



GLOBALIZATION AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN PAKISTAN:  
A NUANCED LANDSCAPE

Tehmina Bibi<sup>1</sup>

**Affiliations:**

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar,  
National University of Modern  
Languages NUML, Islamabad,  
Pakistan  
<sup>1</sup> misstehmeena.fia@gmail.com

**Corresponding Author(s) Email:**

<sup>1</sup> misstehmeena.fia@gmail.com

**Abstract**

*The effects of globalisation on Pakistani women are complex and multifaceted. Although export-oriented sectors, easier access to education, and the empowerment of women entrepreneurs have all contributed to economic inclusion, cultural obstacles still exist, restricting possibilities and sustaining inequality. This study aims to provide light on how Pakistani women are affected by globalisation. In industries like IT and textiles, women are gaining work, financial freedom, and decision-making authority. Initiatives fuelled by globalisation are contributing to an increase in female literacy and educational attainment. Social media and e-commerce provide new platforms for female entrepreneurs. Due to societal expectations and standards, many women are still forced to labour in low-paying, unsecure jobs. Inequalities already present are made worse by unequal access to the internet and digital skills. Certain cultures oppose women's empowerment because they see globalisation as a danger to gender norms. Pay attention to legislation that supports women's skill development, affordable childcare, and equitable employment opportunities. To empower disadvantaged women, strengthen safety nets by providing healthcare, legal counsel, and financial help. To encourage women to participate in the digital economy, make sure they have equal access to training and technology. Give women's organisations and civil society organisations a voice in establishing policies and creating a more inclusive future by supporting them. Pakistan needs to effectively manage the intricacies of globalisation in order to optimise its advantages for women, rectify disparities, and cultivate a more promising future for its whole populace.*

**Keywords:** Globalization, Women's empowerment, Pakistan, Economic inclusion, Education, Digital divide, Social protection, Inclusive policies, Civil society.

**Introduction**

Globalization is a multifaceted concept that has sparked both excitement and fear in various corners of the world. This explanation aims to delve deeper into its intricacies, examining its diverse dimensions and its potential impact on different groups, particularly women in developing countries like



Pakistan. The term "globalization" is often traced back to American business schools in the late 20th century. It emerged as a framework for companies to navigate the increasingly interconnected world, suggesting that survival hinged on embracing a "global player" mindset and expanding beyond national borders. However, the term itself is inherently ambiguous. It encompasses a wide range of phenomena, making it challenging to define precisely. Pakistan ranks 154th out of 189 countries on the Gender Inequality Index according to the report published by UNDP in 2020.

### ***Dimensions of Globalization***

There are different dimensions of globalization around the globe (Giddens, 2001). Following dimension are under consideration to study the impact of globalization in Pakistan.

**Economic Dimension:** This is the most commonly understood aspect of globalization, characterized by the increased flow of goods, services, and capital across borders. Trade liberalization policies and the rise of multinational corporations are key drivers of economic globalization.

**Communication Technologies:** The rapid advancement of technology has revolutionized communication and information sharing on a global scale. The internet, social media, and mobile devices have shrunk geographical distances and facilitated transnational interactions. In Pakistan, according to the World Bank report published in 2020, only 22% of women only use internet. According to the GSMA report, only 38% percent women own mobile phone in Pakistan.

**Ecology:** Environmental issues increasingly require global solutions. Climate change, pollution, and resource depletion transcend national boundaries, demanding international cooperation and coordinated efforts for sustainable development.

**Organization of Work:** Globalization has reshaped the nature of work, with the rise of outsourcing, flexible work arrangements, and the gig economy. This has brought both opportunities and challenges, particularly for workers in developing countries.

**Culture and Civil Society:** The global exchange of ideas, cultural products, and practices has intensified in recent decades. This has led to hybridization and the emergence of globalized cultural trends, while also raising concerns about cultural homogenization and the erosion of local identities.

Transnational corporations seeking cheap labour often exploit women in developing countries, particularly in garment and manufacturing industries. Issues of low wages, poor working conditions, and gender-based discrimination are prevalent. However, globalization also presents potential benefits for women. Access to education, technology, and entrepreneurial opportunities can empower women and contribute to their economic and social advancement (Metcalf, 2008).

Proponents of globalization argue that it promotes economic growth, poverty reduction, and technological advancements. They believe it can lead to a more interconnected and prosperous world. Critics, however, raise concerns about the negative consequences of globalization, including widening inequality, environmental degradation, and the erosion of cultural diversity. They argue that it benefits powerful corporations and wealthy nations at the expense of vulnerable populations and the environment (Asif, 2022; Metcalfe, 2008).

