

WOMEN POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND THEIR ROLE IN THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF BALUCHISTANTariq Ahmed Khan¹, Dr. Naimatullah Hashmi²**Original Article**

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Abstract

Baluchistan is the ignored and undeveloped province of Pakistan. It suffers from instability and *uncertainty in its social, political, and economic spheres, which prevents it from contributing to the provision of the country. Long-term prosperity in the fields of culture, society, economics, and politics is only possible when women are empowered politically. The country can only flourish if its entire labor force including both men and women are put to productive custom. Women can be thought completely empowered if they are adequately represented in politics and have an equal opportunity to participate in decision-making. Women in Baluchistan find it practically impossible to participate in politics due to the likelihood of being disowned by their own families due to cultural and traditional conservative pressures, which are hindering the role and importance of women in the province along with their growth and development. Based on this study aims to evaluate and highlight women's political engagement and their contribution to Baluchistan's social, political, and economic growth. The study employed a cross-sectional field survey, using a sample of 222 Balochistan female political activists. The data obtained thus far have been examined using statistical approaches such as percentages and Pearson Correlation. The findings indicate that the primary hurdles to women in politics are gender differences, political inequity, conservative customs, religious fundamentalism, a lack of education, and geographical discrepancies.*

Keywords: Women participation, Politics, Socio-economic development, Decision Making.

Introduction

Women make up nearly half of the world's population. Due to their twin roles in the productive and reproductive domains, females contribute twice as much to social and economic growth as men. Their participation in formal political structures and procedures, on the other hand, remains minimal. At the moment, female legislators make about 15% of all legislatures in the world (Bari, 2005). Males and females' activities outside and within the house are substantially segregated in most societies. As a corollary, female empowerment is limited and regulated. In order to compete, men are given more schooling. Men have been the basis of power in social, economic, and political domains

since women have indeed been relied on males due to limited opportunities and have a little role in the creation of economic and social decisions or policies. Women are unable to express their concerns or campaign for political participation since they are excluded from decision-making bodies (Kumar, 2017). Patriarchy, conservative theological interpretations, and cultural stereotyping have combined to create a severe psychological barrier to women's political and socioeconomic participation (Alzuabi, 2016). Incorporating women's voices into politics and government has proven to be a more difficult task. Only nine of the world's 191 countries have a female head of state or government at the moment. Women make up

fewer than a tenth of government ministers and one-fifth of all sub-ministerial offices globally, according to UN statistics. Women may have difficulty breaking into electoral office in developing societies because they are often disadvantaged by inadequate childcare, low literacy, insufficient health care, and poverty. The level of socioeconomic development of a country is strongly related to the proportion of female lawmakers (Norris & Inglehart, 2001). Women's political engagement is frequently influenced by the laws that govern broader social institutions. The limitations faced by women are mostly due to an ingrained patriarchal framework in which males wield power over their families and make decisions. Traditional beliefs and cultural attitudes concerning women's responsibilities and social position endure, especially in rural regions. Men's and women's roles and employment differences continue to exist. Women have a tougher time shifting from traditional household chores to more public employment outside the home due to social limitations. Women's gender identity is still mostly perceived as domestic, which prevents women from engaging in formal politics. Women's socioeconomic situation has a greater impact on their involvement and participation in political decision-making than men's does. Women do not have the financial resources to participate in politics more successfully. Because campaigning is so expensive, women's lack of financial security has influenced their participation in politics. Election participation may be hampered by a lack of financial resources owing to the fees involved (Mlambo & Kapingura, 2019).

Women's participation in politics on an equal footing is vital to their overall development. It's not simply a call for basic fairness or democracy; it's also a prerequisite for taking women's issues into account. Without women's active engagement and inclusion of their perspectives at all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality, progress, and peace would remain unattainable (Khan & Ara, 2006). Another severe impediment is the institutional framework that governs gender-

based labor distribution, recruiting, and vertical mobility. Women are disproportionately disadvantaged, with their labor frequently being undervalued and underutilized, according to current estimates. Another barrier that women face is an insufficient level of engagement and empowerment in political and social activities that affect their lives. Men dominate usually public decision-making processes, the decision-making bodies reflects men values (Kasomo, 2012). Women's experiences are distinct from men's and must be reflected in policy discussions and execution. This is why women are required in representative systems to articulate those interests (Kassa, 2015). Women's rights in mainstream society remains a pipe dream, with a gap between legally recognized rights and actual practice (Iwanaga, 2008). Despite quantitative improvements that have had little qualitative influence on women's lives, women's empowerment in Pakistan has not improved (Ali & Akhtar, 2012). Women's essentially non-existent engagement in various disciplines, notably politics and socioeconomic growth, reflects and supports a larger power imbalance between men and women in both the public and private spheres (Zakar et al., 2018).

