

CULTURAL CONSTRAINTS TO WOMEN POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN PUKHTOON SOCIETY

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17513334>

Keywords

Article History

Received: 11 September 2025

Accepted: 21 October 2025

Published: 03 November 2025

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Abstract

The study titled, "Cultural constraints to women political participation in Pukhtoon society", was conducted in union council Wari, Dir upper, Khyber Pukhtoonkhwa, Pakistan. A sample size of 205 voting age women was randomly selected from a population of 365 from four selected villages of study area. There were so many factors including patriarchy, educational fallacy, security and pressure groups which oppose women political participation. Moreover Women political participation had negatively influenced by Patriarchal structure, women subordination, deprivation of women rights and no political socialization of women. Furthermore, women feel threats outside their homes, no active role of law enforcing agencies and government for women protection and no positive response of the local community towards women political rights. Further, women could not participate in outside activities as men could, most of the conservative minded people consider women political empowerment as a threat to their self-interests and they deny participation of women in decisions. In order to bridge the gender inequality and ensure women political participation the study recommended undertaking such measures to empower women in Pukhtoon culture, provide quality and result oriented education to the masses, provision of security to women politicians, identify securing women rights at work place, community and household level were some of the recommendations in light of study.

1. INTRODUCTION

Women's political empowerment means the autonomy of women to cast vote according to their choice, political participation, contesting election, political expression and demonstration, authority, power politics, decision-making and implementation regarding their actions. In order to have a workable democratic polity, the importance of women's political participation and their empowerment has been increasingly realized throughout the globe.

Nearly half of the world's population is constituted by women. Owing to this reality any democratic system would not be able to run effectively without the involvement of half of the population (Ibrahim, 2012). Patriarchy is considered to be a dominant family system in Pakistan. This system has been supported a rigid division of labor and have restricted women's freedom of expression and freedom of movement. This system has strictly

determined the role of women in every day jobs. A women's status is linked with her family and her role is considered to be important if she is bearing and rearing children and is caring elder family members. Discrimination between women and men can be seen in the sectors of education, access to health facilities, employment, political participation, decision making and job opportunities and less investment and interest in female's education is a common practice in Pakistani society. The status of women in society and even in a family is not considered to be satisfactory and thus women have been discriminated in all walks of life (Tisdell, 2002). All over the globe, employment and political activities are referred and linked to sex and gender where men are responsible and are assigned the superior positions while women are not supposed to have the same (UNDP, 2005).

Objectives

1. To know about the interest of Pakhtoon women towards politics.
2. To identify various cultural factors depriving women from political participation.
3. To put forward women's political participation recommendations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The involvement of women in politics at grass root level will be a simple way towards women empowerment. First of all a favorable political environment would be created. This will be possible through collective efforts to aware women for the formation of their own pressure groups to solve their ordinary problems at local and major problems should be presented at upper level (Chandra, 1991). The viewpoint of liberal feminists like Marry Wollstonecraft articulated that women have the right to get equality with men and said that patriarchy is responsible for gender inequality and division of labor which is totally based on sex. Gender equality is possible when we reform and re shape the main institutions for division of responsibility. The main responsible institutions are law, family institution, educational institution and media. The liberal feminists further say that through political and legal reforms equality of men and women is possible. Liberal feminism mainly focuses on the capability of

women and only through this capability and capacity they can get equal position with men (Ritzer, 2000). Large number of women participation in politics gives way to challenge already available structure of power, negotiate gender relationship and also help them to create an enabling environment. It means that women political participation at individual and joint level is an easy way to women empowerment, in simple words it is concluded that the involvement of women in politics is very much important for their empowerment (Hust, 2002). Women are deprived from several of their rights specifically from voting rights and contesting election. The main purpose of Liberal feminists is to eradicate institutional biasness and to make it sure to implement equal laws for the rights of both men and women (Naz, 2011). In Pukhtoon society some unnecessary traits are associated with women, like Tor (dishonor), *peghor* (satire) etc. due these traits women are unable to get authority and prestige and they are always in subordinate position and hence Pukhtoon society is working against of women political participation. (Naz and Rehman, 2011).

