

E-ISSN: 2709-9369

P-ISSN: 2709-9350

[www.multisubjectjournal.com](http://www.multisubjectjournal.com)

IJMT 2023; 5(7): 34-41

Received: 27-06-2023

Accepted: 26-07-2023

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## **Public policy, good governance and women empowerment in west Asia: A critical analysis**

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### **Abstract**

Government made policies for public which enables not the only government to promote equality among citizens at all levels but also gave an opportunity to the citizens to question the public policy and laws. Good Governance is the only possible condition for active participation of citizens as it focuses on the government role to be a responsible, participatory and accountable entity. Good governance, public policy and women empowerment in West Asia are closely linked and determine whether the governance in the region is good or bad for citizen's especially weaker sections such as women through various policies and laws. This paper aims to discuss the theoretical background of public policy, good governance and women empowerment in general as well as in West Asia and how the laws and policies affect citizens specifically women and do this brings any change in the condition of this section of the population.

**Keywords:** Good governance, women empowerment, West Asia, public policy, citizens

### **Introduction**

Earlier West Asian countries has centralization of power by the political actors that ignores the needs of the growing vulnerable population mainly women, but now these need are realized by the government because without the participation of every citizen overall development of the country is impossible and this development with participation can be achieved through good governance reform. Good governance reform has been adopted by different countries after its introduction in 1989 by the World Bank with the purpose to overcome the problem of high corruption, poverty, discrimination against citizens, and centralization of power. The quality and working of government depend not only upon achieving economic wealth but also depends upon the participation and empowerment of every citizen in the country's affairs i.e. why World Bank in 2003 document mentioned that good governance is concerned with economic development but also concentrate that government must work for the welfare of every citizen not only for the tiny majority.

West Asia is a vibrant region in terms of geographical location, resources, and ongoing regional conflicts that shape and affect the entire world at large. Boundaries of the region were changed from time to time by the developed nation to exercise their hegemony over the resources and trade routes. The West Asian region was also known as the 'Middle East'; 'Near East'; the 'Far East'; 'Greater Middle East'; Southwest Asia. The terms 'Near East'; 'Middle East'; 'Far East' were used to define the region till World War I. A. Th. Mahan an American historian in his article "The Persian Gulf and International Relations" published in British National Review magazine used the term 'Middle East' for the first time for the Gulf of Aden and India and stated that the Middle East was a region between the Suez and Singapore, it comprised of the territory between the Mediterranean and the Indian ocean <sup>[1]</sup>.

After the 9/11 terrorist attack, the US renamed the region from 'Middle East' to 'Greater Middle East'. UN preferred to call this region West Asia or Southwest Asia. West Asia is best known for its trade routes because it is located between Asia, Africa, and European continents and also surrounded by the Caspian Sea and Black sea in the north; Mediterranean Sea and Red sea in the West; and Arabian Sea, Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf are the major coastal areas. Yemen, Jordan, Israel, Lebanon, Syria, Turkey, Kuwait, Palestine, Iran, Iraq, Oman, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Egypt are the countries of the West Asian region.

From the earlier times government in West Asia countries restrict women to exercise their rights which makes them vulnerable sections of the population. With the passage of time, these countries observe the progress of western countries where empowerment and participation were enjoyed by citizens which also influence West Asian countries to adopt some elements of good governance for the better working of governing structure and welfare of the citizen especially vulnerable women through various reforms like decentralization,

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political representation, enhancing equality in employment and e-government and so on. This paper discussed the good governance in the West Asian countries and also examines the policies adopted by them that enhanced the quality of the governing system and promote welfare and empowerment of women particularly.

## **Good Governance, Women Empowerment, and Public Policy: An overview**

### **Good Governance**

Good Governance refers to the quality of governance that monitors efficiency and transparency in the functioning of the government for the sustainable development of the country with the welfare of its citizens. Governance is concerned with the role, structure, and process of the government to draft policies whereas government is the authority that implements these decisions. The term governance was first used in Plato's "Republic" and Aristotle's "Politics" that explained the governing system of the Greek city-state. Governance from 14<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> century is synonymously used as the government that relatively means the authority of the state [2]. World Bank in the 20<sup>th</sup> century revived the concept of governance. International Financial Institutions (IFIs) i.e. World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) are the organization that first defined and introduced the concept of governance and good governance.