Due to the rural-urban split in socioeconomic progress, women's standing in Pakistan is significantly divergent. By and large, women are subjected to systematic subordination in comparison to men. Women's participation in politics is not restricted by Pakistan's constitution; yet their representation in political parties and in the political structure at the municipal, provincial, and national levels remains minimal due to cultural and institutional hurdles (Bano, 2009). Presumably, some customs and social taboos exist in Pakistani society that contributes to the ill-treatment and exploitation of common women. These customary customs have persisted in Pakistani society since the colonial period. Fundamentally, these behaviors are gender-based, putting women in Pakistan at risk (Mushtaq, 2013). In Pakistan, males' education is prioritized over girls'

education since it is believed that guys require intellectual talents to compete for resources, whilst girls need to specialize in domestic skills to be good mothers and husbands; as a result, girls' education is not regarded important. Society has accepted the patriarchal reality of girls' and women's lives, and girls and women have few options to change them. Society prohibits girls and women from realizing their human qualities by forbidding them from receiving an education (Murtaza, 2013). In 2002, a nomination document submitted by a number of famous female MPs was rejected on a variety of grounds. Many women were unable to meet the educational requirements, as all candidates were expected to hold a bachelor's degree (Muhammad et al., 2019).

Numerous campaigns advocating for and recognizing women's political, economic, and social rights have resulted in significant advancements in women's lives, yet these accomplishments have only partially succeeded in achieving parity in a social structure where inequities are highlighted in the media. In general, severe family commitments are imposed on women's everyday lives as a result of most parents' preoccupation with future marital concerns (Ghafoor & Haider, 2018). Popular causes include our society's exclusion of women from political activities, security concerns, and the assumption that political decision-making and public obligations are a man's domain, and that women lack knowledge, aptitude, enthusiasm, and skill. It reflects the systematic bias they suffer from men in positions of authority who refuse to promote them, as well as legislation that limits their employment, training, and other opportunities (Umer et al., 2016). Similarly, female labor is uncommon in Pakistan. Although the average annual growth rate of female participation in Pakistan has increased somewhat from 15.9% in 2003-04 to 18.9% in 2005-06. However, women's participation remains extremely low in comparison to south Asian countries (Faridi et al., 2009). Despite widespread agreement among funders on the importance of women's empowerment, individual donors' efforts

frequently fall short on technical grounds. They are conceptually perplexed by what gender mainstreaming is and how to do it effectively. Men must cede some economic, political, and social authority to women in order to abolish women's subjugation (Morrisson and Jütting, 2004). In impoverished countries, productivity inequalities were negligible between men and women prior to urbanization and the emergence of a market economy. Productivity gaps are becoming more substantial as discrimination against women grows more ubiquitous and they are more excluded from the modern economy. It can be reversed if governments improve women's access to education and training, as well as if job market demand for female workers rises. Economic growth isn't the sole aspect to take into account. Women's status will remain constant if patriarchal structures remain intact, and women will continue to be prohibited from modern sector activities/employment despite the economy's modernization (Morrisson and Jütting, 2005).

Due to prevalence of patriarchal society in Baluchistan society women are treated as a chattel under the arrange marriages the major purpose of which was to serve the mail dominant society. The customs of strict family, traditional values etc portray women as a personal property of men wherein she was owned by her father or brothers before marriage and by husband afterwards. A patriarchal society prevails in Baluchistan, in which women are treated as chattel and are given or obtained through arranged marriages in order to serve a male-dominated social order. Strict family, tribal, and traditional values pervade culture, which views women as the personal property of male family members, owned by the father or brothers before marriage and by the husband afterward (Khosro et al., 2011). In regulating gender roles, tribal laws and fines have frequently trumped constitutional legislation, particularly in rural areas where kin hierarchies persist. Women's positions have been challenged by tribal power conflicts, honor structures, and inter-tribe displays of patriarchal authority. Tribal law considers weddings to be intergroup relationships; women are dragged into

