

Challenges Faced To Women Parliamentarians In The Legislative Process Of Pakistan

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Abstract: *Legislation is the prime function of the parliamentarians and women have a key role in parliamentary procedures and practices. Although, Pakistan had a women's Prime Minister throughout its political history many other important posts have been held by women. In Pakistan, numerous legislatures were made by women legislators in various governments. These laws addressed significant issues and problems. Due to different social and economic growth of the urban and ruler areas, women's status is heterogeneous in Pakistan. In our country, women comprise 53% of the population but their political participation is still disproportionate to males due to patriarchal society and gender inequality. This study investigated the obstacles that were faced by these women parliamentarians in legislative and political participation which enhances the situation where women were not represented in political affairs, in the light of expert opinion on political representatives, and political activists. This research is based on a qualitative method. Politicians, lawyers, academicians, and journalists were interviewed for qualitative analysis. The study concludes that ideological, cultural, representation, economic, and patriarchal mindsets are the main factors that hinder women's role in parliament. The findings of the study can be used effectively to increase women's role by bringing awareness at the local level and making appropriate policies at the national level. The gaps in implementations, interpretation, and reporting that have been based are a clear indication that there is a need for continued education capacity building within important institutions and communities.*

Keywords: Women, Parliamentarians, Challenges, Faced, Legislature,

1. Introduction

Around 50% of the world's population consists of women (Rogers, 2005). In Asia, women made up 18.3% of legislators, which is nearly equal to the global average (IDEA, 2003). In South Asia, there are some prominent women's leaders including Sheikh Hasina Wajid of Bangladesh, Indira Gandhi of India, Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan, and Sirivamo Bandranaika of Sri Lanka (Rustagi, 2004). Muslim women actively participated in Muslim League marches and protests before the partition of Indo-Pak. The 1945–1946 elections saw a large participation of women (Awan, 2016). In the political role of women, Pakistan is an important model of the Muslim sphere (Free and Fair Election Network, 2018).

The first constituent assembly of Pakistan consisted of 69 members, where two women, Begum Jahan Ara Shahnawaz and Begum Shaista Ikramullah were the members. Similarly, on 11th August 1955, a 2nd Constituent Assembly was designed by Choudhry Muhammad Ali without any representation of

women. In the 1956 constitution, ten seats in the NA were reserved for women (The 1956 Constitution of Pakistan). On 1st November 1959, General Muhammad Ayub Khan announced the BD System locally, but this system did not provide any representation for the women's population. In June 1962 General Ayub Khan gave the nation another constitution, and allocated six reserved seats for women in the NA out of one hundred and fifty-six seats; the ratio established by the 1956 constitution (Safdar, 1990). In December 1967 when the number of general seats was increased through a constitutional amendment, the seats specified for women were also increased from 3 to 4 (Election commission of Pakistan, 2023). On December 7, 1970, first general election was held. As a result, six women's members were included in the National Assembly of West Pakistan (Shaista S. Ikramullah, 1998).

Several Pakistani state women including Miss Jinnah, who was a courageous woman leader, were involved in the fight for Pakistan's foundation (Shami, 2009). Benazir Bhutto, the country's first women's Prime Minister, took oath of office in Pakistan in 1988. Pakistan has taken great steps towards gender equality in politics. Although Pakistan had a women's Prime Minister throughout its political history and many other important posts have been held by women, the nation is still among those with low levels of women's political representation (Mahmood, 2018). In the Parliament, Dr. Fehmida Mirza elected speaker of the NA in 2008, was the first woman to hold such a prestigious position in the Muslim world (Rapila, 2013). Legislation is the prime function of the parliamentarians and women have a key role in parliamentary procedures and practices. With 33% of women in Pakistan's Parliament, from 1999 to 2007 would be recognized as a golden time for women's participation in elected entities (Zakaria, 1990).

Pakistan has prepared acts to support the situation of women in politics and to substitute a helpful environment for women's political participation (Khan & Naqvi, 2020). The articles of the 1973 constitution provide formal equality. In Article 25, women in Pakistan are guaranteed full political involvement, further Paragraph 3 elaborates on any discrimination against women or exclusion from jobs (Khan. H, 2017). In Article 32 of the Constitution, it is stated that no gender-based discrimination should be done (The 1973 constitution of Pakistan, Article 32). Much emphasis has been placed on women's participation in Article 34 of the 1973 Constitution, which says that Measures will be taken to achieve the full involvement of women in all aspects of life (Rafiq. M, 2015). The reserved seats for women in the NA were sixty (www.ecp.pk, assessed on 17/1/2023). Recently, 17% of seats in Pakistan have been reserved for women (Nizamani, 2018).

Allotment of specified seats for women in NA and PA, the Political Parties Order 2002, the Non-Muslims Regulation Ordinance 2002, and the Election Commission Order 2002 are a few steps that aided in raising the political participation of women (Kamray, 2020).

Women parliamentarians have had a critical and challenging role in legislation since the partition of the sub-continent in 1947. Due to different social and economic growth of the urban and rural areas, women's status is heterogeneous in Pakistan. In our country, women comprise 53% of the population but their political participation is still disproportionate to males due to patriarchal society and gender inequality. The quota system has enlarged the representation of women in the parliament but more work is to be done to empower women (Iwanaga, 2008).

Many authors claimed that women's absence in the political affairs derives from the hindrances and obstacles related to socio-economic, political, ideological, and psychological obstacles and barriers. These legislatures dealt with important issues such as women's participation, equal treatment of women, avoidance of harassment, and guaranteeing that women's received their impartial share of inheritance. This study instigates an in-depth study of the complex web of impacts on women parliamentarians in Pakistan during the transformative years of 1988 and 2008 (Shvedova, N, 1998).

In this study, the focus is on the challenges faced to women parliamentarians legislative and political participation which enhances the situation where women were not represented in political affairs.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Saiyid (2001) in his research found that women played an absolutely important role in the shaping of Pakistan. The cultural practices of Muslims in the Indian subcontinent dispirited women from leaving their families, and at that time women couldn't leave their families for political purposes. The continued cooperation of Fatima Jinnah was the message of this idealistic leader that women should be equivalent allies in politics and not be restricted to the customary local character of wife and mother.

Mirza (1969) in his book author has shown societal, and educational situations, political events, and brief historical drafts of Muslim women's leaders of Punjab and the previous North West Frontier Province from Mughals to freedom. However, the author accurately captured how women entered the corridors of parliament. This research examines the ways and means used by women's parliamentarians to prove their talents.

Weiss (1999) says in his book that there were several women in the legislature of Pakistan shortly after independence. Women struggled to mobilize and draft the 1948 Muslim Sharia Personal Law, which allowed them to share in inheritance. They also achieved success in reforming marriage and divorce laws. There were only two women's members in the 1st Legislative Assembly and then in the constitutions of 1956, 1962, and 1973, the representation of women in political matters was lesser. There were only 10 seats for women which were given to them as a constitutional right in 1956. In the 1962 constitution, only six seats were reserved for women which was the least. Their participation in political events declined in the early 1960s. Bhutto also advocated women's empowerment, but this had little practical significance in increasing women's power in politics.

Mehdi (2015) says that the following three parliaments (1988-91, 1991-93, 1993-96) were without reserved seats for women representation. General Musharraf, another military dictator (1999-2009) increased the strength of women seats to 17% of both the National and provincial Assemblies.

Akram & Basit (2020) elaborated that favourably, 70 women candidates competed in the 2002 elections and thirteen of them successfully won mandates. This progressive tendency of growing women's representation in legislatures was constant when sixteen out of sixty-four candidates were elected in the 2008 general election. In addition, the Electoral Act 2017 is another milestone to strengthen women's seats in legislatures. The law, which required all parties to give a minimum of five percent of their party tickets to women's applicants, was a hugely encouraging quantity to support women's political participation in the nation.

Dawn newspaper (2020) explains that under the 2017 law, the Electoral Commission of Pakistan is now authorized to announce results illegally in those areas, where women's voters are rarer than ten percent. This is a significant quantity to strengthen the role of women in the political method. As an outcome of this act, the 2018 Pakistan by-election in Dir Lower in KP was cancelled due to the absence of women voter turnout. Re-elections were held and women cast votes over 1,000. This is an important start that would lead to further useful results.

PILDAT (2004) identifies that in the 1973 constitution, the quota of women's representation in the NA was increased from 3.8% to 4.7%, and there was no representation of women in the Senate. When Zia took charge and repealed the 1973 constitution, he increased the number of women in parliament and 20 women's seats were introduced to the House, but they had no role in legislation. After Zia's death, the 1973 constitution was restored and the quota for women was increased. The period from 1990 to 1997 was considered a low representation of women in parliamentary affairs. There were no women in the Senate. Only 3% of women appeared in the national assembly. After 2000, there was a strong variation in the representation of women in parliament. Pervez Musharraf and his team introduced a legal framework order in 2002 that allowed 17% of seats for women at the provincial and national levels. Sixty seats were given to women in the lower house of parliament. There were 17 women in the senate, and 66 women in the Punjab assembly out of three hundred seventy-one. In the Sindh assembly,

there were twenty-nine women out of one hundred sixty-eight. In the KP there were twenty-two women out of one hundred twenty-four, and in Baluchistan 11 women out of sixty-five and it was the highest ever quota for women in parliament. Parties won reserved seats for women as a proportion of the whole seats occupied in the National Assembly. But this could not be helpful for women especially in KP and Baluchistan due to their specific cultural and social barriers.

According to the Department of Women's Development (2021), the political empowerment of women is a worldwide issue. In developing nations of the globe, this issue has not yet been resolved. As a developing nation, Pakistan faced disputes of sexual inequality towards women in the political circle as well. The Constitution of Pakistan promises women basic rights, which include political rights. In Pakistan's constitution, the declaration of human rights is to initiate from the preamble forward. Article 25 of the fundamental rights chapter underlines the values of women's equality in the Constitution of Pakistan.

Gunther-H and Renate Nestvoe (1992) describe in their book that women in Pakistan are involved in public and political life through non-governmental women's organizations. In many cases, in the welfare institutions, upper-class women are particularly active. According to a list, there are at present seventy-four such organizations in which women participate.

Lodhi, S. (2024) elaborated in his work that Male colleagues often cited problems related to gender stereotypes and traditional gender roles as challenges to women's effectiveness in parliament. In contrast, assembly representatives and NGO representatives generally had more positive views of the services provided by elected women MNAs and accepted their commitment and determination to address critical social issues.

Bano, S. (2009) identifies that since the establishment of the parliamentary form of government, women's political involvement and representation in decision-making institutions have remained minimal, even though women today make up more than half of the world's population. As time goes by, awareness is growing that the creation of a gender-balanced society to address problems of women's status can only be realized by supporting greater participation of women in decision-making and political institutions in general and in politics and legislation in particular.

O'Brien, D. Z., & Piscopo, J. M. (2019) examine in their work that female representatives really diversify the legislative agenda, especially when it comes to women and other vulnerable groups. The presence of women also disrupts the negative perception of women as political leaders, both between the public and among politicians. Women's presence happens with resistance, particularly as the internal cultures of parliaments and leadership structures remain male-dominated. Gender quotas mediate all of these trends: Quotas increase the figure of female parliamentarians and accelerate political and social change, but they can also create resistance.

Asghar, M. M., & Hussain, S. (2022) describe in their study that Democracy in its full forms will only be guaranteed if women have equivalent rights to participate in politics. The role of women in politics is a crucial element in the empowerment of women worldwide. Many developed countries have achieved their desired goal through gender equality and progressive developing countries are also following the same paths. The role of women in Pakistani politics has not remained the same as proportional to the population. Women had to face many obstacles including social, economic and cultural challenges that kept women on the sidelines for political empowerment. In 2002, President Pervez Musharraf's dictatorship made a major decision to empower women by allocating them to specific quotas in the National Assembly. Women did not have enough chances to participate in politics during democratic governments.

3. CHALLENGES TO WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS

3.1. POLITICAL CHALLENGES

3.1.1 Quota system

The quota system, designed to rise the representation of women in assemblies, is regarded as a temporary measure aimed at achieving gender balance. However, critics argue that it falls short of promoting genuine political empowerment and democratic participation of women. They contend that women are often seen as mere statistical placeholders without substantial political and economic influence. The system, in their view, provides only symbolic representation for women. The practice of reserving a specific quota of seats for women dates back to the 1946 elections and has persisted through the 1956, 1962, and 1973 Constitutions. Although the 1973 Constitution initially mandated the reservation of seats for women for two additional general elections or ten years, whichever came later, this provision perished after the 1990 elections and has not been revised later. Despite pledges from main political parties to restore women's reserved seats, no concrete action has been taken to reinstate this provision (Saiyid, 2001).

