

Gender Disparity & Women's Political Empowerment In Pakistan: Opportunities, Challenges & Solutions

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Abstract:

Women empowerment and Gender equality are among the most widely known concerns at regional, national and international forums. Many countries give this matter priority while formulating their public policies. This study discourses the political perspective of gender equality that is rampant in Pakistan. Pakistan is a patriarchal society. Women here face societal pressure, a discourteous atmosphere, neglect in the decision-making process, etc. Political gender equality is one of the main concerns of a national policy for the development of women. Women in Pakistan live by old traditions and customs that affect their political participation. Musharraf's government and their successors have taken important steps to give them a voice and the right to decision-making and legislation. This paper sections on socio-political issues in empowering women in politics. It analyzes the ideologies of political parties that act towards gender inequality. The study concludes that gender inequality in the workplace, social status and lack of political will are the main culprits of political inequality and gives solutions to these challenges.

Keywords: empowerment, political participation, social pressure, patriarchal society, gender disparity, policies

Introduction:

The word women empowerment refers to strengthening women in society so they can advocate for their rights and fight against gender-based discrimination towards them. Likewise, women's political empowerment means empowering and educating women to participate in politics effectively and eradicate discrimination against women that hampers their influence and role in national policy and decision-making. Gender discrimination or unequal treatment of opportunities given to women is the opposite of this phenomenon.

Gender is a broader word that covers both men and women under its umbrella. Both individuals are born equal, but social structure separates them on a different basis. Gender discrimination is the division of wealth, power, and rights unequally between them. It is a practice of society that most females are subject to male domination. In Western and European times, laws were enacted with time to provide adequate security, liberty, and equality for women.

Women in Pakistan face gender disparities in many areas. Pakistan has a very poor gender index and it ranked 154th on the UN Development Programs. It has failed to achieve its development

goals regarding gender equality which has been considered as a dilemma for Pakistan's image as a progressive and moderate country at the international level. In Pakistan, various strategies have been formulated for different periods of women's development. Each government has referred to women's empowerment and gender impartiality as an integral part of its social policy. The formulation of social dogmas for all genders is in line with the global agenda. Each of the policies followed claims to deal separately with the problems of earlier approaches, but the results of all approaches to gender equality in the past times remained unsatisfactory. Pakistan holds three successful democratic elections (2008, 2013, and 2018). At the start of the democratic change, the military regime of General Pervez Musharraf restored the completed constitutional allocation of women's seats reserved for meetings through a series of reforms in 2000-2002.

Major political parties have been advocating women's empowerment in the political dimension of society for decades. Pakistan has been dominated by a few political parties since its independence. These parties including, PMLN, PPPP and now PTI, have manifested great ideologies in their campaigns regarding the elimination of gender-based discrimination and women's political empowerment. But they have failed to deliver their promises in reality as poor statics women's participation remained constant and no significant steps are taken by them to women's participation in real terms. Moreover, the intra-party mechanism of election is highly conducive to women's empowerment and is held strongly by men. The contrast between the glittery policies of political parties and reality has suppressed the ground of female politicians. They serve just as an element to fulfil the quotas and their participation in policy and decision-making in a real sense due to the ascendancy of men in every institution of politics is seen less than ever.

Apart from constitutional protection, women's entrance into politics is still a hot topic in religious debates, endorsed male politicians in the workplace for their benefit. The participation of women as voters, candidates, and elected officials is strongly posed in many communities. If they are elected by local government or by law enforcement agencies, their power is terminated. All of these experiences greatly reduce their performance as political actors.

The current study seeks to find out how Musharraf's policies and the subsequent government policies address the political magnitude of gender inequality in Pakistan. In this study, it is argued that the governments of Pakistan, over the past decade, have devised policies to bring about gender equality just to achieve their political goals. These policies have therefore been less effective in reducing gender inequality and haven't brought about real change for women in society. The objective of the study is to find motives and ways out of prevailing gender-based political discrimination.

This research is divided into three main sections, the first section contains components of research. The second section holds opportunities or current prevailing conditions of gender-based disparity in Pakistan's political society. It unveils the reality of women's participation to indicate the poor level of women's empowerment and authority and challenges to women's empowerment. It addresses socio-political threats and challenges to women adhering to politics and will give potential solutions to the current challenges to women's empowerment in Pakistan. The third section of this research incorporates a conclusion and future recommendations.

Section I

Research Objectives:

- To readdress the challenges faced by female politicians in the patriarchal political system.
- To analyze the role played by the political parties in the promotion of gender disparities.
- To reinstate that the quota system cannot enhance women's political empowerment.
- To analyze the socio-political environment conduciveness regarding gender equality.

Research Questions:

1. What is the current position of women of Pakistan in the race of gender equality according to political perspective?
2. What are the challenges faced by female politicians in developing countries, like Pakistan, that are dominated by a patriarchal system?
3. What could be the potential solutions to prevailing gender disparity in the field of politics to perform better on the UNDP gender index?

Statement of the Problem:

The majority of Pakistani women are severely hampered by the racist patriarchal practices introduced by the prevalence of extremism. It is factual that the mindset toward the denial of women's basic rights exists in all public institutions. This reality is one of the most important academic and non-academic topics to discuss. Gender inequality and the elimination of women's roles must be an integral part of public policy. This research will highlight the contemporary situation, and issues and highlights the solutions that can make the condition of women's empowerment in politics better.

Significance of the Study:

There is a lot of research on gender-based issues. The social and economic perspective is most widely and often discussed. The purpose and significance of this research is that it enhances and reinforces the issue of gender discrimination even with those who are supposed to protect the public from such dilemmas. Interviews from the Women Parliamentarian Survey WPS further highlights the unseen difficulties faced by women politician due to male dominance in the politics of Pakistan.

