



Gendered Federalism: Issues and Challenges to Women's Political Participation in Sindh, Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

This research article will examine the challenges and prospects of women participating in the politics of Sindh. Generally, in Pakistan the women are always suppressed and they are neglected in policy making process and the political system of Pakistan mainly dominated by the male and the subject of policy making is considered as the subject of the male. Despite this, women have been active in the politics of Sindh from the time of the Pakistan movement. Benazir Bhutto also hailed from Sindh and became Prime minister of Pakistan twice once in 1988 and then in 1993. However, the women in Sindh have a very limited role in the politics of the Province. The research aims to analyze various Ideological, socioeconomic, political, and psychological constraints and the challenges the women face in Sindh. The paper mainly emphasizes the role of Sindhi society, centuries-old traditions, predetermined gendered roles- patriarchy and male dominancy in social and political institutions, and religious misperceptions that barricade women's political representation in the province.



Introduction

The political system is based on democratic rules and democracy always supports equal representation and rights. However, in Pakistan, a minor number of women take part in the mainstream political system and the decisions of the country. On the other hand, women share more than the population of males. Pakistan is a member of different organizations that supports gender equality and discrimination against women is discouraged at a larger scale, Organizations like UNO etc. Apart from that different other organizations like International human rights agencies played a vital role in educating women in different countries including Pakistan, which had increased awareness regarding gender discrimination and the ongoing media campaigns have played a positive role in educating and supporting women on different forums.

Pakistani society has recognized women's participation is essential for creating a stable and successful society and that, in order to do this, they must be elected to local, provincial, and national

assemblies as well as be included in the decision-making process. There are significant disparities between women's role in politics in different parts of the world. The most contentious problems in developing nations today is women's empowerment. Since Pakistan's independence, there haven't been many women in mainstream politics despite the country's claims to be a democratic (Ali, 2018). Despite this, the Pakistani government adopted a limited number of measures to advance women's rights; yet, women still face several obstacles because of society's patriarchal structure.

It is a widely held belief that countries cannot advance significantly in any area of life until their women are treated fairly and without discrimination. Therefore, empowering women is necessary to improve their position as well as the status of their families, communities, and their nation. What obstacles women in Sindh have in participating in politics, and how do these obstacles prevent them from being represented politically in the province, it have been examined in this study.

Sindh: The Situational Context

Sindh is a feudal system with a mixed urban culture; gender inequality, prejudice against people of other cultures and religions, and distortion of Islamic teachings are all typical occurrences. These elements are crucial to the terrible state of Sindh's women. The statement that Sindhi women still lag behind the rest of the globe may not be untrue.

It is also true that numerous groups, such as NGOs or organized societies, are trying to raise the status of women. Their major goal is to do so. Numerous motivational speakers have worked to improve the lives of women, but nothing seems to be working and the situation in Sindh appears to be unchanged.

Claims regarding the empowerment of women are meaningless in situations when a woman's decision will be made by someone else. Women who experience such conditions have very poor self-esteem, little ability to make decisions, and no longer have the freedom to make their own decisions. Women are in a particularly awkward position since they are the object of men's criticism while still being the pride of the family. Therefore, it is necessary to punish harshly anyone who speaks out against the mistreatment of women. They may even have to die for the sake of honour in some circumstances.

Historical civilization, customs, social mores, and conventions all originated in Sindh. Naturally, Sindh's residents are kind and loving. They treat their visitors with the utmost respect and extend a warm welcome. They are renowned for their friendliness. However, once a problem involves women, normative boundaries inevitably break down, revealing a significant disparity between both sexes in the same country. In Sindh, men predominate in both society and the household. Even if they are not a direct member of their family, they have the right to make decisions of any type, whether they concern their own family or those of other related women (Soomro et.al, 2012). Islam portrays a positive image of women being respected in society, but these women are unwilling to follow Islam's rules and instead prefer to adhere to their own traditions and values (Shami, 2010).

Political engagement must be considered within the context of the current environment in Sindh.

Demography

The demography profile of Sindh is given in given table.