In the 1960s and 70s, many countries faced the problem of high inflation, poverty, unemployment, poor living conditions, etc. and to overcome these problems World Bank and IMF gave loans to these countries for economic reforms known as Structural Adjustments Programmes (SAPs) in 1980s. Reducing the fiscal deficit, deregulation, balance of payment, minimum role of the state, privatization, reforming domestic and labor markets and public sector management and trade liberalisation are the aims of these programmes which every recipient country had to adopt in its development agenda but instead, these programs proved to be a complete failure in the developing countries especially Africa is among the worst-hit region.

So these financial institutions decided to divert it's focused on the governing process and its quality. They want a long term solution for Africa's problem of failure of a public institution described as a 'crisis of governance' as President Abdou Diouf of Senegal said that "Africa does not need less government but better government" [3]. For bringing a long-term solution, the World Bank in 1989 report on "From Crisis to Sustainable Growth: A Long-Term Perspective Study" introduced the concept of good governance and regarded it as the major conditionality for receiving aid from IFIs to correct the malfunction of the government institution. In 1989 good governance is defined and used by President Barber B. Conable as an "administration accountable to its people, efficient public services, and a judicial system that is reliable" [4]. World Bank concept is consisting of two words: 'good' refers to the qualities like sound, accountable, effective governing process whereas 'governance' is related to the administration of government and its relationship with the society. In 1992 report, "Governance and Development" highlighted four elements for attaining good governance: Public Sector Reform; Information and Transparency; Accountability; Legal Framework for Development.

The most important highlight of the bank's concept of good governance is the role of citizens in governance. People

played an important role in governance because for achieving sustainable development the state has to enhance equality while providing basic services like education, health care, employment. The state must promote equal opportunity and empowerment of people especially the vulnerable section of society. So, World Bank and IMF identified good governance is synonymous with sound development as it creates a sustaining environment for the economical political, social, and individual development of state institutions and citizens.

### **Women Empowerment**

Empowerment refers to the capability of a person to control the factors which affect their life whether gaining skills or making decisions, economic security, capacity building, and basic rights especially vulnerable groups like women. The concept of empowerment was first introduced and used by Brazilian educationist Paulo Freire in his book "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" published in 1968 [5] and talked about the empowerment of oppressed people through the approach of conscientization. Conscientization allows women to critically interact with other people so that they can become visible and realize their identity by gaining self-awareness and power through collective means that is the sole purpose of empowerment.

The women empowerment concept was first raised by feminist movements that occurred from the 1880s to the 1990s and were divided into three waves. Feminism is the first movement that is concerned with the unequal division of resources, rights, and opportunities between men and women that not only affects the lives of citizens but also the country as a whole. They believe in women's empowerment and equality in every sphere of life. Numerous efforts are also made by United Nations (UN) to internationalize the importance of empowerment of women for the welfare and sustainable development of the country.

UN was the first international organization that focuses on empowering women globally because UN realises that if the women issues are not addressed then development will be impossible to achieve by any country. In 1947 Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) under ECOSOC (Economic and Social Council) was also established whose main function was to pass legislation, provision, and international convention that member states adopt for improving the status of women. UN organised four conferences from 1975 to 1994 that internationalize the concept of women empowerment: First, Mexico Conference; Second Copenhagen Conference; Third Nairobi Conference; Fourth Beijing Conference. All the conferences have talked about the wellbeing and equal participation of women in education, politics, and economic spheres for maintaining international peace and development with the empowerment of women.

