



# GENDER & MEDIA WATCH

September 2025



Photo courtesy: Daily Dawn

A monthly round-up of news stories about women and women's representation in Pakistan's news industry

# EDITOR'S NOTE

## The HPV Vaccine and What the Media Missed

On the surface, the recent HPV vaccine campaign that targeted girls between the ages of 9 and 14 was a positive step forward. It aimed to protect young girls from the human papillomavirus which is a leading cause of cervical cancer. The campaign also sought to normalise conversations around preventive healthcare for women.

The media's response, however, was mixed. Paid content and public service announcements appeared across print and television. This did the crucial job of spreading awareness and encouraging parents to get their daughters vaccinated. Some news platforms also produced meaningful coverage and explainer videos that reinforced the importance of the campaign's message.


But as the campaign moved online, it hit the wall of misinformation. Social media was flooded with negative and often vile comments, in particular after a political figure publicly shared that his daughter had been vaccinated. Once again, baseless (but familiar) claims about 'infertility' began circulating. The 'infertility' narrative has been used to resist polio drops and other immunisation drives in the past.

What was missing from much of the media coverage, however, was context. While some social media spaces spread misinformation about declining fertility, the reality is quite the opposite. Pakistan's population continues to grow at an alarming rate. Fear-mongering about infertility in a country struggling with overpopulation is simply illogical.

# EDITOR'S NOTE

There was another glaring flaw in the framing of the campaign. The HPV virus is transmitted through men, yet boys were completely excluded from this vaccination drive. It's hard to understand why a virus that is spread by both genders is treated as only a women's issue. If we are serious about prevention, why are young boys not part of the conversation? Why do this and other health initiatives (and the narratives around them) place the burden of responsibility on women and girls? Why are men left out of the conversation.

It's time for the media to ask harder questions. Because awareness campaigns that leave half the population out of the equation are incomplete and are simply reinforcing the same biases that have long defined our approach to public health.



Tasneem Ahmar,  
Executive Director,  
Uks Research Centre

# MAJOR STORIES

\*Click on the heading to read the full story

01

September

Express  
Tribune

## CAPITAL SEES RISE IN URBAN THIRD PLACES FOR WOMEN

From pottery workshops to 'paint and sip' sessions, this was the summer people in the twin cities turned crafty, with friends and families choosing to spend quality time learning a creative skill together instead of reserving the usual lunch spot. Every weekend came with a chance to decorate cakes, crochet flowers or even make a leather journal from scratch — and people in the city, starved for human connection in a world more digital than tangible, jumped at the opportunity of a third place. Third places refer to communal spaces outside the usual surroundings of home and work, where people can gather and socialise in a relaxed environment. Parks, libraries and gyms are typical examples.



03

September

The News

## SELF DEFENCE WORKSHOP FOR WOMEN CONCLUDES

Fazaia Medical College (FMC), Air University, in collaboration with the Pakistan Martial Arts Association (PMAA) and IFMSA-Pakistan, organised a two-day self-defense workshop designed to empower women with confidence, courage, and practical protection skills. The initiative, inaugurated by Maj Gen (R) Muhammad Tahir Khadim, Principal FMC, featured training in real-world techniques such as knife disarming, pistol defence, and situational awareness. More than 100 students from leading institutions including NUST, FAST, NDU, Bahria, and FMC actively participated.



04

September

Dawn

## PAKISTAN'S FIRST WOMEN'S SOFTWARE TECHNOLOGY PARK INAUGURATED IN MUZAFFARABAD

The Special Communications Organisation (SCO), a public-sector telecom provider in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), on Wednesday launched the country's first dedicated Women's Software Technology Park at Fatima Jinnah Women's Postgraduate College in downtown Muzaffarabad. The facility was inaugurated by SCO Director General Maj-Gen Umar Ahmed Shah at a ceremony attended by AJK Prime Minister's Coordinator Asma Andrabi, Secretary Information Technology Rashid Hanif, Director Public Instruction Colleges Prof Dr Khawaja Abdul Rehman



09

September

The Nation

## PAKISTAN TO LAUNCH FIRST NATIONAL GENDER PARITY REPORT IN 2026

The National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW), in collaboration with UNFPA, UN Women, Group Development Pakistan and the Embassy of the Netherlands, has concluded a two-day national consultation to finalise a unified framework for Pakistan's first-ever National Gender Parity Report, scheduled for launch on International Women's Day, March 8, 2026. For the first time, Pakistan's gender-related data will be synchronised at the national level in line with international standards. Officials said the initiative is expected to strengthen national policies on women's empowerment and improve the country's standing in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report.