It is crucial to understand globalization not as a singular force or a predetermined outcome, but



rather as a complex and ongoing process. It is shaped by various factors, including governments, corporations, civil society organizations, and individuals. It is important to critically analyze the potential benefits and drawbacks of globalization for different groups and regions. Active participation in shaping the direction of globalization, advocating for fair practices and sustainable development, is crucial to ensure that its benefits are shared equitably and that its negative consequences are minimized (Rashid & Ratten, 2020). By dissecting the multifaceted nature of globalization and recognizing its diverse impacts, we can move beyond simplistic narratives and engage with this complex phenomenon in a more nuanced and informed way.

### **Unpacking the Impact of Globalization on Women: A Nuanced Analysis**

This is the complex relationship between globalization and gender equality, highlighting both its potential benefits and ongoing challenges for women worldwide. Here's a breakdown of the key points, emphasizing a safe and inclusive perspective:

Globalization has contributed to improvements in women's lives, particularly in developing countries, by: Expanding access to education and skills training, providing new employment opportunities, especially in export-oriented industries, promoting international awareness of gender equality issues. However, significant disparities remain, with women facing disadvantages in: Educational attainment and literacy, Representation in leadership positions and skilled professions, Access to healthcare, particularly during pregnancy and childbirth.

In the global context, maternal mortality rates is the alarming discrepancy in maternal mortality rates across countries, emphasizing the need for improved healthcare access and support for women during pregnancy and childbirth. The UN's MDGs, specifically Goal 3 on gender equality and women's empowerment provide a global framework for addressing these disparities (Odera & Mulusa, 2020; Onditi & Odera, 2017).

In the comparison of developed and developing countries, it acknowledges that globalization's impact on women differs between developed and developing nations. In developed countries, women face challenges with job security, temporary employment, and the feminization of certain sectors like service industries. It also emphasizes the importance of considering factors like class, ethnicity, and cultural background when analyzing how globalization affects women, as these factors contribute to diverse experiences and vulnerabilities.

Exploitation of female labour is also a raises concern about the exploitation of female labour in export-oriented industries in developing countries, highlighting issues like low wages, poor working conditions, and gender discrimination (Namuggala, 2015). Feminization of poverty is warns of the "feminization of poverty," where women are disproportionately affected by poverty and economic inequalities. For addressing gender-based inequalities one should continued efforts to address gender-based inequalities and promote equal opportunities for women in all aspects of life, both within and outside the context of globalization (Bradshaw et al., 2019). Supporting worker rights and fair labour practices: Ensuring fair wages, safe working conditions, and strong worker protections for all, regardless of gender, is crucial in mitigating the negative impacts of globalization on women's employment (Bradshaw et al., 2019).



Empowering women through education and skills training is the best strategy (Ahamad et al., 2016). Investing in education and skills training for women can equip them with the tools and knowledge to navigate the changing landscape of the globalized world and access better job opportunities. By acknowledging both the positive and negative aspects, and by emphasizing the importance of intersectional analysis and ongoing efforts towards gender equality, we can work towards a future where globalization empowers women and contributes to a more just and equitable world (Shetty & Hans, 2019).

### **Impact of Globalization on Gender Equality**

Pakistan faces significant challenges regarding gender inequality, particularly in the area of sex ratios at birth. By percentage, men form 51%, women 48.76%, and transgender people 0.24% of the total population of Pakistan. The male-female sex ratio of Pakistan is 105.07, which means there are 105 men for 100 women in Pakistan. This gender disparity can negatively impact Pakistan's international standing and competitiveness (Ghosh, 2004). Moreover, gender inequality can damage a nation's reputation on the world stage. These factors strengthen the case for policy initiatives aimed at achieving gender equality worldwide (Razavi & Pearson, 2004).

However, globalization alone cannot bridge the gender gap without robust public policy. The new forces associated with globalization, economic integration, technological advancements, and increased access to information; operate through markets, formal institutions, and informal structures to remove some obstacles to greater gender equality. Trade openness and the spread of new information and communication technologies have provided many women with more jobs and stronger connections to markets, expanding their economic opportunities. Greater access to information has empowered many women to learn about different ways of life and values, potentially influencing their attitudes and behaviours.

While globalization offers promising avenues for progress (Razavi & Pearson, 2004), it is crucial to recognize that it cannot fully address the deep-rooted societal and cultural factors that perpetuate gender inequality. Effective policy interventions are essential to dismantle discriminatory practices, promote girls' education, and create an environment where women can thrive.

### **Positive Impacts of Globalization**

Globalization has boosted exports for many countries, and wages in export sectors are often significantly higher than in other sectors. In some cases, women even earn more than men in formal industrial jobs. This has led to an overall increase in women's average wages and a larger share of household income going to women. Globalization has also expanded employment opportunities for women, allowing them to contribute more to family expenses (Uwajumogu et al., 2022) this was also endorsed by Okeke-Ihejirika et al. (2022). This has led to the creation of new resources and increased family income. Furthermore, globalization has empowered women to make more social choices, as their paid work has boosted their self-confidence and provided them with more agencies.