This research is useful for students of international relations, political science, Pakistan studies and every other researcher who aims to dig deep into the current scenario and position of women empowerment in politics in Pakistan. It helps interested people to evaluate the current status of women in politics to devise favourable policies in future. It addresses the challenges to women in parliament and draws a picture of the reality behind their representation that creates awareness among women to strive for their rights. Further, it sheds light on false promises by political parties to empower women in this field by stating the real statics of representation they approve for women. Potential solutions to problems are also added in this research.

Literature Review:

- Ghulam Moheyuddin (2005) argues that causes of gender inequality, are linked to particularly complex household decisions. No matter how such decisions are taken, they are influenced by culture, norms, traditions, and institutional setup. These practices and values do not take full advantage of the social benefits of investing in women. Limited opportunities for education and training, poor health and nutrition, and restrictions on access to services undermine women's livelihoods and impede fiscal performance and development. This is distressing because women are the main agent of change, shaping

the well-being of upcoming generations. In Pakistan, as a developing state, the condition is much the same as described. This paper is a detailed study of gender disparity in Pakistan that reflects gender inequality. The author argues that gender issues in Pakistan and the causes of gender inequality lie in its socioeconomic, political and cultural chains. In section I of his research he unfolds these chains of constraints. In section II a brief Pakistani background is introduced. Section III describes parts of serious gender inequality in Pakistan. Section IV examines several gender pointers in Pakistan. Section V discourses current strategies and agendas addressing gender hitches in Pakistan. Section - VI grants a swift nomination and policy recommendations to progress the role of women in Pakistan. And the last section has concluded the research work with the amalgamation of challenges and solutions.

- Farzana and Humaira (2017) argue that public and religious practices have enforced women in Pakistan not to take part in politics. The male-dominated and religiously controlled environment limited women and their active role, they fought for their rights in all walks of life even with problems and obstacles faced by them. Official, functional and physical barriers have downcast women from standing up for their political movements and voicing their visions by creating an atmosphere that protects them. Women in Pakistan after 2002 are more likely to participate due to the additions in seats set at national, provincial and local levels. Previous negligence wrecked the political environment but it is not too late to be amended. The law and the umbrella of the constitution can only safeguard the political rights of women in Pakistan at all levels in all public and private sectors. A main limitation due to misrepresentation by religious parties is the rejection of the nomination of women

as members of the political party is another barrier to the smooth functioning of the political process. For women's empowerment, the government must safeguard women's rights in all domains of life. Economic stability and education are key factors that can fortify and encourage women to protect their rights and face the challenges of a democratic war. Quotas and Election reforms can change the system. Creating awareness through campaigns and capacity-building programs can also help change the status of women.

- Members of the Aura Foundation are the authors of this research handbook. They contend that there have been multiple challenging occasions in Pakistani women's fight for equal rights. Despite the progress accomplished in many areas, many crucial problems from the past are still unsettled, and new difficulties are coming up as a result of social processes in all sectors. It has been urging political parties to develop their manifestos to empower women. They look at the upcoming political phase, especially in light of the significant events that are currently occurring, such as the number of women's rights laws that have been approved but have not yet undergone meaningful implementation, the 18th Amendment to the Constitution, which has limited jurisdiction as a result of the abolishment of local government, violence, fanaticism, religious extremism, and mistreatment of religious and ethnic minorities. Conflicts and environmental concerns are the main causes of aid challenges, while the economic slump has had a significant influence on people's lives and services. The State has also assumed new obligations as a participant in international human rights agreements. The text is based on conference talks that were held through a series of consultative sessions

and involved legislators, members of politics and civil society, as well as academics and technologists from many sectors. To improve outcomes for national development, these sessions were primarily focused on increasing awareness of issues impacting women and girls and figuring out ways and means for political parties to assure the better realization of the rights of all civil society.

- According to Azra and Javaid's analysis, women's political engagement and the development of successful democratic politics are becoming more and more important throughout the world. In Pakistan, women make up 48% of the population, yet they are neglected for national development due to their lack of education, skills, and political clout. With the other half of the people being sidelined, no democratic system can function effectively. As stated by many thinkers, traditional behaviours about women's work have unquestionably been passed down from generation to generation. The consensus is that political activities belong in the "Public Sphere," while women naturally belong in the "Private Sphere" and "Politics" is "uncommon" in their surroundings. In this article, particular problems that have impeded women's advancement toward an equal opportunity to serve as competent public actors will be examined. The concerns of women's participation centre on their representation in parliament or various organizations established by the government. Women have traditionally been denied legal rights and continue to demand rights based on their religion and domestic roles rather than as Pakistani citizens. These government-sponsored initiatives were restricted to urban women, excluding urban activists with a balanced agenda and current leaders of orthodox Muslims. Inappropriate resource allocation in urban or rural areas, in the

context of a section or a challenge to existing infrastructure, might breach their standard and withhold advantages based on a category.

Research Methodology:

This research paper incorporates both qualitative and quantitative data. Hence, a mixed-method approach is used to explain and analyze the topic. This paper used a descriptive style to shed light on the problems, challenges and solutions of women's political empowerment in Pakistan and gender disparity.

The quantitative data is used to quote the number of seats of representation given to women by their political parties, sourced from Dawn News. Further statistics have been extracted from a national assembly of Pakistan's official site to draw a table from independence till the date to show the percentage ratio of women taking part in the decision-making system. In the next part of research that addresses challenges data from the Women Parliamentarian Survey 2018 have been taken to show several women parliamentarians exposed to silencing, verbal, and physical abuse and threats within the toxic environment of parliament. Along with this qualitative data is used to analyze, explain and comprehend the topic of our research which ends with potential solutions to gender inequality, women's political empowerment and an increase in their effective role.

