

Assessing the Barriers: An Investigation into Low Participation of Women in Politics and Voting Behaviour in District Chitral, Pakistan

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Abstract: *The current study investigates the barriers of the low participation of women in politics and the voting behaviour of women in District Chitral, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. The data were collected in District Lower Chitral from February 2019 to March 2019. A total of 30 sample sizes were chosen from the research area. Moreover, a simple random sampling technique was used to select the sample size. Furthermore, the researcher developed a self-administered tool for the collection of data. The data were analysed and presented in descriptive statistics. The result shows that most of the respondents believed that she cast their votes on their husband's priority. The study also shows that 40% of females are getting more interest in politics but due to their values and lack of education, they are unable to participate in politics actively. Furthermore, the majority of the respondents agreed on the view that a female can also utilise their abilities and capabilities and demonstrate the country if she is allowed to represent herself. The study also found that the problems which are faced by females while taking part in politics, they should not be given equal status and there is a big gap between men and women and also the reason that political parties are not giving opportunity to common people. The study recommends that the government should be aware the female about their political rights and empower women to overcome the obstacles which prevent them from practical politics.*

Introduction

Globally the female political participation is very low. A report indicates that average female parliamentary representation stood at 19.8 percent. In 2011 up from 19 percent in 2010. This 0.8 percent point increase has followed similar pattern over the past decade and underscore the minimal progress an attempt to reach gender parity in parliamentary representation across the globe this century (INO, 2012). Providing equal chances for both genders was first declared by UN charter (1945) and subsequently the UN declaration of human rights and Millennium development goals (UN, 1998).

Women participation is defined as the provision of equal opportunity to women to take part in the leadership and decision making. "Freedom can't be achieved unless the women have been emancipated from all form of oppression. All of us take this on broad that the objectives of reconstruction and development programme will not have been realized unless we see visible practical terms that the condition of women in our country has radically changed for better and that they have been empowered to intervene in all aspect of life equal with any other member of the society" (Nelson Mandela, 1994). Females are the crucial part of the society and they constitute half of the total population. Freedom and equality cannot be fulfilled unless both the gender has given equal chances to every sphere of life (Mostafizur & Fardaus, 2006).

Mustafizur (2006) identified the factor which is important for the women participation in local government of Bangladesh .He argued that it is their participation and reserves seats at the lowest level of the election and government process called the union perished. When on these seats, with time hey move up the chain and can actively take part in political decision making of the country .Reforms in the local government act paved the ways for their contribution in political arena .Their participation in this grass root level was very much important for empowering them. A country will be developed when resources including the human resources are fully utilized. The human resources in case of female population were underutilized that's one of the reasons of rural high level of poverty and illiteracy. But the main issue is, mere presence of women in union perished does not guarantee their interest will be served .they should be given proper attention in decision making process of the government.

Marie (2003) considered formal education as the pre-requisite for the political participation of women. There are both direct and indirect impacts of formal education on the political environment. Know how about things and events, communication and persuasion power are important for debates and politics. Hence education is most important factor for women participation in politics. Further it has been found out that the countries having high female literacy rate have high level of female political participation like USA and vise versa for Rwanda etc. it has also been found that only education is not the dominant factor for women participation in politics others factors which show importance are culture and economic, while education also holds a prominent place in this stage.

Pamela and Sheri (2003) focused on the ideology is the key in women participation in politics. Though there are other factors including the social and political structure but ideology holds the important position in this regard. Female education level has increased in recent years but their participation rate in politics has not increased at that pace. In one findings it is shown that in the united states of America women contributed 46 percent of the paid labour force but their representation in the senate is 24 percent while in house of representatives they hold only 13 percent .forty six countries were taken as sample and it was found out that the ideological beliefs remained at the top which were hurdles toward women participation in politics .for achieving a major share in the politics ,women should focus on getting education and experience. There should be a quotas for the women in every political party without fulfilling those criteria the political party should not be allowed to participate in the electoral process. Women should come up with the courage to change the prevailing political structure and their respective societal behavior.

