

Female Political Power and the Complexity of Social Barriers in Pakistan

Umer Khayyam* and Fariha Tahir†

Abstract

Women constitute half of the world's population; however, they are seldom represented according to their numbers. This underrepresentation is prevalent in all socio-economic aspects and in societies across the world. Irrespective of geographical location, women continue to be discriminated, especially in the political domain. This paper has deployed quantitative techniques, based on secondary data of independent sources. It is to check the actual level of female political participation in Pakistan, since independence. The level of female political participation in Pakistan union-council to upper-house (Senate) is studied in comparison with other nations in Asia and the world. It is even at the eve of Pakistan's 70th anniversary, women are restricted to education and health sectors only, whereas, in the political arena societal factors, cultural taboos, and religious misinterpretation are found to be the main hurdles. Also, the persistent patriarchal mindset in the social system remains the underlying belief for low levels of female political participation.

Keywords: Political Participation, Patriarchy, Discrimination, Female Empowerment, Gender Inequality, Democracy

1. INTRODUCTION

“When one woman is a leader, it changes her. When more women are leaders, it changes politics and policies”

Michelle Bachelet, (President of Chile)

* Umer Khayyam <dr.umer@s3h.nust.edu.pk> is Assistant Professor at Development Studies Department, School of Social Sciences and Humanities (S³H), National University of Science & Technology (NUST), Islamabad, Pakistan.

† Fariha Tahir <fariha-tahir@s3h.nust.edu.pk> is Lecturer at Development Studies Department, School of Social Sciences and Humanities (S³H), National University of Sciences & Technology (NUST), Islamabad, Pakistan.

Authors' Note: Authors of the study are thankful to anonymous reviewers for valuable comments that helped to refine the study's findings. Thanks are also to Mrs. Samavia Mumtaz (NJSSH Literary Editor) for the indepth, and well-read and suggestions to correct the language/gestures issues and reference of the whole manuscript.

Women in all walks of life, everywhere in the world are continuously marginalized from the political sphere [Women UN (2011)]. According to the latest statistical figures, only 22.8% of all national parliamentarians are women. Out of those, only 10 women got the chance to become head of the state (mostly in developing countries). The situation remains even worse at the ministerial level in most countries. It is evident that only 17% of government minister offices are held by women [IPU (2016)]. This low trend of women participation in the government exists also in the Pacific countries, where women account up-to 15.3% of seats in the national parliament. In the Least Developing Countries (LDCs), Rwanda has the highest women participation, making up to 64% of the chamber of deputies. The trend is relatively satisfactory in the developed world. In the Nordic countries (i.e., Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden), gender equality is higher as women account for 41.6% of the total parliamentarians [Rosenbluth, *et al.* (2015)]. It remains also a reality that although the number of female participation continues to increase, however, their participation and powers are restricted [Tahri (2003)]. Another important issue related to women's lack of political participation is the nature, style, and system of contemporary democracy. Since times immemorial to date, all political and social thinkers cum philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau, John Lock, Hegel, to name a few, have argued that women are more suitable for their natural roles as mothers and wives [Phillips (1998); Rai (2000)]. Yet, the overall devastating situation in LDCs is linked mostly to the colonial mindset in the developing world. It is one of the main reasons that female political representation is reduced in the post-colonial era because in pre-colonial time a woman's political role in the pre-independence period was relatively higher [Waylen (1996)]. Although significant progress in some parts of the developing world has been noticed, but female participation both in the political institutions and in decision making still remains low for nations like, Pakistan.

The reasons behind these unacceptable figures (particularly in the least developing countries), can be linked to 'feudal' mindset, that views women as incapable of handling leadership positions. This mindset considers women unfit for other productive roles, thus limiting them only to their reproductive roles. It is believed that compassion cannot help in playing harsh public roles like, in politics [UNDP (2012)]. In some societies, other than the reproductive role, female participation in the political domain is hampered by the mindset that female duties should be restricted only to domestic activities. The ones who are lucky enough to escape get seats in the national parliament. However, such an escape usually leaves them isolated from key decision making and policy formulation duties from the male counterparts [Geisler

(1995)]. So, gender differences for political participation and lead have persisted in world societies, and increased and also decreased over time. The level of discrimination among the political participation of women varies across regions and ideological backgrounds, yet it prevails throughout the developing world. Women continue to witness their basic political rights violated. Their political dreams get thrashed as a result of patriarchal thinking, deeply embedded in the institutional structure. However, these differences are not based on biological factors, but importantly socially constructed demands. This overgeneralization of the gender attributes and differences are extremely harmful when they tend to limit the capacity of women to develop their future in politics [OHCHR (2013)]. Consequently, the nominal female participation in the political arena is backed chiefly by customary rules and socio-economic conditions than the institutional structure [UNDP (2012)]. In order to address that issue, the international law on human rights has legally obligated the states that are signatory states to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) to eliminate discrimination of all forms against men and women. Article 5 of the convention encourages all the states to eliminate prejudices and customs based on inferiority and superiority of either sex [CEDAW (1979)].

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The participation of women in politics can always play a prodigious role. Fatimah Jinnah, the sister of Muhammad Ali Jinnah, was an active participant in politics and inspired millions of people through her skills [Sundstro, *et al.* (2017)]. In the 1973 constitution of Pakistan, Article 25 promises equality for all despite the gender of the individual, Article 32 and Article 34 promise participation of women and equal opportunities for them in all domains of life [Anwar (2017)].