3.2.2. Representation Issues

One of the main problems of women parliamentarian is their less representation in the politics and parliament. Although women formed almost half of Pakistan's population, they hold only a small fraction in Parliament, and provisional assemblies. Structural barriers, together with stereotypes, limited access to resources and political support, pose significant barriers to women's entry into politics. Entrenched social norms frequently discourage women from making their careers in politics and push them to the margins decision-making processes (Tariq, 2023).

3.2.3. Limited Representation:

Women faced difficulties in gaining adequate representation in the parliament. The number of seats reserved for women was often limited, hindering their ability to have a significant impact (Hayat, 2023).

3.2.4. System of elections

System of elections is an important tool to elect women to public offices. Several studies reflect that many more women are now being elected under emerging proportional systems of elections (Pippa Norris, 2000).

1. The Proportional Representation system PR welcomes voters to cast their votes by political party and in few cases by voter as well. The parliamentary seats in legislature are divided based on the votes each party receives. This system provides motivation for political parties to widening their scope and appeal with an addition of women to their party lists. Electoral system based on majoritarian single-member system, in divergence, usually allows for one contestant per district to be chosen/elected. The current electoral culture maintains primordial traditional attitudes regarding gender in decision making roles. These beliefs toward gender equality are frequently seen as an important issue in analyzing women's entry into public offices (Ashiq. F, 2014).

The actual effect women can make differs from place to place and country to country and depends on the political orientations and context, the number of women's members in legislative bodies etc. (Lovendski, J. 1998).

In first instance there is need to broaden the political agenda regarding women's issues. This can be done with different perspectives such as: Proposing legislation that is advantageous for women and introducing women's related issues in legislative debates. Women's viewpoint in these debates are significant in making of their point of view politically acceptable (William M. 1998).

3.2.5. Political Parties Barriers

The enlarged involvement of women in political parties has not translated into a substantial representation of women in key sites inside these parties. Due to the absence of systematic elections in many political parties, leaders often hire party activists to key positions within party administrations. While all political parties have designated women's wings, the membership of these wings is typically much smaller than the male membership of the party. Moreover, these women's wings often lack visible influence in policymaking procedures and the formulation of political plans within their parties. In practice, political parties tend to mobilize women primarily during elections, assigning them roles such as working as polling agents in women booths and participating in demonstrations on behalf of the party as directed by the party high command. Additionally, there is a tendency among political parties to assign reserved seats to their own family members.(Inyat, 2023).

This highlights the insufficiency of the promises made by political parties and the uselessness of efforts to integrate women into majority politics. In the 2008 elections, a significant number of women applied for party tickets to participate in the elections, surpassing the willingness of political parties to grant such tickets. Many women, denied party tickets by their political affiliations, opted to run as independent applicants. Unfortunately, the majority of these independent candidates, with the exception of Robina Watto from Okara, did not secure victory. This indicates a conflicting dynamic in politics, where political parties persist in resisting the allocation of party tickets to women candidates, while women's aspirations to serve as representatives in the public domain continue to evolve beyond these constraints (Bari: 2008).

Religious parties and tribal and feudal structures dismiss the electoral rights of women. During the time of local bodies' elections, religious parties in NWPF (Khyber pakhtun khwa) arranged a meeting where an election agreement was signed by the representatives of diverse parties to keep women away from contesting the polls (Dawn, 2006).

3.2.5. Decision-Making Power

Although women parliamentarians can make vital contributions to legislation and policy-making, they are often downgraded in most of the government institutions and political parties. Their voices are not given the same weight as compare to their male colleagues and they often find it difficult to achieve leadership positions within their party (Mushtaq, 2023).

3.2.6. Underrepresentation in Key Decision-Making Roles:

Women were often belittled in key decision-making roles within political parties and parliamentary committees. This limited their ability to influence policies and decisions that directly impacted women and marginalized groups (Said. A, 2023).

3.2.7. Lack of unity among women parliamentarians

Women parliamentarians often refrain from actively championing women's issues due to the influence of party politics. It is essential to scrutinize the role of women parliamentarians who assume their positions through reserved seats for women. During its tenure, the Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarians (PPPP), while in power, did not make efforts on two occasions to advance a bill aimed at repealing discriminatory laws against women. The justification provided was a purported lack of a two-thirds majority needed to annul or amend the existing laws. Regrettably, women members of parliament have struggled to advocate for women's interests and have been unable to effectively convey the consensus established by women's rights activists and human rights organizations over the past twenty-seven years, particularly regarding the repeal of the Hudood Ordinance. Instead, these parliamentarians often echo their party's positions rather than independently representing the concerns of women (Bari, 2006).

