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Women's Rights, Education**Corresponding Author:****Sundas Jabbar Khattak**Email: khattak_sundas26@yahoo.com**License:**

Abstract: *The present study investigates feminism in Pakistan in general and the causes of women in particular. The researcher used letters to the editor of two leading newspapers in Pakistan as primary data. The data was analyzed using discourse analysis. It was found that educated male writers in different provinces in Pakistan support the cause of women. At the same time, it was also observed that women still face gender discrimination. The study has implications for the status of women in Pakistan. It contributes to the purpose of general awareness about women's rights and feminism in Pakistan.*

Introduction

Women in Pakistan can be found in every walk of life. There are lots of female doctors, engineers, pilots, politicians, novelist, teachers, and actresses. The numbers of female position holders in different educational boards are always greater than males. However, in spite of all this, women in our society are generally considered inferior to men. It is therefore important to investigate the perceptions of educated class in Pakistan about the place of women in different walks of life in our society. Through analyzing letters written by public to English newspapers, this study attempts to contribute to feminism in general and the status of women in Pakistan in particular. Historically women have found across different cultures that they perform certain responsibilities including cooking, cleaning, child-bearing and the household responsibilities (Naz, 2003 pg. 290). Gender discrimination started since independence and Pakistani feminists at the same time displayed resistance through awareness campaigns regarding the conditions of Pakistani women (Imran, 2005 pg. 93).

The 1973 constitution which came into force during Bhutto's regime guaranteed gender equality. During the same decade the UN general Assembly adopted a convention in 1979 in which all kind of discrimination against women was condemned through 30 articles (CEDAW, 1979 pg. 2-10). Women

Action Forum, an urban based women's group, was established in 1982 which provided a platform for women for country-wide struggle for the support of women and their causes (Imran, 2005 pg. 93). Today, women have become active participants in the currents of society. Women are the real architects of society, since it is a mother who brings up and nourishes children. Feminism in the world has also got momentum nowadays; many women and men work for female rights in the whole world. For instance, gender and racism were better advocated by Maya Angelou through her writings and she had great influence on women and African American. Qasim Amin is a Muslim feminist who works for women's rights in Egyptian society. Leila Ahmad writes on Islam and Islamic feminism. Ellen Page in her mission for gendered equality has spoken out publically in interviews, on talk shows, and press tours about women's rights (Fisher, 2016). Similarly, Angelina Jolie made speeches for women and she works for women especially for Afghani female.

Pakistani society still remains male dominant society and though women, nowadays, are quite well educated but get little privileges as an educated person. Social media brought a kind of change in the status of Pakistani women as they come to know about women fighting for women and their religious, cultural, social and constitutional rights/ privileges. Women get religious privileges though people still believe that Islam considers men superior to women. In Islam superiority is based on piety and not on gender. In Islam women has given certain privileges. As a mother she is respected to the extent that Heaven is considered under the feet of a mother. Even in the last address of the Holy Prophet Mohammad PBUH, he declared that women have right over you as you have rights over them. Treat them with kindness (31:14-15; 46:15) (Ali, 2003).

Our culture also gives privileges to women. She is respected everywhere. It is a general observation that daughters are nearer and sweeter to parents rather than sons. Fareeda Kokikhel Afridi was a Pashtun feminist, a women's rights activist in Pakistan. She established the platform for the support of women in Rural Areas (SAWERA). Our ideology is based on Islam, so our constitution also gives privileges to women. Reforms have been brought in different bills, acts, Jirgas, etc. for the rights of women in different provinces of Pakistan. In area like Swat, a step was taken for the right of women in the form of a Jirga was organized there (Khan, 2013). Women in Pakistan face different environment in all five provinces. Women have different status in various parts of Pakistan, that's why women have been treated differently in different provinces/ regions of Pakistan. Women in every culture of Pakistan are not only bound to her husband but to every male relative of the family. Condition of women is different in Sindh, Punjab, KP, Baluchistan and Gilgit Baltistan but one thing is common in them and that is most women face violence. A majority of women face domestic violence, sexual harassment, gender discrimination, problems of health, threat of rape, honor killing, forced marriages, childhood marriage, threat of less dowry murder etc. The status of Pakistani women does not remain the same. There is a change in their social, economic and cultural aspect in different region and classes (Bari and Pal, 2000 pg. ix)

Although our religion Islam, cultures of different provinces, and ideology of Pakistan give privileges to women but still our women are oppressed in one way or another. Our culture /tradition also consider women inferior to men. Women are always under the control of male member of the family.

