

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF INITIATIVES IN THE CONTEXT OF LEGISLATION AND INSTITUTIONAL REFORMS FOR TACKLING WOMEN ISSUES IN KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA

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Abstract:

Women's issues encompass challenges disproportionately impacting women, including discrimination, gender-based violence, unequal access to education and employment, and restricted reproductive rights. This study critically examines the legislation and institutional reforms in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) aimed at promoting gender equality. A significant challenge is the weak implementation of laws due to inadequate resources, corruption, and institutional limitations. Cultural attitudes and norms perpetuate gender inequality, complicating efforts as laws fail to address root causes effectively. Institutional reforms often exclude marginalized women's perspectives, particularly those from rural and low-income backgrounds, reducing their overall effectiveness. Achieving gender equality in KP requires robust legislative and institutional reforms, along with broader societal changes, such as promoting gender sensitivity and challenging patriarchal norms. Enhanced community education and awareness raising efforts are crucial for addressing cultural attitudes and behaviors sustaining gender inequality. Strengthening implementation and improving the inclusivity of women's voices in policymaking are essential steps toward gender equality in KP.

Key words:

Gender equality, Women's rights, Institutional reforms, Cultural attitudes

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Introduction

Women's issues refer to a broad range of challenges and injustices that disproportionately affect women around the world. These issues can take many different forms, including discrimination, gender-based violence, unequal access to education and employment, and restrictions on reproductive rights. Historically, women have faced significant obstacles to achieving equality and gaining access to the same opportunities as men. As Budhwar et al. (2005) highlight, gender inequity persists in both developed and developing countries, despite the progress made in recent years.

Women's issues are not just a matter of fairness or social justice; they also have significant economic and political implications. Craig and Gordon (2008) argue that excluding women from education and the workforce means societies miss out on their valuable contributions and potential for innovation. Furthermore, when women are not represented in government and other decision-making bodies, their perspectives and priorities are often overlooked. This oversight can result in policies that do not adequately serve the needs of women and their families, perpetuating a cycle of inequality and disadvantage.

Addressing women's issues involves a wide range of stakeholders, including governments, nongovernmental organizations, and individuals. These efforts may include advocacy, policy reform, education, and direct action to address specific issues like violence against women or unequal pay. Governments play a crucial role by enacting and enforcing laws that promote gender equality, while nongovernmental organizations often lead grassroots movements and provide support services to women in need. Individuals, too, have a part to play in challenging discriminatory attitudes and practices in their communities.

In regions like Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), the challenges are particularly pronounced due to deep-seated cultural attitudes and norms that perpetuate gender inequality. Despite the implementation of legislation and institutional reforms aimed at addressing women's issues, enforcement remains weak, and the reforms often fail to address the root causes of the problem. Cultural attitudes and social norms that justify violence against women and restrict their access to education and healthcare continue to prevail in many communities.

Moreover, institutional reforms frequently exclude the perspectives and voices of marginalized women, such as those from rural and low-income backgrounds. This exclusion limits the effectiveness of reforms in addressing the diverse experiences and needs of women in KP. To achieve genuine gender equality, it is essential to include these voices in the policymaking process and ensure that reforms are comprehensive and inclusive.

Ultimately, addressing women's issues in KP and elsewhere requires not only robust legislative and institutional reforms but also broader societal changes. Promoting gender sensitivity, challenging patriarchal norms, and enhancing community education and awareness are crucial steps in this process. Strengthening the implementation of existing laws and improving the inclusivity of women's voices in policymaking are essential for making meaningful progress toward gender equality. Recognizing and valuing women's contributions to society, and ensuring that their rights and needs are addressed, are vital for building more equitable and just communities.

