RECLAIMING POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY: A CRITICAL STUDY OF WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN MAINSTREAM POLITICS IN PAKISTAN

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Abstract

Women account for over half of the global population, yet women are politically marginalized and underrepresented in third-world countries. Long-standing conventional structural and socio-economic difficulties hurt their mobility, socialization, political and electoral engagement, and participation in decision-making forums. They cannot make significant changes to socio-political trends because of their limited effectiveness. Their political emancipation was weakened and domesticated by Pakistan's traditional patriarchal mentality and the emergence of Islamic extremism. Although women in Pakistan have overcome the obstacles above and increased their representation in Parliament, they still have a bit of a way to go before actively participating in the decision-making process. Over time, there has been a growing realization that the only way to achieve a gender-balanced society that addresses women's issues is to encourage greater participation of women in governance structures. There are significant differences in women's political participation in diverse parts of the globe. This study examines the reasons for the increase in the number of women in legislatures in other parts of the world, focusing on South Asia and presenting the case of Pakistan. This study focuses on the political participation of Pakistani women. The Pakistani Parliament in 2002 now shows the highest level of feminine representation in the country's history. The study examines how Pakistani women benefit from their numerical superiority in Parliament, whether women are "agents of change" or "agents of change," and whether these alterations are driven by women or triggered by external factors. This study examines the challenges women face in

Pakistan in overcoming political marginalization and recommends creating a more comprehensive and representative civilization.

Key Words-Pakistan, Patriarchal, Women Participation, Political Marginalization, Religious Authority

INTRODUCTION

According to (Ortells 2021), women account for about half of the world's population. They are well-known in all aspects of life, from reproduction to family maintenance, from planting to harvesting, and from severe labor to manual labor. In several civilizations, women are viewed as incompetent in making educated decisions. They feel compelled to do what their male spouse or loved one desire, and as a result, social conventions and values are geared toward assisting men at the expense of women (Heilman et al., 2015). Because patriarchy involves the male dominance of women, the family has become the principal player in fostering societal inequality within the patriarchal framework. In Pakistan, men's disproportionately privileged socio-economic status has been integrated into public life. Children's gender-based socialization, in which they assume and accept various responsibilities in the home, generates a social mechanism for developing values that discriminate against women in multiple ways. Democracy, on the other hand, ensures that men along with women have equal and fair chances to engage fully in their country's political affairs, which is also a fundamental human right (Sharma et al., 2021). However, politics has become a nightmare for women in many nations, particularly in conservative, tradition-dominated civilizations, where political and electoral landscapes are wholly male-dominated and under-represented in political organizations. Ironically, everyone agrees on women's equal contribution to politics and the elections and their legitimacy in decision-making forums. Yet, no effort is made to give them their right (Cohen, 2019).

The persistence of patriarchal practices and gender repression prevents women from developing their leadership, involvement in political life, and representation in international institutions (Sanders, 2018). Women who are politically active and socially influential, on the other hand, can motivate other women to oppose these tendencies and patterns. They are politically ignored and excluded due to gender inferiority, which manifests through social standards, cultural barriers, and legal discrimination in certain circumstances. They are confronted with several societal and institutional barriers to exercising their fundamental right to participate in politics. According to (Roomi et al., 2018), the patriarchal framework of Pakistan creates sociocultural hurdles that impede women's independence and socialization. They must act on the whims and wishes of their male elders in isolated locations, who deny them fundamental human rights like education, health, and movement. Because men set preferences in all areas of life, including voting in elections, women's involvement in most elections remains extremely low (Naz and Ahmad,2012).In short, cultural and societal norms and values prevent women from voting, barring them from voting, denying them political involvement, and excluding them from forums of power and decision-making.

On the other hand, these women had to travel long and were exhausted before being recognized as "political agents" in society. The international community recognizes women's political involvement as a fundamental human right, according to the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The Declaration guarantees that every person has equal political rights, regardless of gender or other factors. But only the United States, the United Kingdom, and a few European countries recognized women's right to vote during the first wave of democratization. According to (Kuperberg 2021), despite this, the global proportion of women in politics is less than 15%, which is a shocking figure. Only 12 countries in the world have at least a third of their parliaments of women.

In Pakistan, women's political participation is primarily determined by how males in the relevant social class perceive their activity (Ahmad et al., 2019). While the Islamic Republic of Pakistan's three constitutions (approved so far) promise equivalent political contribution for all citizens with no discrimination or boundaries based on race, religion, caste, or gender. However, women (the bulk of the population) cannot fully participate in decision-making circles, as evidenced by Pakistan's electoral and political history (Khan and Naqvi, 2020). Various regimes have attempted to reduce the gender gap at the state level through constitutional provisions; quotas for women, indirect women's suffrage, and minimal thresholds for women's parliamentary representation aim to accommodate socially marginalized communities.

Women's representation in Parliament was initially relatively low. The 1956 constitution's drafters concluded that seats designated for women are distributed according to specific topographical constituencies (Allauddin et al., 2020). Under the provisions above, women have two voting rights: one for standard seats and one for seats allocated for females. It was soon overturned and changed by the indirect electoral procedure in the 1962 constitution. This time, elected legislators were empowered to elect women in opposition to their retained seats, reducing female members to "symbolic representatives." The National Assembly of Pakistan allotted six seats for women in the 1956 and 1962 constitutions (Syed and Dar, 2017). These seats fluctuate between 3% and 10%, depending on the overall number of seats in the relevant Parliament. The 1973 Constitution expanded this limit to 10 years for at least ten years from the Constitution's entry into force or the date of the National Assembly elections, whichever comes first. As narrated by (Kharl et al., 2018), it's too late at this point.

In Pakistani civil society, gender has become a unique factor. Patriarchal values, which govern general social standards and gender values, are significantly responsible for local traditions and civilizations (Jabeen, 2021). Traditional religious and cultural distinctions position women in the reproductive roles of mothers and wives in the home, caring for family and children, and men in the productive parts of primary breadwinners in public areas. Most women rely on their families or male partners for unpaid home chores, yet their contributions are never acknowledged or recognized as they should be. Gender-based discrimination and inequality have been generated in

all aspects of life due to the institutionalization of biased patriarchal methods and immoral cultural obstacles that limit women's movement in the name of religion. Women's engagement and representation in politics will increase as their socio-economic standing rises. Women become increasingly politically active as they gain economic independence, which leads to increased participation of women in national decision-making bodies, ensuring that their rights are maintained.

The problem with traditional communities is that women cannot earn a living outside of their families. Third-world countries' general per capita income is low, and women are wretched. They are compelled to be restricted or denied economic rights in isolated places. Women are forced to marry Quran men in Pakistan's remote Sindh province to disinherit. Women's political participation is mainly contingent on their financial resources and opportunities to become independent, competent, and self-assured.

Furthermore, due to their lack of experience and non-specialized abilities, they have limited access to the labor market. Women make up only 21% of the workforce, with men dominating the rest of the market. Women's sociopolitical orientation is harmed by male supremacy (Hussain and Kokab, 2012). Economic restraints and social and cultural constraints restrict their mobility, independence, and socialization, resulting in economic dependency and social isolation. Due to structural and financial barriers, women are prevented from entering politics. Due to their economic reliance, limited mobility, and inadequate socialization, political parties in Third World nations are generally hesitant to allocate party votes to female candidates for general seats. Pakistani billionaires have turned politics into a game. Women cannot participate in electoral politics due to a lack of financial means, as they cannot spend the significant sums of money required for elections. On the other hand, political parties do little to support women financially to run for office. Women are forced to be excluded from all sectors of life in Pakistan's tradition-driven society, including politics (Chaudhary, 2009).

Furthermore, the seats allotted for political parties have been reduced to a bare minimum to accommodate powerful political families. Almost all major parties have done nothing to encourage actual women to join their ranks to fight for reserved seats. Parties should create funds for financial support so that deserving female political workers can run for general seats to help them integrate into politics. The Musharraf dictatorship reformed Pakistan's election system, allocating 60 seats in the National Assembly to women, doubling the previous quota. An extraordinary 33 % increase in seats allotted for women in municipal governments. Musharraf, regrettably, did not reintroduce the notion of "women's suffrage" as envisioned in the 1956 constitution, instead distributing seats in the National Assembly to political parties based on their share of the National Assembly.

Furthermore, a large proportion of women (31%) were forced to utilize their legal and constitutional right to vote in the 2002 general election in Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and

Southern Punjab, compared to male turnout. Female voters are not allowed to vote in some constituencies, and, interestingly, political parties have done nothing to remedy the problem. More than 95 percent of female voters did not vote on Election Day. In five of the constituencies, voter turnout remained below 1%. However, the turnout in the 2018 general election was higher than in 2013 (Saud, 2020). Since then, this research has attempted to investigate the reasons for women's marginalization by examining the rights and opportunities provided to them by the state, political parties, and families.

OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this article is to assess the level of understanding "Reclaiming Political and Religious Authority: An Ethnography of Pakistani Women's Participation in Mainstream Politics". This study is essential for understanding women's involvement in traditional Pakistani politics. As a result, the following research objectives guided this study:

⟳   Study the understanding of women's rights from the perspective of Islam.

⟳   Check the extent to which Islamic laws and rules practices are implemented in Pakistan society.

⟳   Investigate the problems and challenges that feminists in Pakistan face regarding social, cultural, religious, and even economic expenses. What impacts have these issues had on their activism?

⟳   Check whether feminist activism in Pakistan succeeds in obtaining women's rights while ignoring class, caste, race, and religious divisions.

⟳   Consider how patriarchal practices and religious beliefs undermine Pakistani women's political and electoral representation.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is primarily qualitative. To address specified research questions, an investigation of Pakistan's socioeconomic and political-cultural dynamics in Pakistan are critically examined. Existing literature such as books, research articles, reports, electronic and print media stories, and editorials is systematically reviewed to make research more representative and relevant. Focused group conversations with professors and researchers from universities have also been arranged as part of the project. The researchers present a broad conceptual theory that explains the practical practice of management using an Islamic approach, based on an explanatory model, employing a grounded theory approach to qualitative research. This is done by extrapolating the Prophet's story from the Noble Quran and Noble Hadith. There is a need to establish Islamic law and develop an integrated approach that benefits society while lowering the degree of catastrophic losses due to the gap between empirical and descriptive research in management. Recent studies have used theory-based ways to close this gap. A grounded theory approach aims to generate a theory from evidence inductively.