Section II

Struggle for Opportunities for Women's Political Empowerment:

Political Inequality based on Gender:

The terms "women's empowerment in politics" and "political equality" relate to women's independence from voting by their beliefs, participation in political activities, election skills at political protests, and decision-making regarding their course of action, needs, and priorities. The patriarchal, imperial, and religious

structures in Pakistani society limit the political empowerment of women. All of these prevent women from gaining experience, influence, and new political activities. Women are represented in political parties, legislative bodies, and local, provincial, and federal governments. However, due to institutional and cultural constraints, there are still few women working in other professions like economics, education, or health.

Role of Political Parties in Women's Empowerment:

Political parties of Pakistan are more or less a representation of its societal norms. Likewise, they are playing their role in the promotion of the gender gap in the field of politics. They highly endorse women's empowerment to gain popularity and appreciation from international actors but in reality, they play a cruel role in the eradication of opportunities for women directly or indirectly. The manifesto of three major political parties of Pakistan is stated below and the ratio of representation they have to women stated below is a question mark on their manifestos. This shows the hierocracy of these male-dominated parties.

Manifesto of Pakistan Political Parties and Gender Discrimination:

There are three significant political parties. The Pakistan People's Party (PPP). Pakistan Tehreek-e- Insaf (PTI). Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), the importance of minority groups could not be ignored in democracy of the Pakistan. Explaining and judging the roles and responsibilities of all political parties, the manifesto (2013 and 18) helps to comprehend how each can participate in women's equality and greater political participation.

1. PPP-P:

Since its independence, Pakistan has had a fragile political system, which has been subject to unrest and severe conditions in the form of military coups. Although numerous barriers, the

PPP is the only party that, since the Benazir era, has demonstrated significant dedication to women's rights and empowerment. This approach has required numerous initiatives, including the creation of a Women's Bank and a rise in the amount of gender disparity in Zia's cabinet. In ordinary seats, the PPP has many strong female competitors. Their initiatives up until the most recent government programs for the promotion of women the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) and chances for females in key policymaking roles serve as evidence. In Pakistan's 'ICT' during the 1990s, Benazir launched the PPP Human Rights (women) Wing (PHR) as a novel idea with an emphasis on the issues women experience in the country's multicultural society. Ensuring women's rights in law, politics, society, and the workplace is a priority for the PHR.

2. PML-N:

The elimination of gender-based discrimination and the development of the status of women in society are two of the pledges stated by PML-N in its manifestos. The PML-N also wants to enact laws and policies to safeguard women. The party has pledged that it will work to defend such people's equal and inherited rights. Women would be included in the political and economic arenas, the leadership has guaranteed. They are committed to providing more opportunities for women in banking, finance, law, health department, and other related fields. They have committed to hiring women as elementary school teachers. Additionally, they give women's technical and higher education special consideration. They have committed to hiring women as elementary school teachers. Additionally, they give special consideration to women's technical and higher education. Also, they planned to open centres for women's health care. The party's objective also includes the economic empowerment of women through focused, small-scale loans.

3. PTI:

In its electoral statements from 2013 and 2018, PTI adopted a gender policy, pledged to set aside specific financing for women's health care, and underlined to eliminate inequitable policies that impede women's advancement in all spheres. Additional steps for the advancement of women are offered in the PTI Manifesto, with a focus on their political, social, and economic independence. The PTI outlines the goals for utilizing women's programs at the provincial and national levels of government to address women's challenges. The management intends to create a single step in the trade union council to offer women financial and legal support. Such claims appear to be apparent attempts to win over more politicians and financial institutions than required. The absence of effective support for ensuring gender fairness and the empowerment of women in numerous sectors is caused by these manifestos. For gender equality, the PML-N Manifesto lays up specific goals. They seek to expand the number of women serving on important committees and bodies that make policy, but they haven't quite reached their full potential in this area. The PML-N hasn't always been sure whether to repeal legislation that discriminates against women's rights. The PPP continued to be a common party on the issue of commitment and practical action for women's rights and empowerment, but it was unable to come to any successful conclusion.

The manifestos of major political parties, when properly analyzed, reveal that they make sweeping claims regarding women's rights and woman empowerment in written form but are unable to fulfil their promises.

Frail Quota of Women in Political Parties:

According to Article 25 of the Constitution, almost all significant political parties in the country have vowed to guarantee equal rights for

all citizens without discrimination; nevertheless, these promises are mostly platitudes ahead of the general election. According to the rules of the 2017 Electoral Act, which require political parties to give at least 5% of women's seats to ordinary seats at national and provincial assemblies, more women are competing for regular seats than in any prior election. The parties did not support the grant out of any political necessity or to fulfil any relevant international responsibilities, according to a closer examination of the list of candidates each political party has so far announced for the 2018 elections. All three major political parties have distributed as few tickets to women as permitted by law, according to the minimal 5 per cent legal minimum. The PPP has nominated a total of 176 nominees for the National Assembly elections, 12 (6.8%) of them are women, according to the list of candidates revealed thus far by the parties. 14 of the 244 tickets given by PTI (5.7%) were for women, and five (4%) of the 125 persons declared by PML-N were female. The three parties' lists of candidates for the provincial elections exhibit comparable trends. For instance, the PTI had never bothered to abide by the laws and regulations of Baluchistan or KPK. Out of the 40 candidates nominated by the Baluchistan Parliament, one woman received a ticket from the party (2.5%), but just four women out of 97 candidates received votes from the KP Assembly party.

