

WOMEN'S ELECTORAL MOBILIZATION: ASSESSING THE WOMEN'S TURNOUT IN GENERAL ELECTIONS IN PAKISTAN FROM 1970 TO 2018.

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ABSTRACT:

This paper aims to examine women's voter turnout from 1970 to 2018. Women's electoral mobilization is sine qua non of women's political movements. The involvement of women and their participation in the electoral process is an essential indicator of the development and effectiveness of democracy in any nation. Almost half of the world population is comprised of women and holds equal importance to men in democratic values. This is because democratic states need the equal participation of their citizens in state affairs without any discrimination based on greed, colour, or sex. It is now widely accepted that achieving gender equality in the electoral process can lead to political mobilization, which is necessary for societal development. Pakistan, as a developing democracy, upholds the principle of affording its citizens equal political rights without any gender-based discrimination. Pakistan's political participation among women has gone through various ups and downs during its history. This article provides a comprehensive exploration of mobilization, electoral participation, and the role of women in the political process, both in Pakistan and on a global scale. This study enhances our understanding of the dynamics of political engagement and its impact on democratic systems both worldwide and in Pakistan.

KEYWORDS: Mobilization, Electoral mobilization, women's Electoral mobilization, women's turnout in Pakistan, Gender Voting.

MOBILIZATION

The term mobilization means the act of readiness to take part in a process or movement (Røkke, 2012). The process of mobilization occupies a central place in the world of politics. It is a necessary process for any social or political movement's creation, development, and achievement of goals (Cox:2015:50). Different scholars define the term mobilization as follows: Duraishkumar and Vasekaran defined mobilization as the process that enables people to develop relationships with other like-minded people to engage them in activities (Duraishkumar & Vasekaran, 2020:25). On the other hand, Rokke viewed mobilization as organizing a group of people to act in pursuit of specific goals (Rokke:2012:51). According to Charles Tilly, mobilization deals with how a group of people or organization takes control over the resources they require for an action. Such resources may be votes, weapons, labour power, goods, etc. (Tilly, 1978: 11). Fatemeh Ghanai and their coworkers also defined mobilization as the process by which organizations, groups, and parties motivate other individuals to participate (Ghanai, F., Gheysari, N., and Jahangir, K., 2016: 242).

In light of the above definitions, mobilization can be defined as "a process in which individuals, groups, parties, organizations, etc. motivate or influence other individuals or groups to participate in achieving certain social or political objectives.

ELECTORAL MOBILIZATION DEFINITIONS

Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) defined electoral mobilization. The actions of organizations, individuals, social networks, and institutions that convert potential voters into active voters in elections (Rosentone and Hansen, 1993:209). M.V. Duraishkumar and Dr. M.K.S. Vasekaran defined electoral mobilization, as voter mobilization is the method by which citizens get involved in elections. Political actors encouraged them to cast votes



in the election (Duraishkumar & Vaseekaran: 2020:29). Steven E. Schier considered electoral mobilization as; Electoral mobilization is the technique that interest groups, candidates, and political parties use to persuade the public to participate in elections (Schier:2006:2). Donald P. Green and Michael Schwam-Baird contributed definitions as well; Electoral mobilization refers to the measures taken by political parties' campaigns and interest groups to convince eligible voters to participate in elections. Political organizations target particular people to deliver targeted messages that will improve turnout. (Green and Baird, 2015).

In light of the above definitions, electoral mobilization can be defined as, “the persuasion of potential voters by individuals, organizations, social networks, political parties, etc. to cast their vote in elections, to increase or improve turnout is called electoral mobilization.

WOMEN’S ELECTORAL MOBILIZATION DEFINITION

Laila Khalid Alfirdaus and Rosihan Widi Nugroho define women’s electoral mobilization as an electoral campaign launched by political actors to convince women, and voters, to participate in elections (Alfirdaus & Nugroho, 2022:20). Another scholar defines women’s electoral mobilization as educating women about their political rights, stressing the value of voting, and persuading them to participate in the electoral process (Falch, 2010: 33).

In light of the above definitions, the terms can be defined as “women’s electoral mobilization is an electoral campaign to convert potential women voters into active participants.