Feminism and the UN has been recognized women's empowerment as a major concept globally which highlighted that women are deprived not only in developing but also in developed countries as well. According to Kate Young women should control their own lives, set agenda for themselves, and also acts as an agent of the transformation of society by working with other women collectively to solve their problems as well as transform their position. Empowerment is the complete change of processes and structures responsible for the inferior position of women in society [6].

Empowerment is the approach of social, political, economic

changes which alleviate poverty and promote the sustainable development of people with the country.

### Public Policy

In every country either authoritative, democratic, monarchical in nature made policies for their respective citizens. Policy is the action of the government for the redressing the grievances and needs of the people living in the societal structure. It is the demands of the citizens that have been fulfilled by the government through various proposals which became a law to run the public affair in a welfare manner. These proposals are strategic governmental actions to address the issues concerning society and the people living in it. Government had to make policies because they elected by people's will for which it is duty of the government to be responsible to their welfare and development.

Policy is a government statement that intended to redress the public problem i.e. the conditions that citizens widely observes unacceptable such as environment degradation, poor drinking water, insufficient access to health care services and that therefore requires intervention by the government officials at every level. Many scholars defined public policy in numerous ways: Thomas R. Dye defined public policy as "whatever government chooses to do or not to do" [7] because government performed many functions such as regulating conflict, distribute benefits in the society, organize bureaucracies, and collecting taxes and all these functions is only performed through public policies. Charles Cochran and Eloise F. Malone stated that public policy is always concerned with the actions of the government and these actions are political decisions for executing the programs to achieve societal objectives [8]. So, state is responsible for the development individual, society and country through different policies. As public policy is the actions of government so concept was evolved with the changing nature of state.

'Magna Carta' in 1215 was the first draft and attempt of government realizing the welfare of the people. Under the draft, authority of the king and its ministers was not remained absolute. It talked about rights and welfare of the people such as no arbitrary arrest and right of free trial for everyone to ensure no offense to the individual livelihood, no forced taxation, or no forced marriage of widows [9]. Since then State has been directing their efforts to promote and protect the rights and liberties of the citizens for the smooth functioning and development of country. Public policy became the sole function of the state after the World War I and II to cope up with the development challenges faced by the different countries. West Asian countries after World War I became independent nations and their governments decide to build the nations by forming new government which focused on the social, economic, political and individual development of country and their citizens.

### Good Governance, Public Policies and Women Empowerment in West Asia

Quality of governance has become a global issue that affects any country both at domestic and internationally. Governance should be citizen welfare friendly and inclusive in nature, must work in cooperation with civil society for the efficient delivery of services, and promote social, economic, and political growth and interest of citizens in the development process. Men and women in the WANA (West Asia and North Africa) region want the government to be

productive that provides services like education, health, and also a good business environment. In the 2003 World Development Report, World Bank stated that the issue of good governance in MENA (Middle East and North Africa) is not only a political issue but an issue of development because its main role is to promote economic development and providing basic social services [10]. Bank defined governance as the exercise of authority on the behalf of people and good governance is practicing that authority in such a manner that respects the rights, morality, and needs of everyone within the state and in which people hold the government officials accountable [11].

According to World Bank, Good Governance in the WANA region can be achieved through two core values i.e. inclusiveness and accountability. Inclusive means everyone men and women, rich and poor or rural and urban can participate in the governance equally and the government should treat and protect them equally in terms of rights, privileges, and well-being for ending discrimination. West Asia region has a different form of government some of them are either different types of monarchy like Saudi Arabia have an absolute monarchy, Bahrain and Jordan had constitutional monarchy whereas Lebanon and Turkey are parliamentary form government with secularism. Around 284 million people residing in the region out of which half of its population around 142 million are female.

