

EMPOWERING CHANGE: WOMEN'S LEGISLATIVE JOURNEY IN PAKISTAN'S 12TH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

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ABSTRACT

The present research offers an in-depth investigation of women-led legislative efforts during Pakistan's 12th National Assembly, that ran from 2002 to 2007. It looks into how female legislators have influenced legislation, advanced gender equality, and empowered women. The study makes use of both qualitative and quantitative research techniques, such as comparative analysis of legislative results, interviews with important stakeholders, and content analysis of parliamentary records. The results show that female legislators in the 12th National Assembly were crucial in promoting women's rights and tackling disparities in gender. They proposed a sizable number of proposals that addressed a range of topics, including gender-based violence, inheritance rights, access to schooling, and involvement in politics. There was an apparent increase in the number of legislative ideas suggested by women compared to prior assemblies, demonstrating the increased political engagement and empowerment of women. The study analyses the results of these projects while taking into account the elements that contributed to their success. It emphasizes the importance of institutional backing, cross-party coalitions, and successful advocacy tactics in assisting with legislation's passage into law and its implementation. The report also cites barriers that women legislators must overcome, such as social and cultural constraints, a lack of funding, and gender prejudices in the political system. Furthermore, the study evaluates how women-led legislation has affected gender equality and women's empowerment in Pakistan. It looks at shifting cultural perspectives, bettering women's access to the judiciary, and advancing gender-responsive policy. While there was advancement in several areas, there remained enduring obstacles and implementation gaps, which highlighted the need for more initiatives to achieve the effective implementation of women's rights. This research study concludes by emphasizing the substantial contribution made by female lawmakers to the advancement of gender equality through legislative efforts in Pakistan's 12th National Assembly. It focuses on the importance of increasing female representation in politics and offers recommendations on how to make women-led legislation more successful. The findings add to the body of knowledge on gender and politics in Pakistan and provide insightful guidance for academics, activists, and lawmakers pursuing gender equality and inclusive governance.

Keywords: Women, legislation, National Assembly, Empowered of Women

INTRODUCTION

Women's contribution to drafting regulations and legislation has grown into a powerful force in political governance, fostering inclusion and accelerating societal advancement. Women make up more than half of the population of the country, yet they have a disproportionate share in politics (Kabeer, 2005). Women have to conquer several

social and economic difficulties all through their political emancipation on a global scale. Only 24.3% of women were included in politics globally in the year 2019, which indicates that only 50% of women hold political office (Ghafoor & Haider, 2018)(Hessami & da Fonseca, 2020). Unfortunately, women constitute barely 20% of legislators in

Pakistan. Furthermore, just about three percent of women are elected to parliament directly, while 17% joined the house on reserved seats, showing the urgent need for men to focus on their political empowerment (M. M. Jabeen & Muhammad, 2021). The political structure of Pakistan is just as dominated by men as is Pakistani society (Noreen et al., 2019)(Bano, 2009). When it comes to politics and aspirations to become a member of parliament, women in Pakistan face a variety of obstacles, including as cultural restrictions, sexism, criticism, and social taboos (Nazneen, 2023). Presently, significant actors like Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz, Pakistan People's Party, and several other democratic parties have an impact on Pakistan's political scene. Unfortunately, in Pakistan, male political elites dominate the leadership of various political parties. This dominant elite erects hurdles that prevent women from actively participating in Pakistani politics in addition to weakening the principles of democracy (Bari, 2010). In the backdrop of Pakistan's flourishing democracy, the 12th National Assembly saw a revolutionary wave of female lawmakers who grabbed the chance to introduce a profusion of innovative measures intended to reshape the country. In order to understand their tremendous influence on the country's socio-political fabric, this research piece starts on a detailed examination of the legislative environment, concentrating in particular on the laws proposed by women members during the 12th National Assembly of Pakistan. It is becoming more and more important to acknowledge and appreciate the important role played by women representatives in influencing the creation of policies and bringing about legislative change in the context of the constantly changing landscape of gender equality and women's empowerment (Abbas & Muneer, 2019). The study discusses the ground-breaking proposals made by these extraordinary women leaders, exploring the broad spectrum of laws they put up and considering how they might impact Pakistan's future course.

Examining the legislative proposals made by women lawmakers gives us priceless insights into the scope and depth of their shared vision, their persistent dedication to resolving urgent national concerns, and their desire to build a society that is both inclusive and progressive. The goal of this study is to expose

the wide range of topics that these legislation address, from social justice to education, health care to economic development, and gender equality to environmental sustainability. We want to identify the underlying motives, desires, and priorities that guide the legislative agenda of women legislators in the 12th National Assembly through this thorough investigation. The effectiveness and impact of these laws will be assessed as well, considering things like their acceptance and execution, their resonance in the public debate, and their capacity to influence the development of future policies. We can determine the transformational potential of women-led legislative efforts by assessing the concrete results they produce, not just in terms of changing the legal environment but also in terms of impacting society attitudes, perceptions, and norms.