As more countries participate in the international economy through exports, new employment opportunities are created, particularly in low-income countries. However, it's important to consider the gender implications of agricultural practices. Traditional methods often rely heavily on women's labor,



but their wages are typically low. In contrast, the rise of cash crops in the international market can increase women's independence by offering them higher wages and better working conditions. Globalization has also led to structural changes in agricultural production, with many countries focusing on manufacturing agricultural products for export. This has benefited women, as these activities often offer higher wages than traditional family farming (Gomes et al., 2022). Additionally, working in companies generally provides better health conditions for women compared to working on farms.

The service sector, currently the most important sector in many economies, has also been significantly impacted by globalization. Sectors like communication and information technology are experiencing rapid growth, offering new and expanding employment opportunities for women. For example, data processing, industrial export industries, airlines, railways, banks, and insurance companies are increasingly employing women. Developed countries have seen a rise in quality job opportunities for women due to the expansion of the service sector. Multinational companies, operating in competitive environments, often hire based on merit regardless of gender, further motivating women to seek jobs (Shetty & Hans, 2019).

For Pakistan, a formerly restricted economy, globalization has opened up significant opportunities for both men and women. Since the "liberalization," "globalization," and "privatization" policies were implemented; many new jobs have become available for women. These jobs, with their higher wages, have led to increased self-confidence and independence among women. Globalization also has the potential to challenge traditional views towards women, paving the way for greater gender equality. It's important to note that while globalization offers many benefits for women in Pakistan, particularly in the agricultural and service sectors, it's crucial to ensure that these benefits are distributed equitably and that women are not exploited in the process (Ahamad et al., 2016).

Globalization has had a complex and multifaceted impact on women. While it presents challenges, it also offers significant opportunities for empowerment and improved living standards. Moving forward, it's essential to implement policies and practices that maximize the positive impact of globalization on women while mitigating the potential risks.

### **Negative Impact of Globalization**

Despite its potential for progress, globalization presents a complex and multifaceted picture for women around the world. While it offers new opportunities for employment and economic independence, it also exacerbates existing inequalities and creates fresh challenges. Women often juggle double burdens, balancing long working hours with demanding household responsibilities. This can hinder their performance at work and limit their career progression. Additionally, women face lower wages and greater vulnerability to exploitation compared to men, including sexual harassment in the workplace (Oosterom et al., 2022).

Urban women tend to fare better than their rural counterparts. Education and awareness empower rural women to challenge exploitation and participate more actively in the economy (Shetty & Hans, 2019). However, globalization also creates new inequalities, leaving some women behind due to factors like limited access to education, technology, and productive resources. Women's property rights and access to productive inputs are crucial for their economic success. Traditional gender norms and limited



mobility can hinder their ability to benefit from trade opportunities and technological advancements. Furthermore, cuts in social services due to globalization disproportionately affect women, particularly those in low-wage jobs with limited training or security.

The impact of globalization on women in agriculture varies depending on the region and type of farming (Gomes et al., 2022). In some areas, women have little to no control over land and resources, leading to unfair distribution of benefits from increased trade. Similarly, the expansion of industrial production and export can have different effects depending on the income level of the country (Lee & Zhang, 2022). While it may lead to increased employment for women in some middle-income countries, these jobs often come with lower wages and limited upward mobility compared to men's jobs.

The service sector offers potential for women, but access to these opportunities is uneven. Poorly educated women, particularly in rural areas, often lack the skills and resources to access higher-paying jobs in the service sector (Gomes et al., 2022; Metcalfe, 2008). Additionally, women's participation in managerial positions remains limited, particularly in the private sector. Globalization has also facilitated the exploitation of vulnerable populations seeking better lives. This is especially true for women in developing countries who are often lured by promises of job opportunities, only to face exploitation and abuse (Oosterom et al., 2022).

However, globalization has also paved the way for positive developments for women. The growth of media and communication has empowered women to learn about their rights and demand change (Weber-Lewerenz & Vasiliu-Feltes, 2022). Additionally, non-profit organizations like SEWA and Women for Women International have played a crucial role in providing education, training, and support to women around the world, helping them become leaders and advocates for their communities. Despite these advancements, significant challenges remain. Women's wages are often substantially lower than men's, and traditional gender roles and limited education continue to restrict their opportunities in many parts of the world (Smith & Sinkford, 2022).

The impact of globalization on women is complex and multifaceted. While it offers opportunities for empowerment and improved living standards, it also exacerbates existing inequalities and creates new challenges. Addressing these challenges and ensuring equitable benefits for all women will require concerted efforts from governments, businesses, NGOs, and individuals alike.

