

CONSEQUENCES OF POLITICAL OBSTACLES ON WOMEN POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE OF MULTAN DIVISION

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Received: 13 December, 2023 Revised: 20 January, 2024 Accepted: 24 January, 2024 Published: 30 January, 2024

ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the consequences of political obstacles on women's political empowerment in local governance of South Punjab, Pakistan. Political empowerment is supposed to empower women against political structural perspective and social configurations of political institutions. However, women existence in local governance has social significances for women's political contribution and their political empowerment. The study analyzed the level of women's political empowerment in structural settings of local governance in South Punjab, Pakistan. The second objective was to explore consequences of political obstacles thorough women's political experiences with integrity to their political empowerment in local governance of Multan, South Punjab Provision of Pakistan. Quantitative approach used to analyze the consequences of political obstacles confronting women lay councilors with esteem to their political empowerment in local governance. Survey was conducted from lady councilors of Multan Division situated in South Punjab, Pakistan. Structured questionnaire comprising 'Likert scale' used as a research tool for data collection. Inferential statistical analysis carried out to analyze political experiences of lady councilors associated with political obstacles and their political empowerment in local governance. Women experiences in politics as councilor in local political structure have been impressive and remained satisfactory. Local political structures increased awareness, interaction, and coordination among them. It also escalate the opportunities of empowering and increased their level of political empowerment.

Keywords: Local governance, women political contribution, political empowerment, lady councilor, local political structure, social pattern of political institution.

INTRODUCTION

The gender gap exists in political contribution globally (Rasool, 2023). While the other groups are based on differences in color, creed, gender, and culture. With the increase in women's proportion in politics, they can encourage themselves to play a vital role in devising policies and strategies for women's political empowerment in politics (Stefan, 2023) women's unproductive political roles in different countries, but for an underdeveloped country like Pakistan, these numbers are very small. However, initial steps are being taken in Pakistan to

empower women in local bodies (Gine, 2011). Women's survival in politics is very troublesome.(Awan, 2023).The acceptance of the patriarchal social system along with the lack of political exposure makes women lag behind in politics (Saeed, 2019). The lesser proportion of women in politics is due to men's contribution to contesting elections and taking positions in local bodies (Chhibber, 2002). In spite of progressing and modernizing the society, women still are facing gendered based social issues (Adnan, 2022). For

sexual characteristic's inequality and real democracy, females' political contribution is a robust obligation (Mushtaq, 2022). It empowers women to directly participate in public decision-making and guarantees better accountability for performing political acts (Latif, 2020). It is very important to quantify the mechanisms of political empowerment in order to consequences elections or communal strategy. Political procedures should be linked to power mechanisms and decision-making abilities in order to improve their substance in political institutions (Saeed, 2019).

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Anjum (2001), under the New Local Government System (2001), 33% of women were given representation quotas in the Local Government Elections in Pakistan. As stated by Zia (2010), carrying a dream and characterized the objectives of the "National Policy for Development and Political empowerment of Women" in 2002. Moheyuddin (2005) stated in his article that the government of Pakistan amends the constitution and that 33% of seats in every rank of local government are reserved for women. In the National Assembly, out of 332 members, 60 seats are reserved for women, while in the provincial assemblies, 128 seats are reserved for women out of 728 seats. Moreover, in the senate, 17 seats are occupied by women out of 100. For the protection of women, several laws were ratified, namely: the Protection and Political empowerment of Women Bill (2004), the Pakistan Penal Code (Criminal Law Act 2009), the Acid Violence Act (2010), and the Protection against Harassment of Women in the Workplace (2010).

During 2004-05, the government of Pakistan endorsed Gender Reform Action Plans (GRAPs) that recommended the mediation sector, for example, women's work in the public area, strategies and monetary changes, women's political contribution, institutional rebuilding, and support activities to establish an empowering climate. The National Commission on the Status of Women was created under the National Commission on the Status of Women Act 2012 by the Punjab Local Government Department (2018). This commission's main task is to assess the policies and plans devised by the Federal Government for women's empowerment. It

mainly assesses all federal orders, rules, and regulations that are against women's interests.

