



RESEARCH PAPER**Feminism Emergent: Prospects of NGOs in Pakistan****Farah Adil¹ Dr. Asma Seemi Malik*² Maryam Batool³**

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ABSTRACT

Feminism is a movement in which people struggle for the rights of women and their better prominence in all domains of life. Women got recognition through waves of feminism around the world in respect of their rights and status. In this regard, non-governmental organizations played a strong role to promote and reinforce feminist approaches that focus on the basic rights of women like education, economic development, legal aid and self-awareness, protection, and political participation. Therefore, the present research main objective is based on the prospects analysis of NGOs in perspective of feminist struggle in Pakistan. This is an e-research based on an analysis of web archives of NGOs working in Pakistan on women concerns. This also involved in-depth interviews with stake holders of these NGOs. Mix method research design was applied to analyze the prospects of 144 registered NGOs from a feminist perspective. Simple random and purposive sampling techniques were used to select samples for quantitative and qualitative data. The research findings showed that NGOs in Pakistan are struggling to accomplish feminism that contributing a great effort to raise the status of women in every field of life. It is needed to present factual understanding and accountability of NGOs in the concern of feminism and women empowerment.

KEYWORDS

Feminism, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), State Feminism, Women Empowerment, Women Rights

Introduction

Social movements are kinds of joint actions that begin in reaction to situations of oppression, discrimination, socioeconomic, cultural and political demands. It comprised of an organized group of voters who follow a common political prospects for change through joint actions (Batliwala, 2012). Civilian activism and awareness have led to the creation of thousands of development-oriented non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with diverse goals, ranks, agendas and remits (Banks and Hulme, 2012). NGOs are value-based organizations that rely on donations, charity, and voluntary service (World Bank, 2001). The relationship between movements and organizations is multidimensional, while many organizations support movement building and provide services to movements; movements can also set up organizations (Batliwala, 2012).

Therefore, it is needed to understand the changing aspects of social movements and the visions on gender justice and women's rights shared by NGOs (Dütting and Sogge, 2010). With the struggle of the state, NGOs and feminist movements, gender equality and

rights of women are being enshrined in policies and laws at international level, although their implementation is still inadequate (UN Women, 2011). Women made substantial strides in the world but still remain undervalued and marginalized especially in developing countries (Augusto and Zahidi, 2005). Progress in women empowerment is hampered by social beliefs in many regions of developing countries (Cohen, 2006) and NGOs originate from grassroots organizations to promote, protect and uphold human rights (Cole and Ramirez, 2013). NGOs promoted women rights and women empowerment from various platforms and strategies (Kumaran, 2014).

Many NGOs worked for feminist movement and influenced their local agenda and help women to speak out against violations of their rights through awareness raising, information and training (Usta et al. 2013). Now a day, NGOs are gradually working such as "catalysts for social change" in particular to promote women empowerment through by plan and activities (Elbers et al., 2014). The present study was developed to analyze the prospects of NGOs in concern to feminism in Pakistan considering the importance of NGOs to promote women empowerment and women rights.

Literature Review

Feminism is a heterogeneous, sometimes fragmented and complex ideology and feminist movement that promoted this ideology are divided into three phases, called as the "waves" of feminism (Humm, 2003). The first wave of feminism started between 1950s, primarily in Canada, Great Britain, Netherlands and the United States. The first wave of feminism focused on legal concerns of women suffrage and property rights of women. Similarly, focused on women' education and role of women as mothers in first wave of feminism (Stephan, 2012).

Second wave of feminism was started in 1960s and became an influential movement in 1980s in western countries and Asia and the Middle East. The paradigm shift illustrated in the slogan "The personal is political" that emphasized the influence of patriarchy and sexism on all aspects of private lives of women (Munro, 2013). The feminists during second wave addressed the concerns included domestic and sexual violence, sexual objectification of women reproductive rights, equal work opportunities, paid maternity leave, sufficient childcare services (Tong, 2009). Another characteristic of second wave of feminism was its organization where a group of women organized meetings regularly to debate their involvements and experiences, that termed as "consciousness rising" (Walters, 2005).

