

Gender Beliefs and Action Tendencies for Women's Rights: Impact of National vis-à-vis International Policy Recommendations

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ABSTRACT

In most democratic developing countries, including Pakistan, a crucial and still least prioritised domain is reforms in the status of women's rights. As reflected in the rankings provided by The Gender Gap Index Report (World Economic Forum 2016), Pakistan stands second from the bottom among 144 countries. There are many organisations and programmes at the international and national level that are trying to influence the challenged countries to improve women's rights policies and practices including the United Nations' Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW); Pakistan's commitment to meeting the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); and, the National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW).

The impact of national and international endorsement of the policies intended to improve women's rights in Pakistan was explored in this survey. The survey was designed to see under which conditions, respondents would support policies focusing on women's rights. The two conditions in the experiment were framed as such that the proposed reforms came from the National Government (national condition) or by the United Nations (international condition). As a comparative baseline, a control condition was added in which the source of proposals was not mentioned (control condition).

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The survey was conducted with 619 university students (males: 51%; females: 49 %). Data was collected from the students of the Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad; and, the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics, Islamabad, from March through August 2016.

Results of the study indicated that compared to the control condition, the respondents in the national and international condition expressed higher support for policy reforms for women's rights. Furthermore, participants in the national and international condition were more likely to offer help in the implementation of these policy reforms. At the policy level, the survey supported the claim that national level endorsement of the reforms, compared to the United Nations endorsement, makes propagation and acceptance of the women's rights reforms easier for the general public.

Key Words: Women's rights; CEDAW; gender equality; gender beliefs; international policies; gender policies in Pakistan.

1. INTRODUCTION

Pakistan ratified CEDAW in 1996. However, after two decades the implementation of the Convention is still a dream. When one talks about the international conventions, possibly due to natural resistance to change, acceptance of international conventions is a fancy ideation. The speculation for this resistance may be based on both structural as well as psychological barriers in our perception, which eventually stands in the way of realizing women's full potential. The structural hurdles could be the lack of rights, whereas, the psychological hurdles would include what men and women think about their abilities and how much they value equal rights for women.

Sustainable development is not possible without inclusion of all population. The constitution of most countries in the world gives the same rights to men and women. In practice, however, women's rights are undermined very often (Shah et al. 2015, p. 203). This disparity in practice of unequal treatment has led to some intriguing research on gender gap. Gender gap refers to the discrepancy and hindrance in progress of women compared to men in a wide range of domains including education, job opportunities, health, political participation and economic outcomes (World Economic Forum 2016). According to the World Economic Forum report, Pakistan ranks 143rd out of 144 nations (Ibid.), violation of women's rights, such as exposure to psychological and physical violence and lack of access to justice and political participation are well-known in Pakistan. Hence, this is giving impetus to the efforts to formulate and apply a rights-based applied framework for development of programmes for empowering Pakistani women. Despite the growing need for awareness among policy-makers, practitioners, and development planners, immense gaps persist among people impeding achievements regarding policy implementations (Khan 2009). Resultantly, these factors have

contributed over time to Pakistan's low performance on many human development indicators and its failure in meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

1.1. Deep Rooted Systematic Resistances to Equality of Rights in Pakistan

Resistance to equality of human rights for women is a result of deep-rooted systemic impediments to gender equality that continue to constrain women's physical autonomy and access to resources (Management System International 2012). In addition to facing discrimination in the education system and workplace, women have limited access to recreation and sports facilities. Violence, and the threat of violence, underpin asymmetrical gender relations and prevent women from fulfilling their potential and exercising their basic human rights as equal citizens (Ibid).

Patriarchal system and traditions of the male figures' authority in Pakistani society are vindicated in the name of customs and religion. This results in under-valuing and invisibility of female contribution to society and the proclivity of society towards violence. For example, the traditional norms of Pakistani society endorse segregation and at times even seclusion of women. Such practices are sometimes justified in the name of religion. Often various religious authorities promote such segregation. The Council of Islamic Ideology¹ for instance holds propositions for gender segregation as well as seclusion of women; limiting their access to financial resources and even political participation (Naz et al. 2012).

In 1994, in anticipation of the Beijing Conference, Pakistan was asked to prepare its National Report on the status of country's laws on women. The Senate prepared a report for the Commission of Inquiry for Women (Weiss 2003). The report indicated that there were some derogatory laws and customs that discriminated against women in Pakistan, which were justified and used in the name of religion (Ibid). Although the Constitution of Pakistan gives women the right to own property, operate a business and to assert their citizenship rights (Ahmad 2010), yet the socially biased interpretations of the law and customary practices have restricted women to exercise of these rights. Furthermore, there is a multiplicity of definitions and laws that contradict each other.

