

## Role of Political Participation in Women's Empowerment at Charsadda, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

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### ABSTRACT

Political participation one of the important factors of empowerment and creates awareness among females about their rights in society. The current study was carried out on "The role of political participation in women's empowerment at Charsadda, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa". The sample size for the data collection was 200 respondents. Data were collected from 200 respondents while applying the criteria designed by Sekaran, aging of the respondents (15-49) who were belonging to two union councils: Behlola and Mohammad Nari of district Charsadda through simple random sampling technique. The interview schedule was used for the data collection. Structured and semi-structured questions were included in the interview schedule. After collection, the data were processed through SPSS and tabulated as well as presented in percentages and frequencies for better understanding. A Chi-square test was used for measuring the association between the independent variable and dