



## INSIGHTS OF WOMEN POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN PAKISTAN (2002-2013)

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### **Abstract:**

*Women are more than 50 percent of the total population of Pakistan, but their political influence is not as such. They have less participation as voters and well as a candidate to contest in elections. This research intends to have insights of women political participation in Pakistan. For this purpose secondary data is used and on the bases of that conclusion has been made. Women's political involvement and mobilization are becoming increasingly important for a functioning democratic polity across the world. Participation is a developmental strategy that emphasizes the need of involving marginalized groups in the creation and execution of policies that affect their well-being. As a result, economic growth cannot be completely realized without the active participation of women in all aspects of society's decision-making. This research explained that women are not encouraged enough and not provided enough facilities to be able to participate in politics. There are some areas where women can play way better role than men, but still they are not provided with enough opportunities. There are societal restrictions and also political parties and governments does not pay much attention to this but with the passage of time things have improved much for women but still there is a lot of room for improvement yet.*

**Key Words:** Political Participation, Politics, Voting Rights, Empowerment, Political Trust.



## **Introduction**

Women must be included in mainstream politics of a country. Women are nearly half of the population of the world, their fair and equal participation in all spheres of human activity is a pre-requisite for social stability, economic growth and sustainable development. There are four types of participation identified in “Human Development Report 1993”. These types are closely related to each other like economic, socio-cultural, political and household participation. It has become a major issue to strengthen the participation of women in all these. On the other hand, women's political involvement and mobilization are becoming increasingly important for a functioning democratic polity across the world. Participation is a developmental strategy that emphasizes the need of involving marginalized groups in the creation and execution of policies that affect their well-being. As a result, economic growth and other cannot be completely realized without the active participation of women in all aspects of society's decision-making.

In developing nations, women's political engagement and the safeguarding of their rights has always been a struggle. The following are some of the most common justifications supporting women's participation in politics:

- As women account for at least 50 % of the population, the gender diversity of public entities should reflect this, and men and women should have equal representation in decision-making bodies.
- It is widely accepted that males and women have different interests, for example female lawmakers will priorities matters affecting other women. Women experiences differ from men's, these differences should be reflected in politics.
- Around the same time, fully equal involvement from both male and females in government decision strikes a balance that even more truly describes the makeup of society, and that as a result, political structures may become more representative of the people and sensitive to the concerns and perspectives of all elements of society, potentially increasing their legitimacy.
- Women confront barriers to political engagement all throughout the world, according to the present situation. Women's involvement in politics, which is the most significant entity in society and is linked to power and decision-making processes, remains ignored. Presence of women in legislative bodies is just 15% globally, and only 12 nations have 33 percent seats for women in legislative bodies (UNDP report, 2005). They're encouraged to stay away from politics since it's a filthy game.



These trends represents democracy, in which judgement powers and freedom are placed in the hands of a few rather than shared by all. This group is concerned with the masculine society's dominance over the female group. For years, the first group has maintained their oligarchy in all aspects of life, whether it is family, societal, or political (Sharma, 2014). This research comprises of following research questions.

- What is the importance of women political participation and political mobility?
- What is the nature and extent of hurdles faced by women in politics?
- Why many women joined the politics?
- To contextualize that men and women have conflicting interests so that women need more representatives who will give more attention to issues concerned to them for a balanced society.

### **Why Pakistan Needs Women Participation in Politics?**

Women's political engagement in Pakistan has been minimal at various points throughout its history. Despite the fact that the Pakistani constitution allows women to participate fully in politics, their engagement in politics at all levels is limited owing to cultural and structural impediments that cannot be overlooked in Pakistani culture. Women make up about half of Pakistan's population, however they are underrepresented in the country's growth. Any democratic system cannot function effectively if only half of the people participates and the other half is sidelined. Ideal gendered role of women in Pakistani society is depicted as “Women are carriers of the family name, honor and prestige. Women means something covered not open. Going outside the home can risk them. It is better to die than to spoil the honor and family name. Furthermore, women are the future mothers. They should be trained enough to take care of their families and children” (Ahmad & Anwar, 2017). In other words, domesticity as women identity appears to be the prominent feature of femininity in Pakistani society (Ali & Akhtar, 2012).

Women in Pakistan have faced several obstacles and problems in the political sector. Former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, who was killed in 2007, is one example of a woman who has faced political obstacles. Women are deliberately kept away from the political activities and political processes. When women experience hurdles which keep them from contributing to society, we all suffer that loss. It is therefore neither productive nor accurate. It is a violation of women’s human and political rights. Insufficient focus on brutality against women by not including political sphere has made situation more stressed. Women who experience these hurdles are not only targeted because of their political activism, but also because they are women who are politically active. The discrimination against women in politics is harmful to all of us, not just women. Every vote not cast,



every voice not acknowledged, pushes us further away from reaching our maximum capabilities in local, nationally, and global politics. (UN Women Report, 2018).