1.2. CEDAW and its Implementation Gaps

CEDAW, since the beginning of its adoption by the UN's General Assembly in 1979, has called upon all member states to ensure zero tolerance against different forms of discrimination and oppression against them across the globe (Zia and Butt 2012). It received the status of a UN treaty in 1981 and currently 187 nation states (over 90% of the member countries of the UN) have ratified the Convention (UN Women Pakistan 2016). In addition to proposing an international bill for women's rights, it also motivates

¹ The Council of Islamic Ideology is a religious body that was constitutionally founded by Ayub Khan's government in 1962. It was made responsible for giving legal advice on Islamic issues to the government and the parliament.

member countries for taking actions that guarantee the achievement and enjoyment of equal rights by women. Pakistan ratified CEDAW in 1996, however, this accession was made with a legal reservation under the Article 29 of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, by which Pakistan was not bound by CEDAW² (Bhattacharya 2014).

Pakistan is also a signatory to the SDGs, where the third goal refers to gender equality. This goal not only asks for equality of rights for women but also demands efforts aimed at empowering women for claiming their rights. As far as data of Pakistan is concerned, both CEDAW and SDGs are not strictly implemented, which is evident due to existence and continuity of discriminatory policies against women in Pakistani society (Ministry of Planning 2013). One could argue that it is so because a UN recommended treaty is not directly applicable to Pakistan, especially due to the reservation made in Article 29 of Pakistani law. Due to such reservations in the law for these treaties, there is a great need for amendments in order to implement CEDAW (Ali 2013). Hence, it is vital to bring to the limelight that Pakistan is still struggling with the comprehensive implementation of the Treaty in serving to the cause of gender equality and mainstreaming the same. Hence, it would be essential to highlight the gender related gaps which affect the implementation of CEDAW in Pakistan.

The Gender Gap Index 2015 ranked Pakistan at 144th among 145 countries in terms of the incidence of gender related disparities; and, at 135th in educational attainment (Human Rights Watch Pakistan 2016). Some areas with the highest prevalence of gender gap include the difference in educational attainment of males and females both in rural and urban areas, and this disparity also extends among the provinces. In 1996-1997, for instance, the literacy rate in urban areas was 58.3% while in rural areas it was 28.3%; this rate was low for women in general and only 12% among rural women were noted to be literate (Moheyuddin 2005).

Regarding economic conditions, an estimated 10.8 million individuals in the labour force are unpaid family workers in Pakistan, out of these 59% of women and 88% of men are full time unpaid workers (UN Women Pakistan 2016). According to the UN Women Pakistan (2016), women are suffering due to lack of rights to fair remuneration, work opportunities, which also pushes women towards economic impoverishment and exclusion. All of these factors may lead to marginalised economic lives among women in Pakistan (Ibid). Similar trends were highlighted by a recent World Bank report which explored women's economic prospects and hindrances across 30 nations (The World Bank 2016). The report identified many laws that are still in place which limit economic opportunities for women compared to those of men. For instance, there are at least 14

² Declaration: "The accession by Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to the (said Convention) is subject to the provisions of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan." Reservation: "The Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan declares that it does not consider itself bound by paragraph 1 of article 29 of the Convention."

laws in Pakistan that are mentioned in this report including those which obstruct female widows in Pakistan from equal inheritance rights, and their right to register a business (Ibid).

In legal and political arena, Gender Gap Index 2015 ranked Pakistan 87th in political empowerment (Ibid). In terms of electoral participation, according to voter registration data released by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) the gap between male and female voters widened from 10.97 million in May 2013 to 11.65 million by September 2015 (Ibid).

With regard to equal rights before the law and legal empowerment, Pakistani women have been subjected to discriminatory laws and objectionable ordinance. The Hudood Ordinances³, for instance, had made it almost difficult for a male rapist in Pakistan to be prosecuted in the court. The Zina (rape) law stated two conditions, one of which should be met in order to consider a case as an incident of rape that could be prosecuted. The conditions were: either the rapist would admit committing the rape or there were four males to testify the act of rape (Bokhari 2009). The need for witnesses to testify was often misused particularly (Ibid). The famous Zafran Bibi case in 2002 is an instance of the misuse of this law where she initiated the charges against the rapist but was instead sentenced for adultery. In this case the infamous Zina Ordinance, instead of providing justice to the women, saw her pregnancy prior to rape as a proof of her illicit sexual relations with other men. Although Bibi was released from jail, however, the rapists in this case were never punished or even prosecuted (Sustainable Development Policy Institute 2008). Since the launch of Protection of Women Bill 2006, some of the Zina law clauses have been less dangerous. For instance, after this bill, the Zina laws could not be misused for impeaching women, or used for settling family or blood feuds. Previously, the offence was not bailable, but now even after accusation they can be bailed and pursue their cases. Likewise, the police are no more authorized to arrest anyone in the case of Zina unless directed by the court.

