



Performance assessment regarding UNESCO Sustainable Development Goals 4 & 5 in Pakistan: Targets, Current Positions & Challenges

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ABSTRACT

This paper contributes to the discussion on Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 5 by exploring the missing targets of the Millennium Development Goals and the challenges faced while achieving the target in Pakistan. The specific areas have been studied to highlight the status of goals 4 and 5 in the present scenario, which includes education and gender equality in terms of women's empowerment in the economy and politics. The situation in rural and urban areas varies significantly for both the elements, including education and gender equality, as most deprived areas lack school infrastructure, absenteeism of teachers at schools, and many others. However, gender discrimination also persists at all levels due to the patriarchal settings of society. It will take more effort to meet the targets in all such situations. Similarly, this study has produced the status of goals of South Asian regional countries to signify the variations in levels of education and gender equality in comparison with Pakistan. It is projected that developing countries and less per capita income-producing states are a long way to go while triumphing the targets of SDGs. This paper explored that the development of education and gender equality needs significant public spending because these sectors are critical to progress; due to this reason, it requires immediate reforms and policymaking which may increase the country's capacity to overcome the degraded situation.

Keywords: *Development; Goals; Education; Labor force; Empowerment*

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INTRODUCTION

By the end of the millennium, world leaders were depressed about the vulnerable conditions of poor people of the world as poverty and hunger crippled a few countries at extreme levels, various diseases were on the rise, lack of education, hazards to the environment and discrimination against women, and many others. Due to such widespread problems around the globe millennium declaration was signed by the United Nations, which was targeted to achieve by 2015. However, later it moved from Millennium Development Goals to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The conference was held in Rio-de-Janeiro on June 2012, and they galvanized a new process where they carry on the momentum of MDGs into SDGs as a global development phenomenon. Later, the United Nations organized Sustainable Development Summit on September 25, 2015, where the members adopted SDGs Agenda 2030. The set of goals includes 17 most important factors that are highly essential for every country to achieve sustainable development as a whole, i.e., eradicating poverty, acquiring global primary and secondary education, gender equality, justice & peace, tackling environmental challenges, economic development and so on (United Nations Foundation).

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) is the leading agency that is uniquely working to implement the SDG in about 170 countries. The UNDP provides financial support to governments to integrate the 17 sustainable development goals into their national development planning and commissions. It accelerates under the priority areas of respective countries, where bottlenecks evaluation has also been done to smooth the program's implementation. Their prime focus is on policy support in a way to have skilled and experienced which should be available at the lowest cost in a timely manner. In short, the UNMAP strategy for SDGs is mentioned in Figure 1.

National SDGs Framework for Pakistan

The SDGs are working internationally for development prospects with 17 goals, about 169 targets, and with estimated 244 indicators for Pakistan. It prioritizes the planning and financing for initiating programs towards the 'process of localization' for implementing SDGs in the national development framework. In this regard, the federal SDGs support unit has been established for preparing objectives for the country, which are included: the adoption of international goals as national development goals, prioritize the targets set for national development, compilation of documents mentioning the strategies for implementing the program; devising co-ordinations with private and public institutions to carry the program; and planning to have monitoring and evaluation mechanism (Atiq, 2021).

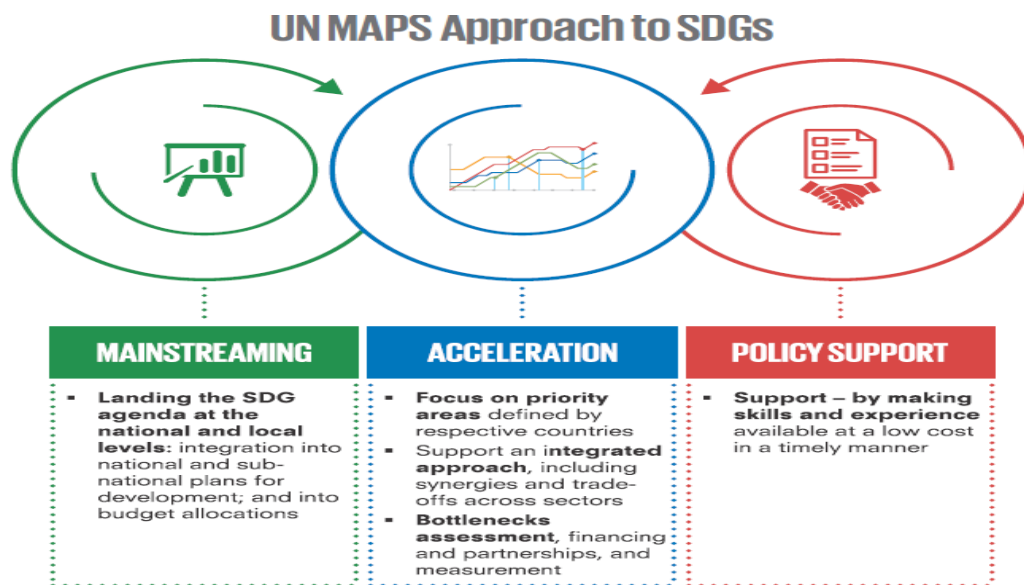


Figure 1: UNMAP strategy to SDGs

Research Objectives

The following are the objectives of this research:

1. To articulate the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 4 and 5 adopted by the UN in 2015, where it analyzes the case of Pakistan.
2. To highlight the challenges faced by Pakistan while achieving the targets especially related to education and gender equality.

Research Question

1. What is the current status of education and gender equality in Pakistan as the program continues till the end of 2030?

LITERATURE REVIEW

As we have discussed above, there are multiple goals for the development of the world, but this study mainly focuses on the education and gender equality aspects in particular. So goal 2 of the MDG is dedicated to “*Achieving Universal Primary Education*” which has unprecedented results because the net enrolment of primary level in developing nations was 83 percent in 2000, which has increased to 91 percent while it comes to the end of MDG, 2015. Previously, about 100 million children were out of school, but this ratio decreased to half of its total, about 57 million in 2015. However, a record-high improvement has been observed in Sub-Saharan Africa since MDG came into existence. But after adopting MDGs, it increased to 20 percent from 2000 to 2015 (United Nations, 2015).