The researcher attempts to investigate the response of Pakistani educated population towards the causes of women. Specifically, the study aims to explore the perceptions of educated populace from different provinces about the role of women in the currents of modern lives, her achievements, her troubles, her pains, or anything related to women.

Literature Review

Womanhood has become emerging phenomenon in global perspective. There are lots of forum, organizations and platforms where women are advocated, supported and even honored and respected. There has been a tremendous change in the rights, values, and status of women, throughout the world. Women, today in the west are not the women of Medieval or Victorian Ages but woman of 21 century- a powerful woman as, Queen Elizabeth, Indira Gandhi, Margaret Thatcher, Benazir Bhutto, Madonna, Malala Yousafzai, sheikh Haseena Wajid, Thresamay, Hilary Clinton, Angelina Jolie and Mother Teresa have some of the names who worked a lot not only for women but men at the same time.

Feminism generally has been a movement since ancient time but after 1970 it took a worldwide momentum. It can be as a cultural, economic and political movement aimed at equal rights and privileges for women.

Women do not get equal rights with men but they struggle to save their rights. In every decade female fight for their rights, women are considered inferior in Pakistan and they have been deprived of many things i.e. education and employment etc. As compared to men, they are being kept to the wall, especially in male dominant oriental societies. Feminism as a movement gradually took momentum, not only in Pakistan, which is among under developing countries, but even in the west it has been developed a great deal. Awareness in women about their ill-treatment is clear from the fact that Friedan realized in early 1960s that women are merely bound to the role of housewives. In the next decade, i.e. 1970s, voices were raised against representing women as sexual objects (Selden, Widdoson, Brooker, 2005 pg. 115-137). In 1980s, it was realized by spencer that women had played a bigger role than men in the development of literature such as novels (Selden, Widdoson, Brooker, 2005 pg. 115-137)

2000- present: in 21st century feminism got momentum worldwide. Many acts, bills were passed in all countries, many books were published, many movies, dramas were released to show female problems and to bring awareness in female. Actress, politicians, NGOs start working for women rights. Now international women's day is celebrated in every country. Movies like "A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night" (Ana Lily Amirpour, 2014), Belle (2014), The Circle (2000), books like "I am Malala", "My Secret Garden", Thousand splendid sun, these all were partly related to feminism. Acts were passed like in 2016 women protection Act was passed.

In global perspective, there has been a clear change in the status of women but it is thoroughly changed in Pakistani perspective. Here in Pakistan, woman is still oppressed and deprived. Generally women play different role in a society including parental, occupational, conjugal, domestic, kin, collective and individual. Mostly women in Pakistan were found within the premises of household and they look after the kids. In Pakistan women are considered less capable than men and it is generally believed that women are to be kept in limits and less modern (Shah, Khan, Naushad, Jadoon & Alam, 2006 pg. 81). Generally the status of Pakistani women is not good in the world. "According to the World Bank report the status of Pakistani women is lowest as compared to other countries" (Rashid, 2012 pg. 520). Research reveals that the situation of women in Pakistan is quite pathetic. For instance, (sheikh, 2009) points out that the responsibilities assigned to women generally revolve around household chores.

The status of woman has not changed a great deal in Pakistan as compared to the West. Women are the integral part of the society. Research has also shown that Pakistan is on the top in the worst countries, where the status of women is precarious. Almost 80% women in Pakistan still face domestic violence, even those who are educated (zohair, 2016). A study by zohair (2016) reveals that Pakistan in the Gender Development Index out of 93 countries, Pakistan is ranked on number 82, while 152 out of 156 in Gender Empowerment Measure (zohair, 2016).

