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# " From Commitment to Action: Assessment and Challenges of Pakistan, S Advancement Regarding Sustainable Development Goals"

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### Abstract

Pakistan has signed the UN 2030 vision and has been a developing state for more than 75 years. On February 16, 2016, the National Assembly adopted the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Nonetheless, the Sustainable Development Goals were taken into consideration by the UN in 2015, and this was an endeavor to construct the country to enable better development. It has 17 SDGs that are vital to both human and environmental well-being. As a member of the UN, Pakistan has framework rules for examining development areas and putting policies in place for building development plans. However, some gaps in the framework are putting Pakistan in the grey area. Nonetheless, the goal of this study is to determine how far Pakistan has come towards achieving the SDGs and what obstacles stand in the way of Pakistan meeting the demands of the UN 2030 agenda. The agenda calls for the eradication of hunger and poverty as well as the discussion of important issues including social justice, inequality, and a clean environment. Therefore, the research will provide suggestions and answers to get past these fundamental problems, and being a strong nation will help.

Keywords: Sustainable Development, Governance, Institutions, Climate, Modernization Theory

# Introduction

The purpose of this research is to examine how policies are implemented, look for development at the provincial and national levels, and track current development with the use of trustworthy reports on Pakistan's performance. These days, innovation and technology are also contributing to progress; this will be covered with Pakistan's chances of achieving the SDGs. The main concept is



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to offer the solutions and policies needed to create the framework needed to work on the UN SDGs efficiently. This introduction lays the groundwork for illustrating Pakistan's commitment to addressing the SDGs' difficulties and the obstacles encountered in achieving them. But it also elaborates on Pakistan's achievements and advances since 2016 and offers evidence-based tactics. Not to mention, my research will provide solutions to deal with all the problems by strengthening the youth through skilled employment opportunities and by demonstrating to them the value of a practical education over a theoretical one. After all, all successful nations have strong youth who contribute to the development of their countries (Botchway, 2001).

This article examines the progress of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Pakistan from 2015 to 2019 and includes data for 2020, indicating that SDG 1 has advanced. However, the figures suggest that, while 9.3 million people were pulled out of poverty between 2015 and 2019, poverty rates have fallen, and SDG 2 remains a concern. Pakistan has achieved limited progress towards SDG 3's fundamental health indicators (excellent health and well-being) (Botchway, 2001). Between 2007 and 2019, the number of moms who died during pregnancy and childbirth decreased by 32.6%. Between 2013 and 2018, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan showed a decline in physical violence against women to 23.4% and 34.6%, respectively, from the peak rates of 31%. Access to clean water and sanitation has improved at both the national and provincial levels (SDG 6). Better drinking water sources are available to 94% of the nation's population. Between 2015 and 2020, Baluchistan's access to clean drinking water increased by 17%.

Pakistan's commitment to environmental protection is evidenced by a more than fourfold increase in the proportion of renewable energy (SDG 7) from 2015 to 2019. The percentage of persons in the country that cook with clean fuel increased from 41.3% in 2014-2015 to 47% in 2018-19. Slow progress is being made towards SDG 8 indicators of decent work and economic growth. The real GDP per capita growth rate fell to -3.36% in the 2019-2020 fiscal year, compared to 2.04% in the 2014-2015 fiscal year, indicating an economic downturn. There has been some progress towards the SDG 9 targets (industry, innovation, and infrastructure). Despite the overall negative consequences of COVID-19 in 2019-2020, small scale industries' proportion of total industrial value added increased to 10.5%. in 2019-2020 from 8.4% in 2014-2015.



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A 2% decrease in income inequality between 2016 and 2019 represents a modest dent in the goal of SDG 10 (reduced inequalities) (Javed at al. 2022). Between 2014 and 2018, the number of urban dwellers living in slums, informal settlements, or poor housing fell by 7% (SDG 11 on sustainable cities and communities), up from 45% in 2014. Pakistan remains committed to resolving the hazardous waste issue and meeting its duties under the Basel Convention, as outlined in SDG 12 (responsible consumption and production). However, Pakistan has made relatively little progress towards SDG 13 (climate action). With a 2020 index score of 0.8, up from 0.4 in 2018, the country has adopted and implemented national disaster risk reduction (DRR) measures in accordance with the Sendai Framework for DRR. In contrast, greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions rose by 375.03 million tons in 2016, a 2.5% increase over 2015 (Husain, 2018). Pakistan kept the percentage of fish stocks within biologically acceptable levels at 30% between 2015 and 2020 in accordance with SDG 14 (life below) SDG 15 (life on land) calls for a share of Pakistan's forest area to be at least 5% of its total land by 2020. This goal has not changed despite the country's rapidly increasing population and urbanization. In terms of SDG 16 (peace, justice, and strong institutions), there was an 8.2% improvement in children under-five's birth registration between 2013 and 2018 (Husain, 2018).

Pakistan is making great progress towards digital transformation in terms of SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). In the three years from 2017 and 2020, the number of fixed internet broadband subscriptions per 100 residents increased by 20%.2) Undernourishment decreased from 20.2% in 2015 to 16% in 2019 (a 4.2% decrease). According to the research, Pakistan had an overall Index score of 57.7% in 2021, putting the country 57.7% closer to reaching the best possible outcome across all 17 SDGs. The 2019 Covid-19 pandemic has wreaked havoc on Pakistan's health and education institutions, resulting in a high death toll and preventing children from attending school. The epidemic also resulted in widespread unemployment and serious devastation, both globally and in Pakistan. According to the article, the government has established a national SDG framework with targets and indicators. It also states that the country prioritizes SDGs 1 (no poverty), 3 (excellent health and well-being), 4 (quality education), 6 (clean water and sanitation), 8 (decent job and economic growth), and 16 (peace, justice, and strong institutions).



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The statement reads, "Pakistan has notified parliamentary task forces on SDGs to oversee implementation of the national framework and has established SDG units under its SDG task forces at the central and provincial levels. Additionally, it shows that the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and federal and subnational governments collaborated to carry out a "comprehensive" consultative process involving all of the nation's provinces and regions. However, Pakistan is struggling to meet the difficulties of the priority-based SDGS because of its weak institutions and economic situation. According to the research, Pakistan had an overall Index score of 57.7% in 2021, putting the country 57.7% closer to reaching the best possible outcome across all 17 SDGs. The 2019 Covid- 19 pandemic has wreaked havoc on Pakistan's health and education institutions, resulting in a high death toll and preventing children from attending school. The epidemic also resulted in widespread unemployment and serious devastation, both globally and in Pakistan. According to the article, the government has established a national SDG framework with targets and indicators. It also states that the country prioritizes SDGs 1 (no poverty), 3 (excellent health and well-being), 4 (quality education), 6 (clean water and sanitation), 8 (decent job and economic growth), and 16 (peace, justice, and strong institutions). The statement reads, "Pakistan has notified parliamentary task forces on SDGs to oversee implementation of the national framework and has established SDG units under its SDG task forces at the central and provincial levels.

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It also looked at the percentage of people living in deprivation, which is close to 38.3%. This number shows that there are many different types of deprivations, such as not having access to clean water and education. Next, it assesses the degree of deprivation, revealing that 51.7% of people live in poverty on an individual basis. Finally, the population share percentage is displayed, with 12.9% of people classified as vulnerable to multidimensional poverty, 21.5% as severe multidimensional poverty, and 4.9% as below the poverty line due to income. Finally, it looked at the impact of deprivation on aspects such as standard of living (31.1%), health (276.6%), and education (41.3%).

#### Challenges

#### Poor Economy

Because most rural inhabitants send money home in the form of remittances, remittances have a significant impact on poverty rates in those communities. The second factor is how people earn their monthly income, and similarly, Pakistan's poverty rate is determined by the number of families in the country. It is obvious that large family units have greater rates of poverty than smaller and medium-sized families. This population, which is primarily concentrated in developing nations, is 90% destitute. Poverty levels rise in direct proportion to GDP growth rates. (Report, 2021). The causes of the growth slowdown can be classified into two types: chronic problems and structural problems.

