



The Perception of Feminism and the Inclination for Empowerment among Educated Muslim Women from Pakistan

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Abstract: Women have been oppressed and exploited in the patriarchal world throughout history. Studies into feminism and its counterparts have mostly been conducted in Western individualistic cultures where women are comparatively better in status as compared to women belonging to collectivistic cultures. The current study intended to portray a well-documented feministic picture of the status of educated Pakistani women. The study used both qualitative and quantitative approaches and involved 1321 women from Pakistan. The findings revealed that Pakistani women perceive feminism in align with the essence of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women. They are satisfactorily aware of the dire need to change the culture in their favor and are desirous to be actively involved in the pursuit of development. The study forecasts a rapid and progressive cultural change for women empowerment in Pakistan, by the women themselves, in the coming decade.

Keywords: Feminism, Culture, Personal Growth Initiative, Women, Gender.

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INTRODUCTION

Feminism, apart from the ambiguities in its definitions (Davidson, 2001), is usually considered as a movement focusing on the appropriate political, cultural, economic, and social equality (Freedman, 2001) and advocating for women’s rights (Robinson, 2013). Women, all around the world and throughout the history, have been oppressed, objectified, exploited, and faced inequalities in every domain of life (Jóhannsdóttir, 2009). The patriarchal structures of societies have been blocking the participation of women in social, economic, and political spheres of life. Women, being far better than men on ethical grounds (Husain, 2021), are expected to follow norms mostly created by men to suppress women.

Feminism is divided into three phases known as three waves (Gupta, 2002). As women’s suffrage was unwanted by men (Larsen, 2010), the first wave, occurring in the 19th and early 20th century, mainly focused on women’s right to vote (Sanders, 2007). This wave of feminism was diminished due to the 19th amendment to the US Constitution that gave women the right to vote and role in civic engagement (Larsen, 2010). Feminism became inactive and individualistic between

the first two phases (Rutherford *et al.*, 2011). After the World War II, the second wave of feminism was started as many women were fired from work and were forced to stay home (Rutherford *et al.*, 2011). In the second wave, which is also called women’s liberation movement, was on its peak during 1960s and 70s and lasted till 1990. During this wave, many co-educational colleges and universities originated and pressure from feminists led many traditional men’s colleges to open their doors for females. Although women were given equality in law, but they were treated as inferior to men i.e. as second-class citizens (Larsen, 2010). The second wave focused on independence, fighting for social, cultural, and political inequalities (Freedman, 2001; Lakhvi & Suhaib, 2010), sexual liberation, health, welfare, education, work, and reproductive rights (Lakhvi & Suhaib, 2010). The third wave of feminism was started in 1990s by young women who grew up during the second wave (Mann & Huffman, 2005). They expanded the basic definitions of gender and sexuality (Baumgardner & Richards, 2010; Harris, 2001). This movement was a response to the apparent failures of the second wave and challenged the political models that were not good for females (Ridout, 2007). The major objectives of the feminists of the third phase were defining gender identity and gender roles, fighting

against violence, developing empowered sexuality and resisting objectifying cultural messages about women's body and beauty (Rutherford *et al.*, 2011). This wave of feminism was more individualistic and complex than the previous waves. Feminists rejected the traditional view of particular roles and status for women only based on biological differences. During the third wave, a slogan demanding equality for woman was raised (Freeman, 1979). Women needed neither protection nor privileges but wanted freedom of decision making. Revisions in existing laws were done to improve the status of women in society (Rutherford *et al.*, 2011). The struggle of women through the entire movement of feminism has provided women with several benefits. Equality in its true essence, however, has not yet been achieved.