The portrayal of women in literature also gives a bleak picture of the status of women. In every

literature (Pashto literature, Urdu literature, English literature, Arabic literature, and Persian literature) the writers show women as source of evil or inferior to men. In English literature, for instance Shakespeare describe female inferiority in his plays e.g. the character of Lady Macbeth or in Hamlet he purely shows, women as weak, fickle minded, and dependent person in society (Shakespeare, 1600 pg. 2-233). In Canterbury Tales, the tale of the “wife of bath” has been an ancient example of the treatment of man towards his wife (Chaucer 1400). Even Aristotle considered women inferior and believed that they can’t be tragic protagonists (hero/heroine) (Aristotle, 1902).

Similarly, In Pashto literature, proverbs like, If a woman is not liked or compared with, there is an option – change her. Woman is less competent and her brain lies in her toes. Usually women have long hair but at the same time a longer tongue. If a woman, she is wrong. Woman has two abodes; home and grave. Woman is believed seven steps a head from devil towards Hell. Woman is like wild plant, grows quickly and in large number but less valuable (Sana uddin, 2015 pg.11) Keeping in mind and culture all these omens, Pakistani society treats a woman.

Pakistan Demographics Profile declared that present male-to-female ratio is 1:06 (Murtaza, 2014).

Son preference is another aspect that keeps women in deterioration conditions in Pakistan. 65.5% people in Pakistan prefer son while 6.1 prefer girls/ daughters. It is considered a step towards gender discrimination (Murtaza, 2014). “Women comes to this world as unwanted child and throughout her life she has been realized her value and status in a male dominant Pakistani society” (Murtaza, 2014).

“When you said in your speech, ‘If not now, when? If not me, who? ’ I decided there’s no way and there’s nothing wrong by calling yourself a feminist. So I’m a feminist and we all should be a feminist because feminism is another word for equality.” — Malala Yousafzai, (2015)

Feminism in Pakistan slightly changed after 9/11. Islam directly was focused and Islamic practices were debated which gave a sense as if they justify the incident via Islam (Ovais, 2014). Feminism in Pakistan changes with the rulers. Benazir Bhutto supported women against the CII bills and other issues. General Zia-Ul-Haq’s Hudood Ordinance was the worst decision. With G.Musharraf feminism once again took momentum. Later, served bills were passed in favour of interest of women. For instance, Criminal Law Amendment Act (2004), the Anti-Sexual Harassment Bill, the Criminal Acid Act, Protection of Women Act, Status of Women Bill etc. (Ovais, 2014). In Pakistan feminists are divided into two categories, a modern, Islamic feminism and a secular feminism.

Modern Islamic feminists include Riffat Hassan, Amina Wadud and Asma Barlas. They are working for women rights and they want to find the solutions of problems related to women by keenly observing female-centric laws offers by Islam (Ovais, 2014). Secular feminists like Shahnaz Rouse and Fouzia Saeed consider feminism as an extension of basic human rights, regardless of any religious connotations (Ovais, 2014). Women do not get their basic rights throughout Pakistan especially in Baluchistan. There is traditionally male dominant society and women have less space in the affairs i.e. social, political, economic and even academic (Notezai, 2015). Baluchistan is on top in maternal mortality, women illiteracy, unemployment and gender discrimination (Notezai, 2015). Honor killing is common in Baluchistan. Famous model Qandeel Baloch was strangled by her brother. “The Aurat Foundation (AF), organization working for women’s rights, has reported different cases of violence against women in Baluchistan. The foundation said that at least 187 cases of violence against women occurred in Baluchistan in 2014 (Notezai, 2015). It is also reported that 75 honor killings, were made in different divisions of Baluchistan (Notezai, 2015). Health sources for female are neglected, in the report of The Pakistan Health Demographic Survey; maternal mortality rate is high in Baluchistan as compared to other provinces of Pakistan. There were 785 deaths for every 100,000 women in Baluchistan (Notezai,

2015).