First and foremost, bad economic management and environmental deterioration are the leading causes of poverty in Pakistan. Nonetheless, the Pakistani government has made attempts to solve these difficulties, such as Musharraf's devolution plan, which was implemented in 2001 in 96 districts across four provinces with the declared purpose of laying the framework for genuine local democracy. Its purpose is to meet the needs of the local population. However, the devolution plan experienced a substantial delay as a result of the political upheaval in Pakistan, and the populace faced various challenges. Pakistan consistently posts high trade deficits because a large amount of its food and petrol is imported.

#### Weak Governance



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A review of Pakistan's economic development during the last fifty years reveals that, while the majority of the population remains illiterate, destitute, and backward, the benefits of this development have primarily benefited a small elite class. Political instability, corruption, lack of accountability, weak institutions, insufficient public engagement, and the absence of effective governance have all been linked to human rights violations and the erosion of democratic norms and practices. Furthermore, a failure to ensure equitable resource allocation has resulted in socioeconomic disparities and unequal opportunities for residents. In it, he suggests three options for correcting Pakistan's poor governance: increasing transparency and strengthening institutions. Another strategy is to encourage citizens to participate more in government. By supporting social services and infrastructure, the government can improve services (Crisis Group, 2004).

#### Weak Institutions

The country's political institutions play an important role in maintaining a major image in the international arena. As in his book Why Nations Fail, the author contends that certain countries are wealthier and wealthier than others due to their political and economic institutions (e.g., government, market system), rather than their weather, geography, or culture. So he describes that if political institutions such as the executive, judiciary, and legislative branches are in good shape, nations will develop, and the primary cause of weak institutions is an economic institution which the free market system plays an important role, with no restrictions on a country's exports. Extractive institutions serve just a limited elite segment in society and restrict access to economic and political activities to those who can afford them, whereas inclusive institutions allow all members of society to participate in economic and political activities. The authors contend that extractive institutions can cause political instability, economic stagnation, and, in extreme cases, state collapse. Inclusive institutions, on the other hand, allow for the flourishing of democracy, innovation, and long-term prosperity. Additionally, he recommended inclusive institutions for political stability. Inclusive political structures are also required, as political poweris frequently used to limit opportunities for others while concentrating rewards in the hands of a few.

#### **Political Instability**



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Pakistan's current political instability has presented both external and domestic problems to its society and state. Pakistan is facing major challenges, particularly in the areas of politics and economy. The international community is sending help and assistance to Pakistan, but in the faceof insincere leadership and politically unstable situations, the massive foreign aid is not yielding favorable effects. (Political Instability: A Case Study of Pakistan, Journal of Political Studies, Vol. 18, No. 1). Political instability occurs when organized society's governing institutions fail tomeet popular demands and expectations. Political instability is thus described as a condition of tension between governments and (competing) power groups that is characterized by overt acts of violence, support for extreme political radicalism, or by apathy in the face of movements dedicated to severe, drastic, or violent disruptions of the status quo (Hussain, 2018).

### Climate Challenge

The challenges posed by Arctic warming and Pakistan's own climate realities are inextricably linked to the country's vision of a successful and environmentally sustainable future. Despite its distance from the Arctic, the consequences of Arctic warming have a substantial impact on Pakistan's ecosystem. The country has a Climate Risk Index score of 87.83 out of 100, indicatinga hazardous state due to chronic climate hazards. As a result, Pakistan faces the immense challenge of accomplishing its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) while navigating these environmental threats. Recent data from the 2023 Sustainable Development Report, which puts Pakistan 128th out of 166 countries according to the SDG score, provides light on this ongoing struggle. Pakistan is scored 58.97 (Tol, 2022). We readily agree that agriculture is not the only way in which climate change might affect the poor. Natural disasters may cause damage to infrastructure such as highways, public and commercial buildings, and dwellings, withlocalized, negative consequences for the entire community. Similarly, sickness, disputes over scarce natural resources, or ethnic unrest worsened by migration out from vulnerable, low- lyingplaces can have a dramatic and negative impact on the poor. By focusing just on agriculture, our treatment of climate change's poverty implications inherently underestimates their full scope.