Women’s Political Representation, Participation, and Electoral Mobilization at the World Level

The involvement of women and their participation in the electoral process is an essential indicator of the development and effectiveness of democracy in any nation (Rai, 2011:47). Electoral participation and representation can be classified into three sections: the right to participate in politics, the right to a gender-sensitive political decision-making process, and the right to vote (Delys,2014:15). Almost half of the world population is comprised of women and holds equal importance to men in democratic values. This is because democratic states need the equal participation of their citizens in state affairs without any discrimination based on greed, colour, or sex. It is now widely accepted that achieving gender equality in the electoral process can lead to political mobilization, which is necessary for societal development (Eve,2013:168). The United Nations, from its beginning in 1946, has put gender equality and women's improvement on its agenda, set up a division for the advancement of women (D.A.W.) and declared the decade from 1975 to 1985 as a decade of women's equality, peace, and development to create awareness about women's issues (Mehmood, 2010). Several international conventions guarantee the right of women to participate in the political process (Noreen et al., 2019: 211). Despite remarkable progress in women's political participation over the last decades, differences still differences remain. By 2021, only 13 countries had a female head of government, only 10 countries had a female head of state, only 25% of national parliamentarians were women, and 21% of ministers were women (UN Women, 2021).

Women's Political Mobilization (Europe and America)

General elections are the means through which political will is translated into practice. Citizens choose their representatives through their will because the will of the people is the source of democracy. The elected members then participate in the formulation and implementation of policies. Elections give citizens, particularly those in marginalized groups like women, ethnic minorities, physically handicapped people, and religious minorities, the chance to participate in the political affairs of the country. The government is chosen, monitored, and replaced through the process of elections. Voter



turnout is a parameter of political participation (Segal, 1974). The activity of voting is the most common of various activities in politics carried out by eligible citizens in a democratic system of government. Even in the most traditional form of democracy that exists in the United States, the vote percentage does not exceed 50%. Voting is a very significant activity because it allows citizens to decide the type of government they choose through their elected representatives. Through voting, the citizens urge the government to be accountable to the people and give it legitimacy. A real democracy can be run only when citizens cast their votes properly (Niroj, S. 2007). The voter gender gap has been a topic of discussion in political research for more than seventy years (Galais, C, & Blais 2019). In the history of democratization in Europe and beyond, the suffrage of women was a significant development. Finland was the first country in western Europe to grant women the right to vote in a nation-wide election in 1906, and Switzerland, most recently in 1971, was the first to allow women to vote. However, women were enfranchised much earlier in other parts of the world. For example, in 1893, New Zealand was granted women's suffrage in nationwide elections. The USA granted women the right to vote in 1920, in the aftermath of the First World War (Aidt & Dallal, 2007).

EUROPE

In the national parliaments of all European states, men are more than women. In 2021, the number of female members of the European Parliament was 38.9%. Finland has 54.5% of women in the national government, Austria has 52.9%, Sweden has 52.2%, France has 51.2%, Belgium has 50%, Greece has 11.3%, and Malta has 7.7%. Greece and Estonia have female presidents, and five European states have female prime ministers. The gender gap in voting decreases in national or European parliament elections. In the 2019 European Parliament elections, the male turnout was 52% while the female turnout was 49%, which shows that the gender gap in turnout decreased from 4% in 2014 to 3% in 2019 (Shreeves & Martina, 2019).

AMERICA

The number of women voting has decreased globally since the 1990s, which has alarmed many stakeholders and democracies involved in elections. Democratic systems around the world are thought to be under threat from decreased voter turnout, particularly among women. Low turnout suggests that fewer people view elections as the primary means of establishing parties' power over decision-making. Additionally, research shows that people have less interest in political parties and electoral processes, which are crucial components of democratic representation (Solijonov, 2016:13). Women voted at consistently lower rates than men in the United States until the 1970s, but this gender gap has disappeared or even reversed in recent elections (Mellon et al., et al.: 2017). In the US, women's voter turnout increased slightly higher than men's voter turnout in the preceding five midterm elections and recorded the highest in the 2018 midterm election. In the 2018 midterm elections, 55% of women voted, compared to 51.8 per cent of men. In addition, the gender gap in turnout increases. Women's voter turnout is higher than men's in previous midterm elections in the U.S., i.e., less than 1 percentage point in 2010, 2.2 in 2014, and 3.2 in the 2018 midterm elections (Harting, 2019). According to the data from the Census Bureau Center, women have had slightly higher rates of voter turnout than men in every U.S. presidential election dating back to 1984. Voter turnout data was first available in 1980. According to this data, 64% of men and women cast their votes, and there was no gender gap in turnout. In 1996, 2000, and 2004, there was a 3-point gender gap recorded. Similarly, the data from three consecutive U.S. presidential elections, that is, 2008, 2012, and 2016, showed that the women's gender gap was 4 points (Igielnik, 2020).