In the Punjab, taken from a recent report by a researcher Sadaf “women in Pakistan” she has observed women badly treated by male family members in Punjab. Indicated towards the so called support of law where in care of family F.I.R the police always convince the victim for reconciliation (Zahra, 2015). According to the report of Aurat Foundation, 7,010 cases of violence were recorded in Punjab in the year of 2014. Similarly 1,408 cases of rape and gang rape were also recorded (Jalil, 2015)

Similarly in the province Sindh, women are oppressed and being mother, sisters, daughters and wife. They do not get that prestige which they deserve (Khan, 2003). In Sindh women face problems in domestic as well as social and political levels. They are considered inferior and their birth is never welcomed (Kakepoto, 2005 pg. 5) Sindhi males are found very untrustworthy towards women. They do not trust their women and it is a common practice killing women on the name of honor, calling her shameful and rapturous. The same is true about women education in Sindh which is only confined to the middle class and urban areas (Khan, 2003). Khairpur in Sindh province is found on top in violence against women in a report by NGO.

Report Prepared by the Aurat Foundation, a non-governmental organization working on women-related issues, the report says the 421 incidents involved 534 women and girls but FIRs were registered only in 66 cases (Bhagwandandas, 2014). Women all suffer in silence but compared to the rest of Pakistan, women in KP suffers greater proportions (Haider, 2014). We live in a society of double standard. I feel that cultures oppressed women in some way, Our Pashtun society is patriarch, male dominant society. In KP the females are less in number than male in every field of life. Socially, in Pashtun society men think that females are made for homes. Handing over girls and women to rival partner (swara), Honor killing, less dowry murders is common in KP. Local customs based on social norms, that’s is Tor (blame), Peghor (satire or irony), strongly discourage political power of women (Naz, Ibrahim & Ahmad, 2012 pg.167) “Women in Karak have been prohibited from leaving their home without mahram in holy months the reason was that they spread vulgarity (khan, 2013). Education level is too less in KP as compared to other parts of Pakistan. Malala Yousafzai was shot in the head because she was trying to pursue education (Khan 2013). In Swat, girls schools in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and FATA are frequently bombed over 1,200 schools are destroyed by the Taliban in Pakistan. Women are not allowed to leave their house without a male, are not allowed to do jobs, listen to music or wear beauty products, and there have been incidents of public punishment (Taseer, 2012).

Violence or threat of violence, at home, in the field, or in the street, is a daily reality for the vast majority of Pakistani women. As like other provinces Gilgit-Baltistan is also male dominant province. Women face discrimination within the house as result of unequal gender power relation (Isran, 2012 pg. 835). Male member of the family is responsible of women and they control the honor of family through their control over female member. When women behavior become doubtful or threatens to family honor, it is her body that punished with beating, sexual abuse or even killing (Noor, 2004 pg.15). Brother, father and fear of dishonor are the major problems in education of Gilgit-Baltistan (Qasmi, 2009 82-86). According to the research, (Khan, Rathore & Ilyas 2012 pg. 115-119) gender discrimination is serious issue in Gilgit-Baltistan.

Research Questions

Replying to the following research question has been the aim of the study:

1. How does the educated class perceive the status of women in Pakistan?
2. What inter-provincial differences exist with regard to the status of women in Pakistan?

Methodology

Research Design

The present study is descriptive in approach and the researcher has adopted qualitative research methodology. Discourse analysis has been adopted as the specific research methodology for this qualitative research. Discourse analysis is the study of social life, understood through analysis of language in its widest sense, including face-to-face talk, non-verbal interaction, images, symbols and documents (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Discourse analysis is “concerned with language use as a social phenomenon and therefore necessarily goes beyond *one* speaker or *one* newspaper article to find features which have a more generalized relevance” (Taylor, 2013). The methodology suits my study since I aim to analyze documents (letters to editors) and the meaning they convey with respect to feminism.