Among all such efforts still, the literacy rate among youth ranging from (15 to 24) is at risk because it increased to 91 percent from 1990 to 2015; but found a narrowed gap between boys and girls. Meanwhile, the regions, including Sub-Saharan Africa, Southern Asia, and Northern Africa, have drastically improved in achieving the primary education target. It added that among all measures taken to achieve the desired MDG, the target for achieving universal primary education had remained unfinished despite massive progress in the past years. The reasons have been explored why this particular MDG does not achieve. For instance, there are still issues in society that have not been addressed till now, i.e., child labor, opportunities for disabled children, refugee children, rehabilitation of people who lived in conflicted areas, and children who live in slums. Meanwhile, Figure 2 shows that the South Asian region seems to have benefits, as it has been observed with the prolonged growth in per capita GDP from 1990 to 2015; however, a similar situation is found in Sub-Saharan Africa. Even some reports said this lackluster performance as per capita income increases, but it fails to achieve many other global goals. It is also important to mention here that per capita income in the South Asian region is still low when compared with international standards. However, it has a surprising performance in the remaining goals. This study emphasizes educational reforms and gender disparity at all levels (United Nations, 2015). Here MDG Goal 2 has shown immense progress in educational aspects. However, many areas and segments covered under literacy are still unsatisfied in the region because the male and female gap is reduced to significant levels. The Table 1 shows that Iran improved their educational sector, including in primary enrolment, reaching the last grade and primary completion while attaining the status of early achiever in thrice of targets within South and South West Asia. On the second level, Sri Lanka reached the last grades of primary class and primary completions but failed or regretted having new primary enrolments. Similarly, Nepal also shows better progress in

increased enrolment in primary and completion of primary while getting the status as early achievers in both factors. Next is Turkey, which has mixed responses in which enrolment in primary education is on track and completion of primary education is an early achiever. However, the completion of the last grades is regretted and observed no progress. Meanwhile, Pakistan has not achieved a satisfactory level as it was found to be slow in new enrolments of primary classes and completion of the last grades. At the same time, the country regretted completing the last grades of primary classes. India, Bhutan, and Maldives are doing well compared to Pakistan (United Nations, 2018).

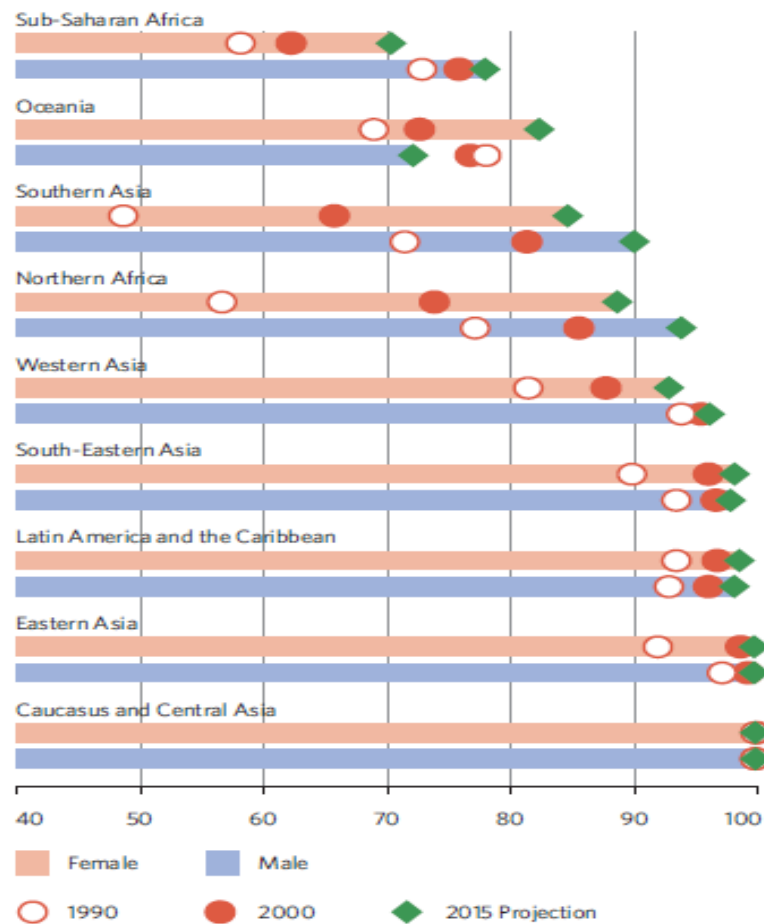


Figure 2: The literacy rate of youth from 1990 to 2015 (Source: United Nations, 2015)

Table 1: Educational Achievements of the MDGs in South Asia

South and South West Asia	Primary Enrolment	Reaching Last Grades	Primary Completion
Afghanistan	---	---	---
Bangladesh	Regression and no progress	---	Slow
Bhutan	Slow	Slow	Early achiever
India	On track	---	Early achiever
Iran	Early achiever	Early achiever	Early achiever
Maldives	Regression and no progress	---	Early achiever
Nepal	Early achiever	Regression and no progress	Early achiever
Pakistan	Slow	Regression and no progress	Slow
Sri Lanka	Regression and no progress	Early achiever	Early achiever
Turkey	On track	Regression and no progress	Early achiever

Source: Facts extracted from United Nations (2018) while the table compiled by the author.

It is important to mention that compared to other regional countries, all the countries have achieved one or another goal rather than only focusing on education levels. But if we talk mainly about education levels, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh have seen progressive competitively with other regional countries.