S.No	Content	Data
01	Area	140,914 km ²
02	Population	47,886,051
03	Rural	22,975,593
04	Urban	24,910,458

05	Male	24,927,046
06	Female	22,956,478
07	Transgender	2,527
08	Total	47,886,051
09	Infant Mortality rate	62/1000(PPHI SINDH)
10	Density (per Sq/Km)	339.8 persons per km ²
11	Population Growth Rate	2.41 %
12	Total Fertility Rate	3.6 per women
13	Contraceptive Prevalence Rate (CPR)	30.9%

Source: Population Welfare Department Sindh.

Mean age of marriage in Sindh

Child marriage cases have been reported in Sindh but the Sindh province is the only province in Pakistan which through legislation the minimum age limit is fixed, Sindh Child Marriages Restraint Act, 2013. In Sindh no any marriage can be enacted if the bride is less than 18 years age, and if it is reported police takes action against that but in rural areas where police can approach or there are family traditions the marriages are reported where the age of bride is reported as 11 years to 16 years.

Economic profile

The economic profile of women in South Asia is poor the majority of women work in fields in rural areas and limited number of women work in offices or government Jobs, the case of Pakistan is similar to Bangladesh, India, Nepal, the government of Pakistan passed many bills from the legislative assembly in favor of women but the women's life get unchanged in rural, The Sindh is the again only province which passed many bills regarding justice system for women. Minimum wages and special incentives are announced by the government of Sindh for women, in Sindh the women's quota for the first time is introduced by the Sindh government and now in the Public service examinations of Sindh, there are separate seats for women.

Agriculture

Agriculture is the backbone of Pakistan's economy like men women are the important in their agricultural services. The women in Sindh are busy all the time with their animals and they are also found in the fields in order to earn for their families. The women cut the gross, they bow the seeds, they plough the fields and many other services are taken but in return the women get nothing

Poverty

The Sindh province witness more than 70% population lies under poverty line and as per statics reports of state bank that Sindh is number second after Baluchistan which faces poverty ,the women also are the effected and the women in tribal areas of Sindh they face acute poverty issues, they are deprived of their basic rights.

Level of Urbanization

The Sindh province is considered as the most urban province of Pakistan due to the urban cities of Karachi, Hyderabad and Sukkur, these cities are counted in urban Sindh .The women in rural areas of Province are very limited towards education the majority of women get education up to primary level and on the other hand in urban cities of province the women get the modern education up to degree level and they are keen interested in jobs.

Work Participation

Like Women in other provinces, women of Sindh are the participating in economy of the country in terms of their work in the agriculture and house hold works like sewing the clothes and the poor class of women they work in mini industries in cities and they're even given task they work in their homes and their male partners they sell the items in the market but the mainstream jobs are still away from the women who live in poor class or the tribal setup.

Education

There is need to reform the system and women should be encouraged to get technical and medical education and also in the field of judiciary so that they can be enough active to fight for their rights though law. The education ratio in rural is still very low due to it women are harassed and they are not able to talk for their basic rights.

Crime against Women

According to official records, Sindh has a high prevalence of violence against women. While there is a significant rate of crime against women, their level of literacy is too low. They face the situation of mistrust from their family, particularly from the males or the head of their family. They always have doubts about their character. For the sake of honor, they can readily be put to death. It is considered unethical in this community to converse with guys. And if it is established that a woman had communication with a guy, it is deemed to be wholly immoral and unacceptable, and the woman is held liable even though she had made no mistakes. Men consistently have the upper hand, and they are able to abuse women and use conventions as their laws because they consistently have an advantage over women (Begum, 2014).

Methodology

This study is based on the qualitative method. This study used secondary sources. While using secondary sources, different books, Journals, newspapers, the internet, and private media channels are critically evaluated to make this research more decisive. The research aims to analyze various Ideological socio-economic, political, and psychological constraints that exist in gender development.