The effect of feminism varies across societies due to the social and cultural factors. The meaning of feminism has often been doubtful and unclear. It kept on changing over time and across places (Moghadam, 2002). Women belonging to different cultural backgrounds had to redefine Western feminism and its terms in relation to their cultures (Afshar & Maynard, 2000). The prime objective of feminism, however, has been shared by all societies as a universal demand i.e. equality between sexes (Robinson, 2013). Findings of the last two decades from Muslim societies have argued that women in Muslim cultures did not consider feminism as a product of West; they believed that it was Islam at the first place which advocated for the rights of women some 14 centuries ago (Bhattacharya, 2014; Cooke, 2004; Roded, 2001). Quran (the holy book of Muslims) addresses both men and women in a similar manner and superiority in Islam is only based on piety and not on gender (Adeel, 2010). As the Muslim women also felt a cultural inequality which was not supposed to be there in Muslim societies, they also welcomed and joined the mainstream of feminism (Afshar & Maynard, 2000). The feminists in Pakistan also considered feminism as a movement which was not in contradiction to Islam (Jamal, 2005). Women in Pakistan have also been provided with equal rights when it comes to the law and religion. Pakistan is a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (Mumtaz, 2005). In practice, however, men prevent women to enjoy those rights (Ibrahim, 2005). The feminist movement in Pakistan has been negatively criticized in the name of religion (Mumtaz, 2005). Women in Pakistan face discrimination enforced on them through culture, customs, religious interpretations and ingrained feudal system (Mumtaz & Shaheed, 1987). Pakistan is a patriarchal society due to political, social and cultural reasons despite the balanced teachings of Islam (Lakhvi & Suhaib, 2010). Women in Pakistan are still trying to attain the same status and equality in politics, culture and economics as the women living in West (Roy, 2016).

Studies on feminism in Pakistan usually involved discourse analyses, historical reviews, and

debates for secular and Muslim feminists (Zia, 2009). The existing literature did not involve any social surveys which could reflect a broader picture of how Pakistani women understand feminism and how much they intend to change. The current study, therefore, was conducted mainly to (a) analyze the actual understanding of educated Pakistani women about feminism and its counterparts, and (b) to analyze the intentions of educated Pakistani women towards change and development by measuring their personal growth initiatives. The first objective of the study was analyzed qualitatively while the second objective was measured quantitatively.

METHOD

The study followed a mixed-model research design where both qualitative and quantitative data were gathered and analyzed. The qualitative part dealt with the "perception" of educated Pakistani women on feminism i.e. how well they understood feminism. The quantitative part measured the "inclination" of educated Pakistani women towards empowerment.

Participants

The qualitative part of the study involved 30 well-educated, socially active, and purposively selected women from Pakistan. They included humanitarian aid workers ($n=5$), students ($n=6$), journalists ($n=1$), psychological counsellor ($n=1$), teachers ($n=10$), businesswoman ($n=1$), medical doctor ($n=1$), writers ($n=2$), banker ($n=1$) and researchers ($n=2$) from various NGOs and Universities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad, Pakistan.

The quantitative part of the study involved 1291 conveniently selected women from Pakistan. This sample was categorized into different groups based on age, marital status, education, occupation, and monthly income (Table 3).

Instruments

A specific semi-structured Interview Schedule was designed to conduct the interviews for the qualitative part of the study. The interview schedule was developed based on the information that was collected through extensive literature review and archival data on feminism. The interview schedule was in English and comprised of 17 open-ended questions that covered different aspects of feminism such as women empowerment, dependency on men, civil life, objectification, gender, sexuality, and freedom. This interview schedule was developed to gain maximum information from the participants while consuming 30 to 40 minutes of each participant.

Personal Growth Initiative Scale (Robitschek, 1998) was administered as the main instrument of the quantitative part of the study. Robitschek operationally defined Personal Growth Initiative as "active, intentional

engagement in ‘changing and developing’ as a person, which is made up of both cognitive and behavioral components and an overall orientation toward change, and it may embody that potent client factor that leads to change”. The behavioral components of Personal Growth Initiative comprise of “seeking out opportunities to grow and then capitalizing on those opportunities that arise” (Robitschek, 2002). Robitschek reports that “the salient aspect of personal growth initiative is the ‘intentionality’ of engaging in the change process, rather than mere awareness that the change process is occurring”. (Robitschek & Kashubeck, 1999) had also found a strong negative relationship between personal growth initiative and psychological distress and a strong positive relationship between personal growth initiative and psychological wellbeing.

Personal Growth Initiative Scale consists of 9 items. It is scored on 6-point Likert Scale whereby scores of an individual may range from 9 to 54. Higher scores indicate a greater level of intentional self-change. The internal consistency of the scale ranged from 0.78 to 0.90 and test-retest reliability was estimated 0.84 for one week, 0.73 for four weeks and 0.74 for eight weeks (Robitschek, 1998). The developer of the scale also claimed support for convergent and discriminant validity of the scale (Robitschek, 1998).

A brief Demographic Information Questionnaire was also used to gather basic information of the respondents of the quantitative part e.g. their age, marital status, education, occupation, and monthly income.