However, examining the climate change-agriculture poverty nexus provides useful insights for climate change mitigation efforts and development policies, which are best understood when



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investigated in depth. Climate change's effects on coastal zones, forestry, tropical and extratropical storm damage, unmanaged ecosystems, water resources, diarrhea, malaria, dengue fever, and schistosomiasis are modelled using simple power functions.<sup>11</sup> Pakistan is at a critical moment, dealing with the twin concerns of climate change exacerbated by the Arctic and meetingits SDG goals. In order to build proactive strategies, Pakistan must understand the global implications of Arctic shifts in order to develop proactive, successful measures. By identifying and resolving these complexities, Pakistan may chart a new road for a future that blends economicprogress with resilient and sustainable development in the face of ever-changing climate challenges. Planting trees is critical for Pakistan's health and environment (ReliefWeb, 2023).

### Education

Education is a fundamental, public, equally and, indeed, collectively provided social good or service. However, as you will recall, we have not let go functionality, effectiveness, efficiency, integration and transformation that refers to accessibility, equity, quality, entrepreneurship, and continuing professional development. Surviving the future that is not a fiction: adapting to learning and preparing for changes that one cannot foresee in the new world of information technology. In the literature that has sought to establish an understanding of education, it has become increasingly clear that it cannot in the current society prepare learners for a better tomorrow using residual paradigms.<sup>12</sup> The educated and literate population contribute significantly to the nation's progress. When the youth of the state are educated and have advancedabilities, there will be more job chances for them. Pakistan has primary, secondary, and higher education, as well as many universities, but there is a need for skill-based and practical educationthat will result in a good population, just as China, the United States, and India have large populations but have, provided opportunities for youth development. However, in Pakistan, numerous institutes provide theoretical-based studies Imran & Nordin, 2018).

### Explosion

Pakistan's population is quickly rising, creating a perpetual challenge for the government and policymakers. According to Prakash Chandra, population is a double-edged sword, which means that a larger population that is talented and educated is an asset to a state, such as China, the United 397



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States, and India. On the other hand, if the same population is unemployed, unskilled, and disorganized, it poses a threat and challenge to the state (Sathar, 2001). However, when the population becomes burden on the country, it causes significant problems. Adam Smith stated, "Growth of population as the basis of wealth" When there is investment in the population, development willoccur steadily. There are three primary measures of development, population growth outpaces agricultural productivity, leading to famines and crises. Furthermore, when the population grows, it will have an impact on the workforce. So, as food grain output increases, it naturally combats population concerns.

### Theoretical Framework

### Modernization Theory and Pakistan's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

The modernization idea holds that societies progress through several stages, from traditional to modern forms. This evolution is driven by economic progress, technical improvements, and social change. When applied to Pakistan's context and pursuit of the SDGs, several important points emerge. It postulates a topical theory of societal progression that underpins the more advance theory of modernization that was proposed. Whereby they have to move from being a traditional economy to being developed economy, before they can be categorized as developed countries. Having highlighted the causes, it is now pertinent to outline some of the effects that organizational change has on the workplace, and these include; in order for it to be utilized and reflected with a focus on Pakistan an, then it shows thatto solve most of them and achieve the ABCs of the SDGs the following needs to be done and hasimportant implications. First, poverty reduction and relevant to economic development which is the key condition for modernization. However, there is some truth in poverty reduction mantra inPakistan because the poverty rates are on the decline. There were entertainment forms that couldbe termed exotic and cultural which means more economy of the country growing with time. However, despite the challenges which are these are; the above challenges are, mainly in the rural regions where poverty is entrenched.

Second, health and well-being: it is chiefly with these elements that people concentrate most theirefforts and requirements. Empowering as to the question of culture in details, it is necessary



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to note that the process of modernization from above in relation to the socially significant position of women or other socially. SDG 3 (good health h) this target can be achieved with relative ease because poor and vulnerable mothers and children are targeted to increase access to health and survival through Health Care Facilities. Third, women must assume their due role in the social order: Since, being modern is the current theme of social and political liberation, gender equality is also inherent in it. The fifth SDG works with the goal of eradicating several acts of discriminations especially on the rights of women in education, employment and also in leadership positions. Progress in this area shows that Pakistan has taken initiatives to show concern towards the process globalization and changing face of society norms.