In the region good governance and women empowerment is realized and measures through inclusiveness or participation of women in the functioning of governing structure which also in turn explains the accountability criteria of respective government and also if government became attentive towards the needs of this vulnerable section of population. With the growing young population, men and women in the region became conscious about their rights and position by comparing it with other developed countries and demand equality, transparency, and sustainability in the working of government because without these values political, economic, social, and human development is impossible. This consciousness among women of West Asian countries was seen in the active participation in elections, education, and employment that was possible only if government allows it because in the region it was difficult for women to make their voices heard but with the aim of achieving development government is now focused on the empowerment of every citizen specifically women that is visible in the political, economic, and social sphere through various policy indicators such as political representation, healthcare, education, employment opportunities, and so on. Following are the indicators of good governance and women empowerment in the region:

1. **Political indicators:** Political indicators refer to the political situation of a particular country that focuses on the inclusiveness of the citizens in governing process both at the center and at the local level. Under this indicator, government and citizens are the crucial actors because the government is formed by people through various laws and policies adopted and granted by the constitution.
2. **Representation and Participation:** Women in West Asia faced discrimination in terms of equal representation due to gender stereotypes, customary laws such as the case in Saudi Arabia's basic law of governance is Sharia and the Quran is their constitution. According to Article 44, King is the supreme source of all the authorities of the state under Royal Decree M/61,



Article 17 & 18 for the first time granted women the right of participation and representation in the 2015 election <sup>[12]</sup>. Government of Saudi Arabia also was launched Qiyadyat program to empower women as leaders. From 2017 to 2019 Saudi women's seats proportion remained 20% in the Shura council and 1.2% in municipal council <sup>[13]</sup>. In Iran also the situation is same as Islamic republic with an autocratic supreme leader mentioned in revised constitution of 1989 under the Article 3 and 20 granted equality before the law with equal rights of participation and allow men and women both are free to enjoy political, social, economic and cultural rights in accordance with the law but government also used constitution by saying that women are not allowed to run for the president and if they even tried Guardian Council has rejected them all. Such as female contestants in the 2017 election 137 women have been disqualified and only 5.9% were at the consultancy position.

3. **Accountability:** In the WANA region, corruption is a prevalent characteristic of the governing process both at the center and local level that hinders accountability which in turn forced the country to adopt anti-corruption laws. Anti-corruption laws in the Turkish Constitution in Articles 74 and 125 have the right to Ombudsman and judicial review to exercise control over government officials. It has also enacted a body known as Financial Crime Investigation Board in 1997 for preventing money laundering and financial terrorism under Law No. 4208. But after the 2016 coup corruption is going way deeper because of the lack of implementation of these laws and centralization of power by president Erdoğan. For curbing corruption in Iran laws mentioned in the constitution are under Articles 49, 54, and 55 that articulate government not to acquire wealth from bribery, and established state audit offices like the Supreme Audit Court to review the accounts of the state budget. In 2008 two major laws were enacted i.e. Law on Upgrading Administrative System cleanness and Countering Corruption and Money Laundering Law in Iran created to curb corruption.
4. **Freedom of Speech and Expression and Association:** In the whole West Asia region, citizens whether in the public gathering or the judicial courts or parliament even on the social media platform enjoyed limited freedom. In the Turkish constitution Articles 26 to 28 and from 30 to 34 granted citizens full freedom of expression, speech, association, press, peaceful demonstration without authoritative interference of any political leader. Erdoğan after the 2016 coup attempt control every means of information. According to an NGO initiative Engelli Web, around 408,494 in 2019 from 40,000 in 2013 sites were blocked by the government and 5,599 articles are blocked by the government <sup>[14]</sup>. Even the popularly known newspaper Zaman was also entirely shut down in 2017 including its online papers.

Women's status in Iran in terms of thought, expression, speech, association, and peaceful demonstration is very stressful and worrisome. Constitution in Iran has granted freedom of press & expression under Article 24 unless it is against Islam. Women are not allowed to use social media for any kind of purpose. Ministry of Communications and

Information Technology and Committee to Determine Instances of Criminal Content (CDICC) and Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) are the ministries accountable to Supreme Leader and also suppress and persecute many journalists or activists. Many women have been arrested for criticizing the government on online platforms. On 18 August 2020, a freelance journalist Nader Fatourehchi was sentenced to 3 years <sup>[15]</sup> under the charge of speaking publicly against the government but the real reason was the self-reporting on Twitter about the high level of corruption in the government. FATA known as the Cyber Police of Iran pronounced that in 2018 they had arrested around 75,000 people which are the highest in its seven years operation <sup>[16]</sup>.

