

## Gender Equity and Governance in Pakistan: An Organizational Justice Perspective

Professor Dr. Nasira Jabeen

Institute of Administrative Sciences, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan

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### ABSTRACT

The paper presents the critical issue of gender equity and governance in Pakistan using Leventhal's, (1976) concept of equity and organizational justice. Since both distributive and procedural justice are interrelated concepts they should be considered important in making analysis of the issue. The paper reviews trends and significance of gender in governance process in general and with reference to Local Governance and Federal Civil Service of Pakistan in particular. It highlights that despite a lot of progress being made in terms of increasing representation of women in quantitative or distributive terms, their participation remains low and limited in qualitative and procedural terms. An application of the Gender, Organization and System (GOS) model specifically developed for analysis of gender in governance of Pakistan suggests that gender is a complex concept which needs to be studied at multidimensional and contextual level. The study reveals that in Pakistani society several systemic, organizational and personal factors contribute to the less representation and low participation of females in the process of governance. It underscores the need for adopting strategies that enhance participation of both males and females on equal lines and ensure conducive organizational environment. More specific interventions at various levels may include: repeal of discriminatory laws and procedures through legislation, equitable access to education, health and employment opportunities, gender sensitive organizational policies and practices, participation in decision making, mentoring, networking and partnering for research and creation of indigenous knowledge along with political will and sincere support for the cause.

**KEY WORDS:** Gender, Governance, Equity, Contextual, Multidimensional, Representation, Participation.

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### 1 INTRODUCTION

Since 1980 tremendous governance and administrative reform have been initiated around the world to bring more efficiency in economic, political and social roles of the states and societies. Citizen participation, democratization, decentralization, transparency, and accountability are the key features of governance reform. The governments as per new arrangements are supposed to take the responsibility of steering, supporting and facilitating the system for efficient governance along with the private sector and community based organizations that are now considered as partners in the process of governance. Since all development initiatives are people centric, their representation, involvement and engagement are considered to be an integral part of development. There is great realization that participation of people irrespective of any exclusion is vital for increasing their trust in governance institutions.

Democratic ways including opinion and expression of people on various public and social issues, their involvement in policy making and their inclusion in decision making and decision implementation platforms are frequently accepted measures to enhance involvement of people for their development (Cornwall and Gaventa, 2006; Rondinelli, 2006; Haque, 2003). In this direction, issues relating to equitable representation and participation of gender, minority, ethnicity and religion have also received attention at global level. The concept of governance besides its basic and universally accepted principles like equity, transparency, accountability, control of corruption and participation incorporates diversity representation as its key strategy towards sustainable development. International Development Organizations are regularly ranking countries on the basis of the above governance indicators. For instance, India cannot be one of the world's largest democracies if gender, minority and religious groups are not represented at various levels through a process of deliberation, dialogue and engagement. Likewise, Pakistan cannot improve its ranking of worldwide governance if all citizens irrespective of gender do not have an equitable access to human development and empowerment opportunities.

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\* **Corresponding Author:** Dr. Nasira Jabeen, Institute of Administrative Sciences, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan. [director.ias@pu.edu.pk](mailto:director.ias@pu.edu.pk)

The paper while using UNDP 1995 concept of Gender Development (GD) and Gender Empowerment (GEM) examines status of Pakistani women on basic indicators relating to human development and governance i.e. education, health, employment, political participation, decision making positions and relates it to the concept of organizational justice as proposed by Leventhal, 1976. Drawing on the key concept of fairness in terms distribution of resources, rewards and inputs among social groups, nations and generations and its perception among the recipients discussed in Equity Theory (Adams, 1963), Leventhal (1976) expanded the research direction towards procedural fairness in such distribution. While challenging the unidimensional concept of fairness in equity theory he developed his concept of organizational justice based on multidimensional conception of fairness including distributive as well as procedural fairness/justice. Since the process used to determine the distribution of rewards plays a vital role in perceived fairness of rewards among the recipients, therefore, it needs to be an integral part of the conception of equity or fairness in social relationships.