In reality, politics is thought of as one of the worst fields for women. In Pakistani society, the character of a woman is a sacred thing that needs to be protected at all costs. Politics is a field in which character is the first thing that is attacked by male politicians, making the situation worse for women [Sugirtha (2007)]. Women face discrimination and extensive violence in the political field. Cases of Benazir Bhutto and Zille Huma are the biggest depiction of violence against women in politics [Shukla (1996)].

The political leadership of women is slowly integrated into the institutions with changing roles from generation-to-generation from a household nurturer to accepting them in the more influential setting of the globalized economy [Lucas (2003)]. According to Bullough, *et al.* (2012); the cross-sectional data from 181 countries show a significant relationship

between women's political participation and institutional barriers, such as technological infrastructure, economic environment, business environment, societal development, political freedom and culture and to increase political power for women. There is a dire need to evaluate customs and trade regulations, education spending's, access to power, the internet, and political empowerment.

The understanding of basic problems, needs of the communities, lack of political decision making by women, women empowerment, low societal standing, occupational segregation, discrimination in salaries and civil rights for women have impeded their power in politics [Bowles, *et al.* (2007)]. Similarly, the domination of money in politics, family care responsibilities, lack of education and knowledge, unwillingness to face societal consequences, lack of political campaign funding's and prejudice against leadership for women has socially assigned this assertive task of political power in hands of the male members of the society [Eagly, *et al.* (1992); Miranda (2005)].

The same gloomy situation continues in the regional scenario. Looking at our immediate neighbour India the history of women's right to vote goes back to 1917 in the sub-Continent, when Saraladevi Chahudrani presented the idea of the female franchise before the Montague-Chelmsford team in 1918. The idea took 3 years to materialize and women got the constitutional right of equal citizens [Kumar (1997)]. Though the Indian Constitution considers female equal even then female political participation is very low due to social barriers of identity attached by family, limited mobility practice and the notions of gender-segregated job responsibilities inside and outside the household, cost of contesting elections, casting vote with the consent of husband or male family head, prevalent urban political culture, prejudiced perceptions about female politicians and gender stereotyping are kind of barriers that are very high for a woman to cross before stepping into a political arena of any form. Consequently, only a small number of women enter politics. In "de-facto" sense women are far behind than a man in politics [Bhoite (1988); Khanna (2009)].

Continuing with the regional scenario we see that Sri Lanka gained universal voting rights in 1930, has 92% female literacy rate and 35.5 % is the female workforce participation [CM (2017)]. The country elected world's first female prime minister in 1960 and world's first female president in 1994, the percentage of female's political participation is staggering in between the numbers of 48-49%, and even in local bodies female representation never rose above 6% [Rathnayake (2017)].

Another study also indicates the social barriers that are practiced in the form of lack of quota for women, lack of fundraising for political

campaigns for women, and persistent gender paradoxes. Likewise, family work and time constraints, the inability of women to take risks and rushing in political opportunity, the political culture of increased intrusions in personal life and family where women are not allowed to move freely or interact with male individuals, lack of unity among women parliamentarians in Pakistan, non-availability of economic resources for women, less awareness regarding political policies and lack of ambition on women's part have decreased female participation in politics (Shukla, 1996). It can, however, only be amended by multilayered feminist's movements that address women equality against all ages, races, sexual orientations and religious and social barriers to build a coalition for progressive change and political inclusion of women [Shames (2015)].

In the past few years, it has been observed that parties such as PTI (Pakistan Tehreek e Insaaf) have formed a women's wing. A women's wing is a women's club. There are 2 different views regarding the women's wing, one according to this is just a new type of women discrimination, whereas the other describe it has a way of promoting women in the political field as this gives them a voice in decision making [Gleason (2001)]. A recent study has observed the changes that this women's wing brought to the participation of women in politics and the result was disappointing as the participation remains limited [Bullough, *et al.* (2012)].

The social barriers that hinder women's political power are accessed through the 'V-Dem' Women's Political Empowerment Index (WPEI), formulated for over 170 countries for the time period 1900-2012. It provides information on women liberties, civil society participation, and political participation. It implores that economic development, GDP per capita, women participation in civil society and levels of democracy impact the women political empowerment and this index provides more precise measurement at global levels [Sundstro, *et al.* (2017)]. Therefore, based on the WPEI, McLaughlin (2017) explored macro and micro factors that influence the women likelihood to gain political power are low worldwide. It represents low participation of women in politics, participative leadership style of women as opposed to the dominating style of men, stereotypes against women on their potential, masculinity, and credibility as a leader. Women have no interest in politics because it is depicted as a negative field, men are considered as traditional and righteous owners of political inheritance and never welcome women in decision-making processes in the political field [Bano (2009)].

Being born a girl in Pakistan is said to be a double whammy for an individual. Pakistan might be a developing country but the stereotype prone traditional society controls the lives of many people. For Pakistani women fields like music, politics, acting, and modeling is thought of as an immoral

choice of the profession [Umer (2016)]. Things are always chosen for a girl in Pakistan and as a result, a woman will always underestimate her intellect when she is not performing well in a field which is not of her interest. Politics is thought of the most dangerous place for a woman. In politics, if some find no other point of criticism on women then they resort to character assassination, which remains a very sacred thing in Pakistani society.

In a recent study conducted in Baluchistan, women were asked why they do not enter the political sphere and support the men. Two main reasons have been mentioned Male dominance and control over women. Men tell women how the house runs and what will be done. Women are only allowed to make decisions regarding kitchen; women cannot even think of stepping into politics as it will be thought of as a direct attack on the masculinity of a man if his wife is earning and he is eating from her income. The second constraint that stops women of Baluchistan from entering politics is a misconception of Islam; Islam is misinterpreted and used against women by creating policies that stop them from participating in politics [Umer (2016)].