In their campaigns for the abolition of gender-based discrimination and the empowerment of women in politics, these parties, which include the PMLN, the PPP, and the PTI, have stated supportive opinions. However, as evidenced by the persistently unfavourable statistics for women's participation, they have fallen short of their pledges.

The intra-party quota for women in the 2018 elections:

Political Parties	Total Tickets Issued	Tickets Issued to Women	Percentage of Women
PML-N	125	5	4%
PTI	244	14	5.7%

PPP	176	12	6.8%
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Source: dawn news, June 08, 2018

However, they have failed in the past of their promises because little partakes to enhance women's participation, and the poor participation rates for women continue to rise. In addition, the male-dominated internal party system does not priorities the empowerment of women. The importance of female politicians on the ground has been suppressed by the difference between the glittering policies of political parties and reality. Due to the predominance of men in all political institutions, they are only used as a means of meeting the quotas, and their actual involvement in policy and decision-making is negligible.

Quota System- Opportunity or Betrayal?

From 1956 to 1973, Pakistan's constitutions all maintained the same percentage of female seats. 3% of all positions in the first constitution were allocated to women. The National Assembly had 156 seats according to the second Constitution of 1962, including 6 seats for women. The two wings of the State each received an equal number of these seats. In 1981, 20 women were chosen to serve in General Zia's Majlis-e-Shoora. The National Assembly increased the quota from 10% to 20% in 1985. In the elections held in 1988, the proportion of women stayed constant. Through its women's policy, the Musharraf administration has significantly altered society. The National Assembly will only have 60 seats available. Women received 60 reserved quota seats and 11 ordinary seats in the current Parliament. Currently, 17% of seats in the NA and 33% of seats in local government are reserved for women.

The lack of clarity regarding the interests that women's aspirations for the appointed seats represent is brought up by women parliamentarians. Family support or connection is frequently facilitated especially that of the heads of male families. This disturbs their participation at meetings and gives the impression that they exclusively speak for male relatives who are unable to run for office for a variety of reasons. The indirect character of their election helps and facilitates the chance for progress as politicians given the reinstatement and expansion of seats reserved for women in legal meetings. Their notion of political empowerment is undermined by the lack of a region, which also contradicts their sense of responsibility to powerful people. Politicians who occupy ordinary seats become even more resentful of them as a result, and the democratic structure becomes an even more difficult place to work because intimidation and silence prevent them from fully participating.

Opportunities for Women in Decision Making Process:

The table below lists the figure of women who have been designated to office and actively engaged in politics and decision-making in Pakistan. The impact of Musharraf's initiatives on the ascent of women into politics is evident in the table above. All of Pakistan's governments have appointed several women to make political and parliamentary choices throughout its history. However, fewer women were participating before the Musharraf administration. Political equality is encouraged through public policies that the Musharraf administration has created. According to the table below, women's participation climbed from 2.8% to 21.64% under Musharraf.

Table showing women participation in national assembly from 1947 till date

National assembly	Tenure	Total Seats	Directly elected women	Women elected on reserved seats	No. of seats held by women	Percentage of women representation
1 st	Aug10,47- Oct24,54	30	-	-	2	6.7%
2 nd	May 2,55-Oct 7,58	80	-	-	0	0%
3 rd	Jun 8, 62june12,65	156	6	-	6	3.8%
4 th	Jun 12,65-Mar25,69	156	6	-	6	3.8%
5 th	Apr 14,72-Jan 10,77	144	6	-	6	4.2%
6 th	Mar20,85May29,88	210	1	10	11	5.2%
7 th	Mar20,85May29,88	217	1	21	22	10.1%
8 th	Nov30,88-Aug6,90	217	4	20	24	11.1%
9 th	Nov3,90-Jul17,93	217	2	-	2	0.9%
10 th	Oct15,93-Nov5,96	217	4	-	4	1.8%
11 th	Feb15,97-Oct12,99	217	6	-	6	2.8%
12 th	Nov16,2003	342	13	61	74	21.64%
13 th	2008-13	342	11	60	71	21%
14 th	2013-18	342	10	60	70	20%
15 th	2018-	342	9	62	71	20%

Source: nationalassembly.gov.pk

This table shows that women started gaining significant representation in the 12th legislature under the Pervez Musharraf government. Since 2003 women's involvement increased in politics. But comparing the statics with standards of gender equality in participation, Pakistan is still far behind in this race.

The above-stated facts and statics show that the opportunities for women are not only the lowest but are only symbolic. The structure of the political system and mindset of mainstream political parties and leaders just forged the empowerment and role of women in the policy-making process, hampering the arena of current and future opportunities for women in Pakistani politics.

Challenges:

Women have a variety of freedoms when it comes to participating in politics, including the ability to speak out and represent an issue, bring people together, engage in public affairs, run for office, cast their votes, and hold onto positions of power. According to the obligations both males and females should enjoy the same rights and opportunities and participating in all political activities is an essential and fundamental right for them. While discussing rights may seem easy, it can be a challenging task for women to exercise these rights in reality. Women often face obstacles and difficulties when considering a career in politics, especially in traditional and cultural communities. Therefore, it is crucial to develop a unique and tailored approach to ensure their right to participate in politics. Pakistan's Constitution guarantees women the freedom to participate in democratic politics. Women can participate in politics without facing any legal obstacles. Women's political empowerment, however, faces several challenges in practice. To ensure gender equality and the implementation of legislation, these obstacles must be realized and removed.

Social Constraints:

Politics has historically been ruled by men, which is wrong and attracts many women. Pakistan is a deeply patriarchal nation with conventional traditions that forbid women from entering politics. Additionally, they have limited access to political knowledge due to cultural barriers, and lack of resources related to finance, some factors that contribute to limited education and information access include low levels of education, heavy family responsibilities, and prejudice.