PARTICIPANT

During collecting data to produce theories through the collection, compilation, and analysis, the theoretical samples for this study were gathered from the noble texts of the Quran, Hadiths of the Prophet, and stories of the Prophet. The theory progressively emerges in tandem with the data.

TOOLS

To construct a theory, the researchers analyzed the noble text of the Quran and the content of the Prophet's Hadith. They deduced suitable management methods and the procedures required to manage these contents based on Islamic methodologies. The Quran and Hadith texts were collected from the Prophet's Hadiths, then organized and classified, qualitatively analyzed their content, extracted topics, and answered research questions. The research findings were presented by the Book of God and the Prophet Muhammad's Hadiths. Because the researchers in this study offered a rich and complete account of the research setting and methodology, qualitative research's transferability indicates that the data discovery and interpretation can be transplanted to other similar circumstances. As a result, readers of the study may profit from the dissemination of this research's findings in different similar situations.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

The researcher of this study uses a theoretically valid method. Using this method, they collect and assess data at the same time. The information is divided into three parts; the first includes Quranic texts on women's and men's rights and hadith materials from the Prophet's Hadith. It helps to build categories and subjects, which improves the theories that arise from the data. The second volume offers analysis ideas. The researchers in this study keep going until they reach theoretical saturation, which implies that there is no new information in the data and that the concepts that have been recognized clearly and accurately for theory building have been validated.

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN MODERN SOCIETY

Television sitcoms of the 1950s often featured men in suits to work and women in charge of household chores, a standard depiction of the division of labor and gender roles at the time (Hussain, 2021). However, as society evolves into a more complex, advanced, and technology-driven society, this is less evident today, and the distinction between male and female roles has blurred. First, before focusing on women's current roles in families today, we must examine the traditional conditions of women over the centuries to fully understand how women's roles have been exchanged. While women have long been seen as an indispensable complement to men, they have also been seen by many cultures worldwide as inferior to men in many ways: physically and intellectually.

- ### THE ROLE OF A PROFESSIONAL WOMAN

While ideas about women and their status in society remain similar to the past, it cannot be denied that the situation of women has changed considerably since the feminist movement of the 19th and 20th centuries, which emphasized women's equality. Women enjoy an unprecedented degree of freedom and become equal to men in many respects, starting with the family unit. Previously, women were seen as family members responsible for caring for the home and raising babies and children (Grandey et al., 2020). In contrast, men were seen as "the breadwinners", providing the necessities of life, money, and items for family members. Today, with the help of equality in education and technology, women in some countries can work like men, depriving men of their dominance as sole wage earners. In some extreme cases, the roles of husband and wife are even reversed: full-time husbands are gaining popularity. Professional women become professional women because of their desire and ability to earn money to prove their equality with men and the need to maintain life in the family unit (Puerta, 2021). However, this change in the division of labor within the household has not necessarily benefited women: men are still reluctant to take on household chores because it goes against their nature; thus, some women have two roles at the same time in the family unit: housekeeper and breadwinner (Nielsen and Huse, 2010). In other words, women have to take care of children and do household chores and work, which places more responsibilities and pressure on them.

- ### ROLE AS AN ACTIVE MEMBER OF SOCIETY

Women are experiencing changes at home; they are also changing at the social level. Women have moved from indirect contributors to society's overall wealth to direct contributors - occupying an increasing number of positions in the labor force due to the market's supply and demand of jobs. From a passive role in forming social values, women are now more actively involved in aspects of our culture previously dominated by men: art, religion, law, etc. The world has seen the growth of enterprising and inspiring women throughout their lives: women presidents like Angela Merkel, women scientists like Marie Curie, etc. This says a lot about the role of women in society (Awan, 2020). Again, women have two parts: to produce offspring to continue the human race and generate society's material and spiritual values, formerly masculine roles.

- ### WOMEN AS THE ARMED FORCES OF MODERN SOCIETY

In January 2013, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta overturned the restriction on women serving in combat roles, giving the Army two years to integrate fully. Two women graduated from the famous Army Ranger School in August 2015, prompting a Pentagon executive action mandating that all combat occupations be open to women. The decision to allow women to serve in combat situations is historic because it broadens women's roles in the Army and gives them the chance to advance to the top.

▪ WOMEN AS POLITICAL LEADERS

There is a growing acknowledgment of women's unexploited capabilities, abilities, and leadership. Over the past two decades, female representation in parliaments worldwide has risen steadily, from 12.0% in 1998 to 17.89% in 2010 and 25.56% in 2018. The growth has been theatrical in some regions, such as Africa, where the number of women in Parliament has risen from 11.6% to 23.9% over the past 20 years, and the Arab States region has increased from 3.12% to 17.51%. Consequently, meaningful participation of women in leadership roles at the national, local, and community levels has become an essential focus of worldwide development strategy.

