



JAWAD S. NAQVI

**E**qual employment opportunity (EEO) is a new concept in Pakistan. Pakistan's constitution puts a ban on discrimination on the basis of gender (Articles 27 and 34).

Pakistan is also a signatory of ILO instruments (Conventions No. 100, 111, 159 etc) that prohibit discrimination in employment. However, Pakistani organisations in practice do not offer equal opportunities and there are instances of discrimination on the basis of gender, religion, ethnicity etc. Effect of discrimination is more pronounced for women than for any other community due to a host of factors including feudal and patriarchal nature of society and misinterpretation of religion.

EEO model for Pakistan:

There is no concerted effort on the

# Towards equal employment

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national scale to introduce equal employment practices.

Government and corporate sector have yet to produce a model for EEO, and do not appreciate its philosophy and rationale. A majority of employers in Pakistan perceive equal employment and affirmative action (AA) as a western idea not relevant to Pakistani society. Popular opinion is to think of EEO

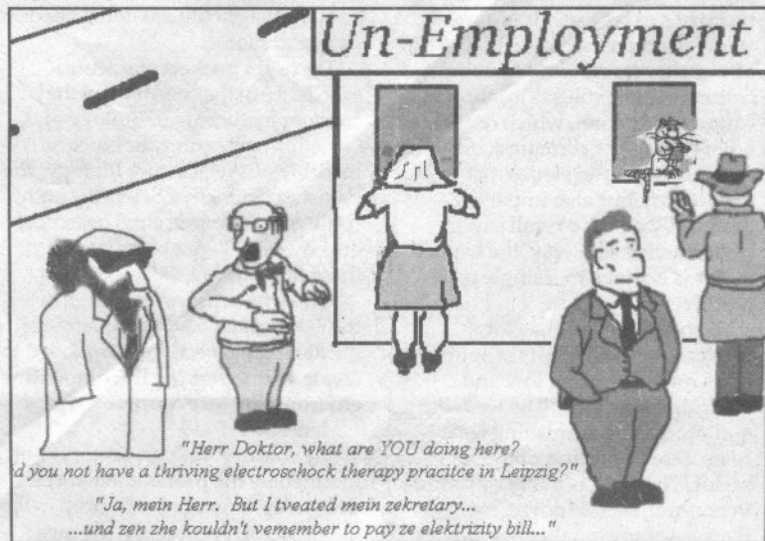
and AA as an additional bureaucratic expenditure that does not contribute to organisational productivity and competitiveness. With short-term monetary targets as the top most priority, a typical Pakistani employer fails to understand that EEO will contribute to cost effective decision-making and efficient management. In the absence of a viable model for EEO, equal

employment for Pakistani organisations will remain a dream.

It would be imprudent to transplant a western concept of EEO in this country that does not conform to its culture and value system. In this article I shall propose a model for EEO in Pakistan, based on two factors:

- I. Identification of specific characteristics of Pakistani society
- II. Analysis of a survey about discrimination in Pakistani society

- 1. Specific characteristics of Pakistani society:
  - 1. Diversity in population: Religious and ethnic diversity
  - 2. Culturally divergent values across society
  - 3. Inclusive nature of society: e.g. Pakistan accommodated huge influx of immigrants in 1947 and in early eighties.)
  - 4. Population: Above 147 millions (7th largest in the world, and second largest Islamic country)
  - 5. Poverty: About 33per cent of the population live below poverty line
  - 6. Low literacy rate: About 50.5per cent
  - 7. Disability: About 2.54per cent of the population
  - 8. Feudal background: A legacy of



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# Payment opportunities

British Raj in India

9. Influence of Indian caste system: An offshoot of stratification in Indian society

10. Nepotism and corruption: Pakistanis in general are more swayed by class and corporate corruption as compared to ability and effort.

11. Special respect for women: Pakistan is the first Islamic democracy to have elected a female politician as its Prime Minister - Benazir Bhutto.

12. Gender bias: Effect of discrimination is more pronounced for women than for any other community in Pakistan. That is due to feudal background and patriarchal nature of tribal society in Pakistan.

13. Sexual orientation: Pakistani society does not approve of homosexuality, bisexuality and sexual promiscuity, on religious grounds.

14. Islamic fundamentalism: Traditionally, religious parties have not secured more than a few seats in the national assembly. However there are more than 8000 religious schools in Pakistan with about 600,000 to 700,000 students, and the religion has been continuously exploited by successive regimes for

popularity sake.

15. Concept about western agenda: Instead of subscribing to a western discourse on feminism and individualism, which is irrelevant to Pakistan's cultural context, majority of Pakistanis favor defining their context and paradigms for equality and perceive Jinnah and Iqbal as their role models.

II. Survey: HR managers' perception about EEO

I conducted a qualitative research in June 2003 about the perception and understanding of human resource managers in Pakistan about diversity and discrimination in Pakistani society. In total 25 organisations (HR Managers) were  
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**"My boss only notices me when I make a mistake.  
If I stay home, I won't make any mistakes  
and I'll finally get a promotion!"**