Regardless of the fact that Pakistan is a developing nation with a growing economy, many women have actively pursued to participate in government and the establishment of a female-oriented civil society. During the 2013 and 2018 general elections, the percentage of women voters grew dramatically. However, still, women are politically marginalized and gender discrimination continues to be the norm. Most importantly for three consecutive years (2012, 2013 and 2014) Pakistan has been ranked second last in the annual Gender Gap Index produced by the World Economic Forum. Again according to the World Economic Forum (“WEF”) Global Gender Gap Report 2016 Pakistan is ranked 143rd out of 144 countries on the gender inequality index. Pakistan ranked 143rd among the places of the world which are consider worst places of women.

### **Literature Review**

Bari, (2005) in a research, some major reasons that impede women's political engagement were established and described. In this sense, ideological considerations, political factors, socio-cultural factors, and economic factors are all crucial. Aside from these issues, there is also a shortage of finance and a plan for women's political engagement. Women's political engagement in Pakistan remains largely exclusive, according to a briefing report published in 2011. Women's right to vote is protected by a strong international and local legal framework in Pakistan, yet their absence from the voting process remains a serious issue. While legal and regulatory improvements can assist to boost women's participation in the electorate, the gap between principles and reality is caused by inadequate execution of the law. As a result, the major question is whether stakeholders with the ability to influence the process, including as the ECP (Electoral Commission of Pakistan), political parties, and domestic observation organizations, have the political will. Sohail, (2014) had a point of view that women still have hindrances in getting their rights. A culture in which women are equally empowered to accomplish things should be fostered. Men do not want to see women mature, and they do not take them seriously. Women need to stand up for their own rights. Women's abilities should be put on display. In a growing country like Pakistan, where billions of dollars in debt must be repaid, women's potential must be demonstrated. To become a developed country, both men and women must work hard. Women who work are not regarded as much as women who simply have household responsibilities. Women must be able to demonstrate their capabilities both indoors and outdoors, and initiatives must be established to help them do so. Even housewives should be encouraged to exhibit their potential by engaging in creative hobbies such as crafts or any form of art rather than wasting their time in snarky gossip. Indoor crafts by women can be a source of exports if

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international relationships are made. Women who are willing to work outside the house should be treated with respect and security in our society.

Bano (2009) did research about the status of women in Pakistani Parliament. The focus of this study is on Pakistani women's political participation. The 2002 and current parliaments in Pakistan have showed the highest level of female representation in the country's history. The research looks at how Pakistani women have benefited from their numerical strength in parliament. The study concluded that, while women's standing in contemporary Pakistani society has improved in relative terms over time, the concept of women's empowerment remains a faraway dream.

Shami (2009) performed research to learn more about Pakistan's historical perspective of women's political engagement. Women were significant participants in the Pakistan movement. Ms. Fatima Jinnah was the first well-known person to join the struggle movement. Women's political engagement was high during the Bhutto era, but it was low during the Zia era of martial law. Musharraf's age, on the other hand, was quite relevant and vital in this aspect. At both the local and national levels, he raised the number of seats allocated to women in politics. Women's political engagement in Pakistan has had various ups and downs throughout its history.

In its report, the National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW, 2010) claimed that despite entering politics, women are not very engaged. Despite the inclusion of women in political institutions, little attempt is made to change the patriarchal nature and ethos of such organizations. As a result, even though it enabled a small number of women gain access to government positions, their involvement was limited since the systems that perpetuate inequality remained in place. The conclusion of this paper is that women are entering politics, but their performance does not reflect this, and the major reason for this is gender stereotyping.

Sumbadze & Nadezhda, (2007) the limits on women's political engagement were researched and categorized into three basic groups. The first one is political, such as the masculine model of politics, lack of party support, collaboration with women's organizations, and the electoral system; the second is ideological and psychological, such as traditional roles, lack of confidence, the perception of politics as "dirty," and the role of the media; and the third is socioeconomic, such as feminization of poverty and unemployment, the dual burden, and education and training.

Philips, (2000) investigates how over-representation of a social group leads to over-representation of opinion and vice versa in her research. Women have a lesser

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representation in politics, which leads to a poorer representation of women's opinions. Under-representation of women in politics, according to Phillips, should be considered as systemic or purposeful discrimination. This suggests that there are societal issues that contribute to women's underrepresentation. This study examines women's political engagement on a more broad level.

### **Political Participation and the Role of Gender from Societal Point of View:**

Women has been considered inferior to men for very long. Women have been seen as inferior to men in terms of physique, morals as well as psychologically. Women have never been blessed enough to enjoy the same rights as men. European women started to have better rights as well as opportunities in the 15th century. But this progress was very slow till the 18th century when the universal rights were the topic of the table by different scholars and philosophers (Neft & Levine, 1997) (pp. 8-12). In 1792 Mary Wollstonecraft published a book in which greater emphasis was made on the education of the women as well as their participation in politics like men. With time women started to raise their concerns related to education rights, political rights, laws related to guardianship of the children, and divorce rights (Neft & Levine, 1997; Randall, 1987).