These social barriers have ruined lives and shattered dreams. People are scared of fields like politics because they need to protect their daughters for a better groom. The bigger picture is being ignored, these social barriers are forcing fewer women to participate in politics, which is due to the rigidity of the system. The rigid system fails to understand the problems of women and therefore nothing is being done. Now is the time where these barriers are discussed and strategies are found to tackle these barriers for the political participation of women.

Furthermore, biased systems of women representation and segregation in the political domain, low quota systems, the institutional barrier to advancement, and lack-of-fit theory in a political environment as judging the potential for women. In case of Pakistan, especially in the Pashtun society, social, cultural, economic, religious and political barriers exist, such as orthodox attitude of people, lack of education, misinterpretation and wrong practices of seclusion, discriminatory social standing, and other forms of patriarchy that hinders the political participation of women in Pakistan [Khan (2017)]. A change can be brought, through strong strategies, brave leadership, and motivation for increased participation of women in the political field [Anwar (2017)]. However, the women of Pakistan, in general, are facing social, economic, and religious hindrances that make women participation difficult in the political arena.

3. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The Constitution of Pakistan (1973) under the national legislation asserts the protection of women's rights. Article 25 of the constitution highlights women's equality before the law and no discrimination on the basis of gender. Similarly, articles 32 and 34 ensure full participation of women in all spheres of life, including the political arena [GoP (1973)]. It is believed that Pakistan has a strong legal framework that protects the right of women to vote. Moreover, Pakistan has taken several steps in empowering women to be an active part of the political arena. For example, Pakistan has ratified CEDAW at the conference on women in Beijing in 1995.

The government of Pakistan has mentioned its national commitments in the National Plan of Action (NPA), launched in 1999, to protect women and give her equal rights as men. It further focuses on the political empowerment of women in Pakistan. Based on Pakistan's international commitments regarding mainstreaming the political roles of women and the role of civil society, the National Commission on Status of Women (NCSW) was established in the year 2000. The National Policy for the Development and Empowerment of Women (NPDEW) was initiated in 2002. Based on NPA, the main aim of NPDEW was to ensure empowerment of Pakistani women. It was taken in line with Articles 25 and 37 of the Constitution of Pakistan. Similarly, Gender Reform Action Plan (GRAP) was introduced in 2002, so that international commitments by Pakistan could be transformed into national responses. More recently in 2010, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) has been signed by Pakistan. It was again promised to ensure political participation of women according to international commitments.

Despite much efforts and international focus, Pakistan is ranked 134th (out of 135 countries) – the worst places for women to be a part of the political process [PACI (2012)]. Pakistan largely has the dominant patriarchal setup that rejects women's political power and forces them to lag behind. They are not entertained to flourish and stand up for their own cause from the political platform. This trend gives a derogatory position to women in practice in Pakistani society. They face hurdles in the male (dominated) society that discourages women to participate in the public domain [Bhattacharya (2014); Kazmi (2005)]. Thus, social causes, along with wrong religious interpretations, hinder women from enjoying their legal and political rights [Ibrahim (2005)].

All these academic literature points in one direction, the political participation of women is consistently hampered by the mindsets of the people in Pakistani society. The patriarchal ideology makes it hard for women to be

taken seriously and their capabilities are constantly discriminated against. So it can be said that the government on its part has taken various initiatives on its part to improve the role of women in the political domain. However, the political role of women is limited and that is mostly attributed to the parochial mindset. Socio-cultural hindrances in Pakistani society discourage women to participate in the political sphere.

4. MATERIALS AND METHODS

4.1 Hypothesis, Research Question and Objectives

The study's main hypothesis remains that mainly social factors hinder female participation in the political arena. The research questions this study tries to answer are:

1. What is the level of female political participation in Pakistan?
2. Does the situation remain satisfactory in the global comparison?
3. What are the main social factors hindering female political participation in Pakistan?

4.2 Research Design & Data Analysis

Qualitative research technique is deployed and statistical data from secondary sources is gathered. Selection of this technique is due to its strength in assembling as well as systematically analyzing the collected data and draw answers to the research questions [Saunders 1987]. Moreover, it is due to its strengths in providing a conceptual framework for the study objectives [Edmonds and Kennedy (2012)], and because it draws concrete results due to creative re-use of data in social science research. This approach also has the strength for fresh and meaningful re-conceptualizations [Denzin and Lincoln (2011); Bornat (2008)]. However, due to ambiguity in the public figures about female political participation, data from independent sources (e.g., WB Inter-Parliamentary Union-IPU and unbiased researchers) is consulted to address the severity of the issue. The statistical figures are then analytically linked with the social factors, which contribute to a lagging of female political participation in the modern era.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The situation of women's active participation in politics remained unsatisfactory since right after independence in 1947. It was only in 1977 when women got special representation in the political sphere, even in national politics. For the first time, the (undemocratic) government of Zia-ul-

Haq passed the order to reserve two seats in the union councils and 10% in other tiers (e.g., provincial government), but only in KP (ex-NWFP) province. The situation improved for the first time in history during the democratic government of Nawaz Sharif in 1990, i.e., 10% representation again in the local government bodies. He, again in his second tenure (1997-99), gave special focus to the issue.

Table 1. History of Women's Political Participation in Pakistan

Time period	Regime	Representation
1958 – 1968	Ayub Khan	No special representation in basic democracies ordinance
1971 – 1977	Z.A. Bhutto	No special representation
1977 – 1985	Zia-ul-Haq	2 seats at UC and 10% in other tiers (except KP)
1988 – 1990	Benazir Bhutto	No local government elections
1990 – 1993	Nawaz Sharif	10.04%
1994- 1996	Benazir Bhutto	No local government elections
1997 – 1999	Nawaz Sharif	12.7%, 25%, 2.9% and 23% in Punjab, Baluchistan, KP and Sindh respectively
1999 – 2002	P. Musharraf	33% at all levels

Source: APISF (2001).