Third-wave of feminism thrived in 1990s in response to the confines of second-wave ingenuities and influenced by another theoretical backgrounds post-structuralism and queer theory that accepted the "fluidity of the categories" they associated with race, sexuality and gender (Munro, 2013). In addition, third wave included subjects such as religion, media communication, ethnicity, gender roles and stereotypes, nationality and cultural background etc. (Jochin, 2007).

Fourth- wave of feminism managed new concerns and organizations such as women empowerment and domestic violence and promoted social networks to aware women of their rights (Stephan, 2012). Taking into account the context of four waves of feminism, the present study is based on an analysis of the prospects of NGOs that promoting feminism in Pakistan.

Theoretical background

The theoretical background of the present study is based on the theory of state feminism. The feminism is approved by the government of a state (Helga Hernes, 1987). In which, political agencies, through national mechanisms worked for gender equality and development of women within state administrations (elected, administrative, or judicial) that dealt with policies of women's concerns at national and international level to advance gender equality. Similarly state feminism can also define as "the actions of women's political bodies to engage the demands and actors of the women's movement in the state, to achieve feminist outcomes in policy processes or social impact, or both" (Mazur & McBride, 2008). The role of state feminism is also to overcome the traditional distrustful approach of many feminists towards the patriarchal state (Kantola, 2006). NGOs produce insights that advance their organizations' goals and influence policymakers by abandoning controversial forms of support in favor of more 'legitimate' evidence-based claims of proficiency (Laforest & Orsini, 2005). Considering the theory of state feminism, the present study focused to analyze the prospects of NGOs that promote leitmotifs of feminism in the state of Pakistan.

Material and Methods

Mixed Method research design was used to analyze information about the prospects of NGOs. Frequencies and percentages were taken from the web data of selected NGOs for quantitative information from web archives. Then adopted the qualitative design, in which data was collected by conducting in-depth interviews with NGOs stakeholders. The sample of the study was based on 144 registered NGOs out of 555 with prospects of feminism in Pakistan by using simple random sampling technique. For the qualitative study, 24 registered NGOs were selected, three from each of Pakistan's eight regions, using a targeted sample by purposive sampling technique.

The NGOs selected that promoting prospects of four waves of feminism through their vision and mission and also analyzed the activities, programs, and campaigns of NGOs about feminism and rights of women and women empowerment. The Web archive 'Greater Good Directory' published on World NGO Day 2015 by "The NGO World (www.thengoworld.org)" was selected as a reference book for e-research. The reference book maintained database region-wise of 555 registered NGOs all from Pakistan, including eight regions i.e. AJK, FATA, Baluchistan, Gilgit Baltistan, KPK, Islamabad Capital Territory, Punjab & Sindh. The information on 555 registered NGOs is available on the following link "<https://www.thengoworld.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/NGOs-Directory-555.pdf>". Qualitative information was collected through telephonic interviews with key informant stakeholders of 24 NGOs for which three NGOs were selected from each of eight regions of Pakistan. Quantitative content analysis was used to analyze information on NGOs. For this purpose, the simple frequency/percentage of each category was calculated and compared. Qualitative interviews were conducted to analyze information taken through NGOs in codes later themes were organized for interpretation.

Results and Discussion

Table 1
Registered NGOs working on women's rights in Pakistan (n=144)

Regions	No NGOs (f)	n=Sample NGOs (f)
Punjab	180	54
Sindh	112	31
Baluchistan	66	20

KPK	84	17
ISB	56	09
AJK	17	06
FATA	08	04
Gilgit Baltistan	04	03
Total	555	144

Source: The NGO World. (2015). Directory of 555 NGOs of Pakistan.

The above table demonstrated the randomly selected registered NGOs with inclusion criteria of NGOs working on feminism in Pakistan. A minimum of three NGOs were selected from FATA, Gilgit Baltistan, and a maximum of 54 NGOs were selected from Punjab. The selection of sample NGOs is based on the total registered number of each eight regions and working on feminism in Pakistan.