The socio-cultural context of Pakistani society among all class systems is primarily patriarchal. In Pakistani culture, men and women are predominantly segregated and psychologically conceptually divided into two separated gendered worlds. In this culture, home is the only well-defined psychological and physical space, however, outside the home men take control of all the matters be they ideological or physical. This socio-cultural segregation leads to the outcomes such as assignment of lower socio-economic status for women as they are only home-makers and not the real the breadwinners. As discussed earlier, the pay gap does not help in mitigating this discrepancy. The

³ Hudood Ordinances were introduced in 1977 by General Zia-ul-Haq to facilitate islamisation process in Pakistan. The reason was to bring Pakistani law in accordance with Sharia. Hudood Ordinance enforced punishments as prescribed by Quran and sunnah for various offences. For instance, Zina law focused on extramarital sex and qazf law on false accusation of zina. Other offences included theft, and alcohol consumption.

psychological barriers that lead to these outcomes are ingrained systematically and slowly over the time, but they start pretty early. For instance, even the news of a girl's birth is greeted with panic and concern. From the start she is considered a burden for many people across various classes and there are many hurdles to her education even if she is very bright. Contrary to that the births of male children are received as harbinger of festivity. If not always, women are denied access to better education and job opportunities in comparison with their male siblings. While males are given superior education and equipped with competence based skills, females in the same households are instructed to master domestic labour skills. This is all done so that females can become good sisters, mothers, wives and daughters (Moheyuddin 2005).

In their domestic roles, especially as wives, women are expected to be fully involved in taking care of other family members, and bearing and raising children. Regarding the social background of people, there is across status preference and priority for having a male child. Male children thus are more privileged in being physically impulsive which may lead to them being more aggressive towards the socially low status beings (the women). This unsaid legitimization of men's entitlement to act out leads to various forms of violence and particularly to high occurrence of domestic violence, which also results in the cases of domestic violence including rape, marital rape, and physical assault that go unnoticed. This might also be the antecedent for the disgraceful practices of honour killing, trade off of women to settle blood feuds (bartering practices known as Vanni/swara and Watta Satta⁴) and marrying women to Quran⁵ to deny them their legitimate share in inheritance. All of these issues are serious breaches of implementing CEDAW in Pakistan (Bokhari 2009).

Indeed, as some would argue, the name of religion is used to justify some of these inequality of rights and entitlements of women. This might as well lead to confusion among people over cultural traditions and Islamic traditions and which jurisdiction to follow in these matters. There are several cases and examples when the members of religious organisations such as the Sipah-e- Sahaba⁶, Jamaat-i-Islam⁷, and madrasas (Islamic schools) have experienced their identity as very strict Muslims. Identity for many members of such organisations is inseparable from their cultural identity, which is not easy to manage. Thus, this may result in or cause identity confusion as culture is a huge

⁴ According to the glossary explanation of Aurat Foundation, *Vanni/Swara* is a marriage done as a compensation for wrong doing by someone else, whereas *Watta Satta* is an exchange marriage, where a family gets a girl in exchange of the other.

⁵ Also called *Haq Bakshish*, it is giving up the right to marry someone. This practice is done mostly in order to preserve inheritance.

⁶ Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan, called Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat in recent years, is an extremely conservative Deobandi Muslim organisation mainly functioning in Pakistan. It has also functioned as a political party.

⁷ Jamaat-e-Islami is an influential social conservative, and Islamist political party aimed at making Pakistan a state run strictly by Sharia laws.

aspect of one's identity and other identities need to be consistent with the cultural variations that are not completely consistent with Islam. Recently, a number of women's rights organisations and action groups such as Legal Aid Cell of the Aurat Foundation, Shirkat-Gah, and Bedari, have been engaging young people in various identity related dialogues. They are also engaged in action research based on gender equality and social activism to address rising domestic violence against women, lower emphasis on education of women, and barriers that are in place to hinder women's political participation (Weiss 2003).

1.3. Rationale of the Study

To the best knowledge of researchers, there have been no studies designed to test the mechanism through which the international conventions of the UN examine national endorsement of policies that encourage improvements in human rights practices. There is no single study which has compared how people will or will not endorse if the proposals for improvement of human rights conditions came from the local governments instead of international organisations such as the UN.

In the Pakistani context, Anjum et al. (2016) explored how the United Nations' endorsed proposals increase their support among Pakistani university graduates. The study showed that as compared to the control conditions, international treaties and laws had an added effect on the study subjects regarding women's rights and political representation in the country.

The study aims to highlight that there is a need to discuss women's rights with respect to Pakistan's current standing of global reports regarding women's rights and gender equality. This experiment, based on the previous research, Anjum et al, 2016, takes one step further from observational data which has already suggested that CEDAW has helped improve women's rights (Lupu 2013 and Simmons 2009). This study focused on certain policy reforms required to improve women's rights in Pakistan that was used as the basis of the study; these points have been highlighted both by the UN and remain a salient political topic in Pakistan.

To administer the experiment, three forms of the survey were randomly assigned to the participants in Pakistan between February 2016 and August 2016. In order to test the endorsement given by the participants to different conditions an "endorsement design" was implemented (Bullock et al. 2011). This design focuses on the effect of learning that the local government or the United Nations proposed a given policy and then seeing how it influences participants' level of support for that policy. The respondents were all asked whether they agreed with four policy proposals aimed at improving the rights of women in Pakistan. These policy proposals were directly taken from the 2013 report produced by the UN's CEDAW Committee on the status of Pakistan's compliance with its commitments to the rights of women (CEDAW 2013). Half of the respondents were asked whether they support the proposals without information on where the proposals

came from, while the other half of the respondents were told that the policies were proposed by the United Nations.

The focus of this survey was to contribute to the existing debate for clarity. Therefore, identifying the mechanism through which human rights law might change state behaviour was the focus of this study. There exists a considerable disagreement over which mechanisms are most likely to be effective. Most scholars have debated and argued that the United Nations human rights system does not place direct pressure on states to improve their rights practices nor powerful states put pressure on weaker states to improve their human rights practices (Posner 2014; Hafner-Burton in Conrad, C. R. and Ritter, E. H. 2013; and, Simmons 2009). Like many other scholars the study speculates that the international system can make a difference by changing the domestic political discourse in ways that may increase the protection of human rights (Lupu 2015; Hillebrecht 2014; Conrad & Ritter 2013).

2. METHODOLOGY

The survey experiment was conducted in a university and a postgraduate Institute in Islamabad, Pakistan. As the survey was specific about women's rights, and being aware of the UN and local political narrative, therefore graduate students of federal university and institute were chosen. Indeed, conducting this survey experiment at federal institutions had a number of practical advantages for the purpose of this study. However, the drawbacks of this sampling were that the sample was much more educated than the usual population of Pakistan and was not representative of the population of Pakistan, which reduces the generalizability of the results of this survey. The research, however, relies on the notion that any public support for improved human rights protections could mainly be addressed by influencing the urban and educated people of the kind that were recruited in the study sample.

2.1. Survey Design

There were three conditions in the survey. In each of the condition, the participants were asked to express how they felt about the proposals and action tendencies expressed in the survey. The experimental treatment had two levels: the local condition level and the UN condition. Therefore, there were three ways of presenting questions to the participants. The questions addressed to the participants in the "**Control Condition**" did not mention any agency associated in the context of women's rights proposals. On the contrary, the questions addressed to the participants in the "**UN Group**", included a mention of an agency, e.g. "A recent proposal by the United Nations calls for..." while the questions addressed to the participants in the "**Local Group**" mentioned a public office, e.g. "A recent proposal by the local government (Punjab Protection of Women Against Violence Bill) calls for...". Thus, the only difference among three conditions was who proposed the

recommendations. Besides this, the demographic information in the survey was also divided into three sections.

2.1.1. *Traditional gender role beliefs:*

In the first section of the survey, the participants were asked questions about their implicit beliefs about gender roles. The respondents, after reading the condition priming, marked their responses about each of the proposal, researchers asked: “How do you feel about this proposal?” Participants’ responses were assessed using their level of support on a five-point Likert-scale where (1) “strongly disagree”, (2) “somewhat disagree”, (3) “are indifferent”, (4) “somewhat agree”, or (5) “strongly agree”. A number of questions were designed and adapted to establish their beliefs on the rights of women.⁸ The items loaded on a single factor and had a modest Chronbach’s Alpha ($\alpha = .72$, $M = 2.64$, $SD = 1.36$).

2.1.2. *Endorsement for policies focused on improvement of women’s rights*

In the second section, the subjects were asked if they supported four reforms aimed at improving the rights of women. Participants’ responses were assessed using their level of support on a five-point Likert-scale: (1) “strongly disagree”, (2) “somewhat disagree”, (3) “are indifferent”, (4) “somewhat agree”, or (5) “strongly agree”. The four policies that the authors asked in the experiment were all recommended by the CEDAW’s 2013 Review of Pakistan’s compliance with CEDAW (Anjum et al. 2016). Like previous research, the focus remained on the following four proposals:

1. Legislative Quotas: increasing the quotas allocated for women in the Assemblies (National and Provincial Assemblies) and in the Senate from 17% to a minimum of 33%;
2. Honour Crime Pardons: repealing all laws which allow perpetrators of honour crimes for a pardon from the victim families;
3. Marriage Age: raising the minimum age for marriage for girls from 16 to 18; and,
4. Election Re-Polling: re-polling any location where women cast less than 10% of votes during an election.