Challenges Faced by Women in Sindh Regarding Political Participation Ideological Constraints

Predetermined Gender Roles-Patriarchy

Patriarchy can be best defined in Rich's words "A familial-social, ideological, political system in which men by force, direct pressure or through ritual, tradition, law, and language, customs etiquette, education, and the division of labor, determine what part women shall or shall not play in which the female is everywhere subsumed under the male." (Rich,1977) Uneven relationships between men and women are a result of gender ideology. In Sindh, male dominance and female subjugation are normative stances. The male counterpart still views women as inferior, and violence against women is a common occurrence in Sindhi society. Giving men an excessively greater social status than women has become ingrained in public life.

Traditions still place a strong emphasis on the fundamental responsibilities of women, which are to care for their homes and raise their families. The values which are purely traditional and cultural work against the progress and growth of the women in the field of politics and it is due to the strong role of male and it favors the male due to their role in every field of life. The notion of "a woman's place" rules most societies throughout the world. This ideology suggests that women should only take on the low-paid, apolitical job of "working mother." Men even instruct women on how to vote in some nations, in addition. This is the atmosphere that many women work in, where a particular cultural image of women in conventional, nonpolitical role continues to rule.

Ingrained Custom: Honour Killing

Although Sindh society is acknowledged to be a Muslim society, a problem arises when women are treated in accordance with local men's norms and values rather than by religion, and as a result, they must deal with all the challenges, discrimination, and the oppression by the male though it is the usual practice in this society. In this type of situation, the power of women

is very strange and only one can find in documented form only (Soomro et.al, 2012). The general mentality in rural areas has not yet altered in the age of globalization. The practice of "KARO KARI" honour killing is still in existence, and people take pride in it. Family members sometimes mistrust women, particularly men. They always have doubts about their character. For the sake of honour, they can readily be put to death. . It is considered unethical in this community to converse with the opposite sex. Furthermore, if it is proved or there is any witness that a woman had any contact with a man, it is deemed wholly immoral and unacceptable, and the woman is held liable even though she had done nothing wrong. Since men always have an edge over women, they can take advantage of women and utilize customs as their rules (Begum, 2014).

Women face challenges and barriers for a variety of reasons that prevent them from making decisions or holding positions of authority in the political or social spheres (Hanif, 2011). They cannot be permitted to know about their rights therefore they must accept this injustice as the system of life, society or family and go through it without realizing it and they consider it as the freedom of that level only.

Socio-Economic Constraints:

Lack of Social Capital

In general, per capita income is low, and the lives of women are woeful. In backward areas, they are compelled to be confined and even stripped of their economic rights. Women in interior Sindh are coerced into marriages with Quran against their will in order to deny them an inheritance. The degree to which women participate in politics is primarily reliant on their ability to access opportunities and financial resources that will enable them to become independent, competent, and self-assured individuals. women's lack of a solid economic foundation has played a role in their participation—or lack thereof—in politics. Given the costs associated with elections, participation may be limited by a lack of funds.

The danger of poverty for women has increased due to the economic crisis, and like unemployment, this risk is expected to become more feminized in the future.

Unemployment

Due to their non-professional experience and expertise, individuals also have limited options to access the work market. Only 21% of workers are women, and men dominate the market's remaining 79%. The sociopolitical orientation of women is negatively impacted by masculine predominance. Through both paid and unpaid labour, women make significant contributions to the economies of their countries. Regarding the latter, it is important to recognize the contribution of rural women and their significance as a voting bloc. Despite the obvious significance of women's biological and social responsibilities, their contribution to all aspects of life is sometimes overlooked.

The connection between socioeconomic class and political behaviour is further highlighted by unemployment.

Domestic work and time constraints

Unfairly more domestic labour is carried out by women. It must be acknowledged that it is challenging for women to get involved in politics when survival is their top priority and they are forced to spend a significant portion of their time attempting to provide for their children. This study concluded 98% of women have limited free time because of their major roles as spouses and mothers, as well as performing domestic duties and caregiving tasks.

Lack of Social mobility

Women's mobility is also restricted by cultural norms. Their mobility is limited by the purdah and sex segregation customary laws. Women must be exposed to politics in order to interact with both male and female constituents and speak at public events.