marriages and are not allowed to divorce; complete submission to the husband and his family is demanded; and women are forbidden from obtaining any education. Women are seen as repositories of honor, which is why women are restricted to the home and keep a low profile (Ahmed-Gosh, 2003). Empowering women necessitates the acquisition of applicable skills, the provision of necessary equipment, the establishment of a market for the product, the facilitation of funding, and, lastly, the usage of underutilized resources (Sarma, 2014). Despite revolutions and positive legal reforms, women continue to be burdened by family commitments, are more likely to work in lower status occupations, and earn less regularly than men. Women's economic advancement and empowerment can be aided and empowered if their contribution to the household economy and local society is recognized (Ardrey et al., 2007). Women's empowerment can be aided by lowering substantial inequities between men and women and boosting the battle against discrimination in general; on the other hand, women's active engagement in the labor market serves as a stimulant for economic growth and accelerates development. Women's tenacity in the high-growth entrepreneurial sector has contributed greatly to the economic gap, given that they currently make up almost half of the workforce and more than half of college students (Lechman & Okonowicz, 2013). Sustainable development is impossible to achieve without women's empowerment and gender justice, considering it a humanitarian problem and a prerequisite and sign of sustainable development. It is also

Table 1. Women participation in Politics

argued that gender inequality exists in all cultures and that sustainable development is impossible without conscious efforts to address it. Gender equality is critical for a just and sustainable world, as well as for women's roles in sustaining their families and communities. However, if gender equality is not preserved, the country's progress will undoubtedly be harmed. Gender inequity has significant economic consequences and contributes to worldwide social injustice and environmental damage (Bayeh, 2016).

R1:To determine the nature and scope of women's political engagement in Baluchistan.

R2:To assess the barriers and opportunities for female political participation in Baluchistan.

R3:To ascertain the relationship between women's political participation and Baluchistan's socioeconomic development.

Methodology: This study has conducted a cross-sectional field survey (n= 222) employing a convenience sampling method. The data was collected from female political activists in Balochistan. To measure women's participation in politics and socio-economic development, a 5-point Likert scale was employed. Cronbach Alpha technique has been utilized to check the reliability and internal consistency of the scale. Descriptive statistics along with Pearson correlation was used to summarize or describe the data.

Main Hypothesis: H₁: There is a significant role of women in the politics and socio-economic development of Baluchistan.

Results

Women participation in politics

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Low Political Participation	167	75.2	75.2	75.2
	Medium political Participation	38	17.1	17.1	92.3
	High Political Participation	17	7.7	7.7	100.0
	Total	222	100.0	100.0	

Table 1 shows that 75.2 percent of respondents believed that women's participation in politics is low, 17.1 percent believed it is moderate, and 7.7 percent believed it is high.

Table 2. Social Participation of Women

		Social Participation of Women			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Low Social Participation of women	161	72.5	72.5	72.5
	Medium Social Participation of women	40	18.0	18.0	90.5
	High Social Participation of women	21	9.5	9.5	100.0
Total		222	100.0	100.0	

Table 2 shows that 72.5 percent of respondents believed that women's social participation is low, 18.0 percent believed that women's social participation is moderate, and 9.5 percent believed that women's social participation is high.

Table 3. Women Political Role in Social Development

		Women Political Role in Social Development			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Women's Low Political Role in Social Development	170	76.5	76.5	76.5
	Women's Medium Political in Role Social Development	40	18.0	18.0	94.5
	Women's High Political Role in Social Development	12	5.0	5.0	100.0
Total		222	100.0	100.0	

Table 8 shows that 76.5 percent of respondents said women's political role in social development is low, 18.0 percent believed women's political role in social development is moderate, and 5.0 percent believed women's political role in social development is high.

Table 4. Women Political Role in Economic Development

		Women Political Role in Economic Development			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Women low Political Role in Economic Development	186	83.8	83.8	83.8
	Women Medium Political Role in Economic Development	24	10.8	10.8	94.6
	Women High Political Role in Economic Development	12	5.4	5.4	100.0
	Total	222	100.0	100.0	

The table 4 demonstrates that 83.8 percent of respondents said women's political role in economic development was low, 10.8 percent believed it was moderate, and 5.4 percent believed it was high.

