understanding the experiences and perspectives of Pakistani women.

Suggestions to Government About Aurat March and Women's Rights in Pakistan:

The government should prioritize the implementation of legislation that protects women's rights. This includes the Acid Control and Acid Crime Prevention Act, Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act and Criminal Law (Amendment) Act. These laws aim to protect women from domestic violence, acid attacks, and sexual harassment. The government

should also ensure that these laws are effectively enforced.

The government can promote women's education and economic empowerment by investing in programs that provide access to quality education for girls, vocational training for women, and microfinance initiatives. This will not only help to reduce poverty but also empower women to make informed decisions about their lives and bodies.

The government can encourage gender equality in the workplace by implementing policies that promote equal pay for equal work, maternity leave, and paternity leave. This will help to create a more inclusive and equitable work environment. The government can also incentivize businesses to implement gender equality policies through tax breaks or other financial incentives.

The government can address cultural norms and practices that perpetuate gender inequality by launching public awareness campaigns that challenge harmful stereotypes and promote gender equality. This can include campaigns that promote positive masculinity, challenge patriarchal norms, and celebrate women's achievements. The government can also work with community leaders to promote gender equality at the local level.

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