The four items measuring endorsement of policies to improve women’s rights loaded on a single factor and had a modest reliability ($\alpha = .75$, $M = 3.51$, $SD = 1.77$).

2.1.3. *Action tendencies to improve women’s rights situation in Pakistan*

In this last section of the questionnaire, the authors asked about the possible action tendencies of the participants to improve women’s rights condition in Pakistan. A set of seven questions included a diverse set of statements ranging from women’s political participation to condemnation of honour killings. They were:

- “If a woman runs in elections for the National Assembly of Pakistan, how likely is that you would consider voting for a woman in election, all else being equal?”

⁸ The questionnaire included statements such as “In general, men are fitter than women to be political leaders; University education is more important for men compared to women; Women should not work outside the home”.

- If a political party promises that it will improve women's rights, how likely is that you would vote for the party in an election, all else being equal?
- If a political party were to condemn honour killing in Pakistan, how likely is that you would vote for the party in an election, all else being equal?"

Participants' responses were assessed using their likelihood to act on these statements on a five-point Likert-scale: (1) "extremely unlikely", (2) "unlikely", (3) "neutral", (4) "likely", or (5) "extremely likely". The questionnaire items measuring action tendencies to improve women's rights situation in Pakistan loaded on a single factor in factor analyses, within each statistical factor, the questionnaire items had modest reliability ($\alpha = .83$, $M = 3.57$, $SD = 1.21$).

3. EXPERIMENTAL RESULTS

Regarding the demographic spread of our sample, there were 619 participants in total (51% females and 49% males). Their age range was between 22 and 34 years (mean age was 24 years). In each of the control and local condition there were 206; and, in the UN condition, there were 207 participants. The research findings on the three set of questions were as follows:

3.1. Traditional Gender Role Beliefs

The findings for traditional gender beliefs showed that there is a significant main effect of the condition, $F(619, 2) = 36.42$; $\eta^2 = .10$. On average, people who were in the control condition expressed higher agreement with the traditional gender role beliefs ($M = 2.87$, $CI = 2.77-2.96$), compared to the UN condition ($M = 2.75$, $CI = 2.65-2.85$), and the local condition ($M = 2.30$, $CI = 2.20-2.40$). In the post hoc analyses, it was further confirmed that the effects between conditions were significant such that Control condition was not statistically different than the UN condition ($d = .57$, $p < .001$). Furthermore, there was a significant difference between the UN and the local condition ($d = .45$, $p < .001$). This means that presentation of the proper stimuli, such as UN or local government, before the message may in itself have a positive impact on what is to be conveyed later on. These results indicate that the best shot for working on bringing some change in the narrative for progressive gender role beliefs would be framing one's messages as coming from the local government and policy institutes.

Regarding gender, there were interesting findings in this study. Males showed significantly higher endorsement of the traditional gender beliefs ($M = 2.76$, $SD = 0.74$) as compared to females ($M = 2.51$, $SD = 0.75$). Overall, these differences were statistically significant, $t = 16.68$; $\eta^2 = .26$. These differences were seen in all conditions such that they did not make any difference to which condition the participants were exposed; men more often than women held stronger traditional gender role beliefs.

3.1.1. *Endorsement for polices focused on improvement of women's rights*

The findings for the endorsement for policies on improvement of women's rights showed a significant main effect of the condition, $F(619, 2) = 22.43$; $\eta^2 = .07$. On an average, people who were in the control condition, expressed lower endorsement for the policies focused on improvement of women's rights ($M = 3.15$, $SD = 1.15$), compared to the UN condition ($M = 3.63$, $SD = 0.88$), and the local condition ($M = 3.76$, $SD = 0.85$).

In the post hoc analyses, it was further confirmed that the effects for the effectiveness of the local condition among the three conditions were significant. The post hoc analyses showed that compared to control condition there was significant difference between the UN condition ($d = .47$, $p < .001$), and the local condition the UN condition ($d = .61$, $p < .001$). However, the difference between the UN and the local condition was statistically non-significant ($d = .13$, $p = .15$). This means that when compared to a control condition, presentation of the materials coming from the UN as well as from the local government can have a more positive impact in moving people's endorsement on certain policies. Again, these findings indicate that the best shot for working on public opinion on international policies is by framing messages that are directed / advocated by the local government and policy institutes.