3.2. CULTURAL CHALLENGES

3.2.1. Socio-cultural Issues

The cultural and social roles associated with women in Pakistan represent a serious obstacle to their political participation. Women parliamentarians often face resistance from traditional social clusters who see women's role in politics as breach of traditional gender roles. In the political landscape of Pakistan, these women face unique challenges, including political commitments and family responsibilities. This mental and emotional dual role is mostly challenging and forces them to choose between family and political career. The duty of women as mothers, wives, sisters as well as her household's duties complicates their active role and contribution in the public sphere (Farza Bari, 2005).

The socio-cultural dependence of women is another factor which hinders women to participate in political domain. Women are generally valued less due to their reproductive role and economic dependence. Women also find it difficult to spare time for political activities owing to their roles working as mothers and wives and looking after the domestic. Women have to spend more time at home for childcare and other domestic responsibilities than men. That is why women have less time for taking part in out of home activities including politics. Moreover, negative propaganda during electoral campaign adds to the difficulties of women for participation in political activities (Shames, 2015).

Ranjhaet. Al., (2011) found that women councilors encounter more social and political hurdles than men. Major reasons of this discrimination include male dominance, women's social and economic dependence on men and lack of social capital at the disposal of women. Major obstacles in the way of smooth women participation in political process as following; structural inequality, destabilized political and economic situation, gender-based discrimination, pro-male environment of politics and huge expenditures on taking part in election process. Further socio-economic barriers such as lack of education, cultural and familial barriers, domestic or office related responsibilities and difficulties in free mobility. (Sarwar, M.et. all.2011).

The mainstream media is also gender biased as it gives no or poor coverage to the events organized by or related to the direct interest for women. In addition, media is hardly playing its due role to raise awareness about rights of women as a person and an equal citizen. At global level, media has yet to realize that women are more prone to socioeconomic and political changes, and they are generally excluded from process of political decision making. The mass has to acknowledge equality of women and men and both hold and deserve equal dignity. (Karam, et. all. 2005).

3.2.2. Domestic Responsibility:

Responsibility at domestic level is encouraged by society but huge discrimination has been found through the responses of women parliamentarians at the level of gender discrimination at job places and its responsibilities (Zahra.S, 2023).

3.2.3. Barriers in Family Support:

Family support is one of the major causes which effect women participation in local and global political developments. In reply to the prevailing socio-cultural hindrances a discourse change, requires to be taken in order to accept the concept of "women politician" to become as common as "male legislature" (Meer. M, 2023).

3.2.4. Cultural Values:

The conventional expectations regarding the roles and responsibilities of women, both within the household and in activities outside the home, are often portrayed as conflicting. The prevalent cultural norm, emphasizing that women should prioritize their responsibilities at home and place their families first, acts as a barrier to their entry and advancement in the field of politics. Striking a balance between family and a career poses a formidable challenge for a majority of women in Pakistan. Societal norms

often discourage women from engaging in events external the home, deeming such pursuits damaging to domestic life. Women are commonly perceived as primarily responsible for their roles as wives and mothers, relegating a political career to a secondary or tertiary role (Matland, 2004).

The economic contributions of women are often undervalued and not adequately reproduced in countrywide statistics. Culturally, ladies' engagement in gross work is watched as a challenge to man ego and identity. Women entering the labor market face unsatisfactory circumstances linked to male, encountering limitations in occupational choices due to prevailing social and cultural constraints. The perception of women as inferior, primarily designated as homemakers, further hinders their professional opportunities. In the agricultural sector, where 79% of the women labor force is employed, women's roles differ significantly from the 57.3% of male workers. Urban women workers predominantly occupy lower-paying jobs. In the service sector, 63.2% of women workers are employed. Within the Federal Government Civil Service, 43.3% of women work in basic pay scale grade 9 and below, with no women employed in grade 22, the highest basic pay scale in Pakistan (South Asian Media, 2006).

3.3. SOCIAL CHALLENGES

3.3.1. Poverty Issue

Poverty is another major cause which hinders women political participation. A women leader featuring feminine orientation is considered to be not acceptable in politics, while on the other side the male domination inherent to the field of active politics creates additional weight for women (Zahid, 2023).