Problem Statement

- The province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) in Pakistan has a long history of gender inequality and discrimination against women. Despite various legislative and institutional reforms, women's issues continue to persist in the region. Analyzing the context of legislation and institutional reforms for women's issues in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is a complex and multifaceted task that requires a comprehensive understanding of the sociocultural, political, and economic factors shaping the status of women in the region. These factors include deeply entrenched cultural norms, patriarchal attitudes, and systemic barriers that hinder women's progress and perpetuate gender disparities. The persistence of gender-based violence, unequal access to education and employment opportunities, and restrictions on reproductive rights are just a few examples of the ongoing challenges faced by women in KP. Despite the existence of laws aimed at protecting women's rights, the enforcement of these laws is often weak, and the intended reforms fail to address the underlying causes of gender inequality. Additionally, institutional reforms frequently exclude the voices and perspectives of marginalized women, particularly those from rural and low-income backgrounds, further limiting their

effectiveness. This study aims to critically analyze the legislative context and institutional reforms that have been implemented in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, with a focus on identifying the gaps and challenges in their implementation. By examining the sociocultural, political, and economic factors that influence the status of women in KP, this research seeks to provide a nuanced understanding of the barriers to achieving gender equality in the region and offer insights and recommendations for more effective policies and practices that can address women's issues comprehensively and inclusively.

Research Objectives

- The following are the objectives for a critical analysis of the context of the legislation and institutional reforms for women's issues in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa:
 1. To identify and analyze the key legislative and institutional reforms that have been implemented to address women's issues in KP.
 2. To assess the effectiveness of these reforms in improving the status of women in the region.
 3. To identify gaps and challenges in the implementation of these reforms and evaluate the reasons behind these challenges.
 4. To propose recommendations for further legislative and institutional reforms that can address the root causes of gender inequality and discrimination against women in KP.

Literature Review

- The issue of women's rights and gender equality in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) has been the subject of much academic and policy research in recent years. The literature review helps the researcher identify the existing legislation and institutional reforms in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for addressing women's issues. This method involves a systematic review of published literature, reports, and other relevant documents.

Women's Issues in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

- Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is one of the provinces of Pakistan, situated in the northwest part of the country. Despite women comprising almost half of the population, they face a range of challenges and barriers to equality and empowerment. Here are some key facts and statistics about women in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa:

Women's Education

- Women in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have lower rates of literacy and school enrollment compared to men. According to a 2017 report by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, the literacy rate for women in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is 45.2%, compared to 71.2% for men.

Violence

- Women are vulnerable to violence in Pakistan due to the dominance of men in society, which leads to widespread violence against women. Gender-based violence is a violation of human rights (Parkinson, 2022). Worldwide, there are still many different types of violence against women, from domestic abuse and sexual assault to more serious types like honor killings and acid attacks (Ashraf et al., 2017). Women in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa face high rates of gender-based violence, including domestic violence, sexual assault, and honor killings. According to the Aurat Foundation, a women's rights organization in Pakistan, there were 2,297 cases of violence against women reported in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in 2020.

Gender Inequality

- The achievement of gender equality is a key objective since it is regarded as a fundamental human right and is economically necessary for social justice and progress (Balakrishnan et al., 2016). Girls and women should be free from violence, and attaining the 2030 Agenda and its global goals will demand quick and strong action on the part of women (UN Women, 2016). UN Women also pushed for the effective

implementation of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls to carry out the 2030 goal (UN Women, 2017). One area where gender inequity is particularly pronounced is in access to education. Girls in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa often face significant barriers to accessing education, including cultural attitudes that prioritize boys' education, lack of safe transportation to and from school, and a shortage of female teachers. In addition to education, women in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa also face significant challenges in accessing employment opportunities, especially in male-dominated fields. They often have limited opportunities for career advancement and are more likely to work in informal sectors. Another major issue related to gender inequity in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is violence against women. Domestic violence, honor killings, and forced marriages are all too common, and women who speak out against these practices often face further discrimination and ostracism. Efforts to address gender inequity in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have been slow, but progress is being made. Activists and organizations are working to raise awareness about the issue and push for policy changes that promote gender equality. However, there is still a long way to go before women in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa can enjoy the same rights and opportunities as men.