Pakistani society and five provinces are the context of this research study. The educated readers and only male educated writers of the letters are the population of this study. The letters were selected according to the five provinces of Pakistan.

Table 3.1: detail of letters to the editors

s.no	Name of Province	Newspapers: June, July 2016		Total no. of letters
		The Dawn (June+july)	The News (June+July)	
1	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	2	5	7
2	Sindh	4	1	5
3	Punjab	3	6	9
4	Baluchistan	1	4	5
5	Gilgit Baltistan	0	0	0

The study took the letters to editor from two leading newspapers of Pakistan “The Dawn” and “The News” of June and July months in the year 2016. Dawn is Pakistan’s oldest and The News is the largest English-language newspaper. Reading habit reduces due to technological advancement. Most of the time people are occupied in mobiles and internet and the only attraction nowadays remains the Newspaper. There is a handful reader of Newspapers. That is why letters to the editors of these two leading newspapers were chosen as instruments of data collection.

Criteria for judging research

The researcher has used letters to the editor in the English newspapers because feminism is new term. Awareness regarding feminism is neglected in Pakistan, that’s why the researcher selected the educated writers and educated readers of English newspapers. From the response of educated writers and educated readers the researcher analyzed proportionally the response of less educated people towards feminism.

Data Analysis

The researcher used letters written to the editor of two leading English newspapers, The Dawn and The News. The researcher analyzed the data collected through letters to the editor to find out the response of educated readers and male writers towards feminism. The result of the analysis of letters was compared with the status of women in the five provinces of Pakistan. All the analysis was carried out

orderly with the help of relevant tables prepared by the researcher for the same purpose. The researcher took letters from two months June, July of the year 2016 and selected/ collected approximately twenty-six letters to the editor from throughout Pakistan.

The letters to the editor describe the pathetic conditions of Pakistani women in every field i.e. educational fields, professional fields, domestic violence, child abuse, honor killing etc. it was observed that women suffer in almost all provinces of Pakistan but at the same time there are certain organization working for the support and welfare of women. This research itself is an attempt to bring positive change in the status of Pakistani women.

Overview of letters from Pakistan

For the cause of women researcher first analyzed the letters provincially i.e. letters to the editor in different provinces were describe through a table:

Table 4.1 Detail of letters to the editors

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3	Punjab	3	6	9
4	Baluchistan	1	4	5
5	Gilgit Baltistan	0	0	0

Table shows the response of male writers towards the causes of women in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It was found that response in Punjab is higher than any other province in Pakistan. In the same way lowest response was found in Baluchistan.

1. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

s.no	Author	Place of Author	Caption of Letter	Theme of Letter	Newspaper Name
1	Muhammad Ahmad Khan	Peshawar	Dirty clinics	Unhygienic conditions of females waiting rooms	Dawn
2	Dr.RazaUllah	Peshawar	Nurses of KP	Female nurses protest for rights, neglected profession	News
3	Engr. Abdul Jabbar	Peshawar	Neglected sector	Low portion of buget for education and health	News
4	Khan Faraz	Peshawar	Poor school	Bad condition of education in Mardan	News
5	Asmat Ali	Tangi charsadda	Meritocracy	Female teachers	News
6	Razaullah	Lakki marwat	Naya KP	Lack of education and health facilities	Dawn
7	Masood Khan	Peshawar	Targeting Malala	Malala was shot	News

The above table shows the response of educated male writers towards female and their problems. In

the two months of newspapers the researcher has found eight letters to the editor regarding feminism in Pakistan. These letters is about female education, education policy, education system, problems of professional women, unhygienic condition of female places.