Moreover, many efforts have been made to achieve gender equality and empowerment of women globally; of course, it needs to measure the indicators to highlight the women's status and gender gaps in all segments of life. It is observed that the ratio of girls students has been increasing in schools within the last 15 years. Every developing nation is making efforts to bring change in society and find curtailed disparity in primary, secondary and tertiary educational levels. According to the world's facts and figures, especially in South Asia, there were only 74 girls against 100 boys getting primary education in schools in 1990 era, but now there is a drastic change has been observed that

there are 103 girls get enrolled in the account of every 100 boys. It further extends the concept of women's equality towards paid and unpaid work in the economy and the inclusion of women in such work, as we know that agriculture is the most common and essential sector of almost every economy in the world. This sector not only provides food but also increases revenues and generates about 80 percent of employment in developing countries (considered the primary income source). In this sector, most family farms are managed by women, whereas men are busy in commercial farms (United Nations, 2015). According to Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), women are significant contributors to agriculture work as it contributes about 80 percent to farms and 70 percent to workers in the agriculture field. However, after MDGs, this scenario has quite changed. Around 41 percent of women are now involved in private jobs (paid work) outside the agriculture sector, which has shown an increase of about 35 percent from 1990. Moreover, the idea of gender equality has been extended to political empowerment as it believes that the underrepresentation of women in politics has shown the democratic deficit. It is believed their enhanced participation in politics brings gender equality which has multiple effects on many public and private life and can make policies regarding women's related issues. Many years and even century have passed; there is little status has been upgraded of women in politics; the position of women have been placed on the grounds of Parliament in 90 percent of countries out of a total of 174 countries within a period of the last two decades. And it is also concluded that the average participation of women has doubled in the last 20 years. As per the data from the MDG report, only one woman is a member among five members of the Parliament (World Atlas).

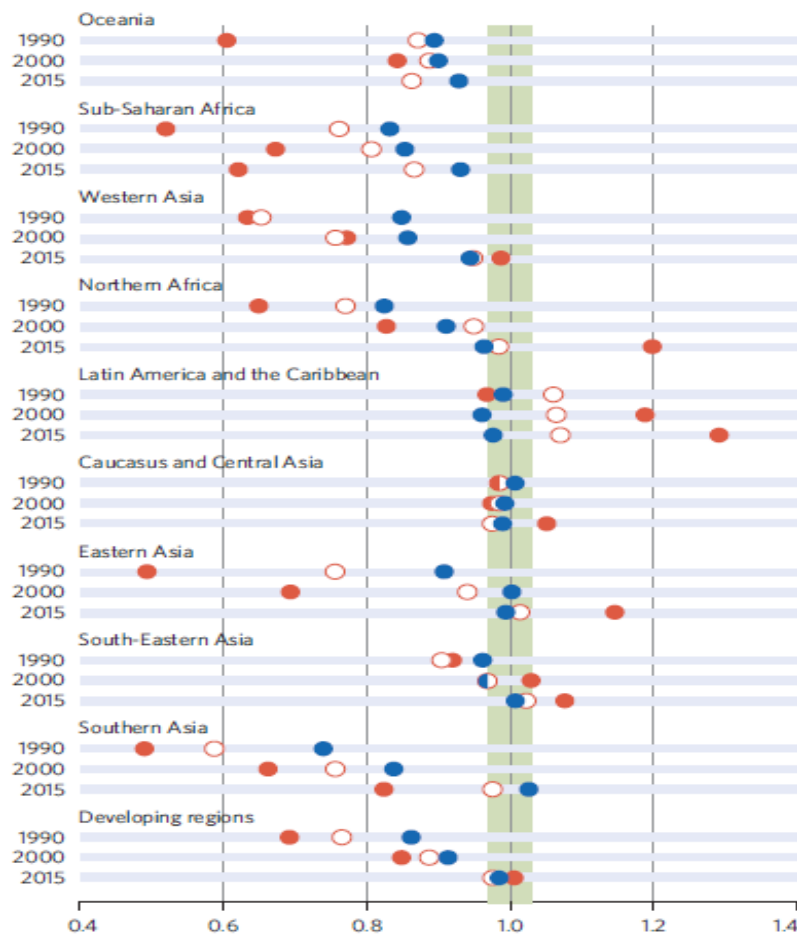


Figure 3: Gender Disparity Index (Source: UN, 2015)

Figure 3 highlights the gender disparity indicators, where it presents that some regions achieved primary education levels, but disparity still persists even at higher levels at various segments of society. The Figure mentions the primary, secondary and, tertiary education ratios among various regions while comparing with past decades of 1990, 2000 and, 2015.

It is observed in the United Nations report of MDG 2015 besides all aspects of women empowerment, education has been found positive and claimed as effective among all developmental areas. It is marked that due to MDG campaign work in collaboration nationally and internationally now, more girls had attended school in 15 years of a target. It can be said that gender disparity has been reduced in the educational sector within a stipulated period of MDGs. Despite all such efforts, gender parity reduced but persists at 0.98 percent at primary and secondary levels and 1.01 percent at the tertiary level. It is observed that most of the disparity has been found in tertiary education. However, Western Asia only triumphs over the target; the largest discrimination has been found in Sub-Saharan Africa in parts

of Southern Asia and many parts of the world. The situation is weird in that most regions do not have any statistical data to present a clear picture.

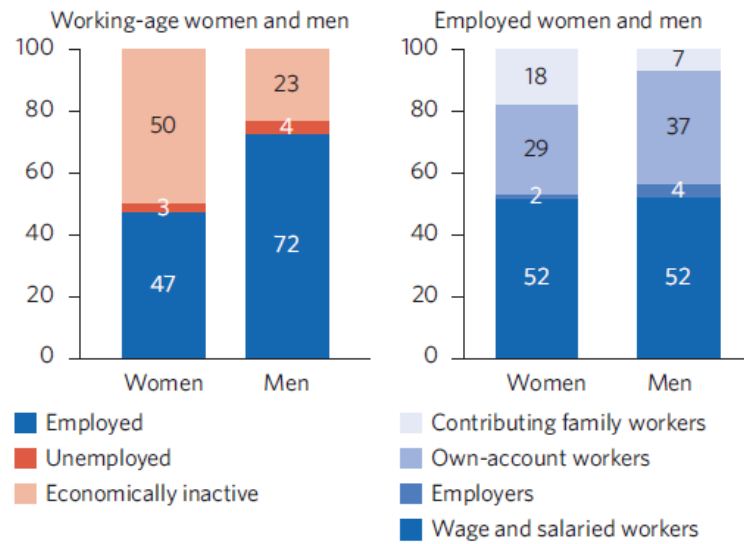


Figure 4: Employment ratio of men and women in various regions (Source: UN, 2015)