Employment Opportunities

- Women in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa face limited economic opportunities, particularly in rural areas. According to the same 2017 report, the female labor force participation rate in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is only 19.4%, compared to 68.4% for men.

Health Facilities

- Women in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa face a range of health challenges, including limited access to maternal and reproductive health services, high rates of maternal mortality, and limited access to mental health services. According to the Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey 2017/18, only 52.6% of women in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa received antenatal care from a skilled health provider during their last pregnancy.

Political Participation

- Women in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are underrepresented in politics, with few women holding elected office or participating in decisionmaking processes. In the 2018 general elections, only 2.6% of the candidates for provincial assembly seats in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were women.

Legislative and Institutional Reforms in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

- Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) has a history of gender inequality and discrimination against women. Over the years, various legislative measures have been taken to address women's issues in the province.

Context of Legislation for Women's Issues in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

1. In 2006, the KP government passed the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act, which criminalized domestic violence and provided legal protection to women against violence and abuse in their homes.
2. One significant legislative accomplishment in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act, passed in 2010. The law criminalizes domestic violence and provides legal protection for women who are victims of abuse. The act also established a Protection Committee to oversee the implementation of the law and provide support to victims.
3. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Harassment of Women at Workplace Act 2010 This legislation aims to prevent and protect women from harassment in the workplace. It establishes a mechanism to investigate complaints of harassment and provides for the punishment of offenders.
4. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Domestic Violence Against Women (Prevention and Protection) Act 2019 This law was introduced to protect women from domestic violence. It provides legal protection and support for women who have been victims of domestic abuse.
5. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Women Empowerment (Protection Against Harassment at Workplace) Act 2016 This law provides for the protection of women from harassment and discrimination in the

workplace. It requires employers to establish a complaint committee to investigate complaints of harassment and ensures that women are not subjected to any adverse consequences for reporting incidents of harassment.

Institutional Reforms for Women's Issues in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

- In addition to legislative measures, the government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) has undertaken several institutional reforms to address women's issues in the province. Some of these reforms include
1. Women Development Department the Women Development Department (WDD) was established in KP in 1987 with the aim of promoting gender equality and empowering women in the province. The department is responsible for developing policies and programs to address women's issues and also provides financial and technical assistance to women's organizations and groups.
 2. Provincial Commission on the Status of Women (2018) The Provincial Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW) was established in KP in 2018. The commission is an independent statutory body that aims to promote gender equality and protect women's rights in the province. It is responsible for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of laws and policies related to women's issues and making recommendations for further reforms.
 3. Women's Crisis Centers The government of KP has established several Women's Crisis Centers (WCCs) across the province to provide support and assistance to women who are victims of violence and abuse. The centers provide a range of services, including legal aid, counseling, medical care, and shelter.
 4. Gender Mainstreaming in Government Departments The government of KP has also introduced gender mainstreaming policies in various government departments to ensure that gender equality is integrated into all aspects of policy and decision-making.
 5. Political Empowerment of Women (2017) The government of KP has also taken measures to increase women's participation in politics and decision-making. In 2017, the province passed a law mandating that

political parties must allocate at least 5% of their tickets to women candidates in local government elections.

Research Methodology

- Several research methods can be employed to analyze legislation and institutional reforms aimed at addressing women's issues in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The choice of methods depends on the research questions, the availability of data, and the resources at hand. Given that the current research is descriptive and based on secondary data collected from various sources, a document analysis tool was used to examine the legislative context and institutional reforms in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Document Analysis

- This involves reviewing relevant legal and policy documents related to women's rights and gender-based violence in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. These documents may include the constitution, laws, regulations, policies, and guidelines pertinent to women's rights and gender-based violence. This method helps identify gaps in the current legal and policy framework and provides a better understanding of the context surrounding women's rights and gender-based violence in the region.