Prevailing Male Dominance:

A significant challenge that women encounter in politics is the prevalent male domination in the legal and political structure. In addition, the impact of societal and cultural expectations on women plays a crucial role in their participation in politics. Women's ability to participate in politics is limited due to their lack of access to resources that enable productivity and their dependence on the economy. Women's political capacity is hampered in this field by their lack of political awareness and ignorance of their responsibilities. Women's political interactions were formed by patriarchy, a system of ideology that promoted male dominance. The gender dynamic is changed and created in such a way that the man is given the advantage and the woman is denied it. As a result, Ancestry has political, social, psychological, and familial components. It is generally seen as a female under the male. Because a man is superior to a woman and power politics favours men over women, patriarchal behaviours are prevalent throughout the world and are particularly prevalent in Pakistani society. As a result, these practices influence various facets of public life. Women are treated as second-class citizens who lack equal status and the ability to make decisions at all levels as a result of patriarchal influences on their employment, selection of partners in life, voting, and participation in politics. This deprives

women of residential and childcare responsibilities.

Quotas- Just a Metaphor:

Quotas, which increase women's political representation and have a beneficial influence on the number of women represented, are one of the most successful consensus acts. Even though the quota system has raised the proportion of women at meetings, this is only a short-term step to achieving gender equality. Women still find it difficult to compete and take part in democracy. Women are seen as the majority to fill the power imbalances in low political and economic spheres. The programme is more than simply a metaphor, even though the requirements have pushed more women to join politics. The aforementioned notions are intricate and have the potential to lead to opportunity, execution, and commitment. At the same time, a constrained number of A limited period is a tactic to encourage participation and create obstacles for women at the same time; it offers strangers a voice while also being a barrier because it reduces the power of women's numbers.

Political Parties' Misogynist Nature:

The advancement of women in politics is significantly influenced by political parties. The political perception of women is significantly shaped by political parties. Political issues are presented as obstacles to women entering politics. A key challenge that hinders women from playing an active role in politics is the dominating presence of men within the political arena, political parties, and the traditions of legal political parties. Male-dominated political parties frequently hold patriarchal opinions on matters of national importance that disregarded the perspectives of women and can be seen in party politics. Because male leadership discriminates against women, women are not elected to key decision-making positions in parties. Council and parliamentary sessions are scheduled at times that

interfere with women's household responsibilities.

Unsympathetic Political Environment of Parliament:

Activists have been successful in passing legislation that guarantees the participation of women in all elected institutions after a protracted battle to fight against the stigma of discrimination and lack of political voice. These ladies are chosen by party representatives who are indirectly elected to each House. Because many of the women in elected posts are linked to powerful males, some of whom may have lost elections, passed away, or been expelled, they are often viewed as male representations. This concept may also apply to women who have won general elections, for instance, former Benazir Bhutto, her father, who worked as prime minister, and other nominated women connected to party officials. Profit, however, might occasionally be quite risky. Before the 2018 elections, the Women Parliamentarians Survey WPS interviewed female politicians to learn more about their experiences in politics, including their interactions with voters, the media, and fellow party members. Their findings were reported in the media.

Political women are interviewed by the Women

1. Hushing/Silencing:

The exclusion and silencing of women in the presence of men severely limit their capacity to actively engage as legislators, both provincially and nationally.

Although there is less gender discrimination in Islamabad than there is in the KP, this antagonistic area ranges to the National Assembly. There were no women's restrooms or Caucus meeting rooms when the first Caucus was established in Parliament in 2008. Our actions may land us in legal danger. According to one viewpoint, women may not be given the chance

to take part in the creation of new legislation because of their fright of men in the Assemblies.

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Across a striking diversity in every province, one-fourth of the women interviewed claimed to have

House/Assembly	Yes		Total
	Number	%	
Senate	3	17	18
National	8	16	51
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	13	62	21
Balochistan	2	17	12
Sindh	10	36	28
Punjab	14	22	65
Gilgit-Baltistan	2	40	5
Total	52	26	200

Source: Women Parliamentarian Survey 2018

2. Verbal Abuse:

The verbal abuse of women that is common in everyday exchange is magnified when it is reported in the media and presented to the state as a share of its political affairs. Since 1997, campaigners have noticed a disturbing trend where abusive language towards women and retaliatory insolence between senior Cabinet and Parliamentary officials has increased. They fear that this behaviour will encourage similar language and behaviour in the media and society

already encountered signs of silence from their male counterparts. Women who work in the Senate and the National Assembly (NA) reported comparable low levels of silence. However, the two values that women highlighted most frequently were regular visits (72 per cent) and involvement in discussions as their greatest contribution to the House (71 per cent). When they are ignored and silenced, this might be seen as an indication of their power.

Women Parliamentarian Reporting Silencing (2013-18):

at large and the flourishing of discriminatory cultural practices.

In several events, female politicians were verbally abused by their male counterparts:

1. Meraj Humayun evokes that he established the Women's group in the KP Assembly to give women the forte and assurance to endure ridicule. She quoted that:
 - a. When it is covered in the media, and presented to the public as a part of its political concerns, the verbal abuse of women that

occurs frequently in regular conversation is exaggerated. After 1997, activists noticed a troubling trend in the use of sexist language and retaliatory attitudes among senior Cabinet and Parliamentary officials. They predicted that this trend would encourage the use of sexist language and attitudes in the media and society at large, as well as the emergence of discriminatory cultural practices.