This study aims to acknowledge and commemorate the crucial achievements made by women lawmakers in Pakistan's 12th National Assembly. By highlighting their legislative achievements, we hope to motivate next generations of female leaders and create an atmosphere that supports gender equity, female emancipation, and progressive governance. We can create a Pakistan that is more inclusive, equal, and prosperous if we acknowledge and uphold the power of representation. The subsequent parts of this research paper will go into a thorough study of the legislation that women in Pakistan's national parliament introduced during the 12th National Parliament. We seek to create a compelling narrative that highlights the crucial part played by women legislators in reshaping Pakistan's legislative environment and advancing the country towards a better and more equal future by exploring their thematic variety, impact, and wider ramifications.

METHODOLOGY

The research study focuses on investigating the factors related to women empowerment in Pakistan. The design of this research project follows a systematic approach aimed at ensuring high-quality outcomes. The study primarily relies on secondary data obtained from reputable sources, including records, books/articles, and research instruments available at the Library of National Assembly of Pakistan. These data sources were carefully selected to align with the research objectives and address any existing research gaps. The study methodology

involved the collection and analysis of discussions held during the 12th National Assembly of Pakistan. To do this, the researchers carefully read and noted down the discussions that happened each day, specifically focusing on the contributions made by women parliamentarians. Since the National Assembly follows certain rules for conducting its business, the study categorized the interventions of women MNAs based on different parts of the assembly's procedures, such as asking questions, raising points of order, participating in debates, proposing resolutions, drawing attention to specific matters, and suggesting private members' bills. The collected data was organized based on research objectives. For clarity and ease of understanding, all the findings and outputs of the research were summarized in the Tables and discussed thoroughly.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN PAKISTAN

Historical Context of Women's Participation in Politics in Pakistan

The Government of India Act in 1935 introduced the concept of reserved seats not only for women but also for other marginalized segments of society based on factors such as religion, race, caste, and national origin. The Nationalist Movement after World War I vigorously advocated for adult suffrage and the right to run for office. The British the federal government's new policy was enthusiastically welcomed by Indian women's organizations since it was based on the democratic idea (N. Mubeen Sultana, 2022). Indian women took an active role in politics and the fight for independence prior to the division of their country (Sarkar, 2001).

Muhammad Ali Jinnah, who founded Pakistan after its independence in 1947, pushed for women to take an active role in society as a whole. Fatima Jinnah, his sister, frequently stood beside him as a sign that women hadn't been less valuable or ignored parts of society. After independence, women could participate in politics without facing any constitutional or legal constraints, but their presence in politics remained disproportionately low. All three of Pakistan's constitutions the ones from 1956, 1962, and 1973 included clauses reserving seats for women, emphasizing the significance of guaranteeing their participation and visibility in politics (Shaheed, 1998).

The gender quota rule was originally set to expire in 1988, but in 1985, a major victory was made possible by the 8th amendment, that increased the number of reserved seats for women (Shaheed, 1998). However, just 0.4 percent of women were elected to provincial legislative bodies, 2 percent to the Senate, and 4 percent to the National Assembly in the general elections of 1997. The military government of General Musharraf took action by reviving the female quota after seeing the urgent necessity to rectify this obvious inequality. In national and provincial assemblies, they established 17 percent of the seats for women, and in the municipal government system, they set aside a staggering 33 percent of the seats (Shabir & Mahmood, 2020).

With 205 women winning seats in the parliament and provincial assembly, the 2002 elections that followed saw a substantial rise in the representation of women. Pakistan rose greatly in the regional and global Gender Empowerment Measurement (GEM) rankings as a result of this remarkable accomplishment. In fact, Pakistan outperformed both the United Kingdom and the United States and climbed to the 58th spot out of 102 countries. This was a significant improvement over its prior position of 100th in 1999. In addition, Pakistan became the South Asian country with the highest representation of women in parliaments following the 2008 elections (M. Jabeen & Muhammad, 2013)(PILDAT, 2004). These events highlight the concerted efforts undertaken to advance gender parity and give women greater power in Pakistan's political structure. Table 1 summarize the history of the female representation in the National Assembly of Pakistan:

Table 1
Summary of the Women Representation in the Various National Assemblies of Pakistan (1947-2007)

Legislature Assembly	Total Parliamentarian Seats	General seats for women	Reserved seats for women	Total Women Seats	Women share (%)
1 st	30	2	-	2	6.7
2 nd	80	-	-	0	0
3 rd	156	6	-	6	3.8
4 th	156	6	-	6	3.8
5 th	144	6	-	6	4.2
6 th	210	1	10	11	5.2
7 th	217	1	21	22	10.1
Z	217	4	20	24	11.1
9 th	217	2	-	2	0.9
10 th	217	4	-	4	1.8

11 th	217	6	61	6	2.8
12 th	342	16	60	74	21.2

Source: <http://www.na.gov.pk> .com.

Source: *PILDAT*.