ASIA

The continent of Asia is divided into eight countries: India, Bangladesh, the Maldives, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Pakistan. Together, they have a combined population of



nearly 1.7 billion, or 21% of the entire world's population (World Population Survey, 2019). There is a significant gender gap in political participation in the developing world, with women being less likely than men to vote, campaign, or run for office, etc. (Chattha & Lakhtakia: 2020). The percentage of parliamentary seats held by women in Nepal is 30%, Pakistan 21%, Bangladesh 20%, India 12%, and Sri Lanka 6% (World Bank, 2017).

VOTER'S TURNOUT IN PAKISTAN

Pakistan adopted a democratic form of government after independence, and the first general elections were held in 1970. Elections were held in Pakistan even during the military dictatorship to support their rule in the country. Although voter turnout in these elections varies, there seems to have been a reduction in participation up until the 2008 elections. From 61.45% in the 1970 election to 45% in the 2008 election, Pakistan's turnout in elections has decreased (Rauf & 2015). Pakistan ranks among the four nations worldwide with the lowest voter participation rates. Pakistan's voter turnout rate varies, like in other nations of the world. Unfortunately, Pakistan has witnessed a decline in voter turnout since the 1970 general election. In ten (10) general elections, the average participation rate stood at 47.82%. Elections in Pakistan saw a 64% turnout in 1970, a 62% turnout in 1977, a 53.2% turnout in 1985, a 40% turnout in 1988, a 45.5% turnout in 1990, a 40.51% turnout in the 1993 general election, a 35.43% turnout in 1997, a 40.69% turnout in 2002, a 45% turnout in 2008, and a 55.2% turnout in the 2013 general election (Express Tribune, 2013).

Elections ensure that public office holders are held accountable regarding their activities and that this is the best method for correction and reform if they fail to fulfil their pledges and carry out their duties according to the preferences of the public. All citizens are able to engage in political matters via the adult franchise by voting. Elections with high turnout increase the elected legislators' responsiveness. A high turnout demonstrates the power and reliance of the populace on the democratic system. Low turnout, on the other hand, has detrimental effects on the government. Due to the general public's lack of interest and political engagement, low participation exerts minimum pressure on elected officials (Shah et al., 2020).

WOMEN'S POLITICAL REPRESENTATION AND PARTICIPATION IN PAKISTAN

All major religions in the world give women high respect, honour, and reverence because women are not only an essential part of society but also constitute half the world's population. The religion Islam is highly concerned about the importance of women's status and their contribution to the advancement of society. Islam is a religion that not only respects women but also gives them their share of the inheritance (Nawas, S: 2019). Pakistan's political participation among women has gone through various ups and downs during its history. In the constitutions of 1956, 1962, and 1973, Pakistan reserved seats for women (But & Victor 2014). Women's representation in Pakistan's National Assembly has fluctuated over the years, from 1947 to 2002. The 1956 and 1962 constitutions gave Pakistani women six reserved seats in the National Assembly, evenly distributed between the country's west and east. In contrast, the constitution designated ten seats for women, which were to be in effect for ten years starting from the date the constitution was enacted. General Zia increased the number of seats designated for women to 20 in 1985 (Women/Women Representative in Pakistan Parliament). The elected administrations of Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif (two for each alternate era, respectively) lost the right to reserve seats in parliament during the elections of 1988, 1990, 1993, and 1997. These elected administrations were unable to enhance or revive the number of reserved seats; instead, they reduced it. The majority of the female political candidates who were seated in their allocated seats for the interview stage condemned the democratic Benazir and Sharif governments for the loss of their reserved seats. Women believed that reserved seats were a way for them to enter assemblies and a means of achieving gender balance. Otherwise, if the quota system fails again, women will suffer. The political