WOMEN'S FREEDOM IN ISLAM

Women, like men, were designed to be approachable and eager to live their lives without the intervention of others. Islam, on the other hand, acknowledges the individual right to liberty. As long as it does not conflict with the collective human society's vital interests, Islam respects women's emancipation and incorporates it into its legislation. As a result, where liberty is at odds with women's true interests, Islam chooses limited and unconditional freedom. We'll go through a few of the advantages that women have: As previously said, Islam views women as one of society's two pillars and assigns them different obligations. Working is considered a necessity and a good form of devotion in Islam, and its adherents are warned to avoid sloth, vanity, and retirement. There are numerous hadiths on this subject, some of which have been listed here.

"There are seventy aspects to worship; the greatest of them is an endeavor for a regular income," said Allah's Messenger (s). According to Islam, work is not a right, but an obligation, and men and women are no different in this regard. Women are delicate, sensitive, and lovely creatures. As a result, they should make an effort to choose professions that will enhance their husbands' physical and mental beauty.

COMPATIBILITY OF ISLAMIC FEMINISM WITH SECULAR FRAMEWORKS

The discussion above argues that the Islamists' position on women's political participation is patriarchal and conservative, conflicting with a temporal framework (Munir and Akhtar, 2014). This position of Islamists generates a place for us to go towards feminist and secular Islamic frameworks and builds a comparative point of view to find out if there is compatibility between them. The compatibility between Islamic women and temporal frameworks on feminism's political participation is framed by three main areas:

- Gender fairness in Islam,
- Boudoir; fixing traditional female roles, fertility, and domestic chores, and
- The contribution of women in political life and high-level appointments in the government sector

This compatibility is essential for women to participate effectively in political life. Pakistan is a typical Islamic and patriarchal society; women are deficient, with insufficient chances and resources to participate in politics and become state actors due to a solid conservative religious culture. This is apparent from the various stages of Pakistan's political history. Women's representation in political and legislative forums has been marginalized, leading to discriminatory legislative meetings where most men comprise conservative religious elites. Conversely, a more excellent illustration of women in formal political discussions positively affects their status when fighting to amend the old gender-biased rule or enact new feminist law, an immediate obligation of modern democratic civilization. Thus, the total contribution of women in politics brings them a message of liberation, allowing them to express their concerns and fully understand their human civil rights.

GENDER EQUALITY

Gender equality is guaranteed in Article 1 of the United Nations Convention for the Suppression of All Elimination of Violence against Women (known as the "Convention"). Discrimination is defined as any difference gender-based that impacts women's rights and fundamental liberties. It guarantees women's rights in all aspects of public life, including politics (Burrows, 1985). Islam advocates gender equality, as stated in the Qur'an: "O human beings! They built you from one man (nafsinwahida) and his colleagues and turned two strangers into multitudes of men and women, aware of your support (Ali, 1999). Islamic feminists argue that the Quran takes a comprehensive, egalitarian viewpoint when it comes to humanity's creation. The Qur'an never asserts or indicates the superiority or inferiority of gender in dealing with human creation in a variety of ways more than thirty times. They argue that patriarchal interpretations of the verse above (4:1), in which classical scholars credit the phrase to Adam, give rise to the belief in men's dominance over women, which has a major impact on women's life. This led to the conventional theological notion that God's primary creatures were Adam (male) and Hawa (female), both of whom are named in the Qur'an and both of whom were made from Adam's rib. As a result, women are inferior and subordinate to men as by-products of men. The sections in question were subjected to a thorough hermeneutic analysis. They discovered that the word "Adam" means "ground" in Hebrew and is frequently used as a collective noun to refer to a human species rather than a specific guy. It's also worth noting that in 21 of the Qur'an's 25 occurrences, the word "Adam" refers to a human being. As a result, "Adam" does not always refer to a specific person. It has a particular representation of humans. As a result, they believe in humanity's single origin and equal rights (Hassan, 1991). As a result, all men and women are equal in the eyes of Allah (S.W.T.). Everyone is in charge of their activities. (Qur'an, 74:38) No one is liable for the deeds of others. They are self-sufficient (Qur'an 4:32) and are assigned positions based on their acts; may Allah reward them for their efforts, and no injustice befalls them (Qur'an 46:19). Only the criteria by which one is superior to another is prescribed by Islam: justice (Quran, 49:13).

As a result, one who is more God-fearing and a model of virtue is superior to another. As a result, an immoral guy is not a good match for a virtuous woman who fits the requirements (Rehman and Roomi, 2012). As a result, there is no differentiation between men and women in gender equality in Islam. Islamic feminists contend that Islam provides all fundamental human rights based on this natural identity. These human rights are built into our D.N.A. and have a tremendous impact on humanity. Their ban or disobedience amounts to a denial of the fundamental norms that define us. Since then, Islam has granted the sacred right to life and prohibited the illegal taking of life. It recognizes everyone's right to education and emphasizes the importance of knowledge development. It offers men and women equal work possibilities and allows them to invest their earnings independently.