Table 5. Challenges as women Politicians

		Challenges as women Politicians			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	High Challenges as women Politicians	163	73.4	73.4	73.4
	Medium Challenges as women Politicians	38	17.1	17.1	90.5
	Low Challenges as women Politicians	21	9.5	9.5	100.0
	Total	222	100.0	100.0	

The table 5 indicates that 73.4 percent of respondents believed that the challenges faced by women politicians are severe, 17.1 percent believed that the challenges faced by women politicians are moderate, and 9.5 percent said that the challenges faced by women politicians are high.

Table 6. Opportunities Women Political Participants

		Opportunities Women Political Participants			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Low Opportunities for Women Political Participants	167	75.2	75.2	75.2
	Medium Opportunities for Women Political Participants	45	20.2	20.3	95.5
	High Opportunities for Women Political Participants	10	4.5	4.5	100.0
	Total	222	100.0	100.0	

The table 6 demonstrates that 75.2 percent of respondents believe that opportunities for women political participants are limited, 20.2 percent believe that opportunities for women political participants are moderate, and 4.5 percent believe that opportunities for women political participants are high.

Bi-variate Analysis

H₁: There is a significant role of women in the politics and socio-economic development of Baluchistan.

Table 7. Pearson correlation between key variables

		of women participation in politics	of social participation of women	Women Political Role in Social development	Women political RoleEconomic Development	Challenges as Women Politicians	Opportunities for women political participants
women participation in politics	Pearson Correlation	1	.283**	.426**	.200**	-.149*	.006
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.003	.027	.927
	N	222	222	222	222	222	222
social participation of women	Pearson Correlation		1	.738**	.719**	-.129	-.083
	Sig. (2-tailed)			.000	.000	.057	.221
	N		220	220	220	220	220
Women Political Role in Social development	Pearson Correlation			1	.633**	-.137*	-.034
	Sig. (2-tailed)				.000	.041	.615
	N			222	222	222	222
Women political RoleEconomic Development	Pearson Correlation				1	-.131	-.106
	Sig. (2-tailed)					.052	.116
	N				222	222	222
Challenges as Women Politicians	Pearson Correlation					1	.389**
	Sig. (2-tailed)						.000
	N					222	222
Opportunities for women political participants	Pearson Correlation						1
	Sig. (2-tailed)						
	N						222
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).							
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).							

From the result of the person correlation indicated that there was significant positive correlation between women participation in politics and social participation of women ($r(220) = .283^{**}$, $P = .000$), between women participation in politics and Women Political Role in Social development ($r(220) = .426^{**}$, $P = .000$), between women participation in politics and Women political Role in Economic Development ($r(220) = .200^{**}$, $P = .003$), between social participation of women and Women political Role Economic Development ($r(220) = .719^{**}$, $P = .000$), between Women Political Role in Social development and Women political Role Economic Development ($r(220) = .633^{**}$, $P = .000$), between social participation of women and Women Political Role in Social development ($r(220) = .738^{**}$, $P = .000$), and between Challenges as Women Politicians and Opportunities for women political participants ($r(220) = .389^{**}$, $P = .000$). Whereas there was significant negative correlation between women participation in politics and Challenges as Women Politicians ($r(220) = -.149^{**}$, $P = .027$) or between Women Political Role in Social development and Challenges as Women Politicians ($r(220) = .137^{**}$, $P = .041$).

Conclusion

It is concluded that women in Baluchistan play a critical role in the country's social and economic growth, and their role can be bolstered through political engagement. Through a competitive political environment, it can aid in restructuring and reorganizing immature political institutions and systems. Additionally, it can aid in the transformation of political institutions that are now hereditary and top-down in nature. As a result, it is argued that women are an invaluable resource for Baluchistan and that political engagement is the most effective means of empowering them. Women empowerment is ascribed to political activities, social legislation, and decision-making, all of which can contribute to Baluchistan's socioeconomic progress and make it more meaningful.

Recommendations

The following recommendations have been made:

1. Institutions both formal and informal should be realized, and their growth should be accelerated in order to empower women in the province.
2. A national gender equity policies are required to promote gender equality and and elevate female politicians.
3. Pakistan's election commission should take initiative and make it mandatory to allocate women half of the seats, and also alter the organizational structure of political parties.

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