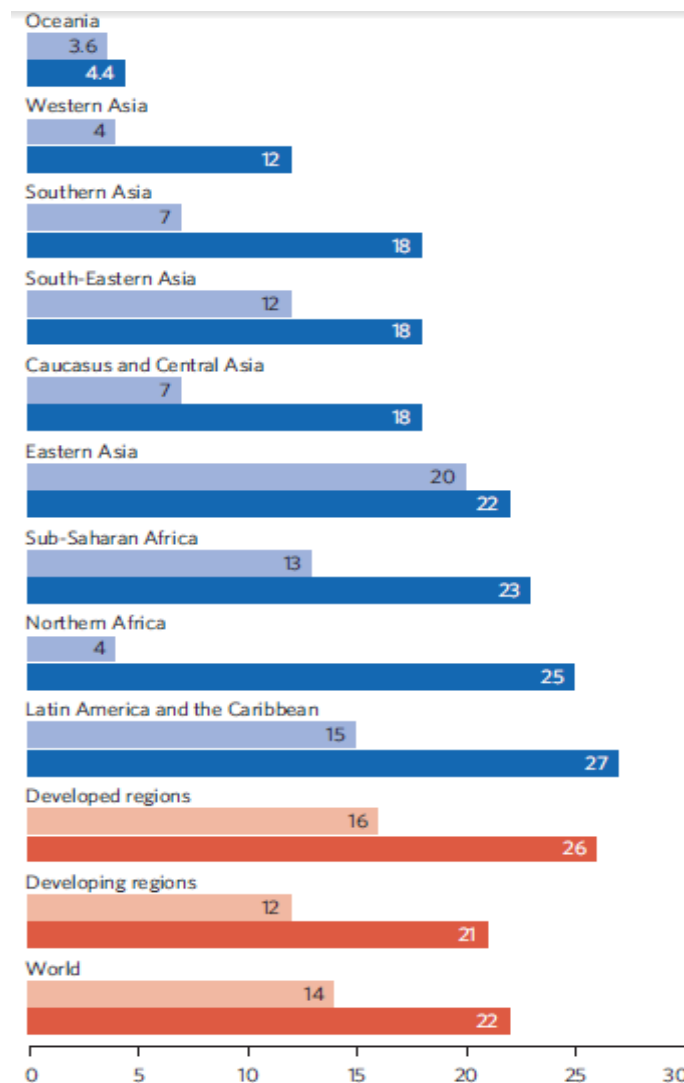


Figure 5: Women's political representation and achievement in some regions (Source: UN, 2015)

Despite massive struggles, women have to gain progress but still have significant gaps while men and women work in the labor market. It is estimated that 50 percent of women between 15 and above are engaged in the labor force,

while men are about 77 percent. Women face numerous problems in paid work because they receive the lowest income compared to men; according to estimates, women's earnings are around 24 percent less than men's. However, the highest wage gaps are observed in two regions, i.e., Southern Asia stands at 33 percent; Sub-Saharan Africa at 30 percent. Now there is a shocking scenario that the availability of 92 countries' unemployment data, about 78 percent of countries where women are higher degree holders are unemployed more than men who have similar levels of degrees in education. As per Figure 5, female participation in the labor force is lowest in Northern Africa, Southern Asia and Western Asia, as only one-fourth of women are involved in paid work compared to one-third of men. Women face different barriers, including the responsibilities of childbearing, family and household, and majorly the cultural impediments restricting women from earning. Women are more likely to work in the household rather than men, and the wake of no financial gains and social security received by women.

Many global commitments have been made to empower women; Beijing Platform for Action is one of those in which women's political empowerment was demanded. At that time, women's political participation was just 11 percent which increased to 22 percent by 2015 (CEPAL, 2015). A Big achievement has been seen in 174 countries as women made grounds in national parliaments from 1995 to 2015. By 2015, drastic changes were observed in European countries as it comes under the top ten countries where women constitute about 50 percent of seats in Parliament. It is mentioned that most of the participation of women in Parliament is found in Sub-Saharan African, American and European countries. In comparison, the highest gains are made in Rwanda, which is at 60 percent at points, Andorra at 46 percent and Bolivia at 42 percentage points. It is astonishing that only male-comprised parliaments worldwide show decreased trends and have dropped to 5 from 10 members. Fixation of quotas for women has gained success in 120 countries, the states are gaining momentum to adopt the "fast-track" impact for women's empowerment in political representations. Other than that, where the participation is increasing in politics, their pace in leadership roles is slow; according to estimates, about 16 percent of women are Speakers of the national Parliament, while 18 percent of women are working as Ministers. This has been observed as an increase of four percent since 2005 (UN Women).

Almost all South Asian Countries have adopted affirmative legislation to ensure women's political representation at the national level, but it is believed that these measures are insufficient to impact women's participation in governance positively. However, following the current data, 71 female and 279 male members are elected to the Parliament of Bangladesh; over time, women's participation has increased, and around 20.4 percent of women are sitting in parliaments (Dhaka Tribune, 2021). Similarly, in India, the consecutive elections of 2009, 2014 and 2019 elected 52, 64, and 78 women politician members in Lok Sabha. It is observed that India ranked 20th from the bottom while acknowledging the political empowerment of women (World Economic Forum, 2019). Though it is also evident that India is the largest democratic country where women members of the political parties are denied to have party tickets for contesting the elections and have been ignored totally. The cause is absolute patriarchal mindsets, community attitudes about women politicians are wired, and found derogatory comments while talking over media. It is considered the third worst country in showing the increased number of women in politics; however, Afghanistan and Bangladesh are the lowest (The Interpreter, 2021). The landmark change has been observed in Nepal, where after presenting the new constitution, which reserved 34 percent of seats for women in their political system, which came into reality in the 2017 election, around 41.8 percent of women entered their political realm across the country. The year 2017 marked a successful year for the political empowerment of women. Also, it increased the number of women voters from the group marginalized from mainstream public activities in the past. Simultaneously, women are not freed from the patriarchal norms, though they have been questioned to have reserved seats, whereas socioeconomic empowerment is still slow. Their participation in decision-making bodies and the constitutional building remains low. Still, it also cannot be ignored that women get the executive positions such as the president of Nepal, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and the Speaker of the Parliament (Upreti et al., 2020). Bhutan also has weakened women's political participation in history, but women's political empowerment is gaining momentum as it was recorded at 8.3 percent in 2013, which increased to 15.2 percent in 2018, a historic high across the country. This has been possible because of the International IDEA, which supports women in politics, media or at various governmental institutions to achieve gender equality. If we compare the data with the world average, about 22 percent of women are sitting in parliaments and stand at 19.6 percent at the regional level. The lesser percentage of women's participation in politics is attributed to the prevalent norms and inequalities in getting leadership roles, and many socioeconomic problems need to be addressed to eradicate gender biases, stereotypes, and attitudes that are embedded in society from pre-historic periods (International IDEA, 2020).

Meanwhile, the Sri-Lanka is also found lowest, as in the 2020 election, only 12 seats are acquired by women, which is about 5.4 percent of total parliamentary seats. According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Sri Lanka ranks 178 out of 184 states when measuring women's political empowerment. The fewer representation of women in politics is due to many social, economic, and cultural constraints, which include the lack of finance to campaign for elections, stereotypical roles of women in patriarchal systems, and portrayal of negative roles of female politicians, are impeding women to actively participate in politics (Democracy Reporting International, 2021). Whereas the situation in Maldives is discouraging, as only five women are held at the national Parliament against 77 men, it is observed that

women are highly underrepresented in governmental institutions; in fact, there is a lack of legislation specifically targeting women's interests. It also falls low in MDG 3, promoting gender equality and empowering women. It is alarming to mention that Maldives State does not have any domestic violence legislation for women's protection. So it is mentioned in a study of Women's Health and Life Expectancy 2007 that one in every three women has faced physical and sexual violence, often from spouse and family members (UN Women). Such ratios are insufficient to represent females in political arenas. Overall, the slow progress and lesser achievements are attributed to weak governance and management in key areas, which are major concerns. Especially in the least developed and developing regions, they limit the private sector's potential and have no transparency to assess actual performance on time.

METHODOLOGY

The paper is based on an ongoing program of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which has been targeted to be ended in 2030; during the current period, the paper assessed the status of goals 4 and 5 i.e. education and gender equality, respectively. It follows the qualitative method because the body of the paper is constructed using secondary data that includes newspapers, official documents, books, and United Nations annual reports. Further, Pakistan's facts and figures are taken from the Economic Survey of Pakistan, which the Finance Division of Pakistan yearly compiles, and also from UN-Pakistan portals to analyze the situation of such goals.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

As the Sustainable Development Goals is an ongoing program that will be completed by 2030, this paper assesses the current status. The data is derived from various national and international surveys, World Bank Reports, United Nations Annual Reports, Millennium Development Goals Reports, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, and Finance Division, Government of Pakistan.

Goal 4 is "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" at the initial level. Primary education is considered the first stage, which is free and compulsory for all in Pakistan. It comprised of five grades from 1 to 5 as formal education where usually children attended in the age of 5 to 9 years. According to available statistics, Pakistan has about 150,129 primary educational institutions, of which 88 percent come under the public sector and 12 percent are in the private sector. As per estimates around 5 million children are out of school; here, if segregated between sex, then 60 percent of girls and 40 percent of boys who are not attended primary schools at a certain age. Currently, about 10.471 million boys and 8.280 million girls are enrolled in primary education (Economic Survey, 2019/2020).

As we all know, Pakistan was unable to achieve Education for All (EFA) by 2015 despite all efforts made under MDGs, even besides the constitution of Pakistan, as it provides the proper free education till matric without any sex differences. The country stands at the bottom; however, the regional countries perform quite well in delivering primary education to their children.

It is also important to discuss the massive differences in rural and urban situations in getting primary education. Usually, in urban areas, primary enrolments are 60 percent higher under private schools, which include high and low-fee schools (where elite-class children pay high fees and middle-lower class low fees schools). In contrast, in rural areas, almost all schools are in the public sector. According to the Annual Status of Education Report of 2014-2019, enrolment rates increased by 77 percent in 2019; however, it was 7 percent in 2014. In rural areas, people opt for public sector schools rather choosing private schools, which may be due to free education. This positive situation is attributed to the efforts made by the government in the past 6-years while they ensure the presence of qualified teachers and make recruitments on a merit basis (ASER, 2019).

Figure 6 explains that the enrolment rate at the primary level is higher, though the enrolments in the secondary classes are not even half of the primary enrolments. Currently, 31.4 thousand secondary schools are in operation, and about 56.3 thousand are teachers. Secondary school enrollment increased to 7.8 percent (2018-2019) from 3.9 million (2016-2017). However, it is targeted that it may increase to 6.6 percent in years ahead. There are about 5.8 thousand higher secondary schools (HSC) and inter-colleges, and the enrolment rate increased to 5.8 percent in 2017-2018. It is observed that enrolment in HSC increased to 5.8 percent in 2017-2018; according to estimates, registration of students increased to 1.7 million in 2017-2018, whereas it was 1.6 million in 2016-2017. It is projected that it may increase to 1.8 million in years ahead. In degree colleges, a nominal decrease of 0.59 million students in 2018-2019 was at 0.60 in 2017-2017. This slight decrease is due to students' choice of vocational courses and professional degrees. Moreover, a significant increase has been observed at the university level, where 1.86 million enrolled in the year 2018-2019, which was 1.58 million in 2017-2018 (Sattar, 2020).

The number of teachers was about 1.77 million in both public and private sectors from 2017 through 2018; however, it stood at 1.73 million compared to 2016-2017. It is showing an increase of about 2.7 and is projected to increase by

1.83 million in the upcoming year. No doubt that teachers are the backbone of educational institutions, and well said saying that “teaching is the only profession that creates all other professions, but quality education is deplorable. In this regard, the UNESCO report stated that the quality of education in schools is very low, and even in remote areas of Punjab, Balochistan and Sindh, no teachers are available at schools (Ahmad, 2014). Nowadays students do not interested in going to libraries. The reason reading habits are no more; students are dependent on traditional ways of lecturers in the classroom and are assessed based on memorization of facts and information rather than their performance in school (SPARC, 2011).