Women participate in national elections in lower numbers than men, even when registered. The gender discrepancy in voter turnout in the 2018 general elections was 9.1%, with 11 million more males than women voting. There are considerable regional disparities in this gap with proven incidents of female voter suppression in rural parts of West Punjab, Balochistan, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Excessive limits imposed by ingrained cultural norms on women's public participation are a common reason for these phenomena. The theory holds that the difference will narrow as these standards are lowered due to cultural, demographic, or institutional changes. The most striking piece is a recent study by Sarah Khan, Shandana Mohmand, Shane Rauf, and Ali Cheema on gender voting disparities in large cities, titled "The Empty Promise of Urbanization: Women's Political Participation in Pakistan". According to their findings, the largest cities in each of Pakistan's four provinces did significantly worse than the rest of the province's constituencies regarding gender inequality in voter turnout in the 2018 general elections. The most significant gap is with the capital Lahore having twice the gender participation gap (12.5%) as the rest of the state (6.3%). Overall, the researchers "found that voter turnout rates for women were 8-10% lower in large cities than in rural areas." "We found that the gender gap in male voting rates in large cities is much smaller than in rural areas, which means that the gender gap in urban turnout rates is larger than in rural areas." The differences in participation, these results still hold. This is a problem for those trying to explain trans-political inequality, given the widely held belief that urban women are more likely to exercise autonomy in different aspects of their lives, including political participation. However, this does not translate into better results in terms of political participation.

So what exactly is causing this female voter suppression, and what can be done about it? Evidence from the authors' previous fieldwork in Lahore suggests that access control by male household members persists, even in urban areas; 8.3% of male respondents said it was inappropriate for women to vote in general elections, a finding that was associated with an 11% lower female voter turnout in these households than in other homes. Field survey data showed that 30.4% of men believed that women should not express political opinions, and 64% believed that women should not work for political parties. In the 2018 elections, the participation rate of women in these

households fell by 7%. In addition to family characteristics, a lack of party involvement added to the variance in voting results. According to data from a 2018 survey, women were three times more likely than men to be mobilized by political parties ahead of the 2013 election or contact political representatives to resolve issues after the election. Contact with representatives, usually through male family members.

The final aspect highlights a significant problem and possible solutions to address gender-based political inequalities. As aggregators and representatives of civic interests, political parties reduce marginalization. If solving this problem requires legislation and implementation, political leaders must undertake legislative reforms. If the response also requires more mobilization and channeling of women politicians at the local level to address the concerns of female voters, it should do so now. It is clear that the current state of exclusion undermines the fundamental nature of the political process and cannot and should not be allowed to continue. Islam treats men and women equally. It will enable women and men to pursue all legal careers. Benefit from their earnings, retain title and comply with any legal procedure. Women can pursue any legal profession. She has the right to maintain her income, inherit belongings, and dispose of her property at will. This concept of equality guarantees his right to participate in political life and exercise political functions (Hassan, 2011; Chowdury, 2018).

TRADITIONAL FEMALE ROLES

The Agreement (Article 5) recognizes that attaining de facto women's rights in the economic, social, and political arenas will require significant socio-cultural changes. These ideas are based on long-held beliefs about women's set roles in society, including reproduction and household labor (Burrows, 1985). According to Hassan (2011), traditional and orthodox views of the veil and segregation are nothing more than a public role that continues pre-Islamic practices and oppresses women. The idea that women should cover their heads and keep their distance from males because their presence in male-dominated environments disrupts society's natural order is a warped interpretation of Quranic thought. The chapter on women's dress and conduct in the Quran primary purpose is to allow women to compete in activities without fear of harassment.

On the other hand, Patriarchal power is unconcerned by the physical location. Confining them to their homes and veiling them in the name of "feminine virginity" at the price of their freedom of choice and ability to engage in activities is a misreading of the Quran's requirements and a discriminatory belief toward women. The adaptation follows a patriarchal and traditional interpretation of the Quran. According to Islamic feminists, the female veil is not explicitly referenced in the Quran. 24:31-32 According to the scriptures, women are advised to cover their breasts with a scarf to safeguard their private parts.

Furthermore, modernists think that the term "veil" or "seclusion" only refers to the Prophet's (PBUH) wives') privacy and the directives surrounding their veil or body covering. They determined that the

veil was a cultural practice linked with high social standing in Arabia, particularly among Assyrian, Roman, Greek, Jewish, and Indian populations. When Muslims conquered these territories, they became part of Islam and ordinary Muslim women who donned the hijab as a permanent moral requirement triumphed (Ahmad, 1992; Syed, 2004; Grech, 2016). Traditional religious organizations have ruled in Pakistan, restricting women to domestic childbearing and household tasks under the guise of "boudoir," barring them from participating in political life.

APPOINTING WOMEN TO HIGH-RANKING GOVERNMENT POSITIONS

Article 7 of the Convention guarantees the right to vote in all referenda and greater involvement in the formulation of government policy, and the ability to be elected to public office (Shah, 2006). Similarly, Islam recognizes the public role of women. A, 2006: 48, according to the Qur'an (sand), "Allah's generosity to the entire society is the establishment of authority in this world. He (governs) their business by bargaining with one another and consulting with them (women) on their problems." As a result, the preceding verses illustrate that men and women have equal rights in government and decision-making. According to Islamic feminists, a thorough review of the Qur'an's rules demonstrates that the political system is built on the Qur'an's norms. There are no restrictions on who can take part. They can vote and run for public office, including the presidency. Even though the Qur'an includes no reference to such phrases, they believe that the majority of Muslim scholars oppose women's participation in politics and leadership roles. Politics is neither a masculine nor a female-dominated profession. It is a relic of ancient Arab patriarchal culture, they believe. Only men were given privileges to function in the public sphere, which is still felt today and disproportionately affects women. Women's disadvantages are not mentioned in the Qur'an, and there is no mandate that politics or leadership are only for men. The Qur'an, on the other hand, is a fantastic picture of female leaders in patriarchal Arab culture; Bilqis, Queen of Sheba, is a great example. The Qur'an portrays his traits of knowledge and self-determination, as well as his political and religious practices, as a leader and ruler of the state.