Women significantly made progress during the following two centuries concerning the have the same rights as men. Suffrage Movement is very important in this regard, it started in European countries and spread all over the world because of this women were able to get voting rights in many countries after the struggle of many years (Neft & Levine, 1997) (p. 12). In 1830 the first feminist movement started in the United States. Seneca Falls's famous convention was joined by three hundred men and women in 1848 (Randall, 1987) (p. 208-209). John Stuart Mill presents a bill in Britain in 1867 which was supported by many women but he did not succeed after which women started to work more to attain the voting rights and they were able to get the rights to vote in 1928 (Abzug, 1994) (p. 8) (Neft & Levine, 1997) (p.13) (Randall, 1987) (p. 211). With the passage of time political participation of women has increased specially in terms of voting. It is practiced in many countries including United Kingdom, United States of America and European countries (Burns, 2007; Burrell, 2005; Coffé & Bolzendahl, 2010; Paxton, Kunovich, & Hughes, 2007). Hence in other forms of political participation women are way behind than men (Fournier, Nadeau, Blais, Gidengil, & Nevitte, 2004; Inglehart, Norris, & Ronald, 2003). Desire to participate in politics is a very important aspect to consider (Burns et al. 2001). It justifies the willingness of a person to apply his/her skills, his/her time, and his/her money which is very important to participate in politics (Burns, Schlozman, & Verba, 1997) along with these knowledge, efficacy also play an important part (Beauregard, 2014).



A research has been conducted in gender based societies to study the women political participation. In these societies social status of women is not equal to men and culture is very deep rooted. While considering political participation and political activities men are preferred than women. Women in this has been put aside. Because of femininity women have been put out of these sort of political context (Cole & Sabik, 2010). Women are not much liked engaged in the political activities and is considered as male dominant domain (Rudman & Fairchild, 2007). Not only in active political activities but also when the casting vote is considered voters prefer men as compare to women. Women have to bear discrimination while joining the male dominant professions like politics (Heldman, Carroll, & Olson, 2005; Raewyn, 2005). Masculine traits are being preferred by the voters rather than feminine traits to run the higher offices.

While talking about the political offices and higher political offices candidate are evaluated on bases of masculine traits and personal character (Hacker, 2004; Loudon & McCauliff, 2004). Masculine and feminine political issues are categorized by (Rudman & Kilianski, 2000) social welfare and healthcare are considered as feminine and crime, defense, economy and military are considered as masculine (Han, 2007; Heldman et al., 2005; Herrnson, Lay, & Stokes, 2003; Major & Coleman, 2008). Masculine issues are considered more important than feminine ones (Rosenwasser & Dean, 1989). In feminine traits emotions, compassion and honesty are considered which in masculine traits confidence, being independent and being aggressive is considered (Christine Banwart & McKinney, 2005; Raewyn, 2005). For political activities and politics feminine characteristics are considered unintelligible, which is the cause of low participation of women in politics and political participation. Trust is considered a strong predictor of participation in politics (Inglehart et al., 2003).

It guarantees political judgements and scripts political apprehensions to the establishments (Van Deth, 2001). Lack of political trust is considered disadvantage in terms of politics and less influential in making a political decision. Men are more inclined and interested in politics rather than women (Burns, 2007; Chhibber, 2002). Women are not only less interested but also have less knowledge related to politics (Burns et al., 1997; Gidengil, 2004; Van Deth, 2001). Not only in less developed countries but also in United States women are less informed and considered themselves less effective politically (Verba, Burns, & Schlozman, 1997). Less interest of women in political activities has many political and social concerns. It has many consequences on sustainable development along with democratic traditions of a country. Lesser participation of women in politics is traditionally associated with the socialization of gender. It is also an important factor to determine the political participation of women (Burns et al., 1997; Lovenduski, 2005; Rapoport, 1981). At childhood as well as adulthood levels women are socialized in such



gender roles which are passive, compliant, and private oriented. On the other hand men socialized in such gender roles which are based on leadership, self-confidant, and being independent (Fox & Lawless, 2004).

### **Individual Factors (Men and Women) and Political Participation:**

Researches have shown that there are some particular factors which do determine the participation of an individual in politics. Those factors include time along with social skills and time. An individual who is having all these factors favoring them may participate in politics more often. They have enough financial resources which they can use to participate in politics.

### **Social Capital/ Mobilization**

Social networking has been discussed in the literature, participating in social groups or associations, etc. Social networking and associations are a very good source to generate trust and mutuality. It plays an important part in the political participation and mobility. (Abramson & Claggett, 2001; Huckfeldt & Sprague, 1992; Knoke, 1990; Leighley, 1996; D. McAdam, 1986, 1988; D. McAdam, McCarthy, & Zald, 1996; M. D. D. McAdam, 2003; Norris, 2002; Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993; Schussman & Soule, 2005; Teorell, 2003; Uhlaner, 1989; Verba, Nie, & Kim, 1987; Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995; Wielhouwer & Lockerbie, 1994). Social capital is considered to a positive thing to have and it has key importance in political participation. In patriarchal society like Pakistan it is very difficult for women to have social capital outside of its family. It is discouraged socially, culturally as well as religiously. Women in such societies may have the access to available resources but lack of social capital, or being unable to build a social capital because of various reasons and restrictions, is a very big hurdle in the way of women political participation (Ali Aksar, Danaee, Maqsood, & Firdaus, 2020). Which can lead to better political participation according to social capital theory (Putnam, 2000). Some researchers have also considered this a source of social capital rather than political participation (Norris, 2004; Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993; Teorell, 2003).