climate in Pakistan has not yet developed to the point where it would enable women to run for general seats. The official political engagement of women is advancing with new patterns at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Pervaiz Musharraf, through LFO, changed the reserved seats from 10% in the national assembly and 5% in the provincial assembly to 17% and also raised it. For the 2000-2001 election, a reserve of 33 per cent of seats was set for women in local government. A similar provision was enacted shortly before the 2002 general elections, reserving 17 per cent of the seats in the NA, four PAs, and the Senate for women (Ahmad, S.,2014). Unlike any previous instance in Pakistan's political history, a significant enhancement of reserved seats was introduced, comprising 33 per cent at the local government level and 17 per cent at the national and provincial levels, making its debut in the Senate. Starting from the 2002 general elections, women were allocated 60 reserved seats in the National Assembly, 128 across four provincial assemblies (Punjab-66, Sindh-29, NWFP-22, and Baluchistan-11), and an additional 17 reserved seats in the Senate. Notably, women actively participated in the 2002 general elections, representing various political parties and running as independent candidates, achieving a historic record of winning seats in Pakistan's political landscape. (Awan,2018).

WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN NATIONAL ASSEMBLIES IN PAKISTAN

TABLE NO.4

S.NO	Legislature of Pakistan	Women Elected on Reserved Seats	Women Elected Directly	Seats Filled By Women With Percentage	Total Seats
01	1947 To 1954.	-----	-----	02(6.7%)	30
02	1955 To 1958.	----	-----	00(00%)	80
03	1962 To 1965.	06	-----	06(3.8%)	156
04	1965 To 1969.	06	----	06(3.8%)	156
05	1972 To 1977.	06	-----	06(4.2%)	144
06	March,1977 To July,1977.	10	01	11(5.2%)	210
07	1985 To 1988.	21	01	22(10.1%)	217
08	1988 To 1990.	20	04	24(11.1%)	217
09	1990 To 1993.	-----	02	02(0.9%)	217
10	1993 T1996.	-----	04	04(1.8%)	217
11	1997 To1999.	-----	06	06(2.8)	217
12	2002 To 2007.	61*	13	74(21.64%)	342

Note: * One woman elected to a non-Muslim reserved seat is also included.

Source: (Ahmad,2014).

Table No. 5: Voter turnout percentage in the last 10 general elections of Pakistan (sharp increase of women voters in Pakistan's 2013 elections)

General Elections	1970	1977	1985	1988	1990	1993	1997	2002	2008	2013



Female Turnout %age	N.C	N.C	N.C	N.C	N.C	N.C	N.C	N.C	12.5%	40%
Total Turnout %age	61.45%	61.77%	53.2%	40%	45.5%	40.51%	35.43%	40.69%	45%	55.02%

Note: N.C. does not calculate votes separately by ECP.

Source: (Shah, et al. 2020)

The general elections of Pakistan in 1970 have received consistent criticism for the low turnout in the country. In Pakistan, the percentage of women who vote in the general elections is never accurately tracked and has been quite low. Apart from the 2013 general elections, the ECP has never designed a gender-disaggregated voting form, but that effort was unsuccessful since polling workers were not provided with the necessary training and facilities (AFP, 2013).

WOMEN’S REPRESENTATION AND THEIR RESERVED SEATS IN THE PARLIAMENTARY HISTORY OF PAKISTAN

Since the beginning of Pakistan's legislative history, seats have been reserved for women. There were nine (9) reserved seats for women in the 1946 Federal Assembly of the United India. In the 1956 National Assembly and Provincial Assemblies of East and West Pakistan, there were ten women or around 3% of the total seats. In East and West Pakistan's Provincial Assemblies in 1962, there were 05 women each, making up about 3% and 4% of the total. In the National Assembly, there were six women. In 1970, Pakistan’s National Assembly included 13 women, and there were 13 reserved seats in each of the Provincial Assemblies for east and west Pakistan. This accounted for approximately 4% of all the available seats. In the National Assembly of 1970, there were ten women, while each provincial assembly had 5% women. In 1984, Pakistan’s National Assembly was composed of 20 women, and each provincial assembly also consisted of 5% women. In the general elections of 1988, 1990, 1993, and 1997, the provision for reserved seats was discontinued, resulting in no woman gaining entry through reserved seats in either Assembly (14 Legislative Watch, -Vol-1-No-1995). In the 2002 general election, General Pervaiz Musharraf allocated 17% of the reserved seats in all state legislatures to women under the LFO of 2002 (15 Legislative Watch-Women and Election 2008).