Table 2. Women in the Lower House in Pakistan, 1947-2016

Year	Total Seats	Women elected on		%
		direct seats	reserved seats	
1947	30	-	2	6.7
1955	580	-	-	0
1962	156	6	-	3.8.
1965	156	6	-	3.8
1972	144	6	-	4.2
1977	210	1	10	5.2
1985	217	1	21	10.1
1988	217	4	20	11.1
1990	217	2	-	0.9
1993	217	4	-	1.8
1997	217	6	-	2.8
2002	342	13	61	21.64
2008	342	17	60	22.22

Source: World Bank, Inter-Parliamentary Union (2016).

Although significant, female participation was ensured in provincial politics in all four provinces. The remarkable achievement was made by the (non-democratic) government of (Gen.) Pervez Musharraf on allocating 33%

of the seats in the National Assembly (NA) to the female gender. Historical trends of women elected in the lower house back from 1947 (independence) show also sharp fluctuation. The figures show 6.7% total seats (direct and reserved) for a female in 1947, which led to 0% female selection in 1955 and again 3.8% in 1962-65, however, only on direct seats. The trend was on the rise till 1988 with 11.1%.

Female representation in the year was backed on reserved seats. A sharp cut was observed between 1990-93, where percentage share of female decreased from 1.8% to 0.9%, whereas 1.8% and 2.8% of the total seats were occupied by female gender, again on direct seats in 1993 and 1997, respectively. For the first time, 21% and 22.22% seats were taken by women in 2002-08 assemblies, the majority of them were on reserved seats. The trend is evident in the non-clarity of the national focus of female inclusion, in comparison to males. It is followed by ambiguity on female representation either on direct seats or reserved seats. The trend shows a clearly sharp increase in female presence in the national parliament from 2002 till 2008 with an average of 22.4%. The most recent trend again remained disappointing. The figures show reduction in the trend up to 20.6%, between 2013-16 [WB (2016)].

Figure 1. Seats for a Female in the National Assembly.



Source: World Bank, Inter-Parliamentary Union (2016).

Before, analyzing the trend at the district and UC level, it remains important to break down the data to highlight the gaps in national assemblies, i.e., as a regional share of women in the parliaments (both NA and Senate). The share of women from Punjab, Sindh, and KP remains 23%, which is

compatible with the national figures. However, the share of women from Baluchistan remains 2% lower than other provinces and stand at 21%. Surprisingly, (ex-FATA) tribal districts stand at 0% share in the national parliaments, thus allocating all the seats to tribal males. In total, the share of women drops to only 17%, provided an allocation of 10 seats to non-Muslims. The situation in the Senate (upper house) is somewhat encouraging. The provincial share of female representatives remains 29% (without provincial discrimination), which after including the non-Muslims and technocrats with drop to 26%.

The trend further shows that on average 23% of the seats are occupied by the women in the provincial legislatures. Remarkably, it is hard to find any female representative as minority representatives, which shows further allocation of seats both in NA and Senate to male members of the society (excluding Islamabad), hence giving them an added advantage to become the main representatives in both the houses.

The situation remains even worse at the local level, i.e., district level and UC level. In this modern era, the number of elected women is not compatible with the number of seats reserved for women. The trend remains only 90% at the union council level and 95% at Tehsil (sub-district) level. Likewise, elected women as Mayor and Deputy Mayor remain at only 16% and just 126 seats are reserved for minorities in the whole political arena of Pakistan. Overall female representation in the district, tehsil, union, and town councils is also beyond the satisfactory level. The overall gap between the reserved and elected seats is 10% (Table 4). Hence, it is not wrong to say that whether the reservation of seats or selection of seats, women in Pakistan fail to be an active part of the political process, again whether it is NA, Senate, or lower tiers of the democratic governments.

The political scenario of total female to male representation (provincial to UC level) illustrates disappointing results. It is computed that in total 6819 candidates were nominated, of which only 3.5% were women, while 96.5% at all tiers of the democratic government, including Islamabad capital territory (ICT) and Pashtun tribal region. This trend remains satisfactory in Punjab and in ICT. However, the trends show alarming results in the tribal districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with 1.1% and 2.4 %, respectively.

Table 3. Reserved and General Seats in Pakistani Legislative Assemblies, 2016

House/Chamber/ Legislature		General Seats	Seats Reserved for Women	Seats Reserved for Non-Muslims	Seats Reserved for Technocrats	Total	
Parliament	NA	Punjab	148	35	—	183	
		Sindh	61	14	—	75	
		Pakhtunkhwa	35	08	—	43	
		Baluchistan	14	03	—	17	
		FATA	12	—	—	—	
		Islamabad	02	—	—	—	
		Non-Muslims	—	—	10*	10	
		NA Total Seats	272	60	10	342	
	Senate	Punjab	14	04	01	04	
		Sindh	14	04	01	04	
		Pakhtunkhwa	14	04	01	04	
		Baluchistan	14	04	01	04	
		FATA	08				
		Islamabad	02	01	—	01	
Non-Muslims				04**			
	Senate Total	66	17	04	17	104***	
Federating	Punjab	297	66	08		371	
Units/Provincial Legislatures	Sindh	130	29	09		168	
	Pakhtunkhwa	99	22	03		124	
	Baluchistan	51	11	03		65	

Source: Computed from 1973 Constitution, 18th Amendment Act 2010 and statistical data of ECP 2016.