METHODS AND MATERIALS

Universe of the study

Universe of the study comprised of union council Wari District Dir upper. Data was collected from the women folk of voting age from union council. To get authentic and desirable information and to reach to the depth of the problem this study area more specifically consists of four major villages of union council. These villages were Wari Payen, Wari Bala, Daskor and Kakad.

Sampling Procedure and sampling size

According to secretary union council Wari population of registered female voters in the concerned villages comprised of 363 numbers. A sample size of 205 suffices for this population (Sekaran, 2003). The random sampling technique was used for selection of respondents from population. The sample was proportionally allocated to each village by using proportional allocation formula (Cochran, 1997). Distribution of respondents is given in Table 3.1

$$n_i = n/N_i * N_i \quad (\text{Cochran, 1997})$$

n = Total sample size required for researcher

N =Total women in the study area

N_i = Women in each village

n_i = Selected respondents size from each village

Table-3.1: Proportional allocation of sample size in various villages in the study area

S. No	Village Name	Total registered female voters	Sample size
1	Wari Payin	97	55
2	Wari Bala	83	47
3	Kakad	106	60
4	Das Kor	77	43
Total		363	205

Tools for Data collection

Interview schedule was used as a tool for data collection with face to face interview method as a procedure. The researcher was not able to collect data himself from the respondents due to strict hijab and Pakhtoon culture hence for this purpose females were hired and properly trained, in data collection process.

Data Analyses

SPSS (20) software was used for data analysis including uni-variate level.

3.4.1 Uni Variate Analysis

Uni-variate analysis was techniques used included percentage proportion of background, independent and dependent variables along with frequency distribution of the same. Following equation was percentage, calculation

Data Class's percentage = $f/N \times 100$

Where,

f = data class's frequency

N = Total observations

Analysis of Data

Women political participation

The active involvement of women folk in political process is the need of each and every society. Majority of the societies are male dominated including Pukhtoon society, due to which women have no opportunities to get political awareness and empowerment. Even they have no right to cast vote in so many parts of Pukhtoon society. It is explained in Table 4.12 that 52.7% respondents were aware about politics while 42.9% were not familiar and 4.4% had no idea about it. According to (UNDP,

2005) all over the globe, employment and political activities are referred to sex and gender where men are responsible and are assigned the superior positions while women are not supposed to have the same. In response to this scenario women are not ready to take part in country's politics. They are even not aware about the political parties and the political system of the country. Similarly, 65.9% respondents stated that their family male members do not support women politics, 32.7% opposed and 1.5% had no idea about it. The result were supported by (Reyes and Socorro, 2002) that the socio-cultural hurdles such as male dominance, biased customs and traditions, and the deliberate misconception of religion and also the unwillingness of women in power to take positive steps to support women and to make sure their empowerment due to these reasons women are unable get support from men and to participate in politics. The study further explored that 56.1% respondents did not like personal involvement in politics while 43.9% were interested in it. As argued by (Farooq, 2003) that women are deprived from so many rights like from their identity in society and as well as their involvement in politics is not satisfactory. Therefore they do not involve personally in political activities. The Table also showed that 72.7% respondents liked equal political participation of men and women, 26.3% answered in no and 1% had no knowledge about it. According to (Tisdell, 2002) the status of women in society and even in a family is not considered to be satisfactory and thus women have been discriminated in all walks of life including in political participation. Though they like equal political participation of men and women. In the response of contribution of women political leaders

to the development of society, 69.3% respondents agreed while 28.3% disagreed and 2.4% had no idea about this statement. Moreover, 82% respondents agreed that security threats to women lead to political disparity among men and women while 15.6% disagreed and 2.4% had no idea regarding this statement. According to (Naz, 2012) Much more legislations are needed in this regard. When women take part in the general election of provincial or national assembly, security should be given from government agencies. This process will not only ensure a secured environment for the women who are contesting election but it will also encourage rest of the women to come forward and to participate in political process and utilize their energies in politics and as well as in other fields where they have no participation and contribution and thus women political leaders will contribute to the development of society when they are secured. Further 31.7% respondents stated that Pukhtoon society is working for women empowerment, 65.4% negated and 2.9% had no knowledge about it. According to (Naz and Rehman, 2011) in pukhtoon society some unnecessary traits are associated with women, like