Regarding the gender of the participants, males showed significantly lower endorsement of polices focused on improvement of women's rights ($M = 3.35$, $SD = 1.12$) as compared to females ($M = 3.68$, $SD = 0.85$). These differences in endorsement were statistically significant, $t = 16.35$; $\eta^2 = .02$. Overall, there was a significant interaction effect of the gender and survey condition ($F(619, 2) = 23.20$; $\eta^2 = .07$). The change towards endorsement of policies was much bigger for males than for females.

3.1.2. *Action tendencies to improve women's rights situation in Pakistan*

The findings for tendencies to improve women's-rights situation in Pakistan showed that there is a significant main effect of the condition, $F(619, 2) = 43.07$; $\eta^2 = .12$. On average, people who were in the control condition expressed lower action tendencies to improve women's rights situation in Pakistan ($M = 3.22$, $SD = 0.90$), as compared to the UN condition ($M = 3.62$, $SD = 0.65$), and the local condition ($M = 3.88$, $SD = 0.77$) where participants expressed higher possibility of engagement. In the post-hoc analyses, it was further confirmed that the between conditions effects were significant. The effects were such that the control condition was significantly different than the UN condition ($d = .39$, $p < .001$), compared to the control condition and the local condition ($d = .66$, $p < .001$). Furthermore, there was a non-significant difference between the UN and the local condition ($d = .26$, $p = .07$). These results indicate that it is helpful to engage people for actions in improving women's rights by offering them a narrative that proposes the policies as coming from the local government and policy institutes.

Our findings for gender effects indicate that females showed significantly higher action tendencies to improve women's rights situation in Pakistan ($M = 3.70$, $SD = 0.73$) as compared to men ($M = 3.45$, $SD = 0.80$). Overall, these differences were statistically

significant, $t = 15.52$; $\eta^2 = .02$. These differences were seen in all conditions such that it did not make a difference to which condition the participants were exposed to, men more often held more traditional gender role beliefs.

In summary, Figure 1 presents the summary from the results from our survey experiment on the three main dependent variables of traditional gender role beliefs, women's rights endorsement, and action tendencies to improve women's rights situation in Pakistan.

Figure 1: Distribution of Responses to Experimental Questions

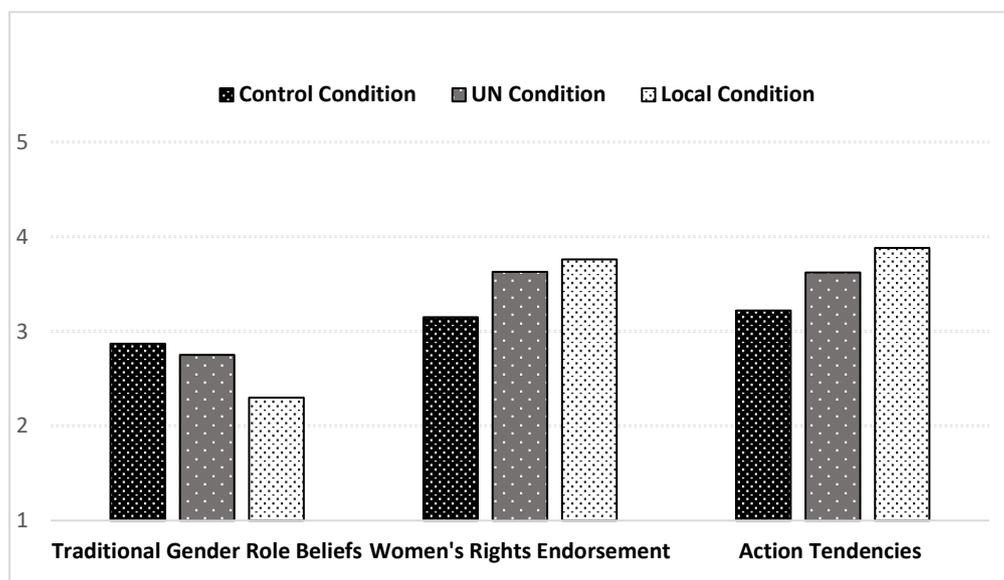
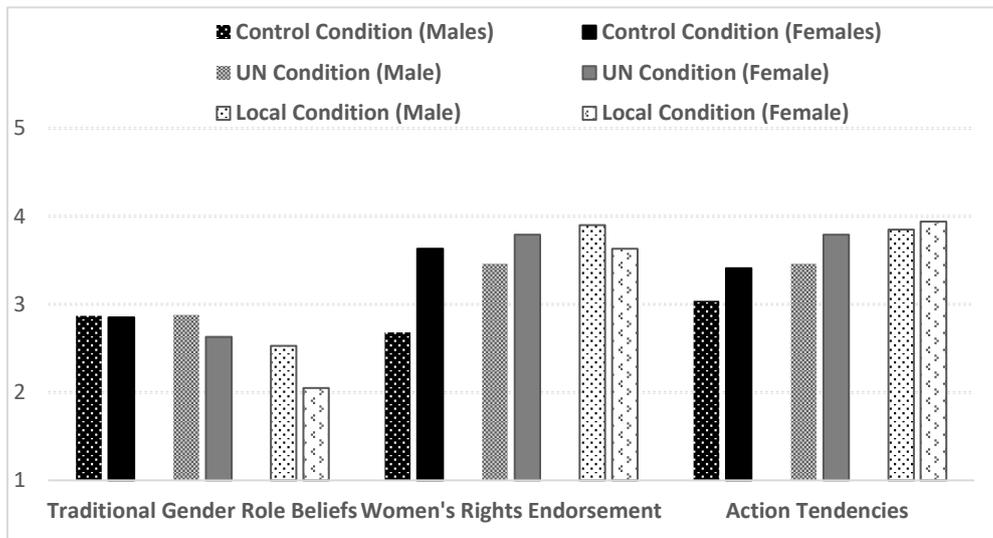