Source: *Own compilation with data from the Secretariat of the National Assembly of Pakistan.*

Women-Led Legislative Initiatives: An Overview

Definition and scope of women-led legislative initiatives

In Pakistan's 12th National Assembly, which convened from 2002 to 2007, a number of legislative proposals were driven by women. As the first legislature chosen following a military takeover in 1999, the 12th National legislature represented a significant moment in Pakistan's political history. Additionally, attempts were undertaken to enhance women's political representation and involvement in legislative processes all through this period (Akram & Azhar, 2023).

Legislative efforts championed or supported by women member parliament (MPs) during a particular parliamentary session are referred to as women-led legislative initiatives. These programs seek to address issues that affect women, advance gender equality, safeguard women's rights, and increase women's empowerment and participation in a variety of societal arenas. Statistical analysis of FAFEN indicates that women parliamentarian took many constructive legislative measures during the 12th NA, some of the major contribution related to the domestic violence, women' political empowerment, gender equality and anti-discrimination, education and empowerment, and human rights and protection etc., are explained below (Tariq Mehdi, Tahir Naqqash, 2008).

Scope of Women-led Legislative Initiatives during the 12th National Assembly:

Women legislators actively proposed and argued for legislation addressing women's problems during the 12th National Assembly. Their programs addressed a variety of issues, including as violence against women, education, health, and involvement in politics. Compared to the men, the women played their critical role for the empowerment of the women at various social level (Rashid & Zaka, 2012)(Ameena Mohyuddin Zia, 2010). During 2002-

2007, important legislative actions done by women include:

Domestic Violence Legislation: Legislation and resolutions addressing domestic violence and safeguarding women from abuse at home were introduced by female legislators. Domestic abuse has been established as a crime, and survivors have been given access to legal remedies and social services (Mirza & Wagha, 2010).

Women's Political Empowerment: To increase women's political representation and engagement, initiatives were launched. Furthermore, to making an effort to build women's political parties and assure their active participation in decision-making processes, there were more reserved seats for women in the national and provincial assemblies (Mirza & Wagha, 2010).

Gender Equality and Anti-Discrimination: Legislation to advance gender equality, prevent discrimination against women, and offer equal opportunities in job, education, and other fields was sponsored by female lawmakers. Additionally, steps were taken to deal with discriminatory legislation and practices (Mirza & Wagha, 2010).

Women's Health and Reproductive Rights: There have been initiatives to improve women's access to family planning and reproductive health care. Maternal mortality, reproductive rights, and the provision of crucial healthcare for women were all topics for proposed legislation (Mirza & Wagha, 2010).

Education and Empowerment: Legislation to support girls' education, improve women's access to high-quality education, and remove impediments to female education has been pushed for by female lawmakers. Women's economic and social empowerment initiatives were also carried out (Mirza & Wagha, 2010).

Human Rights and Protection: Legislation to prevent honor killings, forced marriages, and other types of gender-based violence was strengthened thanks to the efforts of female lawmakers. Additionally, they worked to make the legal system more sensitive to the concerns of women.

Types of initiatives undertaken by women legislators

Performance of Women Members of the 12th NA Over the Course of Five Years (2002-2007)

The amazing trajectory of women MPs' participation in the 12th NA is shown through a thorough analysis spanning five years, demonstrating their ongoing advancement with each passing year. An astounding average of 10 interventions per day is discovered by calculating the number of interventions they made every day while considering the real days in each constitutional year (Table 2). In other words, despite the difficulties posed by their limited political and parliamentary experience and the pervasive tense political climate throughout the assembly's tenure, these exceptional women made a total of 2,698 interventions over the course of five years in the National Assembly. Their persistent dedication to active participation is shown by this amazing demonstration of engagement, which also magnifies their major impact on the legislative process (Mirza & Wagha, 2010)(PILDAT, 2002). Summary of interventions by the women parliamentarian in 12th NA is given in Table 2.

Table 2

Summary of interventions during 5 years of 12th National Assembly of Pakistan (Mirza & Wagha, 2010)

Parliamentary Year	No. Actual Days	No. of Total Interventions	Per Day Average
1 st	65	142	2.2
2 nd	92	493	5.3
3 rd	81	1160	14.3
4 th	89	1044	11.7
5 th	57	859	15.0
Total	384	3698	9.6

The performance statistics show a striking pattern that is characterized by an initial spike in involvement after the first two years, followed by a persistent pattern of interventions throughout the following years. The fact that there were comparatively fewer interventions in the first year may be partly attributable to the opposition's constant interference of the first parliamentary session's proceedings through protests. In addition, women lawmakers may have experienced difficulties in the

first two years due to unfamiliarity with the complicated "Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business." While the rate of interventions experienced a slight decline in the fourth parliamentary year, it notably rebounded during the fifth year, defying the odds posed by President General Musharraf's arbitrary decisions, which virtually paralyzed the parliament during the final months of 200,(Dutoya, 2013) . Despite these obstacles, the unwavering commitment and determination of these exceptional women propelled them to surpass expectations and leave an indelible mark on the legislative landscape (Dutoya, 2013).