3.3.2. Security Issues

Surveillance and vigilance are now a common practice of corporate organizations and even in city life. 24 hours surveillance is propagated to ensure security of people. Surveillance/ vigilance security heavily effect women (Shan. H, 2023). On October 18, 2007, Benazir Bhutto returned to Pakistan after an eight-year self-imposed exile to participate in the elections following an arrangement with President Musharraf. Tragically, Benazir Bhutto was assassinated on December 27, 2007, by religious militants during the election campaign. While some may argue that her assassination was politically motivated, the feminist perspective interprets her death as a commentary on the unique challenges faced by women in politics and public service (Shehrbano, 2007).

3.3.3. Security Concerns:

Security issues are a significant challenge for women in politics. Threats, harassment, and violence are not uncommon, creating a hostile environment that impeded their ability to carry out their duties effectively (Adil. F, 2023).

3.3.4. Women mobility and transportation Issues

Women mobility and transportation is another major cause towards political socialization. The convenient transportation to women causes women active participation in development process and ultimately increased women participation in politics. Institutions relevant to women should become more agronomical to women. The crucial step is to implement appropriate changes in electoral process and campaigning laws (Raza. A, 2023).

3.3.5. Non-indigenous empowerment

The incorporation of gender considerations into Pakistan's political system has some connections with the interests of the international community. Although there are indications that a 33% quota was initially considered in the National Action Plan (1996-2002), it became more concrete after the events of 9/11. The implementation of the women's quota was initiated without adequate groundwork, lacking efforts to educate the predominantly conservative Pakistani society about this significant change. Political representation for women has not been granted based on socio-political necessities, and it has not proven effective in advancing the cause of women. Rather, it has been allocated as a symbolic

measure, with the decision made to project Pakistani society as progressive (Jabeen, 2004).

3.3.6. Limited Access to Resources:

Women often had limited access to resources compared to their male counterparts. This included financial resources for campaigning and access to information and networks that could enhance their political careers but these things are not accessible to women (Kalim. I, 2023).

3.3.7. Lack of Training Opportunities:

A shortage of training opportunities for women in politics was a barrier. Many women lacked the necessary skills and knowledge to navigate the complexities of parliamentary procedures and policymaking (Ahmad. K, 2023).

3.3.8. Inadequate Family and Social Support:

Balancing family responsibilities with political duties was a challenge for women parliamentarians. The lack of adequate family and social support systems made it difficult for them to fulfil their roles without sacrificing personal and family well-being (Meena, 2023).

3.3.9. Legal and Institutional Barriers:

Women faced legal and institutional barriers that hindered their political progress. These included discriminatory laws, a lack of enforcement mechanisms to address gender-based discrimination, and insufficient support from political institutions (Naseer. R, 2023).

3.4. DISCRIMINATION AND VIOLENCE CHALLENGES

3.4.1. Gender Discrimination

Discrimination of women parliamentarians at all levels, is an ongoing problem in the political sphere. They often experience gender-based violence, including character assassination, harassment and murdered threats. These episodes make their work difficult and promote a culture of fear that disheartens women from getting involved in politics (Iftikhar. M, 2023).

Women parliamentarians believe that women are facing gender discrimination in recruitment and interviews which is basic requirement of empowering women in globalized world. Gender and politics researchers argue that women will most possibly not have a major impact on parliamentary and legislative outcomes if they do not evolve from a few members/individuals to a considerable participation. (Krook, M. L.2008).

Societal Norms and Stereotypes:

Traditional gender roles and societal expectations posed challenges for women entering politics. Cultural norms often viewed politics as a male-dominated sphere, making it challenging for women to break into and thrive in this environment (Jaben. N, 2023).

Discrimination and prejudice:

Women parliamentarians encountered discrimination and bias from their male counterparts. They often had to contend with a lack of support and faced skepticism about their abilities and competence in political roles (Irfan. M, 2023).

3.4.2. Injustice in Salaries:

This is another issue related to living wages and salary issues. In many private and commercial organizations women were paid less than men. 70% women parliamentarians have the opinion that low salaries are the main issue of acknowledging women as workforce entity (Walsh K, 2002).

3.4.3. Educational Barriers:

Illiteracy represents a significant challenge in Pakistan, particularly with a noticeable gender gap in education. Girls' enrollment in primary schools stands at 60%, whereas boys' enrollment is higher at 84%. The gender disparity continues in secondary school enrollment, with rates of 32% for women and 46% for males. The adult women literacy rate is notably low at 29%. This educational gap is closely tied to the lower status of women in society and certain societal norms that hinder the empowerment of women, as well as their participation in the formal economic sector (Dawn, 2004).