Hence, the concept of gender is also contextual and multidimensional the paper while applying the concept investigates issues of equity both distributive and procedural as part of the organizational justice to determine the gender and governance situation in Pakistan and outlines its implications for development. An application of the multidimensional and contextual model 'Gender, Organization, System (GOS) model', developed by the researcher and tested in the context of Pakistan offers useful insights for analysis of the issue and provides policy recommendations in this direction. To present the whole discussion the paper is organized as follows:

- 1) Significance and trends of gender participation in governance; 2). Gender and governance in Pakistan; 3). Gender, Organization, System (GOS) model and its application to the federal and local governance of Pakistan; 4). Conclusions and recommendations.

**Significance and Trends of Gender Participation in Governance:** The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) (1995, 1997) define the term 'gender' in view of the economic opportunities and social and cultural attributes assigned to women and men in a given society (UNDP, 2010; 1997, 1995). In view of the above, gender equity denotes to the fair distribution of resources with key focus on equal outcomes for both women and men while appreciating their specific needs, interests and preferences. Therefore, gender equity requires more than just provision of equal access to opportunities of development for women and men in a society. It is rather aimed at bringing the durable change in lives of individuals through providing them differential treatment for reaching equal outcomes (World Bank, 2011; Sen, 1999; Kabeer, 1996). An equity approach calls for revisiting all development initiatives for their meaningful impact on governance.

The term Governance traditionally understood as synonymous to government has now acquired the new broader meaning. Today, governance refers to the innovative methods, processes and participative ways of governing a country (Jolly, 2002; Rhodes, 1996). Governance under the new mode is participatory, transparent, accountable and equitable (World Bank, 2006, 1992; UNDP, 2007; 1997; Hyden and Court, 2002). Government according to this concept is viewed as a partner in governance in collaboration with the private and third sector organizations. For instance, the World Bank, definition of governance refers it to the 'manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development', (World Bank, 1992, p.10). Similarly, UNDP (1997) defines the term as the 'exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels. It encompasses the mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests .....' (UNDP, 1997, Policy Paper, 3, quoted in UN. Economic and Social Council, 2006, p.3). The UNDP view of governance is comprehensive which includes all governing institutions i.e. legal, political, economic, social etc. in the process and underscores the need for bringing efficiency and effectiveness in their management practices in order to improve the quality of human development in a society.

Since quality of human capital is one of the major determinants of institutional/societal effectiveness, it can be argued that gender-sensitive governance is needed not only to meet organizational justice requirement but also to increase efficiency and effectiveness in the above governing institutions. Therefore, gender equity should not be viewed as an important measure of social development only it should be rather recognized as an important economic need for building potential of human capital towards improved governance in a country.

With this recognition, myriad of administrative, structural, financial and human resource reform have been initiated across the world in the name of governance or new public management reform. The above reform measures aim at improving performance, efficiency, service delivery, effectiveness, responsiveness

and management of governing institutions through decentralization and devolution of powers, more participatory ways of citizen engagement, transparency in procedures, commercialization or contracting out, and collaboration among governance institutions i.e. public, corporate and civil society organizations (Kaufman and Kraay, 2007; Haque and Zafarullah, 2006, Christensen, 2001). All of the above reform measures invite more active involvement of people irrespective of gender in the process of governance.

In view of the above, issues pertaining to gender inequity and inequality in terms of their representation and participation in governance have also emerged as a key concern area that need to be addressed carefully at various levels. According to the World Statistics report 2011 women comprise nearly 50% of the world's population as compared to the male population with 3,439,427,037 persons and 3,487,869,561 persons respectively ([www.worldstat.info/world](http://www.worldstat.info/world) 2011). It is widely recognized that countries cannot reach their development potential if all individuals including women and men are not included in the process. Kofi Annan, UN Secretary as quitted in DFID, 2007 noted that 'it is impossible to realize our goals while discriminating against half of the human race' (Kofi Annan quoted in DFID, 2007, p. 1). Therefore, gender equity and their equal access to development opportunities including health, education, employment and participation in decision making are considered as extremely important measures towards sustainable development and effective governance all around the world (Jabeen and Jadoon, 2009).