Prina (1999) showed the struggle women have made and had to make for recognition of their privileges and strengths. With great efforts and consideration they transformed their efforts into ideology and articulated into government domains. The women's social dealings have helped them become politically active and achieve their civic rights. Women's right cannot be separated from other struggles of human rights may they be personal equality or liberty. Democracy is the strongest force behind their struggle to get their rights.

Thomas (1991) found that states where women are in greater number representing the citizens is more active in passing bills which are related to women and children than their counterparts in other states where their representation is low. Their greater number in their strength, through which they easily solve the issues related to women and children. Further it is found that women have all the capacities to make change if they are supported by their colleagues. Due to their presence in the legislative council the whole legislative policy becomes favorable to them.

Adaku (2015) pointed out the factors that could lead to bridge the gender inequality gap between democrats and the republicans in the United States of America. The study found that in an election competition women are as good as men in contesting and wining the seats. The reason behind their less number of representation in the parliament is due their under recruitment. A qualitative analysis is based on the data collected through questionnaires and interviews with incumbent candidates, recruiters and future candidates. In current times the political parties have

been dependent on women for a number of reasons like political convenience etc. one of the reasons to recruit women in getting help for further recruitment of women.

Aksel and Daniel (2015) used 29 European nations with 272 regions in total for the finding of the participation of women in their parliament and their local arena. The study found out that regions with a higher level of urbanization have greater female representations. Further, the study finds that there is a trickle-down effect in the participation of women in politics, as the effect of higher participation at the national level helps women to enter into local political platforms. Hence, the representation of women at the local level is not an independent variable; it has a positive relationship with their representation at the national level.

Female political participation is a challenge for many developing countries, including Pakistan. The contribution of females in social and economic aspects is significant, but they remain absent in politics, which is related to decision-making and power. In Pakistani society, the abilities and capabilities of females are acknowledged or recognized less; this situation needs female empowerment and enabling them to participate actively in politics. Society also believes the wrong idea that women are less capable in decision-making as compared to men. Where a development and efficient government is difficult without the active participation of women in the process of political structure, the constitution of 1973 under the chapter of fundamental rights deals about women's equality. Article 34 and 35 ensure full participation of females in all national life. The success of democracy is hidden in the active involvement of people in political affairs of the state. Thus, being a part of the society, it is necessary to run the government smoothly and to develop the society; the female should actively participate in governance and decision-making processes, especially in the modern democratic age (Paina, 1999).

Pakistan is a democratic and underdeveloped state, yet the female has been given the opportunity to participate in politics and to represent herself and work for the betterment of the state since its creation. The political system of Pakistan is a composition of parliamentary and presidential forms of government. Initially, there was no office of president, and all powers were vested in the Governor General. When Governor General Iskandar Mirza came into power, he established the office of president. Fatima Jinnah was the first female personality who took part in the first presidential election of the general election of 1970, with the opposition of Field Marshal Ayub Khan. From 1947 to 1956, women acquired 3 percent of the total seats. After the General Zia-ul-Haq regime, political changes occurred in the political system. In 1988, Benazir became the first female prime minister and was elected female head of the Muslim country. She introduced a separate ministry for women under the name Ministry of Women Development. In 1988, 3% of the quota was assigned for females in the legislative assembly. The law must be gender-blind. Democracy can't work if women are subjugated, uneducated, and unable to be independent" (Shaheed Benazir in reconciliation Islam, democracy, and the west). From 1999 to 2008, during the period of General Pervez Musharraf, the Majlis Shora passed a women protection bill. The quota assigned for women at local government levels was 33%. In 2008, women acquired 70% out of 342 seats and 17% out of 100, and Dr. Fahmida Mirza became the national speaker of the national assembly (Pamela & Sheri, 2003).

In the 2013 general election, only 36 percent of women candidates were awarded party tickets for 272 general national assembly seats. Moreover, women's representation in the lower and upper houses of the Pakistan parliament stands at 20.7 percent and 16.3 percent of the total female population, respectively, indicating discrimination between men and women. Therefore, every one, whether they are male or female, shall have cast their votes as a citizen of Pakistan (Renuka, 2018).