## **Conclusion**

The role of women in Pakistan amidst globalization is undergoing a significant transformation. The rise of NGOs in the 21st century has seen numerous organizations dedicated to defending women's rights globally emerge. While globalization undoubtedly presents incredible opportunities for women, it also throws up unique and unforeseen challenges. Gender inequality remains a complex web with multiple root causes, making it difficult to discern which forms are being addressed or exacerbated by globalization. In an increasingly interconnected world, the cost of gender inequality is amplified, with women often having to work significantly harder to achieve equal societal standing. This can lead to the perception that globalization has more negative than positive consequences for women.

The reality is more nuanced. In several cases, women are the primary breadwinners for their families, yet societal attitudes often refuse to acknowledge this truth. In cultures like India, many believe



a woman's career choice negatively impacts her family and children. However, this is a harmful stereotype devoid of evidence. A woman's career can flourish alongside fulfilling her familial responsibilities. Ultimately, globalization is not a simple binary of advantages and disadvantages for women. It is a complex phenomenon that both empowers women with opportunities and creates new forms of competition, including competition with men. Navigating this dynamic landscape requires a nuanced understanding of both the challenges and opportunities it presents.

## References

- Ahamad, T., Sinha, A., & Shastri, R. K. (2016). Women empowerment through skills development & vocational education. *SMS Journal of Entrepreneurship & Innovation*, 2(2), 76-81.
- Asif, M. (2022). Integration of Information Technology in Financial Services and its Adoption by the Financial Sector in Pakistan. *Inverge Journal of Social Sciences*, 1(2), 23-35.
- Bradshaw, S., Chant, S., & Linneker, B. (2019). Challenges and changes in gendered poverty: The feminization, de-feminization, and re-feminization of poverty in Latin America. *Feminist Economics*, 25(1), 119-144.
- Ghosh, J. (2004). Globalization, export-oriented employment for women and social policy: A case study of India. In *Globalization, Export-oriented Employment and Social Policy: Gendered Connections* (pp. 91-125). Springer.
- Giddens, A. (2001). Dimensions of globalization. *The new social theory reader*, 245-246.
- Gomes, D., Jesus, M., Rosa, R., Bandeira, C., & Costa, C. A. d. (2022). Women in family farming: Evidence from a qualitative study in two Portuguese inner regions. *Frontiers in Sociology*, 7, 939590.
- Lee, D., & Zhang, H. (2022). Export diversification in low-income countries and small states: Do country size and income level matter? *Structural Change and Economic Dynamics*, 60, 250-265.
- Metcalf, B. D. (2008). Women, management and globalization in the Middle East. *Journal of Business ethics*, 83, 85-100.
- Namuggala, V. F. (2015). Exploitation or empowerment? Adolescent female domestic workers in Uganda. *International Journal of Child, Youth and Family Studies*, 6(4), 561-580.
- Odera, J. A., & Mulusa, J. (2020). SDGs, gender equality and women's empowerment: what prospects for delivery. *Sustainable development goals and human rights: springer*, 95-118.
- Okeke-Ihejirika, P., Punjani, N. S., & Salami, B. (2022). African immigrant's women experiences on extended family relations. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(14), 8487.
- Onditi, F., & Odera, J. (2017). Gender equality as a means to women empowerment? Consensus, challenges and prospects for post-2015 development agenda in Africa. *African Geographical Review*, 36(2), 146-167.
- Oosterom, M., Huq, L., Namuggala, V., Nazneen, S., Nankindu, P., Sultan, M., . . . Azim, F. (2022). The gendered price of precarity: Voicing and challenging workplace sexual harassment.
- Rashid, S., & Ratten, V. (2020). A systematic literature review on women entrepreneurship in emerging economies while reflecting specifically on SAARC countries. *Entrepreneurship and organizational change: Managing innovation and creative capabilities*, 37-88.



- Razavi, S., & Pearson, R. (2004). Globalization, export-oriented employment and social policy: Gendered connections. In *Globalization, export-oriented employment and social policy: Gendered connections* (pp. 1-29). Springer.
- Shetty, S., & Hans, V. (2019). Education for skill development and women empowerment. *EPRA International Journal of Economic and Business Review*, 7.
- Smith, S. G., & Sinkford, J. C. (2022). Gender equality in the 21st century: Overcoming barriers to women's leadership in global health. *Journal of Dental Education*, 86(9), 1144-1173.
- Uwajumogu, N. R., Nwokoye, E. S., Ojike, R. O., Okere, K. I., Ugwu, J. N., & Ogbuagu, A. R. (2022). Globalization and the proportion of women in vulnerable employment in sub-Saharan Africa: The role of economic, social, and political conditions. *African Development Review*, 34(3), 356-369.
- Weber-Lewerenz, B., & Vasiliu-Feltes, I. (2022). Empowering Digital Innovation by Diverse Leadership in ICT—A Roadmap to a Better Value System in Computer Algorithms. *Humanistic Management Journal*, 7(1), 117-134.