Fourth, education and water access remain major issues. SDG 4 (excellent education) has challenges, particularly in rural areas. Finally, Pakistan faces an annual SDG funding gap of US\$3.72 billion. Tomeet the SDGs by 2030, steady economic development and investment are required. Allocation g 16% of annual GDP emphasizes the need of modernization activities. Pakistan's progress towards the SDGs can be viewed through the lens of modernization theory, which states that societies move through stages of development. Feudal structures and rural economies characterize Pakistan's traditional period of history. The country is in a transitional stage as it industrializes and faces challenges with urbanization, healthcare, and education. Modernization requires social reforms, scientific advancements, and economic diversity. Prioritizing sustainable infrastructure (SDG 9), healthcare (SDG 3), and education (SDG 4) is critical for Pakistan to achieve the SDGs. Political stability, inequality, and cultural background remain significant elements to consider. The three key policy outcomes are industrialization, institutional reforms, and human capital investments. Continuing development necessitatescontinuous monitoring of progress. SDG 1 (no poverty) shows steady progress, with poverty ratesfalling below the national poverty line; SDG 2 (zero hunger) indicates a decrease in malnutrition; and SDG 3 (good health and with well-being) emphasis's improvements in maternal health, vaccination coverage, and skilled birth attendance. However, SDG 4 (excellent education)remains a struggle, with stagnant primary school completion rates and a 60% national literacy rate. SDG 5 (gender equality) indicates advances in women's representation in managerial roles and decreased physical violence against



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women, while SDG 6 (clean water and sanitation) shows improvements at the national and provincial levels.

### Analysis

To reduce poverty, the government should subsidize activities that promote entrepreneurship, create jobs, and offer vocational training. Poverty can be reduced by providing people with opportunities to earn an income and develop their skills. Diversifying industries by supporting a variety of economic sectors such as industry, services, and agriculture ensures a bigger pool of potential employees. Long-term job creation can result from modernizing industries and supporting innovation. Perhaps technology adoption has become necessary to lift people out of poverty, allowing marginalized populations to have access to markets, credit, and banking services through the use of digital platforms for financial inclusion.

Pakistan can benefit the poor by closing the digital divide. Agriculture can be sustained by investing in cutting-edge farming methods such as organic farming, hybrid seed use, and precision agriculture. Effective irrigation techniques, such as drip irrigation, can boost crop yieldswhile saving water. Long-term food security can be achieved by promoting climate- resilient cropvarieties and diversifying crop kinds, as well as providing nutritional education to communities about dietary diversity, balanced diets, and micronutrient-rich foods Modernization includes the transmission of knowledge on dietary types, portion sizes, and nutrition.

Community nutrition programmers can help people make informed dietary decisions. Furthermore, by modernizing the food supply chain and implementing efficient means of distribution, transportation, and storage. Renovate cold storage facilities to reduce losses after harvest. Invest in improving transport infrastructure to connect rural producers with metropolitan consumers.

Discriminatory practices such as child marriage, domestic abuse, and unequal inheritance laws must be addressed in Pakistan. Legislative changes can ensure property rights, equal access to justice, and protection against gender-based violence. Furthermore, develop gender- responsive policies to ensure women have equal access to healthcare, employment, and education. Pakistan should develop policies that address gender disparity. Gender-responsive development is achieved, 400



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for example, by boosting girls' education, implementing workplace gender quotas, andproviding maternal health services. Pakistan's water management needs to upgrade its sanitary facilities and water delivery infrastructure. This includes maintaining effective distribution networks, updating outdated infrastructure, and improving water purification facilities. Pakistan may increase access to clean drinking water by investing in modern water management, particularly hygiene promotion, which teaches people about safe water practices. To heighten consumes' confidence and enhance the aspects of food safety regulators as well as other methodsof tracing foods. Pakistan should spend some money on the construction and upgrading of clinics, hospitals and other health center.

Through the process of modernization of health care, an extended community could guarantee the standards of quality diagnosis, treatment and emergency services in case of an outbreak of a particular disease. And by preparing the country'shealth workforce for a universal health care system. A good number of calls have indicted thoseskills of healthcare personnel need to be improved. Those include specialization advanced training and education, continuing medical education, and evidence-based medicine training for the patients. Modernization involves applying of current appropriate means in practice starting with the use of current medical practices sampled from the best Medical Practicing Units in the world. The process of modernizing the syllabi relates to the idea of changing it to achieve an international standard. This comprises using modern and recent themes, encouraging the thinkingprocess, and as far as possible making students encounter problems within the lessons. Most relevant information and skills effective in today's job market can be made available to studentsthrough the process of revising the existing curricula in the country, particularly in Pakistan. Furthermore, many teaching practices will improve as well as teachers' skills and knowledge that results from educating teachers.