2. Several instances where male colleagues verbally harassed female politicians:
3. Meraj Humayun recollects that the Women's Group was started in the KP Council to give women the courage and self-assurance to face contempt. She said as follows:

“Initially, we frequently received remarks from men advising us to be content with just being well dressed and looking presentable if we were to pursue positions in the Council. They attempted to dissuade us from forming any connections with them. Even the Speaker exhibited prejudice against us and actively opposed women.”

4. PML-N's Talal Chaudhry It should be pointed out that during a statement given on camera, PTI's Firdous Ashiq Awan was erroneously referred to as a man. It's important to note that Awan serves as a special aide to the prime minister of information and broadcasting. "If the Firdous baji wash her face, the actual one will originate out after the makeup which means instead of Firdous baji, there will be a Firdous Khan"
5. **Khursheed Ahmed Shah**, a popular leader of the Pakistan People's Party, has taken a taunt from women lawyers. He

said to the Speaker not to stop women in parliament from speaking if they were sitting together. Women must express their thoughts and emotions as neglecting communication can have adverse effects on their health and they will be sick.

6. Former Foreign Minister **Khawaja Asif**, and During his speech, the leader of the Pakistan Muslim League-N referred to Shireen Mazari, the leader of the opposition party, as a "trolley" for interrupting him.
7. After Firdous Ashiq Awan decided to join Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, Khawaja Asif made derogatory comments towards the female politician on Twitter. He referred to Imran Khan's political party as a "silver liner," "tractor trolley," and "newly discovered garbage," suggesting that they could all be used to haul away political garbage.
8. It's worth mentioning that Abid Sher Ali, a member of the Pakistani Muslim League-N, accused Shireen Mazari of requesting him to stay away from her during a rally in his hometown. It's not the first time Ali has made these allegations towards Mazari, saying that “But there is nothing to touch”
9. Back in the 90s, Nawaz Sharif used to point to Benazir Bhutto, the former prime minister, for obscene and degrading remarks. On an occasion, while putting a yellow dress on her way to parliament, he called her a “yellow taxi”
10. There are uncountable similar events of insulting and mocking women politicians. In the current era of increased social media influence, social media is widely used to insult and humiliate women politicians. They are more prone to this kind of verbal and verbal sexual abuse. Male politicians used these third-class tricks to gain popularity from the

public that is against the female party they are insulting and mocking. The overall environment is hostile and mocking and abusing females has become part of our rotten political culture.

Numerous such incidents of insulting and making fun of female politicians have occurred. Nowadays, with social media's growing influence, it is common practice to disparage and

degrade female politicians on social media. They are more vulnerable to verbal and verbal sexual assault in general. These low-grade tactics were employed by male politicians to seek support from the public and humiliate and insult the female political party. The atmosphere is hostile overall, and our corrupt political culture has accepted ridicule and mistreatment of women.

Women parliamentarian reporting verbal abuse 2013-18:

House/Assembly	Yes		Total
	Number	%	
Senate	0	0	18
National	6	12	51
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	4	19	21
Balochistan	0	0	12
Sindh	1	4	28
Punjab	9	14	65
Gilgit-Baltistan	1	20	5
Total	21	11	200

Women parliamentarian reporting social media abuses and abusive messages 2013-18:

House/Assembly	Yes		Total
	Number	%	
Senate	1	6	18
National	6	12	51
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	9	43	21
Balochistan	1	8	12
Sindh	3	11	28
Punjab	25	38	65
Gilgit-Baltistan	1	20	5
Total	46	23	200

Both sourced by: Women Parliamentarian Survey 2018

3. Threats of Violence

Interviews with female politicians reveal that intimidations of violence have been used to avert female Caucus affiliates from defecting, and Ayesha Gulalai's example illustrates how pressure was applied to threaten her when she complained of abuse. For instance in the KP Assembly where a female member of the Provincial Parliament (MPA) stated that another important investigator provided details on how they would not support the government on a specific topic. According to reports, the provincial minister called a meeting with the women in his party and endangered them to break their legs if they did not attend. This has been given as the cause of several female MPAs' subsequent quiet throughout their tenure. Threats from other ordinary politicians to individuals representing the vote have been stated; contestants are told to sell their tickets or remain executed. When probed if they had ever faced physical abuse at the hands of their male peers, thirteen WPS women remained silent. Six per

cent, or 11 out of 200 women, reported receiving actual or implied threats from male partners. Three women (5%) of the KP Assembly were the next group to report experiencing this type of harassment, followed by one Senator and four MNAs. It was mentioned by a female member of the Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly, and another participant stopped responding to the query.

Thirteen women did not respond when requested if they took ever been physically abused by their male counterparts. Eleven out of 200 women (six per cent) reported actual or endangered threats by male partners. It has been reported by one Senator and four MNAs that they have experienced harassment, along with three women (5%) from the KP Assembly. A woman from the Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly has also shared her experience of harassment, while another member has remained silent in response to the inquiry.

Women parliamentarian reporting physical harassment and pressures 2013-18

House/Assembly	Yes		Total
	Number	%	
Senate	1	6	18
National	4	8	51
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	3	5	21
Balochistan	0	0	12
Sindh	1	3	28
Punjab	1	2	65
Gilgit-Baltistan	1	20	5
Total	11	6	200

Source: Women Parliamentarian Survey 2018

Solutions to Gender Disparity in Pakistan's Politics:

Solutions to the above-stated problems faced by women to enhance their participation in a real sense, as it is necessary for the development and security of Pakistan.

Social and Economic Empowerment of Women:

Reasons for women's limited political empowerment are related to social and cultural norms and the financial reliance of women on their male counterparts. This, illiteracy in the public arena is among the barriers to women's participation. Without ongoing social change, which must be carried out in a downward direction, women's participation will not be effective. This indicates that women must be given more social and economic power first. Here is where women can continuously and effectively participate in politics.