Chitral, covering 21st percent of the area of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and 2nd most populous district of KPK, due to its mountainous region and the influence of cultural values, females are facing many challenges in all aspects of life, rather they are political, social, or economic. Each particular society tries to maintain and encourage its cultural norms and customs, similarly in Chitral, the people are closely attached to their norms and cultural values, and they push females apart from social activities. Women's place is still within the four walls, and political life is only for men; therefore, females are discouraged from public and political life. There are certain reasons due to which females are part from political life (Saira, 2009).

Objectives of the study

This study was carried out with the following objectives;

- To assess the voting behaviour of women in Chitral;
- To analyse the causes of low or no participation of women in politics;
- To study the level of interest of women in politics in Chitral

Methodology

The present study is a cross-sectional and quantitative research. The data were collected from District Lower Chitral in February 2019 to March 2019. A total of 30 sample sizes were chosen from one union council (UC-1) of Lower Chitral. Moreover, a simple random sampling technique was used for selection of sample size. Furthermore, the researcher developed a self-administered tool for the collection of data with the help of supervisor and field experts in order to ensure the reliability. After the collection of the data it was coded and entered to excel. Then it was analysed and presented it in frequency, percentages and bar charts. The researcher ensured that each participant was relaxed and was the free will to provide information. The researcher also explained in detail to each participant before interaction with them regarding the question and the purpose of the study and asked for their consent.

Results

Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

The table 4.1 shows demographic characteristics of the respondents. The study shows that 10 (33.3%) of the respondents were single while 20 (66.3%) of them were married. The table also shows that the majority of the respondents (60%) belong to the age group of (18-25 years), (16%) belongs to (26-32 years), 10% belongs to (41-45 years) and 4% belongs to the age group of (33-40 years). The table shows that the education level of respondents among which 50% were above graduate 20% were matric level, and 16% attain primary education while the remaining 13% were illiterate.

Table 4.1: Demographic characteristics of the respondents (N=30)

	N	%
Marital Status		
Single	10	33.3
Married	20	66.6
Age (in years)		
18 - 25	18	60
26 - 32	05	16
41 - 45	04	13
33 -40	03	05
Education level		
Graduate	15	50
Matric	06	20
Primary	05	16
Illiterate	04	13

Voting Behaviour of Women

The table 4.2 shows the voting behaviour of women in district Chitral. The question was asked that on which basis you cast your vote. 36% of females cast their votes on the basis of their husband priority, 23% of women have cast their vote on the bases self-priority, 20% cast vote on the basis of parent's priority and 20% on clan priority respectively.

Table 4.2: Voting behaviour of women

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Husband priority	11	36
Self-priority	07	23
Parents priority	06	20
Clans	06	20
Total	30	100

Level of Interest in Politics of Females

The study show that the 40% of females have more interest in politics, 20% of females have interest in politics to some extent, 13% of women have less interest and 26 % shown no interest in politics.

Table 4.3: Level of Interest in Politics of Females

Level of interest in Politics	Frequency	Percentage
More	12	40
Less	04	13
To some extent	06	20
No interest	08	26
Total	30	100

Causes of Less Participation of Women in Politics

The table 4.4 shows that the different cause of female under participating in politics almost 43% of females argue that religious factor is the main cause, 26 % have argued that culture values are the reasons, 16 % of females family constraints and 13 % were of the view that less resources are the reason of female under participation in politics.

Table 4.4: Causes of Less Participation of Women in Politics

Causes	Frequency	Percentage
Family constraints	05	16
Less resources	04	13
Cultural values	08	26
Religious factor	13	43
Total	30	100

Perception of Women's Towards Election

The table illustrate that 90% of women's were strongly agree with the idea that election is not only man's right while 10% of women's were disagree.

Table 4.5: Perception of Women's Towards Election

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Disagree	27	90
Agree	3	10
Total	30	100

Participation of Women's in Politics

The below table shows that 83% of women reported that they take participation in politics in previous election, while 16 % stated that there was no female participation in previous election from their community.