Summary of the Women MPs Legislative Participation in 12th NA

The combined efforts of 58 female MPs during the 12th National Assembly's five-year term produced an amazing total of 3698 interventions. These initiatives demonstrated how these women were actively involved and committed to influencing the nation's legislative environment. It is important to note that, despite being noted in this report, the interventions made by female ministers, standing committee chairs, parliamentary secretaries, and advisers were not counted because of these individuals' official obligations. This demonstrates the substantial contribution made by these female lawmakers in promoting crucial causes and bringing about constructive change. 28 of the 58 female lawmakers, mostly from the opposition benches, who actively engaged in the five-year evaluation of overall performance had fewer interventions in the first parliamentary year. This illustrates how women legislators may have performed even better during - been involved in boycotts and protests against the activities of the National Assembly (Mirza & Wagha, 2010)(Dutoya, 2013).

The "Question Hour," which had 2724 items on the agenda, attracted the majority of the attention from female lawmakers throughout their remarks. In addition, they introduced 14 Resolutions, 99 Calling Attentions Notices, 101 Private Members' Bills, and 306 Points of Order. Additionally, they actively engaged in 380 debates, demonstrating their commitment to guiding insightful discussions and advancing legislative conversations. Summary of participation by the women parliamentarian in 12th

National Assembly is given in Table 3 (Mirza & Wagha, 2010).

Table 3
Participation by the women parliamentarian in 12th National Assembly

Interventions						Total
	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	
Questions	80	321	842	799	682	2724
i. Starred Questions	49	99	149	427	84	808
ii. Un-starred Questions	16	118	518	285	423	1360
iii. Supplementary Questions	15	104	175	87	175	556
Debates	18	88	119	105	50	380
Points of Order	24	32	98	80	72	306
Calling Attention Notices	13	26	26	16	18	99
Adjournment & Privilege Motions	04	14	21	15	15	69
Private Members Bills	01	10	44	29	17	101
Resolutions	02	01	06	-	05	14
Personal Explanations	-	01	04	-	-	05
Grand Total	142	493	1160	1044	859	3698

Source: <http://www.na.gov.pk> .com.Source: (FAFEN, 2013).

Source: *Own compilation with data from the Secretariat of the National Assembly of Pakistan.*

Questions asked by female legislator during 12th National Assembly:

Female lawmakers swiftly mastered the House's rules and procedures after joining the legislature. They focused on taking part in discussions and found new ways to express their thoughts. They made active use of the 'Question Hour' to aggressively solicit questions on a range of regional, national, and global concerns, including women's rights, socioeconomic growth, and various obstacles that their constituents were facing. They additionally searched for data to support accountability and transparency in government entities. The percentage of women employed by government agencies was a frequent topic of discussion among certain members.

Women members got 2,724 queries answered over the course of five years. Out of these, 808 fell under the category of "Starred Questions" and were responded to orally on the House floor, allowing for follow-up inquiries. The 1,360 questions that were left over were addressed in writing as "Un-starred Questions." 556 more questions were also included. Out of the 10,099 queries that were answered, 2,725 were answered by the treasury benches, as can be seen in Table 3. Accordingly, 27% of all queries were posed by female lawmakers, a much greater percentage when taking into account their presence in the House. The most questions (286) were posed by Ms. Yasmeen Rehman during the 12th National Assembly's session.

Women parliamentarians Contribution in the Debates in 12th National Assembly

During the 12th NA, female lawmakers actively participated in discussions about national problems. Debate participation needed thoughtful and timely contributions that demonstrated their knowledge, competence, and presenting abilities. The 2005 earthquake and its aftermath, military operations in Balochistan, foreign policy, privatization, trade, the environment, poverty, employment, and women's rights concerns were only a few of the significant topics that female parliamentarians actively tackled. Most women lawmakers effectively stated their opinions, notwithstanding the sporadic political blame-games. There were 380 occasions in which female members spoke during legislative discussions. The most active participant was Ms. Mehnaz Rafi, who participated in 25 discussions throughout the allotted time. Following closely behind are Ms. Samia Raheel Qazi with 21 debates, Ms. Naheed Khan with 20 debates, and Ms. Fauzia Wahab with 18 debates. Additionally, notable contributions were made by Ms. Yasmeen Rehman with 17 debates, Ms. Sherry Rehman with 16 debates, Ms. Bilqees Saif with 15 debates, and Ms. Kaniz Aisha Munawar with 14 debates. These dynamic women legislators exhibited exceptional dedication and played a pivotal role in shaping and enriching parliamentary discourse.

12th National Assembly female legislators' Motions for a Quorum

Another speaking opportunity for legislators is the "point of order." It is brought up to explain the Assembly's rules or regulations. A point of order may be brought up during the House proceedings without previous submission, unlike other procedures. Members frequently use it to bring up serious matters, men and women alike. Members can still bring attention to significant issues by involving other members and the media present, even though the Speaker may occasionally exclude these points for technical reasons. In the course of the 12th National Assembly's five years, female legislators asserted themselves by bringing up 306 points of order. Initially, the number of points raised by women was relatively low in the first two years, with 24 and 32 interventions respectively. However, their performance steadily improved over time, reflecting their growing expertise and experience in parliamentary proceedings.