Critical Analysis of Legislation and Institutional Reforms in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

1. **Legislative Reforms in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa:** Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act, 2006: The Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act, passed by the KP government in 2006, is a significant legislative measure aimed at addressing domestic violence against women in the province. The Act criminalizes domestic violence and offers legal protection to women against abuse in their homes.
 - One strength of the Act is its recognition of a broad range of behaviors as domestic violence, including physical, sexual, psychological, and economic abuse. This broad definition acknowledges the various forms of abuse women may face and

provides legal recourse for protection. However, implementing the Act has been challenging.

- There is a lack of awareness among the public and law enforcement officials regarding the Act's provisions, leading to unreported or inadequately addressed cases of domestic violence.
- The Act's limitation lies in its application solely to married women, excluding those in other intimate relationships, such as unmarried women living with their partners. This narrow definition may leave a significant number of women unprotected.
- Additionally, the Act does not provide adequate support services for women victims, such as shelters, counseling, or medical assistance, posing a significant barrier for women seeking to leave abusive relationships.

2. **Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act, 2010:** It should be noted that the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act was actually passed by the National Assembly of Pakistan in 2009 and implemented in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) in 2010. This comprehensive legislation aims to prevent and protect women from domestic violence throughout Pakistan.

- The Act defines domestic violence as any act or conduct against a woman, including physical, sexual, emotional, verbal, and economic abuse, committed by a husband or other family member. It provides legal protection and empowers women to seek restraining orders against their abusers.
- A key strength of the Act is the establishment of a Protection Committee in each district to oversee its implementation and support victims. This Committee, composed of representatives from various government departments and civil society organizations, is responsible for ensuring that victims receive immediate medical and legal aid, counseling services, and shelter. Despite these positive aspects, implementation remains a challenge.

- There is still a lack of awareness among the general public, law enforcement officials, and the judiciary about the Act's provisions, which can result in improper identification, reporting, and prosecution of domestic violence cases.
 - Cultural and societal barriers, such as stigma, fear of retaliation, and lack of access to support services, continue to prevent women from reporting domestic violence and seeking legal protection.
 - The Act has faced funding issues, resulting in limited resources for Protection Committees and insufficient support services for victims.
3. **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2010:** The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Harassment of Women at Workplace Act 2010 aims to prevent and protect women from workplace harassment. However, some critical issues need addressing.
- A significant issue is the lack of awareness and training among employers and employees. Many employers are unaware of the law's provisions and lack the training to implement it effectively, leaving many women uninformed about their rights and less likely to report harassment.
 - The complaint process is slow and cumbersome. Employers are required to establish a complaint committee to investigate harassment complaints, but the committee may take up to thirty days to report its findings, and further delays may occur before the employer takes action. This can lead to delays in justice for victims.
 - The law applies only to formal workplaces, leaving informal or homebased workers without legal protection or recourse against harassment.
 - Additionally, the law does not provide compensation or redress for victims, meaning that even if an offender is punished, the victim may not receive compensation or support for the harm suffered.

4. **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Domestic Violence against Women (Prevention and Protection) Act, 2019:** The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Domestic Violence against Women (Prevention and Protection) Act 2019 is a significant step towards protecting women from domestic violence in the province. However, some critical issues need to be addressed

- A major issue is the lack of awareness and training among law enforcement agencies and the judiciary. Many police officers and judges may not be familiar with the Act's provisions, resulting in improper handling of domestic violence cases and insufficient protection and support for victims.
- The law's definition of domestic violence is limited to physical violence, sexual violence, and emotional, psychological, and economic abuse, excluding other forms such as stalking and harassment.
- The law does not provide support or rehabilitation services for victims, such as medical or psychological support and financial assistance, leaving many victims vulnerable and without resources to recover from abuse.
- The law applies only to married women or women in a domestic relationship with the abuser, excluding women in other types of relationships and potentially leaving them unprotected.

5. **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Women Empowerment (Protection against Harassment at Workplace) Act, 2016:** The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Women Empowerment (Protection against Harassment at Workplace) Act 2016 is crucial for protecting women from workplace harassment and empowering them in the workforce. However, there are some implementation issues.