Table 4.6: Participation of Women's in Politics

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	25	83
No	05	16
Total	30	100

Participation of Women in Political Campaign

The table 4.7 shows the participation of women in political campaign in Chitral. Political campaign was varied as 40% of women's involves in political campaign more times, 23% of women's join the campaigned some times, 26% of women too much less and 10% of women are not interested to involve in any type of political campaign.

Table 4.7: Participation of Women in Political Campaign

Response	Frequency	Percentage
More	07	23
Some time	12	40
Less	08	26
Nil	03	10
Total	30	100

Intentions of Women's After Getting Position in Politics

The below table shows the Perception of Women's after getting position in politics. 43% of respondents argue that they will work hard for the enhancement of education system, 33% of

women's reported that they will focus on the reduction in unemployment, 23% were on the elimination of poverty.

Intentions of Women's After Getting Position in Politics

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Enhancement in Education	13	43
Reduction in unemployment	9	30
Elimination of Poverty	8	26
Total	30	100

Perception of Women's about the form of Government

The table indicates that 60% of women in Chitral like democratic form of government and remaining 40% of respondent like dictatorship.

Table 4.9: Perception of Women's about the form of Government

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Democracy	18	60
Dictatorship	12	40
Total	30	100

Perception of Women's working with Political Workers

Table 4.10 illustrates the perception of women's working with political workers. Of 100% of the respondents 73% of women's argue that women should work with the political workers while 26% of females don't want to work with political workers.

Table 4.10: Perception of Women's working with Political Workers

Perception	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	22	73
Disagree	8	26
Total	30	100

Problems faced by Women while Involving in Politics

The below table shows that 43% of females reported that females faced problems due to Islam as Islam does not allow women to empower, 30% says due to less resources for females, 26% says that political parties do not gave chance to the common people.

Table 4.11: Problems faced by Women while Involving in Politics

Factors	Frequency	Percentage
Religion	13	43
Financial constraint	9	30
Less Chances in politics	8	26
Total	30	100

Perception of Women's towards Women's Empowerment

The results shows that 43% of females take a step to arrange political programs and awareness, 36% argue that they female should include in decision making 20% while 20% are try to manage females' wings.

Table 4.12: Perception of Women's towards Women's Empowerment

Perception	Frequency	Percentage
To manage female wings	6	20
Female should include in decision making	11	36
Political program and awareness	13	43
Total	30	100

Conclusion

This research study was conducted in the one UC of District Chitral (UC 1). The main objective of this study was to find out the major causes of female low participation in politics in district Chitral. In the study area majority of the respondents were of the view of the she cast their votes on their husband priority. The study also shows that 40% of females are getting more interest in politics but due to their values and lack of education they are unable to participate in politics actively. The study also found out that 43% of women of Chitral consider that religious factor are the main reason on the basis of which females are bounded within four walls and they are not giving opportunity to go

outside from home for their necessities. In the study area majority of the respondents are agree on the view that a female can also utilized their abilities and capabilities and demonstrate the country if she has given opportunity to represent herself and 73% of women are argue that a female can also with political parties as a political worker. The study found that the problems which are faced to females while getting take part in politics, she should not be given equal status and there is a big gap between man and women and also the reason that political parties are not giving opportunity to common people And the political system of a country revolve within a few hands.

Recommendations

- As it is found that Females are less aware about their political rights so the government should take initiative to empower women to overcome the obstacles which prevent them from practical politics.
- The Non- government organization which is working in Chitral should include this alarming issue into their agenda, and arrange awareness programme for female to create awareness among them about the importance of their political rights.
- Under the constitution women have the right of political, social and economic equality the local government should implement the law.
- Illiteracy, Social taboos and religious factors are found the main causes low participation of women in politics, so the government should increase the literacy rate for females, so that they become aware about their political rights.
- It is also found that political parties are not encouraging their female political workers by not giving them leading role and decision making power, So all the political parties should encourage them by giving them party tickets and decision making power.

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