Several developments over time such as more awareness, access to information and education, active role of press and social media, emergence of women movements, efforts of World Development Community, international linkages and alliances, and greater collaboration among public, private and civil society organizations have significant role in bringing gender issues on global discussion agenda. Various governments at their own level have also reiterated commitment to the cause through signing in the international conventions and agreements to promote gender equity and equality for improving quality of human development. In this direction, The UNs Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948; Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), 1979; Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, 1995; the Vienna Declaration, 1993; the Millennium Development Goals (3<sup>rd</sup> MDG), 2000; UN, Development Fund for Women, 1985; and the ILO, Resolution Concerning the Promotion of Gender Equality, Pay Equity and Maternity Protection, 2004 Mainstreaming Policy and Strategy, 2006 are some historic international agreements to protect economic, legal, social and political rights of women and ensure their equal access and participation in the in development and governance.

The International Development Organizations including the World Bank, The United Nations, International Labour Organization (ILO), Canadian International Development Agency, Department for International Development etc. assess countries against the governance indicators. International aid to developing countries is also linked with implementation of the governance indicators of which equity and equality of opportunities, elimination of gender discrimination and participation irrespective of gender are important dimensions.

**Gender and Governance in Pakistan** Joining hands with the global community, Pakistan has also reiterated its commitment to international agreements, conventions and declarations to promote gender equality and equality in all areas concerning gender development and gender empowerment. The establishment of the Ministry of Women Development; the National Commission on Status of women; Gender Reform Action Plans (GRAPs), Five Year Development Plans, the National Policy for Development and Empowerment of Women, the First Women Bank are some of the significant initiatives in this direction. The Government of Pakistan submitted a comprehensive report in the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing, 1995 outlining its objectives to combat gender discrimination in employment, training and promotion through affirmative action and special women quota in public sector employment.

Pakistan is a signatory to the convention on the Political Rights to women (1952). Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan accords women the right to vote, contest election and hold public office at par with men (Khosa, 1992). To encourage the recruitment of qualified women in Public employment and to enhance their participation at various decision forums the Government of Pakistan has set 10% quota for women in the Civil Services of Pakistan at Federal and Provincial level through special legislation. Similarly, at local governance level 33% seats have been reserved for women at all tiers of local governance including District, Tehsil and Union Council to promote their representation. Special legislative measures have been introduced to protect women from discrimination, domestic violence and workplace harassment. Besides the government, public institutions, corporate sector and community organizations are also playing an active role to address issues of gender inequity and inequality at various levels.

Although a significant progress has been made on issues relating to gender equity and equality due to the above international, national and institutional commitments women still lag behind men in terms of their representation at managerial positions and decision making bodies in both federal and local governance. A review of the literature and previous research on the subject point to glaring inequalities in terms of access and opportunities on the basis of gender where women are not found having an equitable share in decision making and they are marginalized in all aspects of life through subtle discriminatory practices (The World Bank, 2012; Berniell and Sanchez, 2011; UNDP, 2010).

Women represent only 18% of the world’s parliament positions while only 13 women are reported as heads of the governments out of 189 countries as per International Women Democracy Centre (IWDC) report, 2008 (www.iwdc.org , 2008). Women occupy only 9% of the senior administrative positions and 21% of the management jobs as per Online Women Statistics report. The report also found 14% women ministers concentrated in social ministries, viewed as extension of their roles, 9.4% in legal and 4.1% in economic areas. While 3.9% were reported in executive, only 3.9% were found in political areas (www.womenstatisticsonline.com , 2008).

Statistics on gender gaps and inequalities point to shocking disparities between women and men on all indicators of gender development and gender empowerment among the South Asian countries. Data presented in Global Gender Gap Reports 2013, 2011, 2010, 2009 and Human Development Reports, 2013, 2010, 2009 reflected that South Asia stands very low on both gender development and gender empowerment measures including, health, education, employment and representation in decision making positions. Gender disparities have grown over time in Pakistan and its position has gone further down on gender equity as per global gender gap reports as from 126<sup>th</sup> position in 2007 to 132<sup>nd</sup> in 2009 and from 133<sup>rd</sup> position in 2011 to 135<sup>th</sup> in 2013 out of a list of 136 countries (The World Economic Forum, 2007, 2009, 2011, 2013). Pakistan’s performance on gender gap index was ranked as one of the poorest among the South Asian countries including, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives and India. While Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Bhutan were ranked as the best countries among the region with a ranking of 55, 75, 93 respectively, both India and Pakistan were reported to be at the bottom of the list with a ranking of 101 and 135 respectively (The World Economic Forum, 2013).