### **Political Context:**

Large scale researches have been conducted on political participation recently. Internationally many comparative studies have also been conducted (Ida, Saud, & Mashud, 2020; Power, Frandji, & Vitale, 2020; Valeriani & Vaccari, 2016). In these researches, large data is used along with different techniques to analyze it. These researches include



the study of, political culture, different electoral systems, socio-economic status, political trust, and their impact of different types of political participation.

A comparative study was conducted by Kittilson and Anderson (2009). In this study, they compare 31 electoral systems. They turn out of voters was examined in this study from various point of views like the choices they have and the confidence of the individual. This study revealed that the person who thinks that his or her vote is valued, he or she is more likely to vote.

Another study was conducted to see what affect institution and contexts have on the voting behavior of a person. The modest impact of context on voting behavior was seen and institutions play an indirect role in voting behavior (Dalton, Farrell, & McAllister, 2011). The study conducted in European countries, which was a multilevel study. In this study, the relationship was explored between political intuitions of representative, trust, and protest of non-representational behavior. This research concluded that distrust people are more likely to participate in boycotts and petitions (Hutter & Braun, 2013).

### **Political Participation and Gender:**

The role of gender in political participation has been studied by many researchers. In many developed, underdeveloped and developing countries notable difference has been found (Bennett & Bennett, 1992; Burns, 2007; Burns et al., 1997; Gallego, 2007; Norris, 2002; Parry, Moyser, & Day, 1992). It is very important to conceptualize the political participation, for example, political participation of women is improving with the passage of time in the western countries like the United States and Great Britain in terms of voting (Burns, 2007; Burns et al., 1997; Burrell, 2005; Coffé & Bolzendahl, 2010; Parry et al., 1992; Uhlaner, 1989).

However, the gender gap continues in terms of communication with politicians, strikes, and joining the political parties. In these men are found to be more participative then women (Coffé & Bolzendahl, 2010; Inglehart et al., 2003; Marien, Hooghe, & Quintelier, 2010). In developing African countries the same results were found as western countries. Form the institutional participation point view there was no or very little gap between women and men but from none or less institutional point, a substantial gap is present (Coffé & Bolzendahl, 2010). The world value survey was used to analyze political activities in Islamic regimes. In 13 Islamic regimes, a significant gap in political participation was found. Females were found less participative in Muslim countries as compare to men. Men were found to be more active politically. Cross-national differences were also pointed out which can influence the participation of women (Coffé & Dilli,



2015). Women have less access to resources like education and employment which had been proven correct in many developed, Muslim, and underdeveloped countries (Coffé & Bolzendahl, 2010; Coffé & Dilli, 2015; Inglehart et al., 2003).

Along with this, gender inequality is also making it very difficult for women to participate in politics (Fish, 2002; Inglehart et al., 2003). Political participation may not be measured effectively on relying only on voting and formal organization. Men and women may be having different patterns and types of political participation from one another (Bourque & Grossholtz, 1974; Sarvasy & Siim, 1994; Young, 2004).

### **Women Political Participation and Empowerment in Pakistan:**

Pakistan's overall religious, political, cultural, and social system is the main root cause behind the lesser women's representation. Once a woman enters into politics she faces problems from the beginning. People are putting obstacles in her path, threatening her and even assassinating her character.

Imran and Shahzad (2019) the Pervaiz Musharraf period may be treated as a milestone in Pakistani history. He had committed to politically empowering Pakistan's female strata after taking power in 1999. He increased reserved seats for women to 19 percent in federal and provincial legislatures, and 33 percent in local bodies, through a legal structure directive.

From the historical point of view women have actively participated in politics of Pakistan. In subcontinent Begum Shah Nawaz actively participated in politics. In 1931 and in 1935 in Geneva she participated in round table conferences. She was much out spoken about women rights and their quota in assembly in subcontinent. The first, first lady of Pakistan was Begum Raana Liaqat Ali. She was very active in politics. She always tried to lift the social and economic prosperity of women. She also founded all Pakistan women association (APWA) and worked for the betterment of women. There are many other women who actively participated in politics like Begam Shaista, Fatima Jinnah, Begam Salma Tasadduq Hussain, Begaum Mohammad Ali Johar, Begam Waqarunnisa Noon, Nusrat Haroon are many more are the noticeable women in the political sphere of politics and political movement of Pakistan. Pakistan became the trendsetter in the Muslim world and had a distinctive position when Benazir Bhutto became the first prime minister of Pakistan and Dr Fehmeeda Mirza became the speaker of national assembly (Repila, 2013). Social and special welfare minister had been Samina Khalid, Minister of Information and broadcasting had been Sherry Rehman. Dr. Firdoos Ashiq had been health minister. Hina Rabbani has been foreign affairs minister, Ministry of Information and technology had