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, letters to the editor reflected the voices of educated male writers raising concerns about women's issues, particularly in health, education, and professional fields. The dominant structure of the letters was issue-resolving, with most authors using active voice and clear agency, showing strong engagement with the topic. Themes ranged from the unhygienic conditions of female waiting areas in hospitals to the low representation and poor treatment of professional women like nurses. Writers highlighted systemic gender inequality, inadequate infrastructure for female education, and cultural resistance rooted in Pashtun traditions. The case of Malala Yousafzai was symbolically used to reflect both the struggle and the societal backlash against girls' education. Despite the writers' supportive tone and the overall positive effect of the letters, the underlying issues of gender discrimination, unequal professional opportunities, and socio-cultural barriers for women in KP remained evident throughout the discourse.

Violence of women e.g. domestic violence , forced marriages, less dowry murders, sexual harassment, punishments are faced by women but it is less in number than any other province of Pakistan.

2. Sindh

s.no	Author	Place of author	Caption of author	Theme of letter	Newspaper name
1	Huzaifa Ejaz	Karachi	Disappointed by CII	Remarks how to control womenfolk	Dawn
2	Syed Sufyan Alam	Karachi	Quality of education	Flaws in education system	Dawn
3	Dr. Fazalullah Pechuho	Karachi	Education money	Education issues	Dawn
4	S.Aamir Hussain	Larkana	What gender equality?	Male are inferior than women	Dawn
5	Muzzamil Ahmad	Karachi	The honor card	14 women were murdered in the name of honor	News

The response of male writers towards feminism in Sindh province of Pakistan, is reflected in table no 4.1. These letters are about women education, health, child labor, honor killing, problems of professional women, and remarks against CII bill. Through the letters the educated writers of the province high lightened and support the issues of women but it does not change the status of women in reality in the Province. In Sindh, the letters to the editor written by educated male authors reflect a deep concern for women's issues, including education, professional inequality, honor killings, domestic violence, and societal control. Most letters used an issue-resolving structure with clear agency, showing that writers were aware of the harsh realities women face in the province. One letter strongly criticized the Council of Islamic Ideology (CII) for its stance on controlling women, highlighting widespread physical and psychological abuse, child marriages, and male dominance in Sindhi society. Others focused on flaws in the education system, pointing out how women from poor backgrounds are denied

education due to class discrimination and patriarchal restrictions. Although these writers supported women's rights, they also revealed the contradiction that while men may speak for change, they often remain barriers to it. One letter even claimed men now face gender discrimination, challenging the dominant feminist narrative. Another letter exposed the brutality of honor killings, portraying women as victims of a deeply rooted culture that sacrifices them for male pride. Overall, these letters underline the urgency of reform but also expose the deep cultural and systemic resistance to true gender equality in Sindh.

3. Punjab

s.no	Author	Place of author	Caption of letter	Theme of letter	Newspaper name
1	Usman Shah	Rawalpindi	Girls' education	Position holder girls in FBIS, girls are superior than boys	News
2	Syed Ali Qasim	Lahore	Child rights commission	Women and children face sexual and verbal abuse	News
3	Zaheer Ahmad	Islamabad	What honor	Honor killing	News
4	Taj Nabi Khan	Islamabad	Misogyny	Rise in violence against women	News
5	Najeeb A. Khan	Islamabad	Modern CII	Against light beating of wife	News
6	Akbar Jan Marwat	Islamabad	The role of CII	CII against women	News
7	Captain [®] Saeed Nawaz Khan	Rawalpindi	The rude senator	Senator use abusive words for women	News
8	Maj [®] Mumtaz Bashir	Lahore	Khwaja asif's remarks	Derogatory remarks about women in parliament	Dawn
9	Ejaz Ahmad Magoon	Lahore	Khwaja Asif's remarks	Humiliating language for woman	Dawn

The above letter shows the response of male writers regarding feminism from the province of Punjab. These letters are about women health problems, sexual harassment, forced marriages, domestic violence, sexual and verbal abuse face by women and CII bills.