Table 4. Female Participation in the Local Councils

Local Government	No. of Seats reserved for women	No. of elected women
Union councils	36,066	32,222
Tehsil council	1,749	1,675
Town councils	161	161
District councils	1,988	1,905
Total	39,964	35,963
Women elected on reserved seats that was for minorities		126
Women elected on (Naib-) Nazim seats		16
Total No. of elected women		36,105

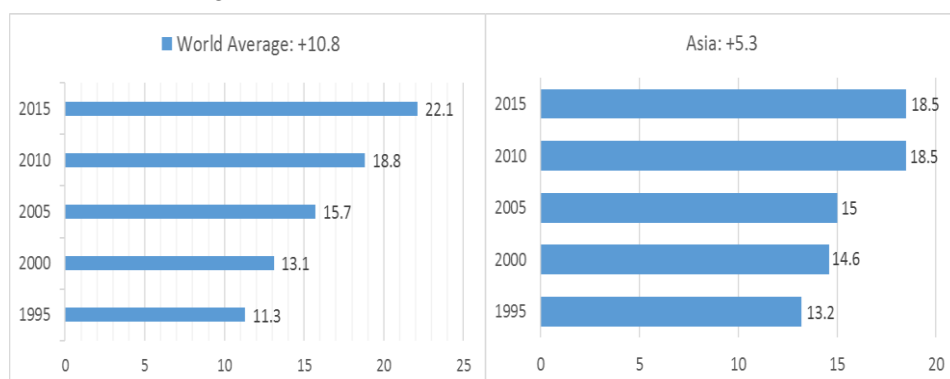
Source: Reyes (2002) and Naz (2001).

Table 5. Number of Overall Elected Candidates by Gender and Region in PA

Province/Region	Total	Male %	Female %
Punjab	3,335	95.4	4.6
Sindh	1,643	96.8	3.2
KP	870	97.6	2.4
FATA and FRs	446	99.9	1.1
ICT	147	97.3	2.7
Total	6,819	96.5	3.5

Source: FAFEN, (2012).

Figure 2. Situation in Asia & World - % Increase



Source: World Bank, IPU (2016).

The statistical figures from Pakistan clearly show a declining trend both at the lower bottom and at the national level. Whereas, at the regional and global

level the same trend is reported progressing at a constant rate, i.e., 2% at the world level and 1.4% at the Asian level. The statistical figures from independent sources [WB (2016)] show +10.8 increase over the last two decades (1995-2015) at the global level and +5.3 in Asia. There is non-erupted progress over the years from 1995-2015, unlike in Pakistan.

An analysis of the trend with neighboring countries in South-Asia, at the eve of 70 years of independence, gives both encouraging and discouraging results. Comparative analysis from the statistical facts shows that although the percentage of participation of the Pakistani women is comparatively better 20.6% (Pakistan) to 12% (India), 5.8% in Sri Lanka, and 20% in Bangladesh, yet, in the case of India, the trend remains +3.2% in India, whereas -0.5% in Pakistan from 2000-16. This remains a disappointing fact as both the rival countries commenced their new journey together in 1947. However, in the upper house, Pakistan leads India with 18.3% to 11.1% [IPU (2016)]. Moreover, Pakistan remains far behind from Nepal in NA and from Nepal and Afghanistan both in the lower house and upper houses.

Table 6. Comparison of Women Parliamentarians in South-Asia

Country	Lower House (NA)		Upper House (Senate)	
	Seats	% W	Seats	% W
Pakistan	340	20.6	104	18.3
India	543	12.0	244	11.1
Sri Lanka	255	5.8	na	Na
Bangladesh	350	20.0	Na	Na
Nepal	595	29.6	Na	Na
Afghanistan	249	29.7	68	26.5

Source: World Bank, IPU (2016).

The basic root cause of the negligible participation of women is a societal factor i.e., social taboos and cultural hindrances backed by often wrong interpretation of religion. This paper (third objective) aims to highlight and interlink all those social hindrances that contribute to non-attainment of the desired female political participation at both national and local/regional level.

5.1 Social Factors as Societal Hazards

Referring to Kishwar Naheed (1987: 77);

“With chains of matrimony and modesty, you can shackle my feet, the fear will still haunt you that crippled, unable to walk, and I shall continue to think”

The Constitution of Pakistan (1973) supports women, as it has imposed no barriers on female's political participation but their participation at local, provincial, and national levels remain significantly low. This is mostly due to the socio-cultural barriers prevalent in society [Bano (2009)]. Hence, the limitations of participation of women can be divided into several categories, ranging from socio-cultural to economic and beyond [Shvedova (2007)]. It is further believed to be emotionally sensitive, people think it is hard for women to be decisive and contribute positively to the harsh world of politics [Shvedova (2007)]. The first one being politically reflecting sexist models of politics, where women lack party support and cooperation with women's organization and electoral system. The second limitation can be termed as ideological, the role of women in politics, regarded as unacceptable as they lack confidence in women's political achievements. Hence, to meet the last study objective, it remains necessary to analyze social factors and stereotypical mindsets that hamper a women's political free will. There exist various other social norms that keep women from participating in the political sphere in Pakistan. Practices and customs, at their first instance, are extremely against the political participation of women [Naz, *et al.* (2012)].

All in all, it is the ideological and socio-cultural factors (also religious perception) that are mostly acting as barriers in the case of women's participation in Pakistan even after 70 years of independence. These factors not only limit women from contesting elections but also make it hard for them to vote. Social discrimination is coupled with women harassment, discrimination, and relegation of projects to men. The social system (also the legal system) supports this unfair treatment, so women cannot compete within the system [Jabeen and Jadoon (2008)].