Awareness Campaigns to Break Cultural Chains:

Politics as a profession for women is seen as a stigma in our society. Multiple reasons for it could be religion, norms etc. the need of the hour is to educate people and especially women regarding the significance of women in the political structure. Cultural chains can be broken by awareness campaigns. The government and private sectors of society should use mainstream media and social media to educate people and to normalize the role of women in politics.

Conducive Political Environment:

To realize the dream of gender equality and to encourage women to participate in politics and decision-making for Pakistan, we have to promote a positive attitude towards women that are in politics today. Government should devise strict rules for ensuring the dignity of female politicians. Mocking, humiliating, body shaming or personal attacks on women politicians should be strictly prohibited and backed by serious penalties. This not only protects the honour of current politicians but also encourages the female competitive youth to step up for their homeland.

Change in Normative Practices:

Currently, top-down strategies, such as allocations and quotas established by legal

measures, are the only foundation for political indicators of women's political empowerment. However, political parties continue to engage in widespread acts of structural discrimination mixed with social and cultural norms. The distribution of duties and responsibilities as well as group promotions are specific instances of this type of conduct. Therefore, alterations in typical activities at the local and community level (particularly familial and economic) and increasing awareness are also necessary to promote actual empowerment. This pertains to the participation of women in operations, their roles in the political system, and the overall political framework.

At present, women's political empowerment is mainly achieved through legal procedures that rely on top-down approaches like quotas and allocations. Unfortunately, political parties still commonly practice structural discrimination, often due to social and cultural norms. These parties allocate roles, tasks, and promotions based on gender, which hinders the effective participation of women in politics. To truly empower women, we need to change the way things are done at the local and community levels, especially within families and economically, and raise awareness of the importance of women's roles in the political system.

Better Opportunities for Women Politicians:

The quota system has helped women rise in politics and there are now more women attending meetings, but it is not a useful tool for reaching the goals of gender equality because it does not make it simpler for individuals to compete and take part in democracy. Women are viewed as a source of low political and economic power, a number to fill in the gaps. Political parties ought to support women running for office in general elections. Women with better possibilities to become political leaders, openness in party elections is also necessary. Taking a more

comprehensive approach is necessary to promote women in politics. The government, the international community, the general public, and women individuals must all make greater efforts to advance women's party-political influence in Pakistan.

The quota system has been beneficial in increasing the number of women in politics and meetings, but it is not an effective tool for achieving gender equality. It does not facilitate fair competition and participation in democracy. Women are often treated as mere statistics to fill gaps, lacking political and economic power. Political parties should actively promote female candidates in general elections and adopt a more transparent approach to their internal elections, creating better opportunities for women to emerge as leaders. Empowering women in politics requires a comprehensive strategy that involves the efforts of women themselves, the government, the international community, and society. While all actors play a crucial role, political parties are particularly important in this endeavour.

Political Party Laws:

This is an additional strategy for guaranteeing the election of women. A major tool for building a women's political development agenda is the legislation that governs, organizes, and certifies political parties in many nations. Few male leaders who control the major parties are likely to be reluctant to embrace such a rule and to choose a sizable proportion of female candidates. To provide women with better possibilities to become political leaders, party elections must be open. Additionally, this law can guarantee that gender equality is provided for within it. By enacting this bill to encourage women's political engagement, Pakistan can follow this precedent.

One effective method for increasing the number of women in politics is through legislation that regulates and organizes political parties. This can help create a platform for women's political development and ensure gender equality within political parties. However, some leading parties may be dominated by a few male leaders who are resistant to accepting such a law and may hesitate to select a large number of female applicants. To provide women with better opportunities to develop as political leaders, it is important to have openness in party elections. Pakistan can adopt this law to promote women's political participation and follow in the footsteps of other countries that have successfully implemented it.

Women's Wings:

To enhance women's participation in politics more effectively in Pakistan, there are specific women's wings in various political parties around the globe. Through this tactic, organizations provide women the chance to learn about politics and get involved. Women's wings can impact party choices, particularly those about women's growth, and they can help an impact on party choices, particularly those about women's growth, and can help to lessen the exclusion of women from the group.

Many political parties around the world have dedicated women's wings, which could be effectively advocated for in Pakistan to increase female participation in politics. This approach provides women with opportunities to become involved and gain political knowledge. Women's wings can play a significant role in influencing party decisions, particularly on matters related to women's development, and can help reduce female exclusion within the group.

Promotion of Gender Equality within Parties:

Political parties can enhance their efforts to tackle gender inequality and other issues impacting

women by increasing the representation of women in decision-making positions within the party and by encouraging women to get involved in politics. Political parties may encourage the inclusion of women by addressing gender-based concerns including violence against women, disparities in work, housing, and education, as well as social issues like family planning and reproductive health.

Political parties can address gender inequality and other women's issues by increasing women's participation in party decision-making and encouraging their involvement in the political process. This can be achieved by promoting gender-based issues such as violence against women, inequality in employment, housing, and education, as well as social issues such as family planning and reproductive health. By doing so, parties can contribute to their platform and create a more inclusive society.

Increase in Effectiveness of Women Caucuses:

Women's caucuses have shown to be helpful, but they are not sufficient in and of themselves to result in increased representation. As there has always been communication with the women's drive to assist develop and supporting the gender equality program, support between their political parties and political leaders is a critical element in their success. Since young people make up the majority of quota legislatures, their request for legal assistance must be treated seriously if they are to overcome other significant challenges and strengthen their political representation. Additionally, they should state their desire to continue in politics and run for reelection, as well as their desire to have a greater say in political decisions and an increase in the proportions leading to ordinary seats, as well as their demand for an increased voice in political parties. Although women's caucuses have proven to be helpful, they are not sufficient on their own to

achieve greater representation for women. The success of these caucuses largely depends on the support they receive from their parties and political leaders. The women's movement has always been in contact with these caucuses to help promote gender equality. Since most quota legislatures consist of younger people, their request for legal support should be taken seriously if they want to overcome major obstacles and increase their political influence. Additionally, they need to stay in politics and run for re-election, as well as demand an increase in the number of ordinary seats and a greater voice in political parties.