Modernization involves ability to empower teachers and offering a training on learnercentered methods, expose the teacher to new curriculum implementation methods, and professional development. A teacher, who is qualified may captivate class setting and inspire the learners. First of all, integration of digital learning will be useful for Pakistanis since they use technology for teaching within the framework of a digital environment. It is due to this reason that 401



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the integration of technology, web-based tools and e-learning systems can assist in improving the accessibility to education with quality, most especially in regions that are rural or unserved.

Pakistan may also get from technology which will help in the overall process of education whichwill definitely be inclusive and lifelong. Women's empowerment must go hand in hand with leadership decision-making power to enhance the abilities of women. One such measuresinvolves encouraging women to be onto corporate boards, community groups and government institutions. Gender empowered women make a positive contribution in the efficient governance of the country inclusive of its population. And to effectively make people, particularly women, understand legal reform and the need to update the law to fit the women's rights. From the givensolution, it is very much comprehensible that if washing vegetable with water & soap, right way of cooking food items, right way of throwing supper and other the wastes then percent- age of getting health complications can minimally be lowered.

All these diseases bear a direct relationship with litter concentration on the streets and hence theGovernment of Pakistan should put in place methods of disposing the above litter through an efficient rubbish management plan to adopt environmentally friendly methods. This should be done in with special reference to segregation and disposal of wastes, EPA should encourage on the recycling and the right methods of handling wastes that are harmful to the health of human beings. They should also be willing to enhance ways of handling wastage in a better manner thatcan also decrease their effect on ecosystems and water resources in Pakistan. As per modernization theory it will be highly beneficial to attempt the changeover of energy from conventional or non-renewable energy sources to the renewable sources for furthering of the process of economic development v hence the suggestion of renewable energy for generation utility in Pakistan by hydroelectric wind and solar power.

This social change that this company can incorporate is the positive change of reform and explain about how viable it is to use the different sources of green energy like the wind mill or the solar energy in contrast to the conventional source of energy in the protection of the environment. Having a country to managethe electrical load shed electricity in renewable as well as affordable and sustainable manner, there lies the opportunity of Solar and wind energy exist; where as to retain 402



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the energy for building and industry in Pakistan there is the need of evaluating the potential of energy conservation, reconstructing the old buildings and implementing energy efficient technologies.

### Conclusion

Pakistan may reduce waste and enhance overall efficiency by optimizing its energy use. Grid modernization is crucial for upgrading electricity distribution networks. Update the electrical system to support dispersed energy sources, improve reliability, and reduce transmission losses. Grid modernization requires three key elements: demand-side management, smart grid technologies, and grid resilience. In respect to analyze the grand strategy of industrial upgrading, it absolutely is important for Pakistan to target mainly on the manufacturing and service industries. They include; Automation improves competitiveness since it is one of the objectives that result in technological modernization and rationalization of procedures in production. Of specific significance for this discourse is the assertion that Pakistan, not only has the capability to entice foreign investment, create sustainable employment, but it can also perform these if onlyit will fund Research and Innovation. Regarding the issue of economics, another essential relevantquestion is to promote the skills or other beneficial competencies in the concerned workforce to be in tandem with today's demand of employment.

As for the investments, it should direct the funds to each stage of learning, with a special emphasis placed on learning throughout life, technology learning, and vocational learning. The technicities knowledge may assist the nation to meet the needs of expanding livelihood Labor market by having paramount skills as competitive thinking skills, flexibility, and proficiency in the computers. Somewhat surprisingly, the most critical reform appears to be on creating an environment conducive to the growth of newfirms and hence competition and innovation. For instance, Pakistan can minimize the onset of hostile conditions for start-up businesses by easing formalities, providing better access to funds and raising the likelihood of venturing. Pakistan of can do much for the purpose of stimulating economic growth and thereby creating employment opportunities for its economically productivesegment through the provision of funds for SMEs.



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