1. **Decentralisation:** Division of power from a central authority to local councils connects citizens not only to the central level but also at the lowest level of government as Janet Newman good governance involves upward and downward flows of power <sup>[17]</sup>. The process of decentralization in West Asia has been adopted by many countries differently as women were the proxy representative with male dominance at local level. In Saudi, women get right to representation and vote in 2015 municipal elections but the percentage of women in municipal council is very low around 1 percent. Local self-government was included in the Articles 100 of the Iranian constitution which stated that for economic, social, political, educational development and management of affairs of state, village, district, city or town level must include cooperation of people by the directly elected council at each level. In the council of rural and urban council of the country percentage of female candidates is 6% with 43% female chiefs in 2017 elections. In Turkey, under the law No: 2002/4550 local administration in 1945 gained the legal status of local administrative authority. The percentage of women representation in recent mayor elections of 2019 is 7% and 3.8% of women are there at metropolitan mayor's position in the cities in the 2019 municipal elections <sup>[18]</sup>. Fatma ŞAHİN is currently the president of the Union of Municipalities in Turkey.
2. **Social Indicators:** Social indicators as the term referred to the social conditions of citizens living in the society. In society condition and status of women is determined by their male counterparts because they are the one who makes decisions for women either as father or husband in matters like marriage, education, and way of clothing which make women subordinate to them as they don't have the freedom to question the decisions that affect their lives. In West Asia, women in society are always treated discriminately on every level education, family, health care.
3. **Education:** Education is the necessary element to uplift the position of women in a society that is why Iran is amongst country of the region that has highest female literacy. Through various laws and policies for education, government encouraged female population to gain knowledge and became self-reliant. The female literacy rate is 80.8% in 2021 <sup>[19]</sup>, Tehran has the highest female literacy rate i.e. 91% <sup>[20]</sup> but due to pandemic around 89,000 students are dropouts in 2021 mostly girls <sup>[21]</sup>. All this is because from 1997 to 2005 President Mohammad Khatami changes the atmosphere of women education. He appointed Massoumeh Ebtekar

as the first women vice president and Zahra Shojaie became the advisor to the president for women's affairs. During his rule around 60% in 2000 enrolled students are female and women's literacy rate is 96% in 2007 [22]. Mansour Gholami, the minister of Science, Research, and Technology in December 2020 stated that 50% of the University population in Iran is women [23].

4. **Health:** Health is an indicator related to the mental and physical wellbeing of an individual. The well-being of a person depends upon the living conditions of a person within the society and the household. Health care in all the West Asian countries is managed by the central government ministry but there is a huge difference between male and female health in terms of infant mortality rate, death rate, maternal mortality rate, etc. Article 31 of Saudi Basic Law of Governance, Article 56 of Turkish constitution stated that it is the duty of the government to provide health-related services for the mental and physical well-being of the citizens. Turkish women have life expectancy rate in 2019 is 81.3 years with 75.9 for men [24]. The maternal mortality ratio among women in Turkey 2019 is 13, 1 per 100,000 whereas the Infant mortality rate is 9, 0 per thousand lives.
5. **Women in Domestic Sphere:** In the domestic sphere, women have to play the role of wife, mother, and the caretaker who don't have equality of choice in terms of marriage, divorce, property and custody of children. In West Asia as society is patriarchal in nature, women are subjected to domestic violence and it is very prevalent in the region. In Saudi Arabia the minimum age of marriage of both males and females is 18 [25] and in case of Iran according to law 13 for girls and 15 for boys is the legal age for marriage, but in Saudi and Iran, most of the women have to marry the person her parents think suitable for them. From 2017 to 2018, statistics of the Iranian census organization stated that around 234,000 marriages in which the age of girls is under 15, and out of this in 193 marriages the age of girls are 10 years [26].