# MAJOR STORIES

\*Click on the heading to read the full story

11  
September  
Daily Times

## SUSPECT IN SAMIYA HIJAB CASE GETS BAIL DENIED

A local court on Wednesday dismissed the bail plea of accused arrested in a case pertaining to the threatening and extorting cash from Tiktoker Samiya Hijab. The court also granted the police a two-day physical remand of the accused Hassan Zahid in the case. The court, however, remanded the accused in judicial custody in case of kidnapping Samiya Hijab. Judicial Magistrate Yasir Mahmood Chaudhry heard the case. During the hearing, accused Hassan Zahid was presented in court. The court made accused Hassan Zahid judicial upon the expiry of his remand in the kidnapping case and dismissed the bail of the accused in the case



12  
September  
The News

## PAKISTAN'S FIRST ALL-WOMEN EXPEDITION SCALES 5,400M BARI LA PEAK

Pakistan's mountaineering history reached a new milestone on Thursday as the country's first all-women expedition successfully summited the 5,400-meter Bari La Peak in Gilgit-Baltistan. The climb, organised by the Alpine Club of Pakistan to mark its Golden Jubilee, brought together women from every corner of the country — a rare display of unity and empowerment on the nation's highest frontiers. The team was led by Bibi Afzoon and included Mona Khan, a journalist from Islamabad, along with Amina Shabbir of Islamabad.



16  
September  
Express Tribune

## REPORT EXPOSES FORCED CONVERSIONS THROUGH MARRIAGE

The National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR), in collaboration with the Legal Aid Society (LAS), on Monday launched a research report and documentary examining the drivers of forced conversions through marriages (FCM) and their impact on survivors, minority communities, and wider society. The launch took place at a national dialogue in Islamabad, which brought together legal experts, rights activists, and criminal justice professionals to discuss practical steps for tackling the issue. Justice Dr Syed Muhammad Anwer attended the ceremony as a chief guest.



17  
September  
Dawn

## IMAAN MOVES SJC AGAIN AFTER REMOVAL OF WOMAN JUDGE FROM HARASSMENT BODY

Advocate Imaan Zainab Mazari-Hazir approached the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) again on Tuesday, with a complaint against the removal of Justice Saman Rafat Imtiaz as the competent authority regarding workplace harassment at the Islamabad High Court (IHC). The judge was stripped of her powers by IHC Chief Justice Sarfaraz Dogar, hours after she took cognisance of a complaint against him. The episode stems from a terse exchange between Justice Dogar and Ms Mazari last week, where the former reportedly used threatening and misogynistic language.



# MAJOR STORIES

\*Click on the heading to read the full story

21

September

Dawn

## PAKISTAN'S STRUGGLE FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Over the last two decades, Pakistan has seen major legislative changes in the areas of gender-based violence and harassment. The legislative changes are remarkable in the context of deep patriarchy and parochialism that permeates Pakistan's society and culture. The legal developments are the product of a combination of factors, not least of which is a strong women's rights movement that has consistently demanded that the state act to protect and promote the rights of women. A frequent refrain in political and social commentary in Pakistan is that these laws, while transformative on paper, have not translated to actual change in the lives of women and girls because of poor implementation.



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September

Dawn

## LADY HEALTH WORKER PART OF HPV VACCINATION TEAM BEATEN UP IN MANDI BHAUDDIN: FIR

A lady health worker, part of a vaccination team for the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) immunisation campaign for girls, was beaten up by local women in Mandi Bhauddin on Thursday, police said. Speaking to Dawn.com, Kuthiala Sheikhan Police Station House Officer (SHO) Sabir Hussain Sindhu said that the incident took place in Chak No 38. "LHW Ghulam Sughra was beaten up by local women while the vaccination campaign was being carried out at a school," he said, adding that the health worker was also thrown to the ground during the assault.



26

September

Daily Times

## SCOOTIES DISTRIBUTED AMONG WOMEN

Speaker of the Sindh Assembly, Syed Awais Qadir Shah attended the ceremony for the distribution of Pink Scooties among women. He said that the distribution of scooties to women is the practical reflection of Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's vision. Syed Awais Qadir Shah stated that empowering women is a key pillar of the Pakistan Peoples Party's policy, and Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto always strived to ensure a dignified status for women. The Speaker emphasized that no society can progress without the development of women, adding that Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari is a ray of hope for women. He further stressed that this initiative demonstrates the Sindh Government's top priority of ensuring safe transport for women.