Procedure

The researchers approached the women in different educational institutes and governmental & non-governmental organizations. Each participant was informed about the purpose of this study and her consent to participate was obtained. A timeframe of 3 months was allocated to collect as much data as possible which resulted in getting information from 1291 women for the quantitative part and interviews of 30 women for the qualitative part of the study. The data collected was analyzed by thematic analyses and statistical correlations & variations.

FINDINGS

The Qualitative Part

The study explored 8 major themes to understand feminism. These themes included the understanding of feminism and its validity (compatibility of local understanding of feminism with internationally agreed perspective as described into the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women), women empowerment, dependence on men, civil life, female objectification, gender, sexuality and freedom. These major themes used in the interviews were extracted from the information that was collected

through extensive literature review and archival data on feminism. Discussion on these 8 themes generated 384 minor themes from the responses of the interviewees. All the minor themes were first tabulated separately to measure the frequencies of the responses against each minor theme. These minor themes were then combined into sub-themes which could adapt the essence of the 384 minor sub-themes so that the analyses could be presented in a summarized way. Frequencies were converted into percentages for a better presentation (Table 1).

According to the findings of the present study, 77% women perceived feminism in a correct way that was in alliance with the essence of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women and regarded gender equality as the prime objective of feminism. Defining feminism further, 50% of them regarded it as advocacy for women rights, 30% considered it a civic right, and 23% viewed feminism as part of humanity. The second theme of the qualitative part of the current study was related to women empowerment. 47% interviewees understood it as freedom in decision making, 43% regarded it as independence, and 33% considered it women’s financial self-sufficiency. The interviewees also gave suggestions to enhance women empowerment in Pakistan. 47% suggested awareness programs, 47% advised to raise literacy rate of the country, and 30% believed that women should be given access to the resources they need for development. Civic life was the third theme in the qualitative part against which 77% women showed their agreement to women’s participation in civic life. When asked for the reasons of women’s participation in civic life, 33% considered it a fundamental human right, 27% regarded it essential for national development, 23% valued it because they considered women as stakeholders in social growth, and 26% viewed it as means to gender equality. Only 7% participants believed that they were enjoying their civic rights. To increase women’s participation in civic life, 23% participants suggested to raise awareness on the issue, 23% suggested to enhance the literacy rate of the country, 20% believed that women should be provided with more opportunities in civic life, 13% advised the government to develop pro-women policies, and 7% emphasized on empowering young girls. The 4th sub-theme of the qualitative part was dependency on men. 50% women agreed that women are treated as completely dependent on men in certain segments of Pakistani society. While providing examples for this, 40% said that women do not have any freedom in decision making, 37% believed that women are considered as a property, 37% believed that women are considered as mere domestic workers, and 27% considered early marriages as an example of dependency on men. 57% women regarded marriage as a form of dependency on men. While giving reasons for this, 43% believed that women after marriage are burdened with both domestic and professional work, 43% were of the view that husbands expect unrealistically from wives, 30% considered married women as mere housemaids,

23% regarded married women as unquestionable servants, and 17% regarded married women as completely dependent on men because of the undue authority husbands possess over them. Sexuality, being the 5th theme, got interesting responses from the interviewees. 63% women considered it important to be sexually expressive. On the reasons, 37% women believed that sexual expressivity is related to freedom of choice, 27% considered sexual expressivity as an intrinsic need, 20% regarded it as a form of freedom, 20% considered it important for gender equality, and 27% viewed it as a fundamental human right. The condition of Pakistani women in the context of sexuality was also asked. 37% women believed that Pakistani women are sexually oppressed, 20% viewed sexuality as a taboo in the country, 20% said that women who are sexually expressive are viewed as prostitutes, 17% thought that sexuality cannot be expressed due to cultural constraints, and 13% women highlighted the double standards of society between the sexualities of men and women. 53% women were having positive attitudes towards female homosexuality, however, only 30% desired female homosexuality to be legalized in Pakistan. They presented certain reasons for their favorable attitudes towards female homosexuality. 33% regarded female homosexuality as freedom of choice, 33% considered it as a natural behavior, 17% viewed it as a legal right, and 10% argued that even heterosexuality is a socially constructed phenomenon so the society may opt homosexuality as well. On female objectification, which was the 6th theme, the women shared their understanding. By female objectification, 80% women meant treating women as objects, 37% defined objectification as treating women like a property, 33% considered it dehumanizing, and 17% women regarded female objectification as using women’s bodies to sell objects. 97% interviewees agreed that women are treated as objects. While giving examples to this, 77% referred to the dramas played through electronic media, 23% considered domestic abuse as an example of female objectification, 13% highlighted the roles and responsibilities of wives and daughters as examples for female objectification, 13% referred to sexual abuse for this, and 13% regarded trafficking of women as an