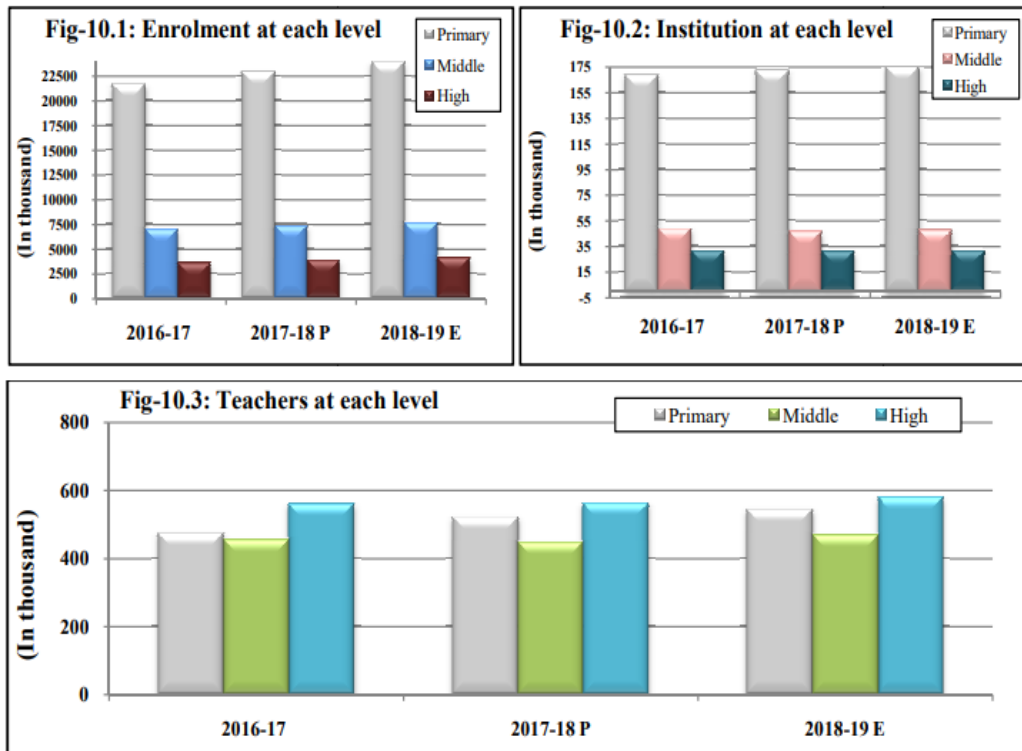


Figure 6: Enrolment rate in primary, secondary and higher education in Pakistan (Source: Economic Survey 2019/2020)

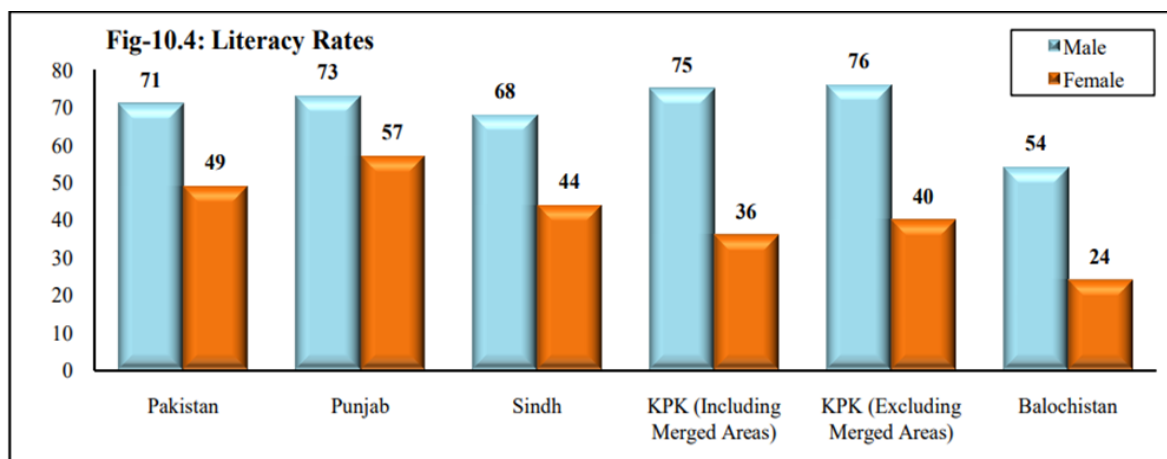


Figure 7: Literacy rate of males and females in Pakistan - 2018-2019 (Source: Economic Survey 2019/2020)

According to the Economic Survey of 2019-2020, the literacy rate has stagnated at 60 percent (on average) since 2014-2015. It is observed that the urban literacy rate is 74 percent, which is higher than the rural literacy rate of 52 percent. Figure 7 shows that the highest rate is attained by Punjab, where males are at 73 percent and females are at 57 percent. However, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is also doing good, but educational inequalities are revealed here where the male literacy rate is more than females. Sindh literacy is at 58 percent (male: 68 percent, female: 44 percent), and Baluchistan at 46 percent (male: 54, female: 24).

Various challenges are confronted due to the different educational systems in the country that includes; public educational sector institutions, private sector institutions, and *Deeni Madaris*. This situation has created a wave of polarization in societies. Moreover, the curriculums are old and need to be reformed as it does not meet modern

demands. It is believed that teachers are the backbone of the educational system, and in Pakistan, teaching qualities are also low (UNESCO) due to a lack of training for teachers though the infrastructure and institutions are available but do not have enough resources to train human resources under strong administration. In such a scenario, the dropout of student rate is higher. According to an estimate, only 30 percent of students who enrolled in primary were reached to metric level, which is attributed to the low literacy rate in the country (The Express Tribune, 2017). However, the country has little funds for its educational budget. According to Figure 8, successive governments have been allocating less than 2.5 percent budget, which is inadequate for educational growth growing needs. In contrast, in our regional states, educational budgets are increasing but Pakistan's budget shows a declining trend. As per Asian Development Bank (ADB) report (2019) "Pakistan spends just two percent of GDP on education, which is a far lower percentage than in comparable countries of the region" though the country's constitution Article 25-A state that free education from 5 to 16 years for children.