been led by Anusha Rehman and minister of national health services had been Saira Afzal Tarar (Ali, 2015; Saeed, 2008). Currently Yasmeen Rashid is Health Minister of Punjab and Zartaj Gul is minister of state for climate change. Hence mostly these women belongs to families which already have political influence or men of these families had already been engage in some sort of political activities. It is also very interesting to see that in some cases men are not able to meet the qualification or criteria of election commission of Pakistan. In that case female members are encouraged to participate in politics to continue their political legacy. Seats reserved for women have also played an important part to encourage women to participate in politics (True, Niner, Parashar, & George, 2012).

### **Voting Behavior of Women**

#### **Why women don't Vote:**

Women political participation is very less or limited in many developing countries like Pakistan. Not only active political participation in terms of contesting in an election but also in terms of voting. A gender analysis was conducted in Seven Asian countries with to women political participated and following issues were highlighted. Men has been provided with the responsibility to select the leader rather than the individual choice of every one. Secondly registration process of voters in very difficult and women feels discouraged as the male members of family assumed responsible of documentation. The burden of expectations on women is also highlighted by researchers how she should behave in public gathering (Perez, 2004), family norms and system (Ospina, 2006) obstacles in registration before casting votes are reason because of which women cast less votes in developing countries.

A study was conducted in Uttar Pradesh, an Indian State. Which reported that women are least interested in political participation in terms of being a part of political campaign, being member of a political party or paying attention or listen to speeches of candidates. The study also find out that women lack behind in many important determinants which leads to political participation for instance knowledge about political institutions, leadership skills and their say in important decisions at home (Iyer & Mani, 2019). Women in United States have much higher levels of education as compare to developing countries like Pakistan but still "Ambition Gap" to participate in politics have been seen (Lawless & Fox, 2010).

There are mobility restrictions faced by women in rural areas while in urban areas women forgo the opportunities due to safety concerns (Borker, 2017). All these factors mentioned along with education, socio economic status, caste and religious orientation caused about

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69% gender gap in political participation. Improving these can significantly enhance women political participation in every aspect of politics. In order to increase women turnout, voters' awareness plays an important role. Voters' awareness campaigns can increase the women turnout up to 12 percent. These campaigns can also facilitate them to make decisions about the candidate of their choice independently (Gine & Mansuri, 2011). A research was conducted in Guatemala on the evaluation of awareness campaigns. Which concluded that it has measureable significant impact in increasing women political participation in terms of voting (Roza, Rodríguez-Tejedo, Silva, Cruz, & Vega, 2014).

A study was conducted in Pakistan. Which conclude that in the city of Lahore Get-Out-the-Vote Campaign works. When information is provided to the family it can help them to make a collective decision after discussing the matter with one another. But the impact of these campaigns is not the same it can be varied depending upon different factors and contexts. More research is needed to study the impact on these campaigns and to understand why, how and when these campaigns can be most effective and provide with the best outcome (Liaqat et al., 2019).

### **Elections 2002 in Pakistan:**

**Total Numbers of Registered Voters in 2002:**

Province/Area	Men	Women	Total
Islamabad	203900	180170	384070
Sindh	8765729	7375837	16141566
Punjab	21874446	19379412	41253858
FATA	813863	467842	1281705
NWFP	4971778	3954030	8925808
Baluchistan	2124021	1802822	3926843
Total	38753737	33160113	71913850

Source: General Elections 2002 Report, Election Commission of Pakistan

In the elections of 2002 the numbers of women registered voters was less than the men registered voters. In Islamabad men were 53.1% of the total registered voters and women were 46.9% leaving the gap of 6.2%. In Punjab 53% men and 47% women were registered



voters and the gap was of 6%. In Sindh 54.3% men and 45.7% women were registered voters and the gap was of 8.6%. In NWFP 55.7% men and 44.3% women were registered voters and the gap was of 11.4%. In FATA 63.5% men and 36.5% women were registered voters and the gap was of 27%. In Baluchistan 54.1% men and 45.9% women were registered voters and the gap was of 8.2%.

This low percentage of women voters in male dominant culture is because of many factors. State institutions and political parties have not taken women as registered voters seriously. It is also prohibited and discouraging for women to register their votes by tribal values. They consider it domain of men. In 2002 out of total registered voters 39 million were males and 33 million were females.

#### **Voters Turnout in 2002:**

Province/Area	Total Registered Voters	Total Numbers of Votes Polled
Islamabad	384070	196719
Sindh	16141566	6179416
Punjab	41253858	18996880
FATA	1281705	327211
NWFP	8925808	3107153
Baluchistan	3926843	1164970
Total	71913850	29972353

Source: General Elections 2002 Report, Election Commission of Pakistan

In Islamabad 51.28% of total registered votes were polled. In Punjab 46.03% of total registered votes were polled. In Sindh 38.17% of total registered votes were polled. In



NWFP 35.09% of total registered votes were polled. In FATA 25.48% of total registered votes were polled. In Baluchistan 29.67% of total registered votes were polled.