Pakistani women were reported as lagging behind men on all indicators of human development having little access to basic health and education, limited economic opportunities and meagre participation in decision making process and power positions. They were found to be working for longer time with huge pay differentials as compared to men and high fertility rate coupled with poor health facilities and little say in decision making. Data presented below reflect the poor status of women in Pakistan on both Gender Development Index (GDI) and Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM):

**Gender Gap on GDI and GEM indicators**

<b>Economic Participation and Opportunity</b>	Female	Male
Labour force participation	23%	86%
Income (PPP US \$)	1,005	4,676
Legislators, Senior Officials, Managers	3%	97%
Professional and technical workers	22%	78%
<b>Educational Attainment</b>		
Literacy rate	40%	69%
Enrolment in primary education	65%	79%
Enrolment in secondary education	29%	40%
Enrolment in tertiary education	8%	9%
<b>Health and Survival</b>		
Sex ratio at birth	49%	51%
Healthy life expectancy	55	56
<b>Political Empowerment</b>		
Women in parliament	20%	81%
Women in ministerial positions	10%	90%

Source: Global Gender Gap Report 2013, pg.306.

Similar trends in terms of gender inequity are reflected in national as well as local governance with only 8.7% representation of women in Officers Category (Basic Pay Scale 16-22) in the Federal civil services and 33% at the local governance level. Women benefited from the affirmative action taken to

ensure 33% representation of women in local bodies through devolution of power system introduced in 2001. Nevertheless, despite having a visible representation in local bodies their participation was reported as low in terms of contribution to various discussions and decision making forums as per devolution audit reports (CIET, 2004) Moreover, women were largely confined to the areas such as social work, education, health, office work and domestic campaigns viewed as extension of female roles as compared to the field work, legal, political, administrative and other prestigious assignments. Therefore, despite having distributive representation in quantitative terms they were deprived of participative and qualitative representation through procedural inequities in the larger system.