Despite these challenges, women in Pakistan have persevered in their efforts to make meaningful contributions to the political landscape. Addressing these obstacles required a multifaceted approach involving legal reforms, societal transformations, and increased awareness about the importance of gender equality in politics.

4. MAJOR FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1. Following are the key findings:

- Women's representation in legislatures remained low, which led to the absence of their voices in the parliament.
- The quota system has increased the seats of women in assemblies but it is a temporary measure to achieve gender balance. It does not facilitate the real political empowerment and the democratic participation of women.
- Many people, especially rural women parliamentarians, were unaware of the procedure of parliament, which restricted their capacity in making legislature.
- Women's parliamentarians are not keen to take up women's issues because of party politics and lack of unity among the women parliamentarians. Therefore they have a smaller number of members for making legislature.
- The membership of women's wings within a political party is much lesser than the man membership of the party.
- There were often no or lacking funding mechanisms for sufferers of gender-based violence, such as housings and analysis plans, so there is a wide gap among theory and practice.
- Women's political participation and representation in decision-making institutions has remained minimal since the inception of the parliamentary form of government regardless of the fact that women's constitute more than half of the world populace today.
- Most women parliamentarians faced obstacles in performing their political role because they were not aware of the system of government and related rules and regulations. Therefore, there is a predominance of men in decision-making on disbursement of funds, approval of development plans and other matters related to government system.
- Interestingly, some of the women were not allowed to take part in the decision-making process of government because of their gender. This is reflection of deeply embedded gender discrimination in Pakistani society where women equality is not being liked at community level. The main contributors of stress are gender discrimination, peers' behavior and sexual harassments as well among working women in Pakistan.
- Similarly, majority of women were not independent in making laws. As a matter of fact, many political families allow women for participation in politics but decision-making lies with the men who work in the background and keep hold on sociopolitical matters.
- Family support is one of the major causes which effect women participation in political

developments.

- Women have to spend more time at home for childcare and other domestic responsibilities than men. That is why women have less time for taking part in parliament activities.
- Furthermore, a majority of women parliamentarians faced opposition from their political opponents who did not want women to be their political colleagues.
- Despite structural and functional barriers women legislators face, they have shown agency in pushing the boundaries of politics by articulating women's voices and concerns in the functioning and in the legislative business of the parliament.
- The role of women legislators was not widely promoted successfully due to the opposition of the conservative social group.
- Women parliamentarians face the growing religious extremism within the region's Islamist movements. The strategies women's groups have employed to engage with these movements and surmount the challenges they posed to women's rights and women's access to justice under the law, especially Muslim family laws and the state's administrative policies and procedures relating to religion.
- The immediate problems that women face include lack of political skill, financial resources and the dubbing of politics as an all-male arena. In relative terms, the status of women has improved in contemporary Pakistani society with the passage of time, but the ideal of women's empowerment is still a distant dream.
- Besides, some of the women participating in government elections faced economic problems due to huge expenditures on political activities. There is no formal support mechanism for financial aid for economically disadvantaged contestants.
- In Pakistan, since independence, all regimes whether liberal or conservative have treated women's issues as political necessities only to project their regimes as liberal and modern to the world. These regimes gave limited rights to women for a place in society and politics. None of these governments answered positively or sensibly to women issues.

These outcomes highlight a recurring design of considerable legislative effort set against barriers connected to awareness, social norms, implementation capacity, and political will, resulting in slow and often useless advocacy for the role of women's parliamentarians in Pakistan over time.

CONCLUSION

Legislation is the prime function of the parliamentarians and women have key role in parliamentary procedures and practices. This research investigated the obstacle that these women's parliamentarians faced in the light of professional opinions on political representatives, and political activists. Women's as integral candidates, their role in parliament and the difficulties they faced were discussed. Purposeful interviews and themes are used to learn about the history of laws, including how they have been influenced by culture, political power, and societal values. The research is based on the qualitative method. Politicians, lawyers, academician and journalists were interviewed for qualitative analysis. It was found that these women's still face many complications in the parliament.