example of female objectification. 80% women agreed that being beautiful is important for Pakistani women. 33% women regarded beauty as an essential requirement for social acceptance, 30% regarded it essential for marriage, and 27% referred its importance to the socially constructed standards of beauty which people follow. 17% did not consider beauty as an essential requirement for women as they believed that the standards of beauty change from time to time. In response to the harms of being unattractive, 53% suggested social rejection, 33% considered low self-esteem as an outcome of being unattractive, 30% thought that being unattractive may cause depression, 30% considered it difficult for unattractive women to be married, and 27% women associated psychological problems with being unattractive. The 7th theme of the qualitative part was gender. The participants explored the desired responsibilities of a wife in Pakistani culture. 67% believed that wives should have equal status with husbands, 37% thought that wives should be supportive to their husbands, 30% suggested that wives should be good friends with their husbands, 30% thought that wives need to be caring, and 33% thought that wives should be empowered. In response to the desired responsibilities of daughters in Pakistan, 47% said that daughters should be respectful, 43% suggested that daughters should be empowered, 23% expected care from daughters, 17% thought that daughters need to be loving, and 17% desired confidence in daughters. Freedom was the last theme of the qualitative part of the study. While defining freedom, 50% women considered freedom as freedom of choice, 27% regarded it as mental freedom, 40% viewed it as freedom in all aspects of life, 20% considered it cultural freedom, and 23% regarded freedom as freedom in decision making. Can wives submit themselves to their husbands by their own sweet will? 57% women replied with yes to this question. They believed if wives desire to be submissive to their husbands, they should do so willfully. While giving arguments to this, 57% women regarded it as a freedom of choice, 27% considered it beneficial to avoid negative situations in household, 17% viewed it as a freedom in decision making, and 17% women opposed the idea of being submissive to husbands even willfully.

Table 1: Summary of the Qualitative Analysis

GENERAL UNDERSTANDING OF FEMINISM
Gender equality= 77% Advocacy for women rights= 50% A civic right= 30% Part of humanity= 23%
WOMEN EMPOWERMENT
<i>Understanding</i>
Freedom in decision making= 47% Independence= 43% Economic empowerment= 33%
<i>Suggestions</i>
Awareness programs= 47% Education= 47% Access to resources= 30%
CIVIC LIFE
<i>Agreement to the importance of women participation in civic life = 77%</i>

<i>Reasons for the importance of women participation in civic life</i>
A fundamental right= 33% National development= 27% Women are stakeholders= 23% Gender equality= 26%
<i>Agreement on enjoyment of civic rights: 7%</i>
<i>Suggestions for increasing women participation in civic life</i>
Raising awareness= 23% Education= 23% Giving more opportunities= 20% Pro-women policies= 13% Empowerment of young girls= 7%
<i>Dependency on Men</i>
<i>Agreement to the treatment of women as slaves in Pakistan = 50%</i>
<i>Examples for treatment of women as dependents</i>
Certain section of society= 80% No freedom in decision making= 40% Treating women as property= 37% Women as domestic labors = 37% Early marriages= 27%
<i>Perception of marriage as a form of dependency = 57%</i>
<i>Reasons of perception of marriage as a form of dependency</i>
Double burden on wives= 43% Unrealistic expectation= 43% Women as domestic labors= 30% Unquestionable servants= 23% Husband as authority= 17%
SEXUALITY
<i>Importance of being sexually expressive = 63%</i>
<i>Reasons for the importance of being sexually expressive</i>
Freedom of choice= 37% Intrinsic needs= 27% Freedom= 20% Gender equality= 20% Fundamental right= 27%
<i>Women sexuality in Pakistan</i>
Sexual oppression= 37% Sexuality as a taboo= 20% Sexually expressive are regarded as prostitutes= 20% cultural constraints= 17% Double standards of society= 13%
<i>Agreement on female homosexuality = 53%</i>
<i>Reasons for agreement on female homosexuality</i>
Freedom of choice= 33% Natural behaviour= 33% Legal right= 17% heterosexuality is socially constructed= 10%
<i>Agreement on legalization of female homosexuality = 30%</i>
FEMALE OBJECTIFICATION
<i>Understanding of objectification</i>
Treating women as objects= 80% Treating women as property= 37% Objects to fulfil sexual needs of men= 33% dehumanization= 17% Using women's body to sell objects= 17%
<i>Agreement on treatment of women as objects = 97%</i>
<i>Examples for the objectification of women</i>
Media= 77% Domestic abuse= 23% Wives and daughters as servants= 13% Sexual abuse= 13% trafficking of women= 13%
<i>Importance of beauty for women= 80%</i>
<i>Reasons for importance of beauty</i>
Social acceptance= 33% Marriage= 30% Conformity to beauty standards= 27% Propaganda of media= 17% Standards are changing= 13%
<i>Psychosocial problems faced by unattractive women</i>
Social rejection= 53% Low self-esteem= 33% Depression= 30% Difficulty getting married= 30% Psychological problem= 27%
GENDER
<i>Desired responsibilities of a wife</i>
Insuring an equal relationship with husband= 67% Supportive= 37% to be a good friend= 30% loving and caring= 30% Empowered= 33%
<i>Desired responsibilities of a daughter</i>
Respectful= 47% Empowered= 43% Caring= 23% Loving= 17% Confident= 17%