Illiteracy and lack of Training

The most effective way to encourage women to speak out for their rights is through education. Women's political participation and literacy rates do not always correlate, but many

nomination processes for candidates call for a certain degree of literacy. Even In remote areas, men tell them how to vote. This makes it impossible for women to sign up to run for office. Many women lack the political education/training necessary to contribute effectively to politics in addition to having a basic education. Therefore, there is a need to increase the number of women who meet the qualifications for employ in political occupations.

Religious Misinterpretations

Arguments have been developed to support the social inferiority of women to men by misinterpreting religious teachings and ideas. The belief is shared by women that politics is a filthy game and that only men can be the finest players.

Women typically have fewer opportunities to participate in politics and use their political rights. It is particularly challenging to overcome those who are in Pakistani society because so many religious elected elites and parties are opposed to women participating in politics.

Sherazi,2013, Zia,2009, Jabeen and Zafer 2009, Shaeed et al, 2009, Latif, et al 2015 all emphasized a number of causes, including misinterpretation of religious teachings, for the marginalization of women in politics.

The religious orthodoxy severely forbids women from participating in politics. They are prohibited from using their voting rights and active in elections. Women's political and electoral involvement in rural Pakistan is shockingly low, and tribe elders forbid them from voting on the grounds of tradition and religion. They contend that Islam forbids women from engaging in activities with men or carrying out activities that are not proper for them.

Political Constraints

Masculine Political Structure

Men predominate in politics, create the majority of the political game's rules, and frequently set benchmarks for success. Furthermore, male conventions, ideals, and in certain cases even male lives are used to reflect political life.

Women MPs are expected to network inside their parties, at multi-party levels, and with women outside of parliament in addition to working on committees, representing their constituencies, and working for their parties. political parties take advantage of women who sit in allocated seats. The women contact voters less and are less familiar with their constituencies. Women party members are not given vital information by party officials. They don't ask their opinion or heed it. On a small number of issues, women in powerful positions within the party can be consulted. Compared to men, women are viewed as inferior. Male party leaders make use of the money designated for women. They are not sufficiently represented in the parliament or have a voice.

Lack of Party Support

Due to their lack of socialization, economic dependence, and limited mobility, political parties are hesitant to offer party tickets to women candidates for general seats. Additionally, the women's seat quota has evolved into a compromise used by political parties to reshuffle powerful political families.

Even though the political parties have resources for running electoral campaigns, women hardly ever use these resources. For instance, many parties don't give female candidates enough financial support. Additionally, the political party nomination and selection processes are skewed against women because "masculine qualities" are frequently emphasized and used as selection criteria. Women may be hindered and prevented from participating in their party's work by their male counterparts.

Psychological Constraints

Lack of Confidence

One of the key causes of women's underrepresentation in formal political institutions is a lack of confidence. Women can rise to the top positions in politics if they have confidence and perseverance. Women are capable of the same things as men do, but only if they can stand up for themselves. Fear occasionally keeps women from contesting in elections and taking part in political life, even though, they are excellent organizers, support-mobilizers, and campaigners.

Public Opinion- Role of Media

Media frequently give insufficient coverage to occasions and groups that are important to women. Generally, media depicts women as a beautiful object, that only highlight its attractiveness and notion of beauty rather than her mental capabilities that confirm the centuries-old gender role stereotype of the weak segment of society where women are object and second-class citizen. There is a need to realize the equal value of both genders.

Conclusion

Predetermined gender roles-patriarchy, deep-rooted cultural traditions, lack of social capital, unemployment, lack of social mobility, religious misinterpretations, illiteracy, masculine political structure, lack of party support, lack of confidence, and public role of media are the main challenges that barricade females' participation in politics. The above-mentioned challenges to female political engagement have been found to be socially driven in male-dominated societies, which also contributes to women's economic disempowerment and discrimination. It goes hand in hand with the incorrect patriarchal misinterpretation of religion. These elements leave the political platforms of political parties at the whim of the society's men solely. People have developed negative gender preconceptions about women because of these beliefs, and any time a woman tries to contradict one of these clichés, society shuns her as immoral. Due to social taboos, only men are encouraged to actively participate in the process of legislation.

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