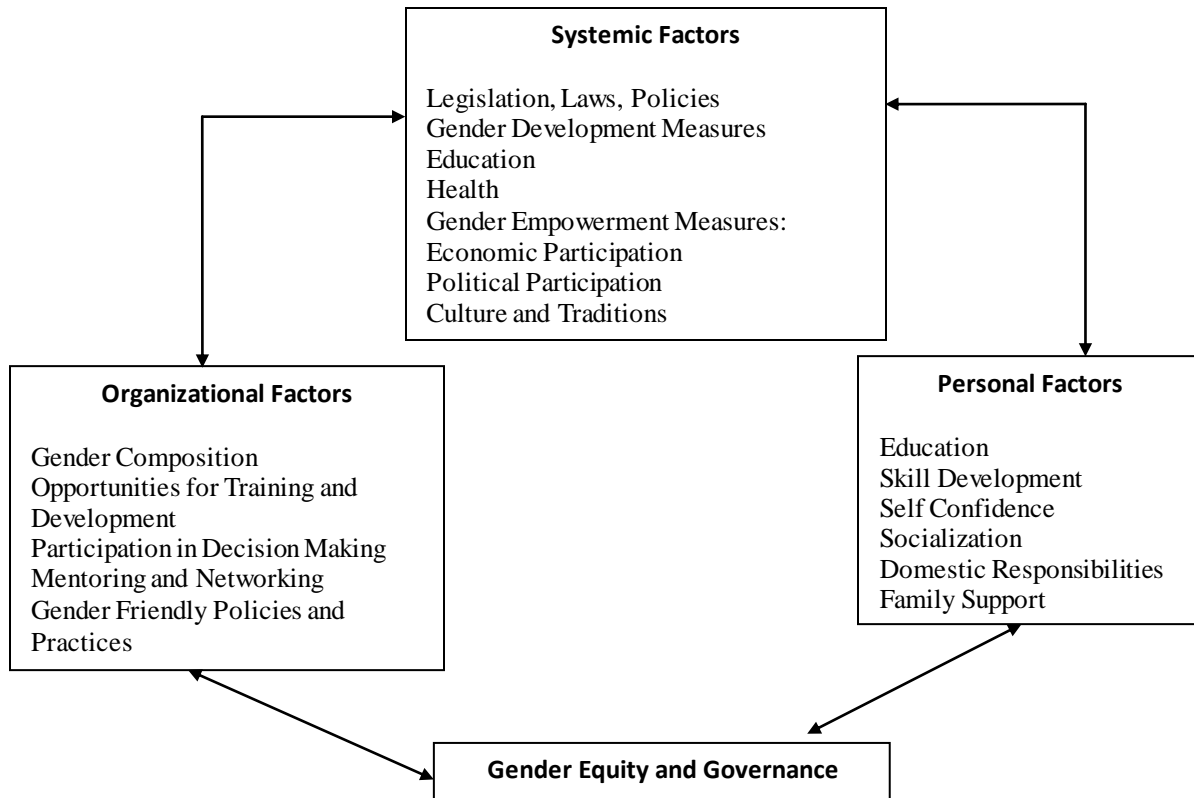
The above profile of women in Pakistan indicates that numerical or distributive form of gender representation in the form of affirmative action, reserve seats or quota has been more dominant to enhance their share in economic, social and political arenas. Quotas though serve the purpose to address the issue of gender imbalance and inequity on a short term basis but, they bypass merit which is an important aspect of effective human resource management. Affirmative action or quotas may be used as a temporary measure but ultimately the issue need to be dealt with using more sustainable ways of adopting a procedural approach to promote gender equity. Otherwise, after the quotas system is abolished women's representation in governance will become low. Women need to be empowered through sound opportunities of participation in education, skill development, employment, and decision making.

Female students outperform in all professional examinations. Position holders at tertiary level of education are mostly women. This might be one of the reasons for having very insignificant gender gap in enrolment of women and men at tertiary level education as pointed earlier. Women have been competing with men in all professional areas including the civil services where the number of female civil servants increased from 11 in 1987 to 81 in 2011 (Khurshid, 2011). Female civil servants are also opting for the Pakistan Administrative Service Group (old name of District Management Group (DMG)), Foreign Services, Police Services and Military and Cantonment Group and other so called prestigious and traditionally male dominated services/groups. Similar trends are reflected at provincial civil services where number of female officers has increased over the years. Besides the affirmative action of 10% reservation of seats for women in public employment Pakistani women are competing on merit and outperforming in all walks of life. Therefore, it is not surprising that many qualified women are not comfortable with the idea of quota or any preferential treatment for women and view it as a compromise on their capabilities. Quotas may balance the numerical representation of women but not enhance their qualitative participation in real terms due to procedural flaws or subtle gender biases in governance practices.

In view of the above, it is reiterated that a comprehensive framework requiring a major policy shift is required to address structural as well as procedural gender inequities at various levels. It is suggested such framework should incorporate multidimensionality of the issue and integrate institutional and contextual realities of Pakistani society. Thus, Gender-Organization-System (GOS) framework initially suggested by Fagenson in 1990 and later developed by the researcher for analysis of gender (Jabeen, 2001) is proposed for identifying factors influencing gender equity in the culture specific context of Pakistan. This, in turn, would help in developing an elaborated plan towards addressing the issue for attaining distributive as well as procedural gender equity in governance.

**The GOS Model of Gender Governance** The GOS approach suggests that women representatives' own gender, organizational policies and practices, legal system, culturally prescribed social attitudes and societal norms influence participation of women in the process of governance. It also underscores the interaction of gender, organization and system while investigating the issue.