REGISTERED VOTERS IN THE GENERAL ELECTION, 2013 IN PAKISTAN

In the 2013 general elections, the Election Commission of Pakistan established a Statement of Count (Form XIV) to separately count male and female ballots in each polling place in response to the observations of several national and international organizations. The presiding officers were instructed to separately count the number of ballots from male and female polling places that were in boxes in the 2013 general election. This data was entered into the record using the Statement of the Count (Form XIV) (FAFEN,2013). In comparison to 48.6 million men, there were 37.6 million more women nationwide who were registered to vote for the general elections in 2013. It received a ratio of 56.4% male votes and 43.6% female voters(ECP,2013). The results showed that male voter turnout at male polling stations stayed at 56.03%, whereas women's voting participation stayed at 48.79% at female polling stations (FAFEN, 2013).

REGISTERED VOTERS FOR THE GENERAL ELECTION 2018 IN PAKISTAN

The total number of registered voters in the 2018 general election was 106,000,239, out of which 59,243,889 were male registered voters and 467,563,350 were female registered voters. In the 2018

general election, registered female voters were 44.1 per cent, compared to 55.9 per cent of male voters (ECP GE-2018 Report).

Registered voters in the general election of 2018 in Pakistan

Table No.6

Province /Area	Islamabad	Punjab	Sindh	Kpk Including FATA	Balochistan	Grand Total
Male Registered Voter%	407,801(53.21%)	33,690,140(55.51%)	12,438,375(55.54%)	10,220,103(57.29%)	2,487,470(57.82%)	59,243,889(55.89%)
Female Registered Voter%	358,659(46.79%)	27,007,278(44.49%)	9,955,837(44.46%)	7,619,742(42.71%)	1,814,834(42.18%)	46,756,350(44.11%)
Total Voter	766,460	60,697,418	22,394,212	17,839,845	4,302,304	106,000239

Source: ECP-2018.

In addition, estimates of the female population, female voter registration, and female voter turnout should be made in this way to acknowledge the challenges that women's advancement has faced (Awan,2018). The women's share of votes in 2018 was estimated at 23.26 million, up from 22.9 million in the general elections of 2013, despite a general fall in voter turnout (Chaudhary, 2018).

Turnout in the 2018 general election in Pakistan

Table No.7

	All Pakistan	Punjab	Sindh	KPK	Baluchistan
Male Voters%	58%	60%	51%	50%	46%
Female Voters%	47%	53%	43%	31%	38%
Gender Gap in turnout	10%	7%	8%	19%	8%

Source: FAFEN,2018.

The above table shows that the female turnout in the 2018 general election was 10 per cent lower than the male turnout, with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa having the lowest turnout of 31 per cent (FAFEN,2018). In Pakistan's 2018 general election, 58.3 per cent of men and 47 per cent of women cast ballots (Zain, 2020).

CONCLUSION:

The article concludes that electoral participation, and women's role in the political process underscores the pivotal role that mobilization plays in achieving social and political objectives. It emphasizes the critical importance of women's engagement in politics, not only as a fundamental democratic right but also as a catalyst for societal development. The text highlights the global efforts, as exemplified by the United Nations, to promote gender equality and women's participation in politics. It further reveals the distinct voter turnout patterns and gender gaps in electoral participation across different regions. It showcases how women's voter turnout in the United States has seen fluctuations and discusses the potential implications for democratic representation. Additionally, it emphasizes the significant strides made in promoting women's participation in politics

in Europe, particularly in national parliaments, while noting the persisting gender gap in voter turnout.

The case of Pakistan provides valuable insights into the historical fluctuations in women's political representation and the introduction of reserved seats as a means to achieve gender balance. It underlines the changing dynamics of political engagement among women in Pakistan, as seen through the increasing number of reserved seats and women's active participation in elections. Finally, it sheds light on the challenges of accurately tracking women's voting patterns, especially in low-turnout elections, and the need for gender-disaggregated data in electoral processes. It underscores the enduring significance of mobilization and women's active participation in the democratic process, emphasizing the ongoing efforts to enhance women's representation and participation in various political systems across the world. It serves as a reminder of the importance of continuing to work toward greater gender equality and political engagement to strengthen democratic governance.

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