Figure 2 presents gender wise distribution of responses to the three aspects: distribution of support for traditional gender role beliefs, women's rights endorsement, and action tendencies to improve women's rights situation in Pakistan. These results indicate that there is a significant impact of effect gender has in the United Nations or local government's endorsement as compared to the control condition.

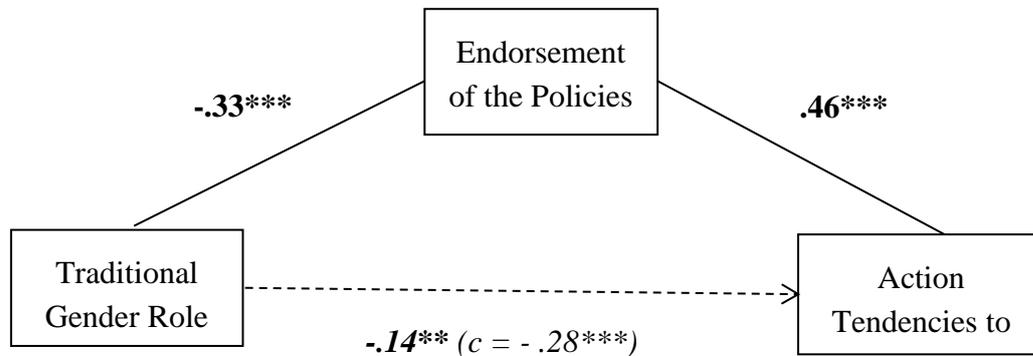
Figure 2: Results by Gender



3.1.3. *The process of endorsement of action tendencies to improve women's*

A mediation modelling with bootstrap analysis with $N = 5000$ showed that the endorsement of the policies to improve women's rights emerged as a partial mediators of the effect of traditional gender role beliefs upon the action tendencies to improve women's rights (see Figure 3). The traditional gender role beliefs predict the endorsement of the policies to improve women's rights ($\beta = -.33, p < .001$), and the direct effect of the endorsement of the policies to improve women's rights on the action tendencies to improve women's rights was even stronger ($\beta = .46, p < .001$). The traditional gender beliefs predict the action tendencies relatively weakly ($\beta = -.14, p < .01$) indicating a partial mediation, suggesting that, lower traditional gender role beliefs lead to the higher endorsement of the policies to improve women's rights condition, which in result leads to higher endorsement of the action tendencies to improve women's rights.

Figure 3: Mediation model for the process of how action tendencies emerge



Note: The Sobel test for mediation was significant, Effect = $-.14$, $z = -5.96$, $p < .001$

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

All around the world, the UN, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and as well as the local governments of countries spend many resources and time to improve women's rights conditions. In particular, the UN expends a large amount of resources in monitoring compliance of the governments to international laws and conventions such as the CEDAW. These research findings are vital in the Pakistani as well as the international context for several reasons. Firstly, little experimental and applied research has been conducted to test whether the policy recommendations proposed by the UN have any impact on improved human rights or not. International law practitioners, especially human rights researchers and scholars have fervently debated on the issue due to the dearth of theoretical frameworks and experimental research.

Secondly, the little research available in this arena has produced contradictory findings due to which the debates have been inconclusive. Thus currently this scholarship is unclear on whether the international human rights system actually increases respect for human rights or not. This research gives a much needed perspective on evaluation of how the policies recommended by the international organisations such as the UN can be effectively integrated and voiced for implementation by the local governments. Therefore, this research brings a new perspective and new evidence on the issue of women's rights in social, and political contexts.