30

September

The Nation

## 80PC OF PAKISTAN ARMY FIELDS NOW OPEN TO FEMALE RECRUITS, NA TOLD

The National Assembly was informed Monday that eighty percent fields in the Pakistan Army are open for the recruitment of females. Responding to a question during the Question Hour in the House, Parliamentary Secretary for Defence Zeb Jaffar further said over five thousand ladies are serving in the Pakistan Army and around seven hundred have been commissioned during the last three years. She, however, said fields entailing extreme physical endurance and prolonged exposure to hostile environment are closed for women.



# EDITORIALS AND OPINIONS ON GENDER

What editorial voices are saying on Gender in Pakistan  
Click on the boxes and find out!

## DAWN

[Silencing women.](#)

[Rethinking equality.](#)

## THE NEWS

[No means no.](#)

[Patriarchal problems.](#)

[We have a choice.](#)

[Our invisible backbone.](#)

## EXPRESS TRIBUNE

[Women's right to alimony.](#)

[The need to invest in women's  
mobility.](#)

[HPV vaccine: is it for dirty  
people only?](#)

## DAILY TIMES

[No Honour in Murder.](#)

## THE NATION

[From Tape To Timeline.](#)

[Everyday Harassment.](#)

[Age of Responsibility.](#)

# STORIES IN THE DIGITAL SPHERE

A roundup of this month's trends and viral stories on gender-related issue on Pakistan's internet

## #SamiyaHijab

Social media influencer Samiya Hijab accused a man named Hassan Zahid of trying to forcibly take her into his car outside her home in Islamabad. CCTV footage of the incident went viral, showing her resisting as he allegedly snatched her phone and attempted to drag her into the vehicle. Samiya stated that the man had been harassing and threatening her for several days before the attack. The video quickly spread online, sparking outrage and calls for justice, while police arrested the suspect within 24 hours of the incident.



## #ImaanMazariHazir

Lawyer and Activist Imaan Zainab Mazari-Hazir faced several legal and political controversies. She and her husband, Hadi Ali Chattha, were booked under the Anti-Terrorism Act for removing road barriers during the England cricket team's visit and later faced charges under PECA for alleged "anti-state" tweets. Imaan also filed a harassment complaint against Islamabad High Court Chief Justice Sarfraz Dogar, accusing him of making gendered remarks during a hearing. These incidents sparked national debate over women's rights, free speech, and judicial conduct in Pakistan.



# MEDIA STATISTICS

Data derived from media-monitoring throughout  
August 2025

Descriptive						
	Total	Daily Times	The News	Dawn	Express Tribune	The Nation
Women Specific Stories (WSS)	280	32	53	45	93	57
Front Page WSS	3	1	1	0	1	0
Back Page WSS	1	0	1	0	0	0
Women Specific Columns	7	0	3	2	1	1
Columns by Women Writers	37	8	18	2	5	4
Women Specific Editorials	5	1	1	0	1	2
Female Reporters (FR)	39	3	20	7	6	3
Front Page FR	1	0	1	0	0	0
Back Page FR	1	0	0	1	0	0

Comparative Mean					
	WSS	Editorial( WSS)	Female Reporter	Columns (WSS)	Columns by Women
Daily Times	1.032258	0.04	0.0967742	0	0.25806452
The News	1.709677	0.043478	0.6451613	0.096774	0.58064516
Daily Dawn	1.451613	0	0.2258065	0.064516	0.06451613
Express Tribune	3	0.038462	0.1935484	0.032258	0.16129032
The Nation	1.83871	0.074074	0.0967742	0.032258	0.12903226

1. Women-specific includes all the news stories, columns and editorials that are dedicated to women's achievements, problems, status etc.

2. All female sources that are named and not named (such as lady reporter) are considered female reporters.

# PICTURES OF THE MONTH



Lahore: Girls engaged in crochet and karhai knitting during the Croatian Workshop on Ancient Croatian Art in Pakistan.

Courtesy: The Nation

Islamabad: Civil society activists hold placards during a demonstration outside the National Press Club.

Courtesy: Dawn



Peshawar: Female visitors take interest in a drone model showcased at the Education Expo 2025 in Peshawar, where students and technology enthusiasts explored innovative projects and emerging educational technologies.

Courtesy: Express Tribune



# PICTURES OF THE MONTH



Bhawalnagar: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz operates a sewing machine during her visit to a flood relief camp.

Courtesy: The News

Lahore: Gypsy children collect leftover and rotten onions at the vegetable market in Badamibagh.

Courtesy: The Nation



Islamabad: A girl is marked with indelible ink on her finger after receiving the HPV vaccine against cervical cancer.

Courtesy: Dawn



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GenderWatch

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