- A primary issue is the lack of awareness and training among employers and employees. Many employers are unaware of the law and lack the necessary training to implement it, leaving many women uninformed about their rights and less likely to report harassment.

- The complaint process is slow and cumbersome, with committees taking up to thirty days to submit findings and further delays in employer action. This can result in delayed justice for victims.
- The law applies only to formal workplaces, excluding informal or homebased work, leaving many women vulnerable to harassment without legal protection.
- Additionally, the law does not provide compensation or redress for victims, so even if an offender is punished, the victim may not receive any compensation or support for the harm suffered.

*Analysis of Institutional Reforms for Women's Issues in Khyber
Pakhtunkhwa*

1. **Women Development Department KP, 1987:** The establishment of the Women Development Department (WDD) in KP in 1987 was a significant step toward promoting women's development and empowerment. However, several critical issues with the implementation of the department's programs and initiatives need addressing.

- A major issue is the lack of financial resources and funding. The department's budget is often insufficient for effective program implementation and may not receive necessary government support, limiting the impact of its initiatives.
- The WDD's programs may have a limited scope, focusing on training and education but not addressing root causes of gender inequality and discrimination, such as access to healthcare, political representation, and economic opportunities.
- The department may lack the capacity and resources to effectively implement its programs, particularly in reaching women in rural and remote areas where barriers to development are more significant.
- Cultural and social resistance may hinder the department's

efforts, with patriarchal norms potentially obstructing women's participation in its programs and causing social stigma.

2. **Provincial Commission on the Status of Women (2018):** The establishment of the KP Provincial Commission on the Status of Women in 2018 was a positive step toward promoting gender equality. However, several issues with the commission's mandate need addressing.

- Lack of awareness and visibility among the public is a significant issue. Many women may not know about the commission, its mandate, or its services, limiting its impact.
- The commission's limited mandate may restrict its effectiveness, as it can promote women's rights and monitor legislation but may lack enforcement powers.
- Political and institutional resistance may limit the commission's effectiveness, particularly in a context with entrenched patriarchal norms and political actors who may not prioritize women's rights.
- The commission may face financial constraints, with an insufficient budget to implement its programs effectively.

3. **Women Crises Centers:** The establishment of Women's Crisis Centers in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) represents a significant advancement in addressing the challenges faced by women in the province. These centers are designed to offer support and assistance to women who have experienced violence, abuse, or other forms of discrimination.

- One of the primary strengths of the Women's Crisis Centers in KP is the wide range of services they provide. These centers offer a comprehensive array of services, including medical assistance, legal aid, counseling, and vocational training. This breadth of support ensures that women who have endured violence or abuse receive the necessary resources to rebuild their lives.
- Another notable strength is their focus on serving women in

rural and remote areas. These centers are strategically located in regions where women might face substantial obstacles to accessing services, such as limited transportation options, social stigma, or restrictive cultural norms. By situating centers in these underserved areas, they help women overcome these barriers and access the support they need.

- The Women’s Crisis Centers have been effective in raising awareness about women’s rights and empowering women to take action against violence and abuse. Through the provision of counseling and legal aid, these centers assist women in understanding their rights and the available options for addressing violence and abuse. This support fosters greater confidence among women in reporting incidents of violence and seeking the help they require.
 - Despite these strengths, the Women’s Crisis Centers in KP face several challenges. One major issue is their limited capacity. With a finite number of staff and resources, these centers may struggle to meet the demand for their services, particularly in areas with high rates of violence against women. Additionally, there is a lack of coordination and collaboration among various government agencies and civil society organizations working on women’s issues in the province. This fragmentation can lead to duplicated efforts and a lack of cohesive and effective strategies for addressing the challenges women face.
4. **Political Empowerment of Women: 2017:** The Political Empowerment of Women Act, passed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in 2017, represents a significant step toward promoting gender equality in politics. The Act mandates that political parties allocate a minimum of 5% of their tickets for women in local government elections. It also requires that at least one-third of the total number of seats on local councils be reserved for women.
- While the Act is a positive step toward increasing women's participation in politics and ensuring their representation in local government, several limitations need to be addressed:
 - **Applicability:** The Act applies only to local government

elections. Although it mandates that political parties allocate a minimum of 5% of their tickets to women in these elections, it does not extend to national or provincial elections. Consequently, women may still face barriers to participation at higher levels of government.