With 36 points of order, Ms. Naheed Khan emerged as the most active participant among the female legislators. She was closely followed in terms of interventions by Ms. Mehnaz Rafi, who had 31, Ms. Sherry Rehman, who had 17, Ms. Samia Raheel Qazi, who had 16, and Ms. Kashmala Tariq, who had 12. These points of order were frequently urgent and tackled important matters including denouncing the Punjab Police's maltreatment of female MNAs and journalists, looking into rape cases, dealing with food crises, and offering assistance to earthquake-affected districts amid harsh winter circumstances. The female lawmakers demonstrated their constant dedication to taking on urgent issues and fighting for the rights and welfare of the constituents they served.

Calling Attention Notices Served by Women Parliamentarians in 12th National Assembly

Calling attention notices differ from debates and points of orders as they require prior submission through a specified procedure. These planned interventions do not address urgent issues but focus on significant public matters that require government intervention.

Women parliamentarians submitted calling attention notices on various important issues, such as train accidents, the spread of bird flu, petroleum price increases, child smuggling for camel races, murders

of religious leaders, preventing women from voting in local government elections, termination of PTCL employees, and high airfare by PIA compared to other airlines.

The National Assembly received 3,157 calling attention notices in total. Out of these, 1,967 expired, 23 were sent to pertinent committees, and only 329 notifications were the subject of government statements. 99 of these 329 submissions were from female lawmakers. Thus, women made up 30% of all calling attention notifications that garnered a government reaction, which is noteworthy given their representation in the House and level of expertise.

The most drawing attention notices, 15, were submitted by Ms. Mehnaz Rafi, who excelled in her performance. With six notifications apiece, Ms. Kashmala Tariq, Ms. Sherry Rehman, and Ms. Samia Raheel Qazi swiftly followed, demonstrating their dedication to calling attention to significant issues. Ms. Fauzia Wahab also made a notable contribution by submitting 4 calling attention notices. These proactive efforts by these remarkable women parliamentarians served as an effective means of highlighting pressing issues and bringing them to the forefront of legislative discussions.

Resolution Introduced by Female Lawmakers in 12th NA

Members of the Assembly use resolutions as a forum to voice their opinions, offer suggestions, and urge the government to take action on important problems. These resolutions usually focus on specific problems and seek to build consensus both inside and beyond the House.

Women legislators actively participated in the 12th National Assembly's five years of work by advancing a total of 14 of the 66 motions that were brought before the body. These 66 resolutions included 46 private resolutions proposed by private members and 20 government resolutions sponsored by ministers. One government resolution and 13 private members' resolutions totaled the 14 resolutions suggested by women. Impressively, the House passed 11 of the 14 resolutions introduced by women, indicating their capacity to win support and shape legislative results. Three resolutions, nevertheless, were rejected by the House. Through their impactful resolutions, women parliamentarians have showcased their dedication to

addressing critical issues and championing positive change within the legislative framework.

The important concerns affecting women and people were addressed in the resolutions presented by female politicians. They discussed issues like ending honor killings, debating WTO agreements, promoting laws protecting women's rights, pursuing justice in specific cases, backing the government's Kashmir policy, setting up relief funds for earthquake victims, urging shared responsibility for reconstruction, requesting rescue training in educational institutions, denouncing terrorist attacks, and remembering Fatima Jinnah's struggles.

Ms. Mehnaz Rafi demonstrated exceptional dedication by presenting the highest number of resolutions, totaling 6, throughout the five-year period in the National Assembly. Following closely behind, Ms. Rozina Tufail brought forth 2 resolutions, highlighting her commitment to addressing important matters. Additionally, Ms. Kashmala Tariq, Ms. Asiya Azeem, Ms. Aisha Munawar, Ms. Nilofar Bakhtiar, Ms. Yasmeen Rehman, and Ms. Beelum Hasnain each contributed by presenting 1 resolution.

Notably, Mr. M. P. Bhandara and Ms. Mehnaz Rafi joined forces in their efforts to introduce a resolution against honor killings during the first parliamentary year. Despite their persistent efforts, the resolution was not passed, although Mr. Bhandara managed to read it out in the House. This highlights the commitment of these individuals to address critical issues and advocate for change, even if success may not always be guaranteed.

Private Members' Bills Moved by Women Parliamentarians in five Years:

Women legislators were actively involved in the adoption of private members' legislation over the whole five-year term of the 12th National Assembly, both on their own and in collaboration with their male and female party colleagues. Out of the 240 private legislations presented during this time, an amazing total of 100 were introduced by women. These bills were distributed as follows: one in the first year, ten in the second, 44 in the third, 29 in the fourth, and sixteen in the fifth. This gradual rise in the number of legislations introduced by women revealed their persistent dedication and resolve to effect good change on matters affecting women in

Pakistan. These women parliamentarians showcased their passion for legislative action and their commitment to advancing the rights and well-being of women in the country. However, it was challenging for them to draft these bills without sufficient support or resources from the National Secretariat or political parties.