In Punjab, the letters to the editor reveal a strong response from male writers on a wide range of women's issues, including education, honor killings, domestic violence, verbal and sexual abuse, and the controversial role of the Council of Islamic Ideology (CII). The majority of letters used an issue-resolving structure with active voice, showing the authors' clear stance on the injustices faced by women in both

public and private spheres. One letter praised the academic achievements of girls in the Federal Board, advocating for gender equality in education. Others exposed how feudalism, patriarchy, and poverty contribute to violence against women, where abuses are often sanctioned by local systems like punchayats. Several letters criticized CII bills that permitted slight physical punishment of wives, portraying them as regressive and damaging to women's dignity. Political figures and religious leaders were also called out for using derogatory, abusive language against women, particularly in public forums like parliament and television. Although Punjab has a relatively higher female literacy rate, class disparities remain significant, and women continue to face cultural, legal, and institutional oppression. The discourse emphasized that, despite legislative efforts, societal attitudes and power structures still deprive women of their rights and respect.

4. Baluchistan

s.no	Author	Place of author	Caption of author	Theme of author	Newspaper name
1	A citizen	Quetta	People vs sardars	Feudal system effects on people	Dawn
2	Aqil Baba	Kech	Children at work	27% of girl' labor	News
3	Babar Ali Shah	Shikarpur	Abuse	Girls sexual harassment and abuse before they turn to 18	News
4	Wajahat Abro	Shikarpur	In poor health	Highest ratio of woman mortality	News
5	Engr Arsalan Thahim	Shikarpur	The business of education	Education depends on money	News

The researcher found five letters to the editor regarding females in Baluchistan province of Pakistan. In Baluchistan, the letters to the editor highlight the severe challenges faced by women, particularly in rural areas where feudal systems and patriarchal norms dominate everyday life. The letters, mostly structured as issue-resolving with clear agency, discuss a range of pressing issues such as honor-based violence, child labor, sexual abuse, lack of education, and poor health facilities for women. Writers expose how women in rural Baluchistan are treated as inferior, often described metaphorically as "ordinary" or likened to slaves under feudal control. The literacy rate, especially among rural women, is alarmingly low, and access to education is limited to upper-class urban girls. Child labor among girls is widespread, with 27% reportedly involved in exhausting daily chores like fetching water, cooking, and cleaning, often under unsafe conditions. Letters also bring attention to the growing problem of sexual harassment, with 15–20% of children reportedly facing abuse before the age of 18. Health concerns are equally dire, with high maternal mortality rates and inadequate medical services contributing to the suffering of women. Despite male writers appearing to support women's rights in these letters, the reality remains starkly different—social and cultural systems continue to restrict women's autonomy and reinforce male dominance, making genuine progress difficult in the province.

Balochi women have little space in politics, education, economic systems. In letters male supported the causes of women but in reality they are against women in every field and keep them to the wall.

5. Gilgit Baltistan

The researcher has found no letter from Gilgit-Baltistan province. This doesn't mean that the status of women is good in Gilgit-Baltistan. The condition of women in Gilgit Baltistan is also pathetic. Due to patriarchal system in Gilgit-Baltistan women are deprived from basic rights. Due to remoteness of the region from the rest of the Pakistan, there has been less awareness among people about female education. Culture and social barriers also limit the mobility of women.(The nation, 2015) In Gilgit-Baltistan women are not allowed to seek medical treatment from male doctor, domestic violence, Social discrimination, honor killing are present but less as compare to rest of the provinces.

Discussion

This research reveals how the voices of educated male citizens, expressed through letters to the editor, reflect varying degrees of awareness, concern, and contradiction regarding women's issues across different provinces of Pakistan. While the number and content of these letters do not represent the complete socio-cultural landscape, they offer valuable insight into how men from various regions publicly engage with the discourse surrounding women's rights, education, violence, and gender equality.