Election commission of Pakistan (ECP) did not issued or uploaded the data of voters turnout segregated on the bases of men and women on website. But it is estimated that 40% of women casted the vote (PILDAT, 2004). According to a report “Election Observation Mission to Pakistan General Elections” by the Democracy International the turnout of women voters was 41.8%. This report also mentioned that the numbers of turnout in Pakistan are not reliable. Comparatively the low turnout is because of political culture in which corruption is deep rooted and voters have not been able to trust the political parties and their ability to deliver (Democracy International, 2008) (p.27).

**Reserved Seats for Women in 2002-2007:**

Assemblies	Number of Women Legislator
Overall	232
National Assembly	73
Senate	18
Punjab	73
Sindh	33
NWFP	23
FATA	00
Baluchistan	12

Source: Women & Elections 2008, Legislative Watch, Issue No.23 Aurat Foundation.

Above table shows the numbers of women legislators against their respective assemblies in 2002-2007.

**Elections 2008 in Pakistan:**

Total Number of Registered Voters in 2008:



Province/Area	Men	Women	Total
Islamabad	261697	221104	482801
Sindh	10894176	8612297	19506473
Punjab	24481520	20004376	44485869
FATA & NWFP	7310176	4761362	12071538
Baluchistan	2358971	2004639	4363610
Total	45306540	35603778	80910291

Source: General Election 2008 Report, Pakistan Coalition for Free, Fair and Democratic Elections

In the elections of 2002 as well as in the elections of 2008 the numbers of women registered voters was less than the men registered voters. In Islamabad men were 54.20% of the total registered voters and women were 45.80% leaving the gap of 8.4%. In Punjab 55.03% men and 44.97% women were registered voters and the gap was of 10.06%. In Sindh 55.84% men and 44.16% women were registered voters and the gap was of 11.68%. In FATA & NWFP 60.55% men and 39.45% women were registered voters and the gap was of 21.1%. In Baluchistan 54.06% men and 45.94% women were registered voters and the gap was of 8.12%.

### **Voters Turnout in 2008:**

Province/Area	Total Registered Voters	Total Numbers of Votes Polled
Islamabad	482801	383603
Sindh	19506473	8467146
Punjab	44485869	20931539
FATA & NWFP	12071538	3380358
Baluchistan	4363610	2004639
Total	80910291	34542454

Source: General Election 2008 Report, Pakistan Coalition for Free, Fair and Democratic Elections



In Islamabad 79.45% of total registered votes were polled. In Punjab 46.52% of total registered votes were polled. In Sindh 43.40% of total registered votes were polled. In NWFP and FATA 28% of total registered votes were polled. In Baluchistan 31.62% of total registered votes were polled.

Major reduction was seen in the elections of 2008. Women casted much less votes, the reason might be possible terrorists' attacks. 3.92 million Women casted their votes in 2002 in Pakhtunkhwa but in 2008 these votes were reduced to 2.17 million which is almost 45% less than 2002. 9/11 attacks and the military operation in FATA also affected the voters turnout and it declined to 96%. Many other factors also caused the less turnout of women in all over Pakistan. 41% in Sindh, 37% in Punjab, and only 19% in Islamabad (PILDAT, 2012). 39% reduction in women turnout and 18% in males' turnout was found in 2008. In 2008 Dr. Fahmida Mirza was nominated the speaker of National Assembly which was the only appreciate able step towards women political participation (NCSW, 2014).

Along with this some steps were taken to facilitate women political participation before 2008 which were related the women registered voters. The numbers of registered voters increased as compare to 2002. The procedure of casting vote was very complex, because of that many votes were marked as invalid. The procedure to stamp five ballot paper created a lot of confusion and was a big constraint in this regard (NCSW, 2014). Along with this late opening, lack of sufficient material, lack of facilities on polling stations and discouragement of media towards women from casting their votes were the constraints faced by voters.

Women were listed by both fathers name and married names which caused a lot of confusion (Democracy International, 2008) (p.11). The electoral procedure was criticized by NCSW (2014). Counting of votes and polling were not paid specific consideration in terms of gender expect in polling booths reserved for women. Women voters were also not considered and much importance was not given to women voters in terms of final counts of results of candidates. Gender specific representation should be there in the official record of "Election Commission of Pakistan" (ECP) to better understand the women political participation in terms of voter.

### **Reserved Seats for Women in 2008-2013:**



<b>Assemblies</b>	<b>Number of Women Legislator</b>
Overall	233
National Assembly	76
Senate	17
Punjab	76
Sindh	30
NWFP	22
FATA	00
Baluchistan	12

Source: Women & Elections 2008, Legislative Watch, Issue No.23 Aurat Foundation.

