

TECHNICAL SESSION-5: WORK ENVIRONMENT, PRODUCTIVITY AND INCENTIVES

Chair: Prof. Dr. Nasir Nadeem, MNS University of Agriculture, Multan

Paper Title: Values, Women's Autonomy and Workforce Participation in Pakistan: Evidence from the World Values Survey

Author and Presenter: Mannan Hassan Khan

Abstract: To target participatory and sustainable development, it is pertinent to have an inclusive environment. For this to happen, an empowered society is the key, and literature highlights employment as one of the strongest indicators of empowerment. With almost half of Pakistan's population comprising of women, only 22 percent of them are counted in the labor force, which puts them at a perennial disadvantage and impedes economic development. This research allows us to argue that that society and culture play an important role in determining the economic engagement of women. Thus, using microdata from the 6th and 7th waves of the World Value Survey (WVS), this paper explores the relationship between 'values' and women's labour force participation and income-generating activities. Values are defined as 'pre-set' decisions that are made by a culture between common choices. The regression results indicate that values supporting women's work significantly improves their economic participation. Moreover, self-reported social class, age, children, and improvement in social cohesion are also found to be important determinants of Pakistani women's employment. It was found that regressive values, which are a part of the informal norms of society, can predominantly explain low levels of female labour force participation in Pakistan. This highlights the need for policies that promote inclusivity and gender balance. At the same time, a long-run policy framework is also imperative that focuses on developing a value system that normalises female labour force participation, the idea of which resonates with the notion of human development.

Discussant: Dr. Fatima Farooq, Associate Professor, School of Economics, BZU, Multan