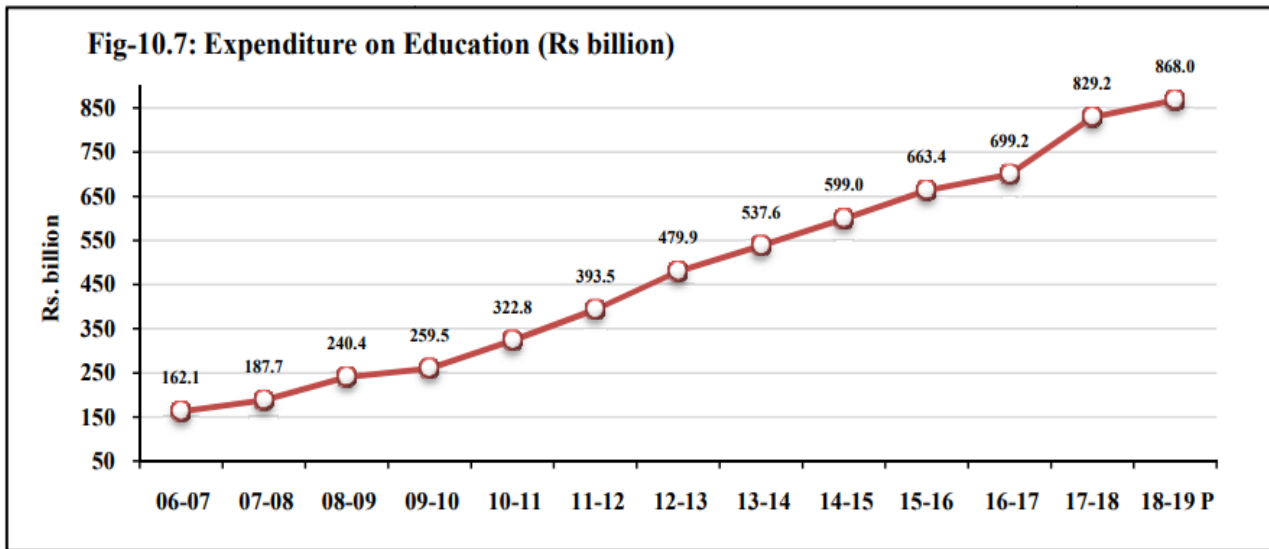


Figure 8: Allocation of Educational Budget in Pakistan (Source: Economic Survey 2019/2020)

The 18th Amendment in the Constitution of 2010 has integrated the powers from federal to provincial levels and planned to cover certain areas, including access to primary education universally, proper curriculum development, syllabus planning, increased budgetary funds, infrastructure development, moderate management of schools, quality teaching, which will have improved learning outcomes. But the problem is the policies and reforms are highly ambitious but do not implement in their true sense, as the corruption levels are high, there is inconsistency in budgetary allocations, and uncertain political regimes in the country (Dawn, 2010). Moreover, Covid-19 is responsible for the closure of almost 185 countries' schools; massive dropouts were observed and most of them were adolescent girls. In such a scenario, the SDG-4 goal is far more challenging to achieve its targets. However, Pakistan's situation is the same during the extreme Covid-19 days. Girls were married off at early ages, in forced marriages and early pregnancies. It is also true that education would be considered a lifeline for girls who survived in that era and indeed protect them from exploitation and violence (Umar, 2020).

Meanwhile, between 1990 – 2019, women's labor force participation average was 18.2 percent; the yearly data shows that the peak was seen in 2015 when women's participation was at 23.86 percent and later declined to 21.67 percent in 2019. According to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS), data represents massive gender discrimination as there are nominal sectors where women are working i.e. agriculture sector, where the female proportion is 21.96 percent while males at 78.06 percent, similarly in the manufacturing sector female at 3.15 percent and male at 12.55 percent, in education females at 1.57 percent and male at 2.48 percent, in administrative and support services female at 0.01 percent and male at 0.5 percent, in professional scientific and technical activities female at 0.01 percent and male at 0.5 percent in wholesale and retail trade female at 0.33 percent and male at 14.59 percent, in human health and social work at 0.47 percent and male at 1.08 percent (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2019) and remaining women workforce is involved in home-based work, there is about 20 million work as home-based workers out of total around 12 million women are women (www.paycheck.pk). There are no specific laws defined for home-based workers in the country. However, ILO has made convention C-177 to preserve the rights of home-based workers but do not ratify by the country yet. UN Women report 2016 stated that home-based workers are adding 400 billion rupees to the GDP out of the total of about 65 percent of women contributing to the economic growth of the country during the year 2013-2014.

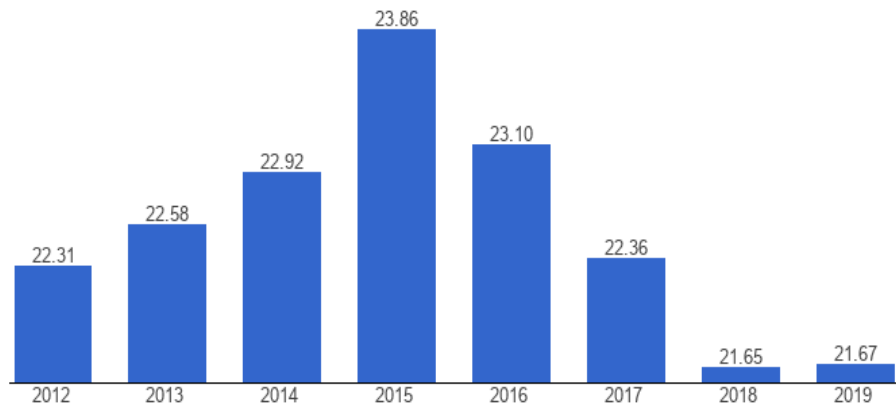


Figure 9: Labor Force participation of women in Pakistan (Source: The Global Economy, 2021)

In this situation, Figure 9 showed the rate of female labor force participation is 21.6 percent but low when compared to the regional countries. It is a dilemma of our society that women with higher degrees of qualification lag behind too; as per the record, only 25 percent of university degree holders are part of the labor force and remain unemployed (The Global Economy). It is worth mentioning here that in patriarchal societies, there is a massive gender division of labor, but the question is Pakistan already has a tremendous unemployment rate which is hindering both men and women equally, so if overall economic scenarios would improve, then women's economic empowerment would achieve positive impacts to some extent. Due to low female participation in the labor force, we are preventing our economy from potential gains from the female population. It is observed that women who earn are likely to take part in household decision-making and family-related matters.