Tor (dishonor), *peghor* (satire) etc. due these traits women are unable to get authority and prestige and they are always in subordinate position and hence pukhtoon society is working against of women political participation. In reply of the statement, proper security is needed for women political culture, 89.3% respondents stated yes while 9.8% stated no and 1% were not aware about it. Furthermore, 88.8% respondent's persued that, pressure groups do not allow women to political participation while 9.3% disagreed and 2% had no idea about this statement. It is also mentioned in the table that, 75.6% respondents viewed that majority of the people are against of women politics in Pukhtoon society while 24.4% respondents were not agree with this statement. These results are supported by (Mirza, 2002) Women have no electoral rights in because of local customs and existing traditions while in several situations the local system has an organized anti-women movement in shape of pressure groups which do not allow women to political participation and their political participation is not up to the mark.

Frequencies and percentage distribution of respondents according to their perception towards women political participation:

S. No	women political participation	Yes	No	Don't Know
1	You know about politics.	108 (52.7)	88 (42.9)	09 (4.4)
2	Male members of your family support/favor women politics.	67 (32.7)	135 (65.9)	03 (1.5)
3	You like to be involved in political activities personally.	90 (43.9)	115 (56.1)	0 (0)
4	You like equal political participation of men and women.	149 (72.7)	54 (26.3)	02 (1.0)
5	Women political leaders contribute to the development of society like men.	142 (69.3)	58 (28.3)	05 (2.4)
6	Pukhtoon society is working for women political empowerment.	65 (31.7)	134 (65.4)	06 (2.9)
7	Proper security is needed For women political culture.	183 (89.3)	20 (9.8)	02 (1.0)
8	Security threats to women lead to political disparity among men and women.	168 (82.0)	32 (15.6)	05 (2.4)
9	Pressure groups do not allow women to political participation.	182 (88.8)	19 (9.3)	04 (2.0)

10	Majority of the people are against of women politics in Pukhtoon society.	155 (75.6)	50 (24.4)	0 (0)
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Conclusion

The present study focused to determine the position of women political participation and their empowerment in Pukhtoon society, in Dir upper, union council Wari.

It is concluded that Pakhtoon society is male dominated. There is a huge gender based gap in power and authority which deprive women in their political process. Although women can bring positive change in society but they are always in subordinate position having no access to their rights. Household activities are the only domain in which they dominate male group. Most of Pakhtoon women are illiterate therefore they are not politically socialized and lack of freedom of expression like men. As a result women have no option to get due power position in society. Poor state of security outside homes posed to those females who want to participate in political activities is another hurdle in women political participation. The role of government and law enforcing agencies is not satisfactory in this regard. There are no security measures for women protection therefore they cannot play their active role in the uplift of the society. Women who talk about their rights and empowerment are disrespected in society. The pressure groups play major role to inhibit women empowerment. Due to these groups women cannot move freely and safely and they are restricted to their homes only. Pressure groups in association with local leaders promote conservatism and deny decision making process regarding women rights.

Recommendations

In the light of the findings of this study the following recommendations are made:

- (1) Securing women basic rights of expression and political participation under the umbrella of equity principle, to ensure development of society in general and of women in particular.
- (2) Encouraging female education through providing quality educational facilities at their door step and motivating parents to enlist their daughters in school for better

- (3) socialization, awareness raising, empowerment of female endeavors and their political learning.
- (4) Encouraging women political participation in election and legislative representations through allotting maximum number of reserve seats for them.
- (5) Starting mass level awareness raising regarding women rights and their role in national development by taking support of religious, political and social leadership to forbid negative propaganda of pressure groups and to encourage women's participation in political activities.
- (6) Implementing courts verdicts of cancellation of election results, wherever evidences of disallowing women from voting process are established.

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