Overall, this research led to three conclusions. First, both experimental conditions (UN and Control), had a positive impact on three aspects: there was a lower endorsement of traditional gender role beliefs, there is a higher endorsement of the policies focused on improvement of the women's rights condition, and people are more likely to express higher action tendencies to improve women's rights condition in Pakistan. More specifically, when the recommended reforms were presented as coming from the local government compared to the UN, people showed lower endorsement of the traditional gender beliefs, and higher endorsement of the policies and action tendencies to improve women's rights condition in Pakistan. These effects of the endorsement of the policies and action tendencies were both substantive and statistically significant. Second, these findings showed substantive gender and mechanism related revelations as well. This study suggested that women, as compared to men, were more likely to agree with the policy proposals. In both conditions of the survey, in terms of average scores, men moved from, being unsupportive to supportive of the women's rights reforms. Third, regarding the psychological mechanism of the three aspects covered in this study, it was found that traditional gender role beliefs influence the endorsement of the policies focused on improving women's rights, which in turn mobilizes people for various action tendencies to improve the situation.

There are, however, several limitations to this experiment that may limit the application of its findings. First, the sample was not a representative sample of all Pakistani young men and women. The sample of this study was an educated young adult population from a university and an institute in the capital of Pakistan. This sample is not representative of the whole Pakistani population. Second, there might have been some desirability effects⁹ that might have generated an impact of local endorsement and the endorsement by the UN. Third, the survey focused only on three aspects related to the improvement of the women's status in Pakistan; there might be other important factors that have not been incorporated in this study. Lastly, even if people show higher endorsement of the policies and action tendencies recommended by local or international organisations, it would not ensure that they will actually engage in these actions.

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS FOR PAKISTAN

Pakistan has been stated as one of the most unsafe places in the world for women, be it violations of their human rights, exposure to violence, or denial to justice and political participation (Human Rights Watch Pakistan 2017). For instance, according to Human Rights Watch Pakistan (2017), there have been more than 1,000 honour killings in 2016 in Pakistan, and around 80,000 prisoners, including women, are on death row, which is the largest number anywhere in the world. There is a growing awareness and education

⁹ Desirability effects refer to the social phenomenon when the participants are apt at guessing the purpose of a study. These effects are usually difficult to control in survey-based studies.

among the policy makers but still there are extreme gaps in women's access to their rights and political participation. The prevalence of extreme violence and lack of political participation has led to Pakistan's low performance on many human development indicators and its failure in meeting the SDGs.

Due to this status of Pakistan regarding human rights in general and women's rights in particular, the policy implications of this study are vital. This chapter suggests that in order to get endorsement by the public, we have to frame the message as coming not only from the local governments, but also, explore which mechanisms work the best for creating awareness. It also adds to the policy debates regarding these mechanisms, it is suggested that they are facilitating support for women's rights. These implications have ecological validity because the policy recommendations used in this survey experiment were the ones that were obtained from the United Nations' review (Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women 2013) of Pakistan's women's rights record. Hence knowing about the how people receive these policy recommendations would be of great value to policy makers.

The findings of this study, like previous research and theoretical speculations, have indicated that international conventions would help in uplifting educated public's narrative in improving women's rights and condition even in countries such as Pakistan. But the research more specifically highlights that it would be more beneficial to translate the international conventions in the local government's narrative. It is also vital to note here that Pakistan has been identified as a "Transitional Democracy" (Simmons 2009), as well as a "Partially Free" (Freedom House 2015); current year's status is "Not Free", see Freedom in the World Report 2017. This identification further strengthens the significance of this research in building liberal narrative and public debate on the issue of women's rights in Pakistan.

Even though Pakistan is a transitional democracy, we strongly believe that policy recommendations by the international bodies like the UN have an impact on countries such as Pakistan. Recent development in the legislation on women's rights, i.e. Punjab Protection of Women against Violence Act 2016, has been seen with hope and possibility of positive outcomes. This is an historic achievement that even though the 2015 Punjab Protection of Women against Violence Bill had faced extreme opposition from many stakeholders, yet Punjab Assembly passed it. In Pakistan, this is the first bill of its kind that has promised protection to women. Initially, when this bill was launched there were many insecurities among men, but due to the involvement of the provincial government and the media's positive role, people are receiving it more positively (Punjab Laws Online 2016).

Furthermore, research specifically on the policy recommendations based on CEDAW and especially in the Pakistani context is not only relevant to the country, but also contributes to the international discourse on women's rights for several reasons. For instance,

previous observations and interviews based research has supported that compared to other conventions and agreements, CEDAW has led to more improvements in women's rights and their status (Anjum et al. 2016 and Lupu 2013). Although this support has been there, the use of experimental methods has been very small. To-date there are only a few countable studies (Anjum et al. 2016; and Chilton 2014). The implementation and findings of this study, therefore, encourage the use of stringent experimental methodology in future research to test under what conditions (message from the local government in this study) policy messages are better received and perceived by the masses.

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