The study achieves that ideological, cultural, representational, economic and patriarchal mindset are the key reasons that delay women's participation in parliament. There are multiple barriers, including structural and normative barriers. Structural barriers include socio-economic development and the percentage of women in managerial and professional activities. Along with socio economic barriers there are some normative issues including norms, values and cultural aspects of the society. Women have a disproportionate household shared responsibility which makes a political career of women's

individual almost difficult. Other barriers are lack of self-confidence to run the affairs of elections, the negative observation of politics as dirty and corrupted politics, and the effect of the media which depicts women as “sex objects” while not compensating enough care to women’s activities and subjects, and overlooking the problem of women’s political representation in electoral processes.

Moreover, many household tasks including management and governing houses, taking care of the children, ill and elderly person are not included in the min professions of state. The availability of gender related quotas or its representation based on proportional system of elections are some examples of compensation which cause to reduced institutional hindrances that effect fair and transparent competition. Usually, political sphere is suitable for men and that women should only have minimum role in politics. Further, it follows to the awareness of Georgian politics where the politics are primarily focused on hostility and mutual blaming, rather than on positive cooperation. It is significant that women ‘do politics’ differently from their male counterpart because of their different social experience. A women politician expressed that party affiliation does not matter; resolving local issues have much more importance.

The findings of the research can be successfully used to rise women's participation by raising awareness at the local level and creating suitable policy at the countrywide level. The identified gaps in implementation, interpretation and reporting are a clear signal that there is a need for continued educational capacity building in key institutions and societies. Realizing that the progress of legislation is a continuous process requiring the collaboration of government entities, civil society, the media and the judiciary is important as Pakistan continues its journey towards gender mainstreaming, implementation and societal transformation can be learned from the experiences and visions offered by the research participants. These experiences and findings will serve as a benchmark for future legislative attempts.

RECOMANDATION

Based on the findings, several key recommendations emerge that can contribute to increasing the participation of women parliamentarians. The following proposals are proposed to solve the problem and shortcomings in the application and effects of women’s deputies:

- The legal framework has reformed over time and it has been recognized that more progress is needed to rise the effectiveness of women's representation in parliament.
- To promote better information of the role of women in parliament and encourage the passage of progressive legislation, we need to initiate conversation and awareness efforts targeting conservative organizations.
- For promoting women role in parliament to give free education to women up to post graduate level to enhance women education to compete in global context.
- Political parties need to improved participation of women within the political parties and specified their women’s wings.
- Political parties should also be modified so as to rise each party’s membership of women to a minimum of 30 percent and representation in the central working committee to a minimum of 25 percent to ensure that women participate in the processes of policy making.
- The ideal of enlarging the level of women’s representation and participation in policymaking bodies requires well-developed plans.
- The affirmative action will be taken to increase women parliamentarian’s voices, e.g., additional quota requirements within parties and participation in decision-making bodies of parties.

- Although there was a prospect for bigger impact through more energetic participation, it was recognized that lawful activity, advocacy and the media had positively influenced the results of the role of women in legislation.
- Women visibility in politics can be made through the visibility of viewpoints in political decision-making. Therefore, a development needs to take place in the minds of the leading group rather than the more application of policies which create the marginalized group in political, legislative and decision-making bodies.
- There is need to broaden the political agenda regarding women's issues. This can be done with different perspectives such as: Proposing legislation that is advantageous for women and introducing women's related problems in legislative discussions.
- Government should show unconscious support to women's legislators by assigning enough funds, setting specific targets and directing regular progress checks.
- In order to make timely improvements and progresses based on changing societal demands, methods of long-term impact of women's legislation should be established periodically.
- Parliamentarians must identify and mitigate barriers to ensure women's participation through entree to economic activity, digital education and role of women parliamentarians.
- The linkages of women's legislators with the women's movement and networking for collective voice and capacity enhancement may be identified as key milestones in the pathway to women's politics.
- In order to aware women from politics and highlight their role as a parliamentarian, the media and advocacy organizations are important.
- A plan has been outlined in order to make necessary changes and maximize women's impact in legislation in terms of responsibility of job. The strategy contains learning and using rules and eventually changing them to pave the way for the future generation of women parliamentarians.
- Women parliamentarians needs to uniformly struggle in ensuring gender sensitive legislative activities and putting women's related issues and problems on the top priorities of political agenda.
- Undertake in-depth analyzes by relevant researchers and experienced policy makers of the current role of women in legislation to identify and correct any potential flaws or ambiguities that could be used to weaken their efficiency.

By putting these proposals into practice, Pakistan can move faster to a society that is more comprehensive, just and empowered, while linking the gap among legislative intent and practical progress in women's lives.

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