FREEDOM
<i>Definition of freedom of women</i>
Freedom of choice= 50% Mental freedom= 27% Freedom in all aspects of life= 40% Cultural freedom= 20% Freedom in decision making= 23%
<i>Agreement on wilful submission and dependence of women on men= 57%</i>
<i>Reasons for agreement on wilful submission and dependence of women on men</i>
Freedom of choice= 57% To avoid negative consequences= 27% Freedom in decision making= 17% Unhealthy decision= 17% Individual difference= 10%

The Quantitative Part

Personal Growth Initiative Scale was found reliable (Table 2; $\alpha=.80$). As discussed earlier, personal growth initiative is referred to the cognitive and behavioural readiness of a person towards change and development. The current study analysed personal growth initiative in 1291 educated Pakistani women to see how well they were ready to accept cultural change for empowerment. The results revealed that 70.78% of the sample was ready to be changed and was involved in taking initiatives for personal growth (Table 3). The levels of personal growth initiative were also observed based on age, marital status, education, occupation, and monthly income (Tables 3 & 4). Age did not reveal any significant differences in this regard (table 3; $p=.088$). The divorced women had significantly higher levels of personal growth initiative (table 3; $M=39.58$; $p=.036$; $\%=73.30$) as compared with married ($M=39.01$; $\%=72.24$), single, ($M=37.99$; $\%=70.35$) engaged ($M=37.36$; $\%=69.19$) and widows ($M=34.86$; $\%=64.56$).

Women with university level education had significantly higher levels of personal growth initiative (table 3; $M=38.94$; $p=.005$; $\%=72.11$) as compared with women with college ($M=37.80$; $\%=70$) and school level education ($M=36.82$; $\%=68.19$). Occupation of the responding women did not reveal any significant differences in this regard (Table 3; $p=.199$). Women whose fathers were salaried individuals, however, had significantly higher levels of personal growth initiative (table 3; $M=38.83$; $p=.006$; $\%=71.91$) as compared with women whose fathers were businessmen ($M=37.77$; $\%=69.94$). Occupation of the responding women's husbands did not reveal any significant differences in this regard (table 3; $p=.260$). Personal growth initiative had significant positive correlation with the monthly income of the responding women (Table 4; $r=.060$; $p<.05$) and the monthly income of the responding women's husbands ($r=.098$; $p<.01$). It was, however, not significantly correlated with the monthly income of the responding women's fathers (Table 4).

Table 2: Descriptive statistics and reliability of Personal Growth Initiative Scale (N=1291)

Variable	Range								
	Items	α	M	SD	%	Potential	Actual	Skewness	Kurtosis
Personal Growth Initiative	9	.80	38.22	6.82	32.53	9-54	13-54	-.603	.195

Table 3: Description of the sample with a categorical overview of the mean, standard deviation, percentage, ranking and variance of the respondents by Personal Growth Initiative