Women as Actual Policy Makers:

To ensure that women's viewpoints are taken into account in all decision-making processes, including the selection of female candidates for quota seats, the next course of action should be to boost the number of women in leadership positions within political parties. Most female party members currently work within the women's divisions, which serve as a support system for (male) politicians rather than the participating majority of female party members currently solely work within the women's divisions, which serve as a support system for (male) politicians rather than taking part in the creation of party policy. Although the Pakistani Electoral Commission is prepared to change election laws to include parties in the parties, legislation may be needed first.

To truly amplify the voices of women in all aspects, especially in the selection of female candidates for quota seats, the next crucial step is to enhance the representation of women in key decision-making positions within political parties. Presently, women in political parties are often confined to merely supporting (male) politicians within the women's division, rather than actively participating in policy formulation. The Pakistani Electoral Commission has expressed its readiness to amend election laws to enforce gender quotas in political parties, although it may require legislative action to do so.

Special Harassment Protection Wing:

The government should make a special harassment protection wing for female politicians. The task of the wing will be to monitor, investigate and punish elements that are involved in verbal, physical, sexual or threatening to their female colleagues. This wing should work for the assurance of a conducive working environment that could promote gender equality in Pakistani politics.

The Women's Movement and Civil Society Groups:

There is a dire need for the formation of an effective women's movement within the political framework of Pakistan. This movement should be jointly started by women politicians from all parties, keeping aside their rival political ideologies. Civil society groups and joint women's politician movements could not only pressurize the government to increase women's quota but also compel them to increase the general seats competence of women. Their emerging role could compel their parties to give more seats to women in parliament.

Political Power and Accountability:

To enhance the foundations of women in the electoral system, democratic institutions must be continuously opened up. Women in the legal profession won't leave their jobs as long as there is a constitutional provision. To ensure political

power and accountability, it's crucial to modify the political system's rules. Pakistan's extreme patriarchy and the ongoing development of democratic ideals require more women to be involved in politics to promote women's advancement. Democratic institutions must remain transparent and open to strengthen women's participation in the electoral process. As long as there is a constitutional provision, women will continue to engage in politics. The political system must adapt to reflect its founding principles, especially concerning women's empowerment. Pakistan's patriarchal culture and evolving democratic values make it clear that more women, not fewer, must participate in politics to promote gender equality.

Section III

Conclusion:

This study concludes that women's standing is inferior in Pakistan's male-dominated societal structure and that they cannot be interpreted in terms of economic and political difficulties. Political gender equality policies implemented by the Musharraf administration and the next administration had a favourable impact on society. Women have become more prevalent in parliament. In Pakistan's parliament, women are more evenly represented in some provinces than in others, despite being greater than in other Muslim nations. In Baluchistan and not fully in the FATA region, women are underrepresented. To create national policies that address women's challenges in these areas, it is crucial to include women. In Pakistan's broader society, women who want to pursue a career in politics face numerous obstacles and difficulties. The study concludes that women's status is inferior in Pakistan's male-dominated social structure and that it is impossible to understand it in terms of political and economic challenges. The Musharraf regime's and the next government's political gender equality programmes positively affected a positive effect on society. The

proportion of women in parliament has increased. Despite being more numerous than in other Muslim countries, women are less evenly represented in Pakistan's parliament in some provinces than in others. Women are underrepresented in Baluchistan, but not entirely in the FATA region. It is essential to incorporate women in developing national policies that deal with the difficulties women face the development of national policies that address the difficulties faced by women in these areas. Women in Pakistan's larger society who aspire to enter politics must overcome several challenges and difficulties.

It is evident from this study that the status of women in Pakistan is inferior within the male-dominated societal structure, thereby hindering their participation in economic and political discussions. Nevertheless, the Musharraf era and the subsequent government saw a positive change in policies related to political gender equality. The number of women in parliament has increased, albeit unevenly across all provinces with low representation in Baluchistan and the FATA region. Women's representation is critical in developing national policies that address women's issues in these areas. Despite facing numerous barriers and challenges, women need to pursue politics as a career in Pakistan. However, women often encounter difficulties in establishing relationships with male politicians, putting them at a disadvantage. Political parties must strive for gender equality in decision-making and promote women's participation in parliament. The quota system is not a viable means of achieving gender equality, as it does not foster healthy competition and democracy. Encouraging women to run for office in general elections is crucial for achieving true political empowerment for women in Pakistan. Currently, women are often given limited power in politics and economics, being viewed as mere gap-fillers. To make progress, a comprehensive approach is needed, with efforts from women themselves, the

government, the international community, and society as a whole. However, political parties play a particularly important role in promoting women's involvement in politics and should take action accordingly.

Recommendations:

- Women should be aware, trained and educated about their political rights and the importance of their involvement in politics through different programs and campaigns at the high school level.
- The mind-making process of the young male should incorporate an element of openness towards female participation in every field of life through compulsory training.
- Government should work to improve statistics of women in policymaking.
- The quota of women should be increased granting real powers of exercising their right of participation through amendment in the legislature.
- Political parties should be compelled to approve more party tickets to women in general seats as a compulsion from the Election Commission of Pakistan.

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