Unfortunately, these measures did not receive the same level of passion and support. Only 70 of the 240 private measures that were moved were introduced in the House, while the remaining 170 were rejected or blocked for a variety of reasons. The majority of the private member's legislation introduced by women suffered the same fate. They encountered delays in consideration, and when they did make it to the House, they were frequently turned down, denied, postponed, or dropped right away. Rarely, when they were presented, they remained pending for a long time before expiring. In the 12th National Assembly, just one bill out of 240 private member bills was carried, illuminating the legislative culture around these measures.

Only 40 of the 101 private member's bills presented by female lawmakers were successfully laid or introduced in the House, a substantial part of which, 60, were either abandoned, prohibited, or rejected.

It's interesting to note that women lawmakers were heavily involved in introducing private laws; 40 of the 70 private bills were introduced by women lawmakers, who proposed the bulk of them. Among these 40 legislations, one in particular had an interesting evolution. The Domestic Violence Against Women (Prevention and Protection) Bill, 2006, introduced by Ms. Mehnaz Rafi, was coupled with the Prevention of Domestic Violence Bill, 2005, put forth by Ms. Sherry Rehman. Both measures were consolidated after being referred to the appropriate Standing Committee. This demonstrates the combined efforts of female lawmakers in addressing the urgent problem of domestic abuse and striving to pass useful legislation in this area.

Three female lawmakers from various political parties stood highlighted for their outstanding assistance in advancing private members' legislation throughout the course of a five-year period. By proposing 11 legislations apiece, Ms. Sherry Rehman, Ms. Samia Raheel Qazi, and Ms. Kashmala Tariq demonstrated their commitment to legislative activity. Mehnaz Rafi and Beelum Hasnain followed

closely following, each moving eight measures and contributing to the discussion on legislation. Dr. Farida Ahmed, Ms. Yasmeen Rehman, Ms. Farhana Khalid Banoori, and Ms. Rubina Saadat Qaimkhwani each contributed five legislations, while Ms. Samina Khalid Ghurki made her mark with six. These women parliamentarians demonstrated their commitment to addressing diverse issues through the introduction of substantial private members' bills, exemplifying their dedication to making a positive impact within the legislative framework.

Most frequently, female lawmakers worked with their male and female party colleagues to advance private member legislation. These proposals, sometimes known as "Bills" or "Motions," differ from other sorts of interventions in the House in that they are collective efforts. Private legislations were most frequently written and delivered by teams of female legislators, often with the assistance of their male colleagues. Even members of various parties, both male and female, contributed to the creation of cross-party efforts for several measures. These collective efforts confirmed and strengthened the party's stance on particular topics. The Hudood Laws (Repeal, 2005), Pakistan Environmental Protection (Amendment, 2005), The Protection of Serving Women (2005), The Criminal Law (Amendment, 2005), The Uplift and Welfare of Women (2005), and The Prevention of Domestic Violence (2006) bills, for instance, were joint initiatives during the fourth parliamentary year, though the primary movers were frequently mentioned first.

Focus of Private Members Bills and Some Important Bills:

Women's rights problems as well as important general themes like governance and constitutional matters were discussed in the private legislation that female legislators sponsored. Out of the 101 measures, about 45 expressly addressed significant issues relating to women's rights, including legal, social, and economic difficulties. Another 45 measures proposed constitutional revisions, strengthened institutions, improved public welfare, or improved existing legislation. Around ten other measures have tangential connections to issues affecting women. Overall, the proposals that women lawmakers offered showed their dedication to addressing the many needs and concerns of society

as a whole with a focus on women's rights in particular.

Women's Rights and Welfare:

During the five-year period, women parliamentarians introduced several important private bills, focusing mainly on women's rights. Some notable bills presented by different legislators include:

Ms. Sherry Rehman: Bills on protecting and empowering women, amending criminal laws, ensuring equality of opportunity in employment, preventing domestic violence, repealing Hudood Laws, and amending the Pakistan Penal Code and Code of Criminal Procedure.

Ms. Samia Raheel Qazi: Bills on uplifting and welfare of women, protecting serving women, inheritance rights for women, economic stability of women, effective enforcement of Hudood Laws, family stability and protection, and repealing certain provisions of the Criminal Law.

Ms. Kashmala Tariq: Bills on amending the Pakistan Penal Code, Code of Criminal Procedure, Family Courts Act, and enforcing Hudood Laws.

Ms. Mehnaz Rafi: Bills on amending the Pakistan Penal Code, citizenship rights, establishing the Office of Wafaqi Woman Motasib, senior citizens' rights, preventing domestic violence against women. Other women legislators proposed bills on various topics such as amending the Code of Criminal Procedure and Code of Civil Procedure, family court reforms, prohibition of forced marriages, dowry and bridal gift restrictions, amendments to Muslim family laws, abolishing bonded labor, protecting child laborers and shelterless children.