Politics, according to Latif (2020), is a social science that regulates the distribution of power and authority in order to manage social order and control affairs at the local and national levels. Saeed (2019) mentions in his article that the main component of women's political empowerment is women's involvement in politics. This also helps to solve women's concerns at a social level and empowers them. The distinctive ideological-based categorization of men and women is an international topic. These concepts, along with disrespecting women's self-respect, lower women's social rank. Women's peer groups, especially relatives like husbands, brothers, or other male fellows, are the controlling obstacles for women's out-of-door activities (Saeed, 2019).

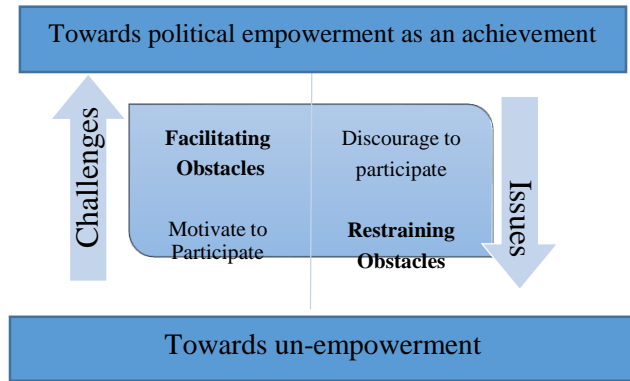
Women get entangled in their daily household activities. Lack of literacy plays a very important role in ignoring their political roles (Khan, 2009). They mainly feel isolated from this system. They feel excluded. The main causes of these types of responses are their immaturity and financial dependence. Often, political parties do not engage young people in their parties for representation. Koyurcu (2016) clarified the fact that due to a large number of active participants, women have made consequences on social change, creating waves where the old power system still governs the social lives of people.

Umer (2016) has proposed a study that will depict the movements of democratization. It has made women realize the maxim "the personal is political" by providing women with the required space and understanding for the process of democratization in Pakistan. Even women's participation is not enough to resolve their social and political concerns (Ahebwa, 2009). Actually, they can consider themselves as the changing factor in local bodies (Zakar, 2018).

Therefore, it is needed to know to what extent women's active political roles help in progressive projects, productive engagements, economic commitments in council affairs, their priorities and responsibilities, social support of their family and relatives, and decision power in political affairs. However, existing social as well as political obstacles may motivate or discourage women towards empowerment or empowerment in a society.

Figure No. 01 depicted facilitating obstacles motivate women participant towards empowerment while restraining obstacles discourage women and leads them towards un empowerment.

Figure No. 01
 A circle of Positive and Negative approach of Obstacles of Women Political Participation



Purpose of the study

This study will provide a new clear dimension and a foundation for policy makers to update the process and policies of local governance. The study attempts to deal with the vulnerable points by educating female councilors to get their rights and utilizing current finance to facilitate the common women of the area. It highlights the inequality (Patriarchy) and biased decision-making about the grant of tickets to female candidates. It shares the practical reports of the female councilors in order to be useful in making plans for the future to avoid queries.

Main Objectives

- To explore political obstacles in women local political contribution.
- To find out reasons of political obstacles and challenges faced by women in local political contribution
- To analyze consequences of political obstacles on women political empowerment in Multan Division

Research Question

The research questions for the current research are as Whether or not political obstacles is associated with women political empowerment?

How do local political obstacles influence women political participation and its consequences on their political empowerment?

Theoretical Framework

The three-dimensional women's empowerment model borrows assumptions from the ecological systems theory (Darling, 2007). People do not exist in a social vacuum but encounter different environments throughout their life that may influence their behavior. Women's empowerment can occur on three distinct but related dimensions: Personal empowerment means that a person has control over his or her thoughts and actions (Hossain, 2015).