Factor	Category	N	M	SD	%	Rank	F or t	P
Age	Overall	1291	38.22	6.82	70.78			
	Adults	221	38.82	6.731	71.89	1	2.429	.088
	Young Adults	882	38.25	6.712	70.83	2		
	Adolescents	188	37.34	7.367	69.15	3		
Marital Status	Divorced	12	39.58	9.337	73.30	1		
	Married	374	39.01	6.397	72.24	2		
	Single	762	37.99	6.733	70.35	3		
	Engaged	136	37.36	7.855	69.19	4		
	Widow	7	34.86	9.155	64.56	5		
Education	University Level	509	38.94	6.261	72.11	1	5.320	.005
	College Level	732	37.80	7.175	70.00	2		
	School Level	50	36.82	6.381	68.19	3		
Occupation Self	Working	330	38.80	7.192	71.85	1	1.618	.199
	Student	795	38.03	6.647	70.43	2		
	Housewife	166	37.95	6.867	70.28	3		
Occupation Father	Salaried	546	38.83	6.630	71.91	1	2.75	.006
	Businessman	745	37.77	6.929	69.94	2		
Occupation Husband	Businessman	44	39.05	5.827	72.31	1	1.320	.260
	Retired	69	38.46	6.211	71.22	2		

Factor	Category	N	M	SD	%	Rank	F or t	P
	Govt. Employee	842	38.26	6.964	70.85	3		
	Army Officer	310	38.16	6.427	70.67	4		
	Jobless	26	35.38	9.274	65.52	5		

Table 4: The correlation of Personal Growth Initiative with Income

	Income Self	Income Father	Income Husband
Personal Growth Initiative	.060*	-.005	.098**
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).			
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

DISCUSSION

Personal Growth Initiative is referred to the active and intentional engagement in the process of personal development (Robitschek, 1998). It involves both cognitive and behavioral engagement. People with higher personal growth initiative are aware of their intentions about self-development and are actively involved in the process of empowering themselves. In addition to self-efficacy which is concerned with a person’s beliefs only (Bandura, 1977), personal growth initiative focuses on the behavioral engagement as well which is based on those beliefs. Personal growth initiative is a construct of Positive Psychology and refers to a positive and constructive behavioral engagement for a person’s self-development. It encourages a person to think and, as well as act on ideas which can empower the person. It has been well noticed in the feministic movements that women themselves must advocate for themselves. They need to raise their voice against any inequality based on gender alone. Although women in the developed countries even are not fully parallel with men in the civic life, they however have attained their rights better than women belonging to the developing or under-developed countries. This was made possible by several contributing factors. The major credit for this, however, goes to the personal growth initiatives those women took in the pursuit of development.

Feminism mainly advocates for gender equality and women empowerment. The understanding and execution of the principles of feminism heavily depend on the prevalent cultural norms of a society. Women, under the influence of culture, are expected to be sensitive and responsive to the wishes, desires and needs of others, even when they themselves are tired, worried, tensed, and ill (Forssén *et al.*, 2005). In Pakistan, men are dominated in all spheres of life (Madhani, 2007), especially in tribal and rural areas of the country (Bari, 2000). Low literacy rate among females is considered the most crucial factor in exploiting women (Bhattacharya, 2014). In Pakistan, boys have been given better education than girls and have skills that help them compete for resources and perform better in public arena (Bari, 2000). The participation of Pakistani women in political structures at local, provincial, and national level is very low and their presence in political parties is insignificant for the same cultural reasons. The state of mental health of women in Pakistan is worse than men

(Husain, 2018). They lack appropriate knowledge on the specific psychosocial and cultural stressors (Husain & Faize, 2020; Husain *et al.*, 2016) and face several cultural barriers in seeking health related support (Husain, 2019). They are expected by men to stay within their conventional roles e.g. marrying by the choice of parents (Husain & Gulzar, 2015), reproducing children (Husain & Imran, 2021), having submissive emotional bonds with their husbands (Husain, 2020), gratifying the sexual needs of their husbands (Husain & Qureshi, 2016), and beautifying themselves to please men (Husain *et al.*, 2021).

The current study, in relation to the status of feminism and women empowerment, was the first ever initiative of its kind. It focused on the role of Positive Psychology in the Psychology of Women. In contrast to a very few and quite backdated studies on the status of women in Pakistan, the current study projected the latest picture that is quite hopeful. By qualitative interviews, the study established that the level of understanding regarding feminism among educated Pakistani women is quite satisfactory. According to the findings of the current study, the educated Pakistani women are aware of the major themes involved in feminism e.g. gender, female objectification, women empowerment, etc. The study has also established that women in Pakistan are 71% cognitively engaged and behaviorally active in the pursuit of development. The study, based on its findings, forecasts a rapid and progressive change for women empowerment in Pakistan, by the women themselves, in the coming decade.

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