Above table shows the numbers of women legislators against their respective assemblies in 2008-2013. Overall 233, National assembly 76, Senate 17, Punjab 76, Sindh 30, NWFP 22, FATA 00, Baluchistan 12, seats were reserved for women in 2008-2013.

### **Elections 2013 in Pakistan:**

Total Number of Registered Voters in 2012:

<b>Province/Area</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Total</b>
Islamabad	370560	314264	684824
Sindh	11138189	8992708	20130897
Punjab	30182757	23641863	53824620
FATA	1129140	593164	1722304
Baluchistan	1914014	1419304	3333318
Pakhtunkhwa	7629288	5747366	13376654
Total	52363948	40708669	93072617



In Islamabad men were 54.11% of the total registered voters and women were 45.88% leaving the gap of 8.22%. In Punjab 56.07% men and 43.93% women were registered voters and the gap was of 12.14%. In Sindh 55.32% men and 44.68% women were registered voters and the gap was of 10.64%. In FATA 65.55% men and 34.45% women were registered voters and the gap was of 31.1%. In Baluchistan 57.42% men and 42.58% women were registered voters and the gap was of 14.84%. In Pakhtunkhwa 57.03% men and 42.97% women were registered voters and the gap was of 14.06%. Overall women registered voters were 43.73% of total registered voter as compare to men which were 56.27%.

**Voters Turnout in 2013 Elections:**

Province/Area	Total Male Voters Voted	Total Female Voters Voted	Total
Islamabad	337900	288064	625964
Sindh	10490631	8472744	18963375
Punjab	27697701	21561633	49259334
FATA	1142234	596079	1738313
Baluchistan	1915388	1421271	3336659
Pakhtunkhwa	7008533	5257624	12266157
Total	48592387	37597415	86189802

The elections of 2013 emerged according to the rules and regulations of law and elections with a difference (PILDAT, 2013). It facilitated women to come forward in the politics. In the elections of 2013 number of register voters increased in respective of the terrorist attacks in Pakistan and political unrest. “The Election Commission of Pakistan” (ECP) failed to maintain the data based on the gender during the all stages of elections. Which is a hurdle to better access and analyze the participation of women and to work accordingly to enhance the political participation of women in future (AF 2013).

Tehreek-e-Insaf’s mobilization played an important role to activate first time men and women voters (PILDAT, 2013). In 2013 women turnout to cast vote increased from 44%



(which was in 2008) to 55% in 2013. But still there are 10 million unregistered women voters. In around 564 polling stations the turnout of women voters had been zero and unaddressed. The result of those polling stations was not displayed by “The Election Commission of Pakistan” (ECP) (Jamil, 2014). Historically women have faced many challenges and hardships to get their rights not only as a human being but also being a citizen of a country. Voting rights are basic rights which a citizen should have so that he or she can play its part in the political scenario of a country. Not only women but also the common men have also been deprived from voting rights but men were able to get their voting rights much earlier as compare to women. Women are still struggling to have the full capacity to participate in voting. They are being discouraged or they have to face hurdles one way or the other. Sometimes its culture, patriarchy, male dominance, being oppressed or lack of facilities which are discouraging factors for women to participate in voting. Struggle of women had been going on from many years and will last for years to come.

#### **Reserved Seats for Women in 2013:**

Assemblies	Number of Women Legislator
Overall	1170
National Assembly	342
Senate	100
Punjab	371
Sindh	168
KPK	124
Baluchistan	65

Source: Legislative Watch 2013 elections - Women representation in legislatures

Overall 1170, National assembly 342, Senate 100, Punjab 371, Sindh 168, KPK 124, Baluchistan 65, seats were reserved for women in 2013.

Number of Women Representation in National Assembly of Pakistan:



	Total Number of Seats	Quota Women	Elected Women	Total	Percentage
2013-2017	342	60	9	69	20.2
2008-2013	342	60	17	77	22.5
2002-2008	342	61	9	70	21.6

Source: National Assembly of Pakistan; Women Parliamentary Caucus

Above table shows the total numbers of seats and seats reserved for women in 2013-2017, 2008-2013 and 2002-2008 Number of Candidates Contested In Elections and Given Tickets. In 2013-2017 quota for women in national assembly was 60, and women elected were 9, make it 69 which is 20.2 percent of total seats. In 2008-2013 quota for women in national assembly was 60, and women elected were 17, make it 77 which is 22.5 percent of total seats. In 2002-2008 quota for women in national assembly was 61, and women elected were 9, make it 70 which is 21.6 percent of total seats.