Table 2
Prospects of NGOs n=144 to promote feminist perspectives (n=144)

Prospects/objectives	f	Percentage %
Women education	128	89%
Women and Child health	101	70%
Women empowerment	93	64%
Women and children's rights	72	50%
Advocacy and good governance	68	47%
Inter-sectionalism	68	47%
Peace-building	39	24%

Source: The NGO World. (2015). Directory of 555 NGOs of Pakistan.

The above table shows the main prospects of NGOs, while 89% of the work in education of women and girls is done by providing them with primary and secondary education. 70% of NGOs provided reproductive health services to women. Similarly, 68% of NGOs promoted empowerment of women in Pakistan by providing basic business skills, awareness and information. In eight regions of Pakistan, 50% of NGOs fight for the basic rights of marginalized communities, including women and children. Advocacy and good governance were other important perspectives for NGOs, with 47% of NGOs engaged in advocacy and good governance and highlighting women's policy-making challenges in various forums. It was also noted that NGOs in Pakistan were also working on women's issues in various fields including disabled women, minorities and women's role in the environment. Another perspective noted that NGOs in Pakistan were working on peace building where NGOs were working with the active participation of youth at the country level.

Table 3
Qualitative information of Prospects of NGOs (n=24)

Regions	NGOs	Prospects/themes
AJK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women Organization Pakistan SANJH Foundation Shama Development 	Welfare Poonch <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women education, health, disability, women empowerment, social mobilization. Women and child education, health, peace, disaster management, provide safe drinking water to disable and poor women, shelter for poor violence victim women. Education, help disabled people, child protection, health, and hygiene promotion, women empowerment.

Baluchistan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Sangat • Women Development & Community Organization WDC • Human Dignity Society 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peace-building, youth participation, women empowerment and strengthening democracy. • Capacity building, education, microfinance, human rights & law, relief Services in emergencies, women health, women & child rights, child protection, gender sensitization. • Health, education, women empowerment, child protection.
KPK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Horizon Development Organization • Movement for Development Organization • Aurat Association 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocacy, women and child protection, health, education, entrepreneurship, infrastructure, energy, skill development, interfaith, rights of women. • Social and community mobilization, women education, health and skills enhancement, women and child protection, drug eradication, political awareness. • Women & child development, poverty alleviation, peace building, disaster response, disability, advocacy, WASH.
Punjab	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bunyad Foundation • Baidarie • Behbud Association of Pakistan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women education, child labour/child rights, women empowerment through micro-finance, livelihood. • Reproductive health, awareness-raising, women empowerment, gender-based discrimination and violence, capacity building, advocacy/local government, registration for voting. • Health care, education, vocational training, women empowerment, community development, and advocacy.
Sindh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Badin Development and Research Organization • Roshan Samaj Development Organization (RSDO) • Sindh Health & Education Development Society (SHEDS) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environment, disaster management, women empowerment, health, livelihood, research, advocacy. • Sexual reproductive health & rights, women empowerment, emergency response, natural disasters with different donors, early marriage. • Women and child health, water & sanitation, women empowerment, skill development entrepreneurship, research & development, drug rehabilitation, HIV/AIDS information, vocational training, advocacy
Gilgit Baltistan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Association of Global Humanists & Ethics • Publishing Extension Network • Vershegom Area Development Organization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human rights, Women empowerment, peace-building, environment awareness, governance, women education. • Empower the women and youth through mobilization, advocacy, management, peace-building, gender equity, HIV/AIDS prevention, and education. • Education, gender, and environment.
ISB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bedari • Helping Hand for Relief and Development • PATTERN Development Organization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women's rights, child rights, youth and peace-building. • Women education, orphans, micro finance, health, skill development, women empowerment, rehabilitation, relief, emergency infrastructure development. • Women empowering, minority rights, good governance.
FATA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tribal's Integrated Development Program • Kamore Development Welfare Organization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peace-building, basic health, and education, community / rural development, gender equality, water, sanitation.