In Saudi Percentage women residing in urban areas (4%) experienced more violence from their husbands than in rural areas (1%) [27]. Every day in Iran 2000 women across the country have been arrested for improper veil and around 66% of women experienced domestic violence [28]. But in Turkey, both men and women have equal rights in terms of marriage, divorce, and custody but violence against women is a serious problem, in 2014 38% of women have experienced any kind of physical and sexual violence once in their lifetime. The rate of domestic violence against women is now 75%. From January 1<sup>st</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> October 2019 around 302 women were killed and 532 were injured by men [29]. To address the issue of violence against women Turkey has adopted the National Action Plan on Combating Violence against Women 2016-2023.

1. **Economic Indicators:** Economic indicators in women's empowerment involve the participation of women in the economic development of the country. Globally women's participation in the workforce is 63% but in the WANA region is less than 35% in 2017. Countries have established labor laws to protect the right of labourers. The economic empowerment of women can be determined by looking at their

participation in the labour force of the formal and informal sectors.

2. **Women employment in the formal sector:** In the Formal sector of the region there is a good comparison in terms of employment, but mostly women employment is limited at the government ministries and administration. Turkey's overall employment rate of people 15 years and above is 45.7% in 2019 in which 28.7% are women this employment rate is increased to 38.5% in 2021 [30] as in Saudi Arabia female employment rate is increased from 22% in 2016 to 32.6% in 2021 [31]. In Turkey limited women employed in the government ministries that are about 25% are ambassadors, 17% are elected in the parliament in 2020 and in recent 2019 municipal election around 37 are women among 1,389 elected mayors either at the district level or higher [32]. Derya Yanik of Justice and Development Party (AKP) in 2020 was appointed as the minister at Turkey's Ministry of family and social affairs. In Saudi women are appointed in various ministries in Saudi only 1.2% in the parliament but under vision 2030 many women were appointed to different ministries like Princess Reema Bint Bandar Al Saud was the first female ambassador to the United States and under the Ministry of Culture has 50% of its employee are female [33].
3. **In the Informal Sector:** Informal sector includes the work for which women are not being paid or recognized. For unpaid work women of West Asian countries are considered as the sole actors for the fulfillment of household needs. In comparison with 0.3% women in Saudi Arabia, 18% of Iranian women are employed in the agricultural sector in 2019 [34]. Women population of 41.02 million in Iran is almost equal with men 41.89 million [35] but have major difference in terms of participation in the economy i.e. 13.3% in females and 68.5% males participation with an employment rate of 11.1% females in comparison with 62.8% males in 2020-2021 [36]. Most of the women in Iran are dependent and working in the informal sector around 60% [37] in which 16% in agriculture, in services sector 57.2%, and in the manufacturing sector 26% in 2020-2021 [38], 75% of them working in the handicraft market mostly in carpets industries [39].

In Iran government efforts for protecting women lack transparency like the laws protecting women from violence, Comprehensive plan for empowerment of women, Poverty Preventive Plan for lactating and pregnant women all put on hold because of the lack of funds.

### **Governance and Women during COVID-19**

COVID-19 has emerged as the most dangerous state of health emergency that emerged in Wuhan China in late 2019 then spread to the entire world. The virus put pressure on the governing system of every country. Just like other nations these three West Asian countries took measures to cope up with this challenge. During COVID-19 Turkish government had delivered five masks to every citizen through the post every week free of cost. Ministry of Family, Labour, and Social Services have given around 2, 1 million families around 1,000 TRY cash to support. In terms of job loss during COVID-19 the percentage of women was higher 18.8% from 14.2% men and 20% of female and 8% of male lost their businesses which led the increase in the