**The GOS Model of Gender Equity and Governance**



An initial application of the GOS approach to the Federal and Local level governance in Pakistan reveals that at **systemic level** discriminatory laws, political, and cultural factors, and social attitudes are major constraints towards gender equity. While at **organizational level**, gender inequality in terms of opportunities to development including, education, training and development, segregation, inadequate budgetary provisions, token presence at decision making forums, less opportunities for mentoring and networking and lack of gender friendly policies and practices influence their participation at **personal level** certain demographic factors including women’s education, their self confidence and familial factors including parental education, domestic responsibilities, lack of family support i.e. child care, elderly care etc. account for women’s less participation in governance (Jabeen, 2009).

**Conclusion and Recommendations** To conclude, the above review and application of the GOS approach to the federal and local governance in Pakistan reveals that gender is a complex, multidimensional and contextual issue. We cannot have gender equity in governance solely on the basis of imported recipes without indigenizing the concept according to the local institutional context. It also suggests that progress in this direction is possible by adopting a realistic strategy of **developing people** both women and men equitably at personal and organizational level and **creating enabling environment** at institutional and systemic levels through gender sensitive policies and practices. More precisely, some specific interventions in this regard may include:

1). Reconstituting the governance agenda by making it more specific to gender needs through legislation on gender discriminatory laws and practices such as, sexual harassment, domestic violence, acid burns victims, gender sensitive budgeting, gender discrimination etc. While some progress in this regard has been made in form of Workplace Harassment Act and open sale of acids, the implementation of these laws are not strictly adhered to which provide a lot of margin for violation on the part of convicts. An awareness of such laws and its strict implantation need to be ensured at all levels. Hefty fines and penalties may be imposed in case of violation of the above laws. The above laws and regulations need to be revisited from time to time in view of the dynamic requirements of work organizations.

2). Adequate budgetary allocations should be made to promote gender reform actions and mainstreaming of gender in all spheres of governance i.e. local, provincial, and federal. A continuous and

objective evaluation of the above programs and initiatives should be made to gauge the impact of reform measure and avoid fraudulent use of funds.

3). Providing both women and men an equitable access to gender development (GED) as well as gender empowerment (GEM) initiatives including education, health, training and development, decision making and political participation opportunities.

4). While organizational landscape is changing today with more and more women joining the workplace there is need to develop acceptance for this emerging human resource and replacing the traditional 24/7 work phenomenon with more need based and gender friendly policies and practices including, flexible modes of engagement, flex timings, child care, elderly care, leave rules, and policies and congenial work environment in organizations.

5). The patriarchal societal practices still believe in strict role division in Pakistani work organizations where females through a process of gender streaming are routed to certain civil services groups like Accounts, Office Management, Postal Group, Information Group etc. as considered suitable for them involving less mobility and public interaction. Male civil servants on the other hand are frequently found in Foreign Service, Pakistan Administrative Service (old name of District Management Group), Police Service and other prestigious groups requiring a lot of public interaction, variety and versatility of experience ultimately favouring them in their career advancement. As a result of such subtle gender biased practices women find fewer opportunities of their representation and participation in governance process. An organizational justice perspective requires challenging the existing gendered practices and promoting egalitarian role divisions in society through effective socialization process, gender mainstreaming and gender sensitivity in education, curriculum and upbringing.

6). As pointed earlier women are making steady strides in governance process in the country including the civil services, however, they find low and limited opportunities of mentoring and networking due to their token status in administrative and decision making bodies. A conscious effort is needed for facilitating working women in terms of networking, mentoring and partnering through building alliances among institutions working in this direction at local, national, regional and international levels.

7). Since gender is a complex, multidimensional and contextual phenomenon which needs to be understood in view of the cultural specific norms and realities, creation of indigenous knowledge through promotion of collaborated research, seminars and conference on the issues and at university level are needed to have a meaningful impact in this direction. Such collaborated conferences as organized by the Tayyip, Erdogan University, Rize, Turkey and Abdul WaliKkan University, Mardan, Pakistan may serve as a mile stone in this direction through sharing of learning experiences and understanding of the successful organizational practices at international level. Last but not the least, a sincere and genuine effort and political will to promote gender equity in distributive and procedural terms in all spheres of human development and governance is crucial to achieve organizational justice irrespective of gender.

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