- **Implementation Challenges:** The Act's implementation may encounter difficulties, particularly in ensuring that political parties adhere to the 5% quota and that women elected to local councils can effectively participate and influence decision-making.
- **Limited Impact on Women's Empowerment:** While the Act is a crucial step toward increasing women's political participation, it does not address other structural barriers that hinder women's achievement of equal political representation and empowerment. These barriers include unequal access to resources and social norms that restrict women's mobility and agency.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Legislative Reforms

- The Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act (2006) is an essential step toward addressing domestic violence against women in KP. However, its implementation and enforcement need to be improved. Further measures should be taken to ensure that all women are protected from domestic violence, regardless of their marital status. Additionally, support services for victims of domestic violence need to be established to help them leave abusive relationships and rebuild their lives.
- The Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act (2010) is a significant legislative measure for addressing domestic violence against women in KP. However, there is a need for increased awareness, funding, and support services to ensure its effective implementation and protection of women's lives.
- The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Harassment of Women at the Workplace

Act (2010) is an important step toward protecting women from harassment in the workplace. Nonetheless, many issues still need to be addressed to ensure its effective implementation. The law needs to be more widely promoted and enforced, and the complaint process should be streamlined to ensure timely justice for victims. Moreover, the law should be expanded to cover informal and home-based work, and victims of harassment should be provided with compensation and support for the harm they have suffered.

- The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Domestic Violence Against Women (Prevention and Protection) Act (2019) is a significant step toward protecting women from domestic violence. However, there are still critical issues with its implementation that need to be addressed. The law needs to be more widely promoted and enforced, and law enforcement agencies and the judiciary should receive adequate training on its provisions. The definition of domestic violence should also be expanded to include other forms of violence, and victims should be provided with necessary support and rehabilitation services. Finally, the law should be expanded to cover all types of relationships so that all women can receive the necessary protection and support from domestic violence.
- In conclusion, while the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Women Empowerment (Protection Against Harassment at the Workplace) Act (2016) is an important step toward protecting women from harassment in the workplace, many issues still need to be addressed to ensure its effective implementation. The law needs to be more widely promoted and enforced, and the complaint process should be streamlined to ensure timely justice for victims. Moreover, the law should be expanded to cover informal and home-based work, and victims of harassment should be provided with compensation and support for the harm they have suffered.

Institutional Reforms

- The establishment of the Women Development Department in KP in 1987 was a positive step toward promoting women's development and empowerment in the province. However, there are still many critical issues that need to be addressed. The department needs adequate financial resources and funding to implement its programs effectively.

Its programs should address the root causes of gender inequality and discrimination in the province. Additionally, the department needs the necessary capacity and resources to reach out to women in rural and remote areas and address cultural and social resistance to its programs and initiatives.

- The establishment of the KP Provincial Commission on the Status of Women in 2018 was a positive step toward promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in the province. Nonetheless, there are still critical issues that need to be addressed. The commission needs to raise awareness and visibility among women in the province, expand the scope of its mandate to enforce its recommendations, address political and institutional resistance to its initiatives, and receive adequate financial resources and funding to implement its programs effectively.
- Women's Crisis Centers in KP are a positive step toward addressing the issues faced by women in the province, but challenges remain. These centers need to be adequately resourced to meet the demand for their services, and there needs to be greater coordination and collaboration between different actors working on women's issues in the province.
- In conclusion, while the Political Empowerment of Women Act is a positive step toward promoting gender equality in politics, it needs to be complemented with other reforms that address structural barriers to women's empowerment. Additionally, the Act's implementation must be closely monitored to ensure its effectiveness in increasing women's representation in local government.