household work about 77% <sup>[40]</sup> women said that cleaning, cooking and serving a meal is the most time-consuming work during these time. For seeking health services women have to be dependent upon the health insurance of other family members 46% of women said that their health expenses are covered by their spouse or parent's health insurance. The outbreak of the virus has hugely strained their emotional and mental health as 54% of women and 49% men stated that they have been feeling high stress and anxiety during the pandemic. From March 2019 to 2020, according to the Istanbul Security Directorate that there is 38% increase in domestic violence <sup>[41]</sup>. Saudi during covid made possible restrictions on gathering and also launched two GPS apps Tawakkalna and Tabaoud to maintain social distancing. Sehhaty, Mawid, Wasfaty, and Sehha are e-health service providing apps launched by the government. Saudi has had an e-learning process in the kingdom for a very long time especially higher education so it is easy for them to completely shift to electronic media for educational purposes. According to the ministry of education, they have conducted more than 76000 online classes with 1.2 million users <sup>[42]</sup> during COVID-19. During COVID-19 government give 2.3 billion USD to 60% employees for 3 Months. In terms of female conditions their labor force participation has been increasing from 17% in 2016 to 31% in 2020 with maternity benefits, anti-harassment law, child care support, right to drive but still, they have no freedom of speech and expression arresting of activists like Loujain al-Hathloul, Smar Badawi and other still prevalent which affects their position in the society.

Iran with 4.8 million COVID-19 cases has suffered the fifth wave <sup>[43]</sup>. They have built the Primary Healthcare System (PHS) in urban-rural areas for creating awareness and dealing with COVID-19 by providing essential health services. UN also extending financial helps of USD 6.7 billion <sup>[44]</sup> for equipment, medicines, and test kits for saving the lives of people. The government established national headquarters for the management and control of coronavirus and allocate 5 billion Tomans for masks, disinfectants, compensation for physicians, nurses, and health care personnel. To help the poor government tried to financially help people about 100 billion Tomans to the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education with insurance. It has also enforced 10,000 Tomans <sup>[45]</sup> and with the help of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) prevents COVID-19 and provides health services to the deprived areas and introduced electronic health record so with the help of phone patient's location can be determined. But to cover their inability government regarded COVID-19 as a western plot and a security threat instead of a health emergency. During the pandemic, most of the women around 1 million nearly lost their source of income mainly the handicraft industry workers and nurses as the movements of people are restricted. There are 80% of nurses who faced inequality in terms of income but MOH was never addressed their issues. Around 60,000 nurses have been infected from which 100 lost their lives <sup>[46]</sup>. During COVID-19, the most important fallback of government initiatives is the digitization of education through online platforms when 3 million students don't have smartphones which leads to high dropout rates, especially in girls.

### Conclusion

Good Governance and women empowerment in West Asia is the important aspects as they explained the relationship of

governing authority with its citizen. Governance is good when it secured the rights of the citizens including the vulnerable i.e. women and ethnic, religious, or cultural minorities as World Bank stated that good governance means the development of the country with all citizens not only of few elites. Good governance and women empowerment can be achieved through participation, inclusiveness, transparency, and accountability in the implementation of policies and laws in West Asia. Inclusiveness means everyone is equally represented in the economic, social, and political sectors, and in each sector, transparency can be checked by questioning or holding the government accountable. Turkey, Iran, and Saudi Arabia with the distinct form of government have tried every possible way to empowered vulnerable women for achieving sustainable development of the country which can be possible if each and everyone residing in the country participated and represented. In these countries, women's empowerment is connected and depends upon the working of the government which determined their role and position in the social, economic, and political sphere. In these countries, the education sector is the most important and the sole sector in which all three countries succeeded in empowering women the most, and political representation in parliament at the center is the weakest sphere where government needs to pay more attention. Iran's government wanted to control every sphere of women's life even during the covid time that is why they are lagging in terms of governance and empowerment. But in governance, all of them have seemed very focused i.e. decentralization and e-government of power to ensure that people's needs are fulfilled from central level to local level as well. By this paper, it can be stated that good governance and empowerment do exist in West Asian countries and now they are more focused on these concepts for achieving development mainly economic.

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