Social inequality hinders women from taking an active part in politics, both regional and national. It is a commonly held belief among voters that politics is a field for men as they are better at demonstrating the power and dominating while women allegedly lack the strength to make an impact. So, they believe that women lack the strength to deal with these men and if the situation arises where things get physical and out of hands, in that case, women are bound to fail. These are the mindsets incorporated by patriarchy in our society that prefer women to be the weaker sex and make them believe that they will fail in the political field [Latif, *et al.* (2015)]. There are certain laws that are discriminatory in nature and deny women their basic rights, while the ones benefitting them are ignored due to cultural and religious beliefs. In some parts of interior Balochistan and KP, women are not allowed to go out and vote.

There have been instances in the past where not a single vote was cast by women in some areas of (ex-FATA) tribal districts and Balochistan province [APISF (2001)].

Male Chauvinism

Pakistani women need the permission of the father, brother and/or husband to contest elections and without which they cannot make any move. It is this reliance upon men that acts as a hurdle in their decision making the process as they are not allowed to have opinions of their own. Hence, males' consent is a prerequisite if women in Pakistan want to have a career in politics. As living in the male-dominated society and relying on their source of income does not let women form their own opinions which further hampers their progress. As a result, people generally do not want to invest in a female candidate, because they believe that their chances of success are not broad and so they are not willing to take such risks. This is another setback faced by women in politics [Philips (1995)].

The ideology of gender-specific roles is another obstacle because defined gender roles are used as tools to keep women in the private arena. Though secular democracies in Europe have created some room for women in politics, the overall scenario is not very supportive for female involvement as the male-dominated political party culture in Pakistan keeps women's issues blurred and keeps male perspective as the main part of all the political agendas. This system ensures women not to be elected on any key positions within the political parties or on any position of power in the legislature. Also, the timings of the parliamentary committee's meetings and councils are mostly in odd timings, mostly in a clash with domestic responsibilities of a female politician as mother and wife [MHDC (2000)].

Thus, women have to work harder than the rest. It is difficult for them to get recognition and acceptance as the general public is seldom willing to give them a chance. The stereotypes about women relating to their qualities and capabilities further divert the public from voting for them. Female candidates mostly face a threatening environment from the male participants and many tend to drop out of the race out of fear [McCarthy and Sultana (2004)]. In this male dominant society, the concept of reserved seats is considered by many as prescribing an inferior status to women as compared to men, who are elected on open seats. These very women, who join on reserved seats, are also viewed as proxy representations and once elected they hand over the decision making power to their male counterparts [Reyes (2001)]. So, in the male-dominated society and in both ancient and modern-day civilizations women are not duly considered. Therefore, they are excluded from all kinds of decision making

[Bathla (1998)]. Resultantly, when women participate in politics, they only play a supportive and silent backbencher role inside as well as outside of the legislative bodies.

Religion as the backing of a social problem

The act of excluding women from the political arena, only due to the fact that they are women, is no less than tribalism based on gender. The Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) stated: "*He is not of us who proclaims the cause of tribal partisanship...*" [Asad (1980)]. The religious factor (Islam) is clear about the role and status of Muslim women. However, social and educational backwardness is the hurdles. Unfriendly interpretations of the Sharia law by some self-seeking scholars that have curtailed rights of the women. All types of venture outside her home, including any political activity, which is beyond the permission of husband or father, is strictly forbidden. So, religious interpretations by a few scholars in order to fulfill their own personal objectives also act as a barrier in female political participation [Latif, *et al.* (2015)]. Women are mostly discouraged on the basis of religion, claiming by some individuals in the society that religion discourages the public roles of women, but that is not always true. It varies from one religion to another and depends on the understanding of an individual member of society. Social differences make women dependent on male members of the society for taking effective decisions, including financial decisions, to enter into politics and to contest elections. It is accompanied by an overall environment of politics in Pakistan, which is not female-friendly. Women have to struggle and face social discrimination just to get a party ticket [Tahri (2003)]. Religion has been used as a major deterrent in the political participation of women by some religious leaders. They believe that women are not allowed to deal openly with the opposite gender [Bari, (2005)]. All such realities are considered as the main barriers in the ways of political participation of women, as they tend to block laws aiming to protect women rights and further hinder the role of women in the public sphere.

6. CONCLUSION

"No nation can rise to the height of glory unless women are side by side with you"

(Muhammad Ali Jinnah, 1944)

The active role of women in the national and regional politics remains a nightmare since the early days of Pakistani politics. Although the trend shows a slight improvement in the democratic government up to 16% until 1999 and 33% in 2002 in the provincial assemblies and national assembly (lower house), respectively. The study shows a sudden increase and decreases in the female participation in the national parliament from 2002 till 2008 with an average of 22.4%; however, it remained disappointing with the ending figure of 20.6% from 2013-16.

The situation in the Senate (upper-house) remains somewhat encouraging—29% female representation and without provincial discrimination. The situation remains worse in the UC, Tehsil and District assemblies, where not all of the (reserved) seats are occupied by women. The situation remains, even more, worse in tribal districts. Pakistan is even failing to meet +10.8 rate at the global level and +5.3 rate in Asia. Besides, it cannot compete with states from regions regional powers, i.e., Nepal with 29.6% in the lower-house and Afghanistan 29.7% and 26.5% in lower and upper houses, respectively.