The Quran's basic norm of leadership relates to the notion of functional specialization: to wield power, the correct individual must execute a function, which means that the Quran does not preclude women from exercising control, either over women or over both women and men (Wadud, 1999; Muhibbu-din, 2019). Modernists criticize Islamists' use of male-centered and misogynistic stories. They think Islamic history shows that women were freed from slavery and violence during the Prophet's (PBUH) time, demanding their rights as equal citizens and participating in the Arab building process in the Prophet's politics (PBUH). Under his guidance, all women in Medina were granted full citizenship as Sahabiyat (honorable and venerable Muslim women of the time of the Prophet who devoted themselves to spreading Islam and fulfilling various socio-economic tasks, political and educational). They have the right to attend Ummah (Muslim community) meetings, to speak freely with their leader, the Prophet (PBUH), to fight for their rights, and to join the military, including the Prophet's wife (PBUH). History and Culture of Islam: Mernissi (1991)

concluded that any thought that Muslim women wished to receive honorable people and have citizen status necessarily excludes them from the Muslim community and makes them fervent protectors of Western civilization (Mernissi, 1991; Muhibbu-din, 2019). As a result, if we objectively evaluate the history of Muslim societies, we can observe that Muslim women have the right to participate in modern-day activities fully. We'll also illustrate how their goal for social equality, human rights, and involvement in sociopolitical and democratic processes is rooted in Muslim tradition rather than Western ideas.

BARRIERS TO WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS IN PAKISTAN

Women's political engagement is hampered all over the world. These impediments can be found in the current social and economic system and the existing political structure. Uneven distribution of resources, a lack of tradition and motivation to actively intervene in politics, voter distrust of women, economic and social standards of political candidates, and the availability criteria for political action are all social and economic impediments to women's participation.

POLITICAL GROUPS

To date, women's increased participation in political parties has not resulted in many women being chosen for top positions. Because most political parties do not hold elections regularly, party leaders routinely assign party workers to posts in party organizations. The self-proclaimed liberal Pakistan People's Party (PPPP) central executive committee comprises one woman and 36 men (PPPP, 2004). The five women who have shaped Pakistan's history are Fatima Jinnah (P.M.L.), Benazir Bhutto (P.P.P.), Nushrat Bhutto (P.P.P.), Kinwa Bhutto (Shahid), and Nassim Wali Khan (A.N.P.). After inheriting their political careers from siblings, husbands, or fathers, they became full-fledged politicians.

In Pakistan, all political parties have developed a female wing. On the other hand, female party members are significantly fewer than male party members. These factions have no discernible influence on their party's decision-making process or political agenda. During elections, political parties frequently mobilize women to act as poll workers at women's polling stations and demonstrate on behalf of the party under the supervision of the central command. Political parties commonly offer reserved seats to family members. This reflects the lack of commitment of political parties and the ineffectiveness of any attempt to integrate women into politics. More women applied to run for office in the 2008 elections than political parties were ready to accept. Many persons whom political parties rejected chose to run as independents instead. Except for Okara's Robina Watto, they all lost. This echoes the polar opposite political trend, with parties continuing to oppose the allocation of party tickets to female candidates and a desire for women to be fully represented in the public sphere. Religious parties, tribes, and feudal organizations deny women the ability to vote. During local body elections, religious leaders from around the NWFP convene

and sign an election pact prohibiting women from voting. Women in Swabi, Mardan, and Dir were unable to vote and submit nomination papers.

Religious officials gathered in Malakand province to announce a ban on female candidates and voters participating in the Nikah, Namaaz-I-Janaza, and other religious rites. Some Dir consultants were unable to fulfill their obligations. Worse, at parliamentary gatherings, the women's male cousins acted as their representatives. In the 2008 election, the type of change described above was refreshing. Women in South Waziristan voted for the first time. True, they have been denied the right to vote in other regions of the FATA and NWFP, but tribal elders in South Waziristan and elsewhere have chosen to allow women to vote in this case. This demonstrates that the elderly are willing to change and challenge radicalism by breaking convention.

SYSTEM OF QUOTAS

The quota system tries to improve female representation to address women's underrepresentation. Quotas are often regarded as one of the most effective methods for increasing female political involvement. The number of women represented increased as a result of this. Although the quota system boosted the number of female seats in Parliament, it was just a temporary solution to attain gender equality. It is incompatible with true political emancipation and women's democratic involvement. Women are regarded as statisticians' fillers, with little political or economic authority. Women are merely given symbolic representation in the system. Specific seats in Parliament have been reserved for women since the 1946 elections. 1956, 1962, and 1973 constitutions all maintained the requirement of reserved seats for women. Even though the 1973 constitution mandated that women be retained for two general elections or ten years, whichever comes first, this provision will expire. The clause was repealed after the 1990 election and hasn't been replaced. Despite the two major parties' agreements, the seats earmarked for women have yet to be reinstated. The regime of General Pervez Musharraf has increased the number of seats allotted for women to 60. Even though women's presence in Parliament has grown, they do not function in a vacuum; social attitudes and customs bind them. Women's socio-economic situation in society means that men in Parliament treat them unequally and do not regard their thoughts. Women have resorted to their male political masters for counsel due to their lack of meaningful participation in politics, and political parties, and a proper understanding of the political process.

CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

Traditional domestic roles and responsibilities clash with activities outside the home. Women's participation in politics and advancement is hampered by the culturally accepted idea that women should first fulfill their duties to their families and homes. Balancing family and career is challenging for them. In general, society discourages women from doing anything outside the house because it is detrimental to their family life. As wives and mothers, women are regarded to have binding obligations. As a result, a political career is more likely to be the second or third

employment in these situations. The labeling of politics as "filthy" connects to past ideas. Another issue is illiteracy. In education, there is a gender divide. Girls enroll in primary school 60% of the time, whereas boys attend 84 percent of the time. The enrolment percentages for secondary education are significantly lower: 32 percent for women and 46 percent for men. The literacy rate for adult females is 29%. This disparity is directly related to women's lower social position and specific social conventions that prevent women from becoming empowered and participating in the formal economy. The fact that women's economic engagement is hampered is not reflected in national statistics. Women's paid job is viewed as a danger to the male ego and identity in the culture. Women have unequal access to the labor market, and societal and cultural restraints constrain their professional options. Women are regarded as inferior because their primary role is that of housewives. In the agricultural industry, women make up 79 percent of the workforce, while men make up 57.3 percent. The majority of women in the urban sector work in low-wage employment. Women make up 63.2 percent of the workforce in the service sector. Level 9 and lower account for 43.3 percent of primary pay grades among federal government officials, with no women employed at level 22, Pakistan's highest primary pay grade.

LACK OF COHESION AMONG FEMALE PARLIAMENTARIANS.

In Pakistan's Parliament, women play a minor role. During the 2003-04 Senate sessions, female senators raised only 201 (7 percent) of the 2,779 questions. Similarly, only 43 (12%) of the 335 resolutions offered by women senators were approved, and only 26 (7%) of the 400 motions were approved by them. Because of partisan politics, female lawmakers are hesitant to highlight women's issues (Durrani et al., 2017). We must analyze the roles of female lawmakers who have been elected to women-only seats. Gender quotas are advocated for a variety of reasons. Still, the most common ones are (a) the fact that women make up half of the global population, so it is just a question of fairness to reflect their numerical strength in the political establishment; (b) women have a unique point of view on politics and political problem, so their presence will make a distinction in politics; and (c) they have unique interests as a result of their gender. When the Pakistan People's Party (PPPP) was in authority, it failed twice to introduce a bill to repeal laws that discriminate against women, claiming that it lacked the necessary two-thirds majority to overturn or change the direction. The PPPP, which is currently in opposition, must portray itself as a pro-women liberal party, so it supported the law proposed by the government.

Women parliamentarians have also failed to represent women's interests. They have not adequately communicated the consensus reached by women's rights activists and human rights organizations following the repeal of the Hudood Ordinances in the legislature for the previous twenty-seven years. Everyone returned to their party's positions. Women parliamentarians from the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (M.M.A.) led the charge against the bill. In accepting the modification, their counterparts from the Pakistan Muslim League Quaid-i-Azam (PML-Q), the Pakistan People's Party (P.P.P.), and Muttahida Qaumi Movement (M.Q.M.) followed their party line. The women who sat in

the restricted seats did not realize that they were responsible not only to their political parties but also to their constituency, the country's women. They needed to speak up for women's rights to explain their existence and participation in the National Assembly. As political parties, these women's ideas were bound by their parties' discipline, and they were expected to endorse their party's position on the topic.

NON-INDIGENOUS PEOPLE'S EMPOWERMENT

Global concerns in Afghanistan have resulted in the growth of progressive groups in Pakistan in a post-9/11 context. The emergence of the Pakistani political system is intertwined with foreign issues. Despite proof that a 33 percent quota was included in the National Action Plan (1996–2002), it was not implemented until after 9/11. Progressive fundamentals enforced quotas on women not including doing their homework, training the generally conservative Pakistani culture to accept alter. Due to socio-political imperatives, political illustration has not been established and thus is ineffective in furthering the cause of women. It is just given to them as a symbol. The truth is that Pakistani society has chosen to be portrayed as progressive. Ninety-five percent of female elected councilors in local governments are illiterate and uneducated. The primary goal of becoming a councilor is to receive the authorized amount as a monthly income ranging from Rs. 1000 to Rs. 5000. The advisers' shared understanding of their mission is to help the Nazis at the district level. Pakistan's political institutions are ruled by the national elite, including civil and military bureaucracies. Since Pakistan's independence, the Army has wielded more than half of the country's power during the Ayub era (1958–1969), the Zia era (1978–1988), and the Musharraf era (1999–present). The elite decided to adopt a 33 percent quota in response to pressure from international financial institutions, developed countries, and multinational firms worldwide. After an eight-year voluntary exile, Benazir Bhutto returned to Pakistan on October 18, 2007, to run for election after an "arrangement" with President Musharraf. In an interview, President Musharraf revealed that the United States played a role in commencing discussions with Benazir Bhutto. Religious fanatics killed Benazir Bhutto during the election campaign on December 27, 2007. Men will claim she was killed because of her politics, while feminists will see her death as a commentary on women's struggles in politics and public office.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Women's political empowerment is constrained due to socio-cultural traditions and women's economic dependence on male family members. Low literacy rates and gender segregation in social positions are two more issues that limit women's participation. Women's engagement can only be effective if a steady socio-cultural shift occurs, which should be undertaken from the bottom up. Women must be economically and socially empowered. After this is achieved, women will only play a constructive and influential role in politics. Currently, top-down political indications of women's political empowerment, such as quotas, are gained through legislative actions. However, structural discrimination manifested in socio-cultural practice constitutes normative practice inside political