SDGs will help 208 integrate more women into economic activities. This social movement will not only help in women's empowerment but also ensure women's autonomy in their lives and extend more business opportunities adding 12 trillion dollars to the global GDP. At present, about 38.8 percent of women are working in the economy around the world, out of which 20 percent of women are serving the labor force in Pakistan (UNDP, 2021). This limited participation can be attributed to the unequal opportunities for women, lack of gender-sensitive policy formation, harassment in the workplace, and stereotypical roles of women. Meanwhile, women in the workplace have faced different challenges, for instance, wage gaps between men and women, mobility issues, shortage of separate toilets for women, glass ceilings at the workplace, job insecurities, and many other hazardous occupational environments. These challenges create hindrances in achieving SDG-5 "Gender equality" in developing countries like Pakistan. As we know, most women work in informal and traditional sectors, which require structural and systematic changes to overcome such problems (Asian Development Bank, 2016).

Moreover, Covid-19 has hit the economy hard, as men faced the economic shock. Similarly, female's also come under great stress. The survey by IDEAS (2020) disclosed that 22 percent of working women stated that; their wages had been reduced, service providers' females' salaries reduced by 90 percent, female agricultural workers by 44 percent, 34 percent complaint about salary delays, and 16 percent informed that they had not received non-pecuniary benefits. It was also observed during February 2020, around 75 percent of women switched jobs, 40 percent of females used savings for bearing expenses in times of lockdown, 50 percent sold their assets, and 20 percent of females violated the lockdown to earn their livelihood.

Table 2: Women Representation in National Assembly of Pakistan during the election of 2017-18

	Punjab	Sindh	KPK	Balochistan	FATA	Federal capital	Total
General Seats	148	61	35	14	12	02	272
Women	35	14	08	03	0	0	60
Non-Muslims	-	-	-	-	-	-	10
Total	183	75	43	17	12	02	342

Source: Government of Pakistan, 2018

Table 2 showed that the election 2017/2018 represents the nominal rate of elected women in Parliament. There are 342 seats, out of which Pakistani women acquire only 60 seats; around 35 seats are held by women from Punjab, 14 seats in Sindh, eight seats in KPK, and three from Balochistan, but there is no woman in FATA and Federal Capital. According to the Global Gender Gap Report 2020, Pakistan ranks 93 out of 153 countries in the representation of women in politics, as 20.2 percent of women are legislators, and 12 percent are in ministerial positions. Similarly, in recent elections, the turnout rate of voters was 112.39 million. However, 62.55 million were men, and 49.83 million were women from all over the country. The provincial participation of voters; Punjab has 64.35 million voters, where the female rate was 20 million, Sindh has 23.64 million voters (with female 10.54 million), Balochistan has 4.6 million voters (with female 1.9 million), KPK has 18.85 million voters (with female 8.13 million), and Federal Capital 0.80 million (female 0.38 million). One story published by Pakistan Today said that disparity had been seen in the electoral process because we lived in a male-dominated system where male relatives taught women what to do. Women cannot

make their own choices in their daily lives. She has been dictated to what she has to do next. One survey has been done in which it is disclosed that 30.4 percent of men stated women are not appropriate for expressing their views about politics; however, 64 percent opined that women could not participate as political workers in a political party. It is also observed that fewer turnout rates of women voters are due to commitments and agreements not to attend elections made with elders of the village and certain politicians of specific areas before elections. This type of activity is common in the FATA region, where the eldest person makes such decisions. And the feminists and activists believed that women are prevented from being active catalysts of change or 'agents of change' in society. The Global Gender Gap Report 2021 stresses the need to bring gender equality in all segments of life, which mainly emphasizes achieving SDG-5 by 2030 (Kunwar, 2021).

The challenges are manifold; it is observed that women are usually being targeted while having awareness sessions or workshops, seminars, and training programs. However, it must be gender inclusive; there is a need to target men, women, and transgender people to work on equality as SDG-5 is targeting gender equality. The time witnessed that shift of political parties or government has focused on diverse gender activities. However, continuity on specific working topics must be continued in the long run. However, previously international NGOs focused on female entrepreneurship and active political participation to increase their socioeconomic strata. But now days focused on conflict prevention, peacebuilding, the end of violence, and so many others. It does not mean such topics would not cover, but funding previously provided must not be halted or made seasonal; it must have continuity to support without gaps. There must be legislative and policy-making support to address the problems faced by gender, with national and international financial support for good results in the future; otherwise, the gaps will not fill, and project outcomes will remain undone and incomplete (Fatima, 2021).

CONCLUSIONS

The paper reviews SDG goals 4 and 5 in the context of Pakistan and concludes that achieving these goals is challenging due to the wide disparity in educational attainment among the poor and rich classes. It is found that children who belong to poor households cannot complete their primary education; however, the proportion of rich-class children is more than five times in completing primary education. As we can draw the lesson from MDGs, we need a sound and effective primary educational system, broaden and deepen reforms to target children of minorities, rural areas, urban slums, differently abled, and particularly girls. On the other hand, to address the gender inequalities, documentation and research have been done related to gender-based discrimination, violence against women, equal opportunities in the public and private sector, gender division of labor, and limited control over assets integrated into the post-15 agenda. It required serious gender-targeted policies to eradicate the deep-rooted causes of gender discrimination. However, policies need action, and it needs to be implemented. In the past few years, women-related laws have been formulated, but the efficacy of laws needs to be addressed. It is envisaged that until and unless discrimination against women is not addressed, women cannot be fully active in economic activities, and participation of women in politics will be limited. SDG – 5 'Gender-equality' should be a priority of Pakistan because it will bring positive outcomes on other SDG goals, like; 'no-poverty', 'zero-hunger', 'reduced-inequalities', and 'peace, justice, and strong institutions'.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The suggestions have been made cautiously regarding SDGs (2030) that more investments must be made in Public Sector Development Programs (PSDP), especially in the educational sector and gender equality programs. Scholars urge in this research that transparency is very important while allocating money in the education sector. The allocation must be equal in boys' and girls' schools. And in many Pakistani cultures, girls are discouraged from getting secondary schooling, so the government should make it mandatory for families and parents to send girls' to school. Moreover, economic opportunities must be created for young girls and women to make them financially stable and, on the whole, create an environment for women so they can easily participate in politics. If such measures could not taken seriously, Pakistan will probably again miss the target within the timeframe of 2030 and remain vulnerable. Future research work analyzing other SDG goals using other approaches would help understand the progress to meet the targets.

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