Major obstacles found that hamper female participation in the political arena are determined socially in the male dominant society, which also leads to the economic disempowerment and discrimination of women. It is coupled with the wrong patriarchal interpretation of religious laws and regulations. These factors put the political agenda of political parties on the mercy of only the men within the society. These mindsets have further led to people forming gender stereotypes against women, and whenever women try to challenge these stereotypes they are shunned by society as being morally wrong. Social taboos encourage only male members of the society to participate actively in the legislative and regulatory reforms process. Also, the social taboos encourage men to amend Political Parties Order 2002 of Pakistan that has further thwarted the steps whether to have a mechanism for an active political appearance of women in the public. The dominance of men in the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) furthermore discourages an increase of quota for women, as informally they are not taken into the forefront. Male dominance in ECP further discourages any code of conduct for the political parties regarding women's equal participation as candidates and voters.

REFERENCES

- Akhlaq A., A. H. Anwar. (2017) Femininity and Women Political Participation in Pakistan. *The Pakistan Journal of Social Issues*. Vol. VIII, 73-84.

- Alexander, D., & Andersen, K. (1993) "Gender as a Factor in the Attributions of Leadership Traits." *Political Research Quarterly* 46: 527-545.
- Annual Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and Reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General (2009)* the Palestine Yearbook of International Law Online, 15:1, 265-268.
- APISF. (2001). *Citizens' Report of the Citizens' Campaign for Women's Representation in Local Government in Pakistan 2000-2001*. Aurat Publication and Information Services Foundation. Retrieved on 4 January 2017, from <https://www.af.org.pk/Citizens%20Reports/Citizen%20%20Report/ccwr-2000-2001.pdf>.
- Bano, S. (2009) Women in Parliament in Pakistan: Problems and Potential Solutions. *Women's Studies Journal*, 23:1, 19.
- Bari, F. (2005) Women's Political Participation: Issues and Challenges. *In United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women Expert Group Meeting: Enhancing Participation of Women in Development through an Enabling Environment for Achieving Gender Equality and the Advancement of Women*. Bangkok.
- Bathla, S. (1998) Women, Democracy and the Media: Cultural and Political Representations in the Indian Press. Sage, New Delhi.
- Bauer, J. (2015) Women and the 2005 Election in Liberia. *Journal of Modern African Studies*; 47:193-211.
- Bhattacharya S. (2014) Status of Women in Pakistan. *J.R.S.P.*, Vol. 51:1, 179-211.
- Bhoite, A. (1986). Women and Democracy in India, Kerala Sociologist, Vol. XVI
- Bowles, H. R., L. Babcock, and L. Lai (2007). Social Incentives for Gender Differences in the Propensity to Initiate Negotiations: Sometimes it does hurt to Ask. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 103:1, 84-103.
- Broveman, I.K., R. Susan, M. Donald (1972) Sex-Role Stereotypes: A Current Appraisal. *Journal of Social Issues*, 28:2, 59-78.
- Bullough, A., K. G. Kroeck, W. Newburry, S. K. Kundu, & L. B. Lowe (2012). Women's Political Leadership Participation around the World: An Institutional Analysis. *The Leadership Quarterly* 23:3, 398-411.
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (1979). Retrieved on 4 January 2017, from <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/>

- Country Meters (2017) World Population Statistics, Country Meters. Retrieved from: <https://countrymeters.info/>
- Eagly, A.H., M.G. Makhijani, B.G. Klonsky (1992) Gender and the Evaluation of Leaders: A Meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 111:1, 3-22.
- FAFEN (2012) *Baseline Survey for Strengthening Women Parliamentarians in Pakistan for Effective Government*. Final Report. Retrieved on 4 January 2017, from <https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/WIll-Baseline.pdf>.
- Geisler, G. (1995) Troubled Sisterhood: Women and Politics in Southern Africa: Case Studies from Zambia, Zimbabwe and Botswana. *African Affairs*, 94:377, 545-578.
- Geyser, G. (1995) "Troubled Sisterhood: Women and Politics in Southern Africa." *African Affairs* 94, 377: 545-578.
- Gleason, S. (2001) Female Political Participation and Health in India. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 573:1, 105-126.
- GoP (1973) Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Nadeem Law Book House.
- Ibrahim, F. (2005) Honor Killings under the Rule of Law in Pakistan. Master of Laws Thesis, Montreal: McGill University
- Indian Council of Social Science Research. (1975) *Status of Women in India: a Synopsis of the Report of the National Committee on the Status of Women*, New Delhi: Indian Council of Social Science Research, 1971-74.
- Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU) (2010) PARLINE Database on National Parliament. Retrieved from: (<http://www.ipu.org/parline-2/parlinesearch.asp>).
- Ishtiaque, A. (2013) 'Plight of Muslim Women', The Sunday Times (retrieved from: (<http://www.sundaytimes.lk/980322/plus8.html>))
- Jabeen, N. and M.Z.I. Jadoon (2009) Gender and Local Governance in Pakistan: Representation vs. Participation. *International NGO Journal*, 4:5, 264-276.
- Kazmi, S. W. (2005) "Role of Education in Globalization: A Case for Pakistan", *SAARC Journal of Human Resource Development*, 90-107.
- Khan, A. (2017) Barriers to the Political Empowerment of Women in Dir Lower. *Discussion Draft*. Malakand, Kyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.
- Khanna, M. (2009) Political Participation of Women in India. *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, 55-64.