Relational empowerment refers to a level of social group membership, such as a larger network level (Pitt et al., 2006) and

Societal empowerment refers to the situation of women in a broader societal context to understand how women's empowerment develops. Also, by breaking down two important moderators of empowerment—time and culture—the model makes it easier to understand why some women may feel more empowered than others.

Integrating all three aspects of women's empowerment and their two moderators, a theoretical framework shows how women's political empowerment may grow through access to political services and gives clear practical implications for involved female councilors at the local level of political participation (Huis, 2017).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study components the mixed research approach to find out women's active political roles in politics and their consequences on achieving their political empowerment tasks in South Punjab, Pakistan. An interpretive approach is used for data understanding. It also promotes the logic of social events (Ormston, 2014). This study analyzed the concrete experiences of lady councilors and was conducted in Multan Division. According to the Punjab Local Government Act 2013, two seats in the union council are reserved for women. The researcher adopted a quantitative research design. The universe/population of the present study is comprised of all women who participated in the local government election held in 2015 in Multan

Division. While simple random sampling was used to target sample size and women were elected to reserved seats as a research population. Survey conducted through proper structured questionnaire as a research tool and consisted of structured open-ended questions that allowed respondents to narrate their experiences. 415 respondent evaluated through the statistical formula out of 990 respondents. The list of 990 respondents as a lady councilors provided by Local Government and community development department of Multan Division. Data consideration (data secrecy) through verbal consent from respondents is assured for the conduction of academic purposes. Quantitative findings were analyzed by inferential statistics (ANOVA and Linear Regression Modules).

Results and Discussion

By quantitative research approach, the data collected by using ‘Likert’. After conducting a response from the participants, the data entered and analyzed in SPSS Software. To predict the frequency and percentage of the education attainment, decision power in political party concerns/affairs, social support from peer group for political engagements, political duties and responsibilities, women economic engagements in councils matters, Women’s contribution in community development projects of the respondents, descriptive analysis was applied.

Results of the simple linear regression analysis of table No. 1 showed that the value of R square showed that the political empowerment significantly contributed to the model as it pertains the values of 0.584. The analysis further showed that ANOVA also showed significant results as $F(3, 411) = 194.8, p < 0.05$. The variable party affiliation, candidate contestation of election and casting of vote were also significantly contributed to the model ($p < 0.05$). It means that women political empowerment has significant consequences on their political engagement, political obstacles and political services, resources and their utilization.

Table No. 01

Consequences of Political Empowerment on Political Factors, Political Engagement and Political Resources and Political services utilization (M3)

Political participation	Unstandardized Coefficients		z-value	p-value
	B	Std. Error		
(Constant)	2.723	.104	.280	.000
Political Engagement	0.302	.006	51.207	.000
Political Resources	-1.819	.088	-20.743	.056
R	0.762			
R ²	0.584			
R adj.	0.588			

Table No. 2 depicted that results of the stepwise linear regression is used to explore the consequences of political obstacles on the political empowerment of women. The regression produced 11 models in which the significant variables were included. The table contains the results of model 11 because it has all the significant variables. The value of R square, i.e., 0.437, of this model showed that the variables included in the model significantly contributed to the model. Further, the significant value of ANOVA also affirmed the fit of the model, $F(11, 403) = 1569.586, p < 0.05$.

The results of the stepwise linear regression showed that the settled trend of resting the party tickets on women, the lack of political lobbying among women, as well as the lack of social capital among women showed significant negative consequences on the political empowerment of women. The measurement of the political empowerment of women is the same as described in the results of the regression analysis about demographic variables and political participation. The analysis also showed that the personal political experience and the party decisions, which are mainly male-dominated and oriented, negatively affect the political empowerment of women.

Results of the current study matched with study conducted in Faisalabad and Rawalpindi of Punjab, Pakistan (Khan 2010) in which women political empowerment is largely associated with lack of political experience in politics and pressure of

political party. Women's has less culturally compatibility of taking decisions about their political career. Their dependency on male members in politics neglect their personal political skills and encouragement to enhance their political skills in existing social settings.

Table No. 02
Consequences of Political Obstacles on Political Empowerment of Women (WPEM)

Political Factors	Unstandardize d Coefficients		z-value	p-value
	B	Std. Error		
(Constant)	2.124	0.022	.547	0.000
Lack of awareness for applying for their CNICs and FIRs (family registration certificate)	0.476	0.032	14.769	0.000
Reserved quota of women in local bodies	0.238	0.026	9.053	0.000
Less ability of connectivity with voters	0.306	0.032	9.438	0.000
Trends settled resist the granting of party tickets to female candidates	-0.097	0.035	-2.764	0.006
Lack of capability to make political alliances with local influential	0.106	0.009	11.759	0.000
Lack of appropriate lobbying	-0.138	0.022	-6.393	0.000
political campaigns, activities and skills depend upon women's social capital	-0.181	0.029	-6.235	0.000
Lack of political experience and awareness,	0.165	0.031	5.276	0.000
Influence of Personal political background experience	-0.081	0.021	-4.376	0.000
Influence of Party decisions during election campaign	-0.112	0.022	-4.656	0.000

Lack of education, awareness & training
 Discouragement for women political leadership

R 0.579
 R² 0.437
 R adj. 0.435

CONCLUSION

The study ascertained the dynamics of gendered political structural setting and pattern of local political activities, which included significant socio-cultural, economic, and political factors for women's political participation. Struggles for female candidate seats, financial and moral support for electioneering campaigns, and preferences for the allocation of lady councilors on reserved seats all have a significant consequences on political empowerment in local government. In the gendered structural settings, the attitude of male members at the council level discourages women from participating in political activities.

Women face issues and obstacles in politics. They have to manage impending opportunities to perform their duties. Lacking self-abilities and skills, women are incapable of participating in politics (Latif, 2020). The number of women's development political projects remains very low (Chhibber, 2002). Women can act as an element of change due to a lack of political understanding and political exposure, but women are neglected by their male councilors due to a lack of political understanding and political exposure (Shvedova, 2005). The major finding of the study is that women are politically dependent on men. Their active political role in politics is basically the contribution of men's struggle. By obeying the patriarchal system of society, women secure their social and political status. By merging themselves into politics, women can play a vibrant role in promoting their social issues at the local governance level. Newcomers to politics should train themselves and educate themselves about political understanding. Political and economic impediments create issues for women in political contribution. Male councilors' responses and behavior are so narrow about women's political experiences in local bodies (Gopalan, 2012).

The patriarchal system promotes male dominance in politics and disrespects women in political campaigns. They considered women just for domestic tasks (Saeed, 2019). There is a need to take initiatives to promote women's political rights and strengthen their political status (Ocran, 2014). According to the current study, women's decision-making power in politics is dependent on male will; their education level is important for political empowerment; and political understating can promote women's political status in local bodies. The specific budget for women's social development projects can also endorse women's political-based strategies and policies. Bias against women running for political office in political parties is unavoidable (Zakar, 2018). This study also showed that women weren't encouraged to become part of any local governance-based committee. This means women have an equal legal right to participate in politics (Ocran, 2014).

The present study also explored that the moral support of peers plays a very important role in promoting women's political and social rights-based strategies. The current study concluded that the representation of women on reserved seats in the obtainable male-controlled administrative erection in politics generates substantial benefits for women by representing women's interests at the grassroots in local government.

RECOMMENDATION

Lady Councilors should take initiatives for their women's-based lobbying to enhance their social support.

Women activists should promote lady councilors' contribution to women's development projects from the budget of councils.

Lady councilors should be united at the Division and divisional level to highlight they're and lay women's issues to empower themselves as well as to empower the common woman.

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