These bills reflect the dedication of women parliamentarians to address crucial issues and bring about positive changes, particularly in the realm of women's rights in Pakistan.

Bills Moved by Government on Women's Rights Issues in Five Years:

A total of 38 laws were passed over the course of five years, with two of them particularly addressing women's problems. The National Assembly approved the first key piece of law, which dealt with ending "honor" killings, on July 30, 2004. The government's National Assembly introduction of the second significant measure sought to reform the

Hudood Ordinances, notably the Offences of Zina and Qazf Ordinances.

General Public Welfare and Reform:

Women parliamentarians made remarkable contributions through their introduction of prominent private members' bills, addressing a wide array of pressing issues. Notable among these bills are:

The groundbreaking Freedom of Information Bill, 2004, championed by Ms. Sherry Rehman, aimed at ensuring transparency and access to information.

Ms. Gule Farakhanda's pioneering Control of Thalassaemia Bill, 2004, focused on combating and managing this hereditary blood disorder.

Ms. Sherry Rehman's visionary Pakistan Press Bill, 2005, aimed to uphold and safeguard the freedom of the press.

Ms. Fauzia Wahab's far-reaching Pakistan Environmental Protection (Amendment) Bill, 2005, sought to strengthen environmental conservation measures.

Dr. Farida Ahmad Siddiqui's trailblazing Direct Access to Courts by the Victims Bill, 2005, aimed to empower victims by facilitating their access to justice.

Ms. Beelum Hasnain's transformative Pakistan Bait-ul-Mall (Amendment) Bill, 2005, sought to enhance the efficacy of this vital welfare institution.

Ms. Razia Aziz's crucial Disaster Management Bill, 2006, aimed to bolster disaster preparedness and response mechanisms.

Ms. Shamshad Sattar Bachani's progressive Agricultural Pesticides (Amendment) Bill, 2006, focused on regulating and promoting safer pesticide use.

The visionary Parliamentary Supervision of Subordinate Legislation Bill, 2006, proposed by Ms. Ishrat Ashraf, aimed to strengthen oversight of subordinate legislation.

Mrs. Shakeela Khanam Rasheed's commendable Bonded Labour System (Abolition) (Amendment) Bill, 2006, aimed to eradicate the scourge of bonded labor.

Ms. Yasmeen Rehman's dual contribution with the Control of Viral Diseases Transferred via Blood Production Bill, 2006, and the Compulsory School Attendance Bill, 2006, addressed critical health and education issues.

Dr. Azra Afzal Pechuho's trailblazing Child Labour and Shelterless Children (Protection from Exploitation) Bill, 2007, aimed to safeguard vulnerable children from exploitation.

Ms. Sherry Rehman's far-sighted Donation and Transplantation of Human Organs Bill, 2007, sought to regulate organ transplantation and donation.

Ms. Kashmala Tariq's visionary National Commission for Human Rights Bill, 2007, aimed to establish a national body dedicated to safeguarding human rights.

In addition, Ms. Kashmala Tariq and Ms. Beelum Hasnain proposed notable bills seeking amendments to the constitution, demonstrating their commitment to constitutional reforms.

Public Perception and Media Coverage of Women-Led Legislative Initiatives

Women-led legislative efforts in Pakistan's 12th National Assembly, which sat from 2002 to 2007, received a variety of reactions from the general public and media attention. This response offers a broad perspective based on the facts available as of my knowledge cutoff in September 2021, however it is vital to keep in mind that public opinion and media coverage might vary greatly.

Representation of Women: With a record number of women elected as Members of the National Assembly (MNAs) in Pakistan's 12th National Assembly, women's political representation increased. The creation of allocated seats for women in the Parliament was the main cause of this. Women lawmakers' participation in legislative ideas and their presence in the legislature were viewed as significant steps towards gender equality and women's empowerment.

Support and Opposition: Women-led legislative initiatives received a mix of support and opposition from various quarters. There were individuals and groups who appreciated and championed the efforts of women legislators, recognizing the importance of their representation and the need for gender-sensitive legislation. These supporters often highlighted the significance of women's voices in shaping policies that address women's rights and concerns.

However, there were also segments of society and conservative elements that opposed women-led initiatives, particularly when they addressed issues that challenged traditional norms or religious

interpretations. Such opposition often stemmed from deeply entrenched patriarchal values and a resistance to change.

Media Coverage: Depending on the magazine or venue, media coverage of bills introduced by women during the 12th National Assembly may differ. Some media sites ran stories emphasizing the value of women's political engagement and the relevance of their efforts. They highlighted legislative victories and success stories, which improved the public's opinion.

It is important to keep in mind, too, that cultural prejudices and accepted gender standards also have an impact on media coverage. Some media outlets could have emphasized sensationalizing specific parts of women-led projects or reinforced stereotypes, which might have diminished the gravity and significance of their efforts. Limited coverage of negative stories or criticism, particularly from conservative groups, may also obscure the wider accomplishments of female lawmakers.