Issues and Challenges

- Access to Data: One of the biggest challenges is the limited availability of data related to women's issues in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. This can make it difficult to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the context of legislation and institutional reforms for tackling women's issues.
- Cultural and Language Barriers: Cultural and language barriers can pose a challenge in conducting research on women's issues in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Engaging with women from different cultural backgrounds and communicating effectively can be difficult,

particularly if they speak different languages.

- **Political Instability:** Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has experienced political instability and conflict in recent years, creating a challenging environment for research. The safety and security of researchers and participants may be at risk, and the availability of resources may be limited.
- **Bias and Discrimination:** Biases and discriminatory attitudes towards women in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa can affect the research process and the quality of data collected.
- **Lack of Resources:** There may be a lack of resources available for conducting research on women's issues in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, including funding, equipment, and trained personnel.
- **Limited Representation of Women in Decision-Making Processes:** Women in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are often underrepresented in decision-making processes, which can limit their input in the development and implementation of legislation and institutional reforms related to women's issues.
- **Complex Legal and Institutional Frameworks:** The legal and institutional frameworks related to women's issues in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa can be complex and difficult to navigate. Identifying relevant legislation and policies and understanding their implementation and enforcement can be challenging.

Way Forward

- **Tackling women's issues in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) will require a comprehensive approach involving legislative and institutional reforms as well as cultural and societal changes. Here are some potential ways forward:**
- **Strengthen and Enforce Existing Laws:** KPK should ensure that existing laws protecting women's rights are effectively enforced, including laws on domestic violence, sexual harassment, and child marriage. The government should also work to close legal loopholes that allow perpetrators to avoid punishment.

- **Pass New Legislation:** Gaps in current legislation may need to be addressed. For example, there may be a need for specific laws on workplace harassment or honor killings. The KPK government should work to pass new legislation aligned with international standards and addressing the unique needs of the region.
- **Increase Women's Participation in Decision-Making:** Women should be included in decision-making processes at all levels of government. This includes appointing more women to decision-making positions and ensuring that women's voices are heard in policy-making discussions.
- **Improve Access to Education:** Education is a key factor in improving women's rights and reducing gender-based violence. KPK should work to improve access to education for girls and women, including providing scholarships and addressing cultural barriers that prevent girls from attending school.
- **Address Cultural Norms:** Many issues faced by women in KPK are deeply rooted in cultural norms and attitudes. The government should work to raise awareness about women's rights and address harmful cultural practices, such as honor killings and forced marriages.
- **Increase Economic Opportunities:** Women in KPK often face economic disadvantages, which can contribute to their vulnerability. The government should work to create economic opportunities for women, including providing job training and promoting women's entrepreneurship.

Responsibilities of Departments/Ministers

- **Ministry of Women's Affairs:** This ministry has primary responsibility for promoting and protecting women's rights. It should create policies and programs that address the specific needs of women, including gender-based violence, access to healthcare, education, and employment.
- **Ministry of Justice:** This ministry is responsible for ensuring that women have equal access to justice and legal protection. It should enforce laws that protect women from gender-based violence and discrimination.

- Ministry of Education: This ministry promotes and improves access to education for all citizens, including girls and women. It should ensure that girls have equal access to education and that schools are safe and welcoming environments for girls.
- Ministry of Health: This ministry provides healthcare services to citizens, including women. It should work to improve access to healthcare services for women, particularly in rural and remote areas.
- Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs: This ministry creates policies and programs that promote gender equality in the workplace and address issues such as sexual harassment, equal pay, and parental leave.
- Ministry of Information and Broadcasting: This ministry is responsible for promoting public awareness and education. It should work to promote gender equality and raise awareness about the issues faced by women in the country.

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