CHAPTER 9

Gender Equity and Governance in Pakistan: Looking through Leventhal’s Concept of Organizational Justice

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Abstract

This paper discusses the critical issue of gender equity and governance in Pakistan using Leventhal’s concept of equity and organizational justice. Since both distributive and procedural justice are interrelated concepts, they should be considered important in the analysis of the issue. The paper reviews the trends and significance of gender participation in governance processes in general and with reference to Pakistan in particular. It highlights that despite much progress having been made in terms of increasing representation of women in quantitative or distributive terms, their participation remains low and limited in qualitative and procedural aspects. An application of the Gender, Organization and System (GOS) framework to the local governance system in Pakistan reveals that in Pakistani society several systemic, organizational and personal factors contribute to the low participation of women in governance. It underscores the need for adopting a two-pronged strategy that seeks to promote participation through developing people and an enabling environment in institutions. More specifically, interventions in this regard may include the following: repeal of discriminatory laws and procedures through legislation; equitable access to education, health and employment opportunities; gender-sensitive organizational policies and practices; capacity building; mentoring, networking, and partnering for research and creation of indigenous knowledge; and political will and sincere support for having a meaningful impact on governance.

Introduction

Drawing on the key concept of fairness in equity theory in terms of distribution of resources, rewards and inputs among social groups, nations and generations and its perception among the recipients, Leventhal (1976) expanded

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1 Fifth holder of the Prince Claus Chair, 2006–2007.
the research direction towards procedural fairness in such distribution. While challenging the one-dimensional concept of fairness in equity theory, he developed his concept of organizational justice based on a multidimensional conception of fairness, including distributive as well as procedural fairness/justice. Leventhal argued that the process used to determine the distribution of rewards plays a vital role in perceived fairness of rewards among the recipients; therefore, the process needs to be an integral part of the conception of equity or fairness in social relationships. He further added that procedural fairness takes into account the social system which generates this distribution and is based on rules, including consistency over time and across persons, accuracy, prevention of bias, ethics and representativeness of all stakeholders.

Later research on the subject added the dimension of ‘interactional justice’ to the view, which referred to the individual’s perception of the degree to which s/he is treated with dignity, respect and concern (Sharlicki & Folger 1997). While there is sufficient support for distributive and procedural dimensions of justice and its relation to organizational performance, less evidence exists on interactional justice. Leventhal’s approach to the study of fairness in social relationships is considered to be comprehensive, which provides a reasonable basis for conceptualization and interpretation of the view. Many professional organizations—including UNDP, the World Bank, Asian Development Bank and researchers like Amartya Sen (the Noble Laureate of 1998) and Dr. Mehboobul Haq—utilized the concept for developing their work on equity, empowerment, capability and human development. Moreover, this view of equity is closely linked to the basic philosophy of the Prince Claus Chair as advocated by Prince Claus:

"Development in the true sense of the word is impossible without some form of democracy which gives the people some say in the process. It is a question of enabling people to direct their energies within their own cultural context to bring about change, in the belief that it is in their own interests. I am not using democracy here in the formal Western sense but in its more basic meaning of ‘by the people and for the people’. (Prince Claus’s Proposition, 22, 1988)"

This paper attempts to apply the above view of equity (both distributive and procedural) to the situation of gender and local governance in Pakistan and outlines its implications for development. Applying the Gender, Organization, System (GOS) framework, proposed by Fagenson (1990) and further developed and tested in the context of Pakistan by the researcher, the paper offers useful insights for analysis and provides policy recommendations in this direction."