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- Community Awareness & Rural Development
 - Peace-building, environment, education, health, livelihood, vocational skill development, agriculture, WASH, capacity building of youth and women.
 - Human rights, education, awareness.
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Source: The NGO World. (2015). Directory of 555 NGOs of Pakistan.

The table above shows the prospects of NGOs to support feminism in Pakistan. The most commonly observed themes were education, women's empowerment, health, women and children's rights, gender equality, violence against women and women's role in the environment.

NGOs are considered the fourth pillar of a country as civil society does a lot of civic work. NGOs played a strong role in launching development programs for community especially for women; by providing business prospects; information and skills (Taufiqu et.al., 2015). The results of the present study showed that NGOs in Pakistan are active within their means to ensure basic rights to education, health and economic opportunities and to empower women by providing basic skills. In general, NGOs contributed to formulating policies for women empowerment, awareness rising of women about political and socio-economic rights in Pakistan (Siddiqui, 2012). Similarly NGOs can play role to conduct extensive research on gender-based violence (GBV) in and around the schools that need to be carried out to analyze the intensity of GBV that may affect literacy rates in Pakistan (Adil et al., 2022).

Similarly, the result of the present study showed that 47% of NGOs contributed to advocacy and mobilization for women's challenges in Pakistan and encouraged the government of Pakistan to tackle women's challenges through politics and gender sensitive legislation, that is one of the aspect of NGOs to contribute in state feminism by highlighting gaps at state-level women friendly politics. The Government of Pakistan, in cooperation with international development agencies and non-governmental organizations signed various policies and plan to implement various political and gender empowerment programs (Weiss, 2007).

The results of the present study also found that most of NGOs in Pakistan work on women concerns, including women empowerment, women education, women health, sexual and domestic violence against women, minorities' rights and women with disabilities, peace-building etc. to make economically independent and free of violence acts in Pakistani society. Considering the four waves of feminism, the results of the present study found that NGOs in Pakistan are working on the agendas of first and second waves of feminism. The overall literacy rate for women and girls is low and women lag behind men in education in Pakistan (Adil et al., 2021). Therefore, government of Pakistan accepted the challenge of low women educational status, health and economic development as state feminism and signed several national and international commitments including Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and also formulated national guidelines and laws to elevate the status of women in Pakistan. Similarly NGOs played a key role in identifying the challenges women faced in Pakistani society through research and promotion of state feminism in Pakistan.

The second theme was women empowerment, for which civil society played an important role in Pakistan, as women constituted the half of population in Pakistan and are considered a marginalized group in society, therefore there is a need to empower this half with skills, knowledge to make them a productive part of the society. Similarly, NGOs also contributed in promoting women empowerment as 64% of non-governmental

organizations worked to empower women through information and business skills in Pakistan. During COVID-19, NGOs across Pakistan faced funding problems from donor organizations and also a collapse in field activities. Once again, the role of state feminism is to continue the productive activities of NGOs in times of need and to oversee fundraising, given the need for proper government oversight of the use of funds in NGOs (Hameed et al. 2012).

Conclusion

Feminism is a movement that seeks to elevate women's status by promoting rights of women. NGOs are cultivating feminism in Pakistan with socio-cultural constraints and funding challenges. There is significant influence of NGOs in promoting feminism agendas in Pakistan, and it was found that most of the NGOs are working on first and second waves prospects of feminism and some visions of third wave were also in prospects of the organizations.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are presented in this study:

- Need to train NGOs staff on the waves of feminist agendas to incorporate an appropriate sense of feminism;
- The need is to create government collaboration with NGOs to implement feminist visions to empower women in Pakistan;
- Necessary actions must be taken to hold NGOs accountable for the implementation of feminist perspectives in Pakistan;
- There is a need to promote the accurate image of feminism through education, seminars, and media;
- There is a need to retain graduates in social sciences, particularly gender studies, psychology and sociology, on board to become part of NGOs.

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