	Elections of 2002		Elections of 2008		Elections of 2013	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Total	2005	61	2130	75	4301	161
Independent	706	24	1131	35	2248	95
Others	768	15	450	13	1210	30
Pakistan Muslim League (N)	165	5	202	7	208	8
Pakistan People Party	219	10	233	14	212	13
Pakistan Tehreek E Insaaf	91	3	0	0	224	6
MQM	56	4	114	6	199	8

Source: General Election 2013: FAFEN Observation – Key Findings and Recommendations



Above tables shows the comparison of women and men who contested in the elections of 2002, 2008 and 2013. Women were not provided with equal opportunities as compare to men. Not even they were encouraged by different political parties. Independent women candidates who contested in elections were 24 in 2008, 35 in 2008 and 95 in 2013. Pakistan Muslim League's (N) women candidates who contested in elections were 5 in 2008, 7 in 2008 and 8 in 2013. Pakistan People Party's women candidates who contested in elections were 10 in 2008, 14 in 2008 and 13 in 2013. Pakistan Tehreek e Insaaf's women candidates who contested in elections were 3 in 2008, and 6 in 2013. MQM's women candidates who contested in elections were 4 in 2008, 6 in 2008 and 8 in 2013. Which shows even political parties not supported and encouraged women and provided them with the opportunities to contest in elections.

### **Discussion and Conclusion:**

Women are almost 52 percent of the total population in Pakistan. In order to develop society, enhance the quality and quantity of human resources, sustainable development, to solve the issues of women and to strengthen democracy women political participation is much needed. Women have the multi-dimensional trait of, which can be very fruitful if utilized. As women political participation is much important and fruitful for the country there are many hurdles which are faced by women. Patriarchy is biggest concern in the societies like Pakistan, if somehow women manage to get into politics he will have to be limited only in female wing. Old customs, none women friendly environment, considered incapable, economic dependency of women on men, discouragement from political parties, lack of allocation of funds to women politicians, political system is not designed the way it suits women.

With the passage of time things have got much better for women In terms of political activities like voting, but women still have to face many hurdles while contesting in elections. As women are facing much more hurdles to hold or contest for the seat in parliament as compare to as a voter. In urban areas women are not having much hurdles in terms of voting but in urban areas women still have not right to caste there votes according to their own wish or even discouraged to vote. Socio-economic, social system and religious argumentation, hinder women's political emancipation in Pakistani society. Not only are the external factors but also there are some internal factors. Women do not know the worth of their votes, as they are more than 50 percent of the total population and can have huge impact on the success of a political candidate. It is well documented that government can play a vital role to increase the political participation of women. Current Government of Pakistan has created women wing to facilitate women, increasing women's access to politics, education, healthcare, economic opportunity and legal protection, and adding

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women in boards of public bodies and also Pakistani government has made it a law that if the turnout of women in a constituency is less than 10% of the total registered votes, then there will be re-election. The main challenge Pakistan faces in the promotion and protection of women's rights is to ensure the implementation of constitutional provisions and international obligations, in addition to raising awareness and changing entrenched societal attitudes relating to women and women's rights... tackling the patriarchal culture which consider women second grade citizens. Government is also working to improve women education and physical health by establishing women institutes as well as health units. A number of women are working as a primary teacher, but still politically women in Pakistan have still a long to go.

Most of the women due to limited exposure, may not want more women representatives but they continuously need them. There must be a quota system until we develop civic sense in our society. As it helps to represent both gender properly Initially Gender quota is the only feasible policy to ensure women's inclusion in the parliament, women are getting education but still due to discrimination, and lack of resources they do not come forward. Even sometimes women do not fill the quota seats. Secondly, quotas are temporary measures aimed at eradicate inequality that has built over time. Compulsion should be made for political parties to give equal election tickets and importance to women. Men and women have diverse and often contradictory needs which lead men and women think about politics in different ways. This has important consequences for women's and men's social and public roles, and it will influence the extent to which policy decisions reflect men's and women's demands and interests.

Women politicians and policy makers are more effective in targeting issues related to social welfare because women understand it more than men do for example child abuse, labor and protection, women trafficking, women's health and education along with this women also play a key role in conflict resolution and peacebuilding and also take active part in peace talks.

Men are slightly more likely to mention trade, taxes, and foreign policy as compelling concerns for taking part in politics.

Women are more concerned with the issues faced by women, Only women politicians highlight the domestic violence, acid attacks, marriage and divorce rights, necessary amendments to the sexual harassment bill, home based and domestic workers. One of the respondent commented that women can perform way better than men as in the recent pandemic, countries led by women have better managed this pandemic like New Zealand and Germany. According to a report of "Bloom Berg Business" countries run by women

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have suffered half as many Covid-19 Deaths as those led by men. One respondent also mentioned that gender has nothing to do with being a good leader, it is all about skills and capabilities, but unfortunately in Pakistan women are discouraged to be equipped with these skills.

### **Limitations and Future Recommendations:**

This research was intended to have insight of the women political participation in Pakistan. In future interviews can be conducted from different politicians from Pakistan for better understanding. A comparative study of two provinces can also provide better understanding of women political participation in Pakistan as there is huge difference in political participation of women among provinces. A cross cultural study with more developed country as compare to Pakistan can also help to better understand, and also can provide us with many ways to improve the situation of women political participation in Pakistan. Furthermore this research is based on secondary data, research can be done in future using primary data either qualitative, quantitative or mix methods can applied for better understanding.



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