The highest number of letters was found from Punjab (9 letters), indicating relatively higher public engagement with women's issues in this region. Writers highlighted a range of problems including verbal and sexual abuse, honor killings, forced marriages, and the controversial role of the Council of Islamic Ideology (CII). Letters critiqued derogatory remarks made by politicians in public forums, and some celebrated girls' academic achievements. This shows a dual narrative: while the public supports women's empowerment on the surface, entrenched patriarchal values, class-based inequalities, and institutional barriers continue to limit progress. The discourse emphasized systemic violence against women, both within homes and professional spaces, despite Punjab having the highest female literacy rate among all provinces.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (7 letters) reflected a strong concern for women's health, education, and the poor treatment of professional women like nurses. Authors acknowledged that traditional Pashtun values and societal pressures limit women's access to education and professional life. The symbolic use of Malala Yousafzai's case as a discourse point revealed how extreme resistance to girls' education still exists. Letters frequently adopted an issue-resolving tone and pointed out the low literacy rate among females, lack of basic health facilities, and gender-based violence as persistent challenges in the region.

In Sindh (5 letters), the writers dealt with themes such as child labor, honor killings, gender discrimination, and critiques of the CII's allowance of "light beating" of wives. One letter even reversed the discourse, claiming that men were becoming the victims of gender discrimination — a reflection of the defensive stance some segments of society takes in response to feminist progress. Letters revealed that Sindhi society remains deeply patriarchal, with education for women often limited by class, poverty, and traditional male control. The honor-based violence discussed in the letters shows the normalization of extreme punishments inflicted upon women under the pretext of maintaining family dignity.

Baluchistan (5 letters) brought to light the grim reality for rural women, including severe illiteracy, poor health care, child labor, and honor-based practices. Letters depicted women as "ordinary" or voiceless figures under feudal control, with limited mobility and no access to quality education or health services. Authors used metaphors and rewording to portray the everyday struggles of Baluch women, reinforcing

that while awareness might be growing, actual socio-economic improvement remains negligible. The intersection of class, geography, and culture severely limits the visibility and agency of women in public discourse.

Interestingly, Gilgit-Baltistan had no published letters on women's issues during the study period. This absence is not a sign of progress but a reflection of systemic silence and limited access to media platforms. The region's geographical remoteness, cultural constraints, and deeply rooted patriarchal values prevent women from voicing their concerns publicly. Despite this silence in media discourse, social issues such as domestic violence, restrictions on women's medical access, and educational barriers remain significant, though often invisible.

Across all provinces, the majority of letters adopted an issue-resolving structure, used active voice, and revealed an ideological stance either supportive of feminist concerns or entangled in cultural contradictions. While many writers expressed sympathy for women's rights and highlighted systemic oppression, the overall discourse still reflects that patriarchy is deeply embedded in Pakistan's social, political, and institutional fabric. The limited and often elite-driven public engagement through letters also shows a disconnect between public discourse and grassroots realities. True gender equality remains hindered by class disparity, cultural traditions, and a lack of political will.

Conclusion

The letters written to the editors of two leading newspapers of Pakistan were selected to see/investigate the response of the educated public of Pakistan towards feminism in general and status of women in particular. Many letters were selected from all most all five provinces. Punjab stood on the top and Gilgit-Baltistan on the bottom. Throughout Pakistan greater response was found in Punjab and KP and there is no response from Gilgit-Baltistan and little response from Sindh and Baluchistan. The data of the letter were classified provincially and the framework of discourse analysis is used to analyze the data according the research question. It was found that as compared to response the status of women in that very province doesn't match the response being made by educated writer.

The results of the study seem to be well suited with the above mentioned statement that the status of women doesn't change with the change of perception of Pakistani educated writers. Furthermore the outcome of the study can add something to the conflicting ideologies, social, religious and cultural privileges to women. The results of the present study foretell that a part from awareness, the status of women cum feminism in Pakistan doesn't develop a great deal.

Implication and recommendation

- 1) The status of women still remains pathetic and oppressed despite development and momentum in feminism. There is a need to raise awareness about women-rights in Pakistan.
- 2) Through literature review different researchers also pointed the deteriorated condition of women in all five provinces in Pakistan. Feminism as a movement should be performed, advocated and promoted.
- 3) This research study will give importance to women in particular in Pakistan and feminism in general.

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