parties. Such methods and attitudes include role assignments, duty assignments, and partisan appointments. As a result, actual empowerment, effective participation, and the role of women in political systems and structures must be increased by altering norms at the local level and in social institutions (particularly homes and economic institutions) and raising awareness. Other options for improving this ratio are as follows:

- **DEVELOPING POLITICAL IDENTITY:**

The organization promotes the registration of women's I.D. cards, which gives formerly marginalized women access to several services and resources, including the right to vote. As a result of these benefits, women have greater possibilities to engage and access public venues, allowing them to develop direct connections with duty-bearers.

- **NETWORKING:**

Another essential strategy is to connect isolated women. W.L.G. keeps an informal list of members' talents and contacts and an official list of local service suppliers, political actors, and government authorities. The multiplier impact of these contacts and information raises the possibility of support and manipulation, while quantitative security minimizes the risk of violence for a person. Relationships with local elders and religious academics have also been fostered. The movement conducts activities with local communities, governments, and non-governmental organizations (N.G.O.s) at the national level to increase awareness and garner recognition for the campaign, which women can then use to gain support from local government agencies and leaders.

- **MEDIA:**

R.H.V. Pakistan and the projects listed below collaborate with national media to develop shared messaging on critical governance issues, which is then translated and presented on local channels in local languages. Working with local media to boost the visibility of W.L.G. members and other activists and highlight their accomplishments is also a good idea.

- **TACTICAL PARTNERSHIPS WITH DECISION-MAKERS AND GATEKEEPERS:**

The W.L.G.'s rising collective voice, both in terms of numbers and credibility, boosts women's influence and makes them more appealing to people in positions of power, opening doors for policymakers. Furthermore, the project has devised culturally relevant tactics to "reward" male proponents of female empowerment, such as assisting them in gaining good media attention by promoting their achievements and inviting meetings with other significant community members.

- ### HAVE AN IMPACT ON LEGISLATION AND THE GOVERNMENT'S STRUCTURE:

W.L.G. and local civil society organizations collaborate with allies to advocate for legislation that promotes women's political participation. They also work with and influence governments and political parties to educate, uncover gaps in laws and policies that safeguard children's and women's rights, and hold duty bearers accountable for those gaps.

CONCLUSION

The main issues that hinder women's active participation in socio-political activities include religious rigidity, financial constraints, economic dependence, socio-cultural barriers, restricted mobility, illiteracy, family responsibilities, and relatively weak decision-making capacity. As a result, the gender gap in Pakistan has widened due to radical Islamic extremism. The sector of religious orthodoxy has radically changed and misunderstood the Islamic creed of equality. In addition, sociocultural patterns, societal patriarchy, and agriculture-based economy adversely affect women's mobility and socialization. These situations exclude women from politics and reduce their participation in bureaucracy and administration. Modern Pakistan has taken steps to address women's grievances; increasing reserved seats for women, enacting anti-harassment laws, and creating a "women's ombudsman" are just a few examples, but greater social awareness is still needed to elevate the socio-political status of women's grievances. In this sense, all stakeholders must play their part to ensure that they have political space, that their contributions are recognized, and that their rights are protected. Women in positions of authority should be role models for other women, inspiring them to fight for their fundamental human rights.

Since independence, all administrations in Pakistan, whether liberal, conservative, or military, have seen women's concerns as a political imperative in order to demonstrate to the rest of the world that respective regimes are open and modern. The initial implementation of quotas can pave the way for Pakistani women's future empowerment. Still, we must move beyond gender awareness to include a collective element of gender rights. Changes must originate from inside if they are to last. Women consider politics to be a "poor" field, hence they are uninterested. In official political processes, women are not permitted to participate. Women are not allowed to participate in significant political decisions because men consider themselves the "traditional custodians" of their political history. Women face immediate challenges such as a lack of political capacity, financial resources, and the perception of politicians as a male-dominated environment. Women's representation along with participation in the assessment bodies must be expanded through strategic measures. He also wants a high-quality female role model, proper education, training alternatives, and scholarship monies to support women's political participation. One of the most important indices of social growth is the position of women in society. We can't envisage a contemporary society without thinking about women's status; we can't imagine a community without full social, political, cultural, and economic rights for women, as well as complete dignity

and social status. Women's status in contemporary Pakistani culture has improved little over time, yet female empowerment remains a pipe dream.

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