- Koch, J. (2000) "Do Citizens Apply Gender Stereotypes to Infer Candidates' Ideological Orientations?" *Journal of Politics*, 62, 414-29.
- Kumar, R. (1997) *The History of Doing: An Illustrated Account of Movements for Women's Rights and Feminism in India 1800-1990*. Zubaan Publishing, NewDehli.
- Latif, A., A.Usman, J. R. Kataria, and M. Abdullah (2015) Female Political Participation in South Asia: A Case Study of Pakistan. *South Asian Studies*, 30:2, 415-443.
- Lucas, J. W. (2003) Status Processes and the Institutionalization of Women as Leaders. *American Sociological Review*, 68:3, 464-480.
- McCarthy F. and M. Sultana (2004) Gender and Governance Issues in Local Government: Regional Report of Technical Assistance in Bangladesh, Nepal, and Pakistan. Manila: *Asian Development Bank*.
- McLaughlin, B. P. (2017) Varieties of Supervenience. *In Supervenience*. Routledge, 145-188.
- MHDC. (2000) Gender and Governance, The Gender Question, Gender and Governance, Mahbub ul Haq Development Centre, Islamabad, Pakistan
- Miranda, R. (2005) Equal Participation of Women and Men in Decision-making Processes: With Particular Emphasis on Political Participation and Leadership.
- Muhammad Asad. (1980) *The Principles of State and Government in Islam*, Dar Al-Andalus. (Cited by Abu Dawudin in; *Women's Participation in Politics*. (Retrieved from http://www.crescentlife.com/thisthat/feminist%20muslims/women_and_politics.htm).
- Mumtaz, K., and E. Shaheed (1987). *Kishwar Naheed, Poetry*, Cited in *Women in Pakistan: Two Steps Forward, One Step Back?* London: Zed.
- Murthi, M., A.C. Guio, and J. Dreze (1995) Mortality, Fertility, and Gender Bias in India: A District-level Analysis. *Population and Development Review*, 745-782.
- National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) (2010) *Study on Local Bodies System and its Impact on Women*. Pakistan: NCSW.
- Naz, R. (2001) *Report on the State of Women in Urban Local Government*. Pakistan: Aurat Foundation.
- Naz, A., W. Khan, U. Daraz, H.U.R. Chaudhry and M. Hussain (2011) *The Ignominy of Evenness: An Exploratory Study of Pakhtun Social Organization in Gendered Occupational Decision-Making Among*

- Pakhtuns of Malakand, KPK Pakistan. *International Journal of Business and Social Science*, 2:24, 142-158,
- PACI. (2012) 17th PACI Task Force Meeting Executive Summary. (Retrieved on 4 January 2017, <http://reports.weforum.org/global-competitiveness-report-2012-2013/>).
- Phillips, A. (1995) "Must Feminism Give Up on Liberal Democracy?" *Political Studies*, 40, 62-82.
- Rai, M.S. (2000) *International Perspective on Gender and Governance*, Macmillan Press, Great Britain.
- Reyes, S. (2002) 'Quotas for Women for Legislative Seats at the Local Level in Pakistan', International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), Stockholm, Sweden.
- Rathnayake, P. (2017) *Women's Political Representation in Sri Lanka: Leading towards Prosperity or Peril*. University for Peace Publication. San Jose, Costa Rica.
- Rosenbluth, F, J. Kalla and D. Teele (2015) "The Female Political Career." Report for Women in Parliaments. *Dawn News*, Islamabad. https://www.womeninparliaments.org/wpcontent/uploads/2015/01/Final_13012015_The-Female-PoliticalCareer.pdf.
- Sanbonmatsu, K. (2002) "Gender Stereotypes and Vote Choice." *American Journal of Political Science*, 46:1, 20-34.
- Shames, S. (2015) *Barriers and Solutions to Increasing Women's Political Power*. Cambridge: Scholars Strategy Network and the Rockefeller and Wyss Foundations.
- Shami, A.A. (2009) Political Empowerment of Women in Pakistan. *Pakistan Vision*, 10:1, 141-150
- Shukla, S. and S. Shukla (1996) Political Participation of Muslim Women. *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, 57(1/4), 1-13.
- Shvedova, N. (2007) "Obstacles to Women's Participation in Parliament". In *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers*, *Handbook by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance*, IDEA.
- Sumbadze, N. (2008) Sida, UNDP, Gender and Society: *Georgia*.
- Sundstro, A., P. Paxton, Y.T. Wang and S.I. Lindberg (2017) Women's Political Empowerment: A New Global Index, 1900-2012. *World Development*, 94:1, 321-335.
- Tahri, R. (2003). *Women's Political Participation: The Case of Morocco; Association Démocratique des femmes du Maroc*.
- Thanikodi, A., and M. Sugirtha (2007) Status of Women in Politics. *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, 68:3, 589-606.

- Umer, S. (2016) Socio-Cultural Obstacles to Women's Participation in Politics, *International Journal of Business and Social Sciences*, 7:10, 145-152.
- UN. (2015) *Women 2015-2016: Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights*, ID: 7688.
- UNDP. (2012) *Human Development Reports*. United Nation Development Program, Washington.
- Waylen, G. (1994) "Women and Democratization: Conceptualizing Gender Relations in Transition Politics." *World Politics* 46 (April): 327-354.
- Women, U.N. (1995) Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. In fourth World Conference on Women (Vol. 15). Beijing, China.
- Women U.N. and OHCHR (2013) *Realizing Women's Rights to Land and Other Productive Resources*. United Nations, New York and Geneva.
- WB (2016) Proportion of Seats held by Women in National Parliaments (%). Report by Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SG.GEN.PARL.ZS>.
- World Classification. (2017) Women in Parliaments. Retrieved on 4 January 2017, from <http://www.ipu.org/WMN-e/classif.htm>.
- Zakar, M.Z. (2014) *Strengthening Women's Political Participation and Leadership for Effective Democratic Governance in Pakistan: A Baseline Research Study*. Islamabad, Pakistan: Search for Common Ground Pakistan.