Challenges Faced: Women-led legislative initiatives faced numerous challenges during the 12th National Assembly. Some of the common challenges included:

Resistance from conservative elements: Initiatives that challenged conservative societal norms or religious interpretations often faced significant resistance and opposition.

Institutional barriers: Women legislators sometimes encountered barriers within the political system, such as limited access to decision-making processes, unequal representation in key committees, or insufficient resources for effective implementation of initiatives.

Lack of consensus: Legislative initiatives, especially those related to sensitive or controversial issues, often faced challenges in achieving consensus among the diverse political parties and factions in the National Assembly.

Limited media coverage: Despite some positive coverage, women-led initiatives might not have received the same level of attention and visibility as other political developments, resulting in a narrower reach and impact.

In general, throughout the period of 2002–2005, public view and media coverage of legislative proposals spearheaded by women were varied, reflecting the nuanced dynamics of Pakistani society.

Although there was support for efforts and representation of women, obstacles and opposition persisted. It is crucial to understand that this response only offers a broad picture, and that specific situations and viewpoints may vary depending on the circumstances of each individual case and geographical variations.

Comparative Analysis of Women' Contribution in 12th National Assembly of Pakistan.

Although comparing the performance of male and female lawmakers is not the major objective of this study, a limited analysis has been done in a few key areas to gauge how effective women legislators are. These areas cover a number of activities, including the creation of questions, the publication of calling attention notices, the presentation of private member's bills, the introduction of resolutions, as well as the beginning of privilege and adjournment motions. Overall, the women' contribution is summarized in the given Table.

Table 4

Comparative analysis of the performance of Parliamentarians during 12th NA

Sr No	Type of Interventions	Total Moved During 5 Years	By Men Members (269)	By Women Members (73)	%age Share of Women Members
1	Questions (Answered)	10099	7375	2724	27%
3	Calling Attention Notices (Statement made on)	329	230	99	30%
	Private Members Bills	240	140	101	42%
	Resolutions (passed)	46	35	11	24%
4	Privilege & Adjournment Motions (brought before the House)	864	795	69	8%

Source: <http://www.na.gov.pk.com>

Source: *Own compilation with data from the Secretariat of the National Assembly of Pakistan.*

The information in the table above shows that during five-year period, government officials responded to

a total of 10,099 of the 47,014 questions posed by National Assembly members. Male lawmakers asked 7,375 of the questions that were answered, while female lawmakers asked the final 2,724 questions. This indicates that women made up 27% of all the queries, which is a much greater percentage than the number of women that make up the House.

Over the course of the five years, government representatives replied to a total of 329 calling attention notices. Male MPs filed 230 of these notices, while female parliamentarians provided 99 notices. This indicates that women legislators contributed 30% of the total calling attention notices, an impressive achievement considering their numbers and experience in the House.

Parliamentarians introduced 240 private member's bills in total during the course of the five-year period. These were divided into 139 measures sponsored by male lawmakers and 101 proposals proposed by female lawmakers. Here, the proportion of female lawmakers who proposed bills reached 42%, underscoring a major effort in the legislative process. Throughout the five years, the National Assembly approved 46 resolutions in total. Out of these, 35 resolutions were proposed by male lawmakers from the government and the opposition, while 11 were proposed by female lawmakers. 24% of all resolutions were sponsored by female lawmakers, highlighting their involvement in this field.

A total of 864 motions about privilege and adjournment were made by members of the House. Of these, 795 of the motions were made by male lawmakers, while just 69 were made by female lawmakers. Only 8% of female lawmakers moved privilege and adjournment motions during a five-year span, showing a male-dominated performance in this specific area of the 12th National Assembly's parliamentary operations.

CONCLUSION

The representation of women in the 12th NA was not only symbolic but also substantial. Women benefited from the restoration and increase in the number of reserved seats, and the concept of Critical Mass proved effective as women successfully asserted their presence and influence in parliamentary affairs. In the legislature, women held two distinct identities: the quota seats and the general seats. However, it is worth noting that the quota seats were not

exclusively utilized for advancing women's issues, as political parties often selected candidates based on obligations to influential political families or individuals with feudal backgrounds, resulting in compromises. This dynamic hindered women's ability to work independently, as they remained indebted to their parties and families, adhering to party policies or conforming to feudal or tribal traditions that perpetuate women's subordinate status. The absence of dedicated constituencies weakened the position of women politicians, often placing them in uncomfortable situations. Additionally, many women elected on general seats faced limited engagement in their constituencies due to traditional societal norms. Despite these challenges, a comprehensive analysis of the statistics reveals a notable shift in women's active participation and their integration into the political process. This shift signifies a positive change, demonstrating that women have emerged as dynamic contributors within parliament, despite the prevailing dominance of male legislators. The legislative performance of women served as a testament to their commitment and determination. There should be strong measures to further enhance the women parliamentarian seats either in the form of reserved or elected seat so that they can effectively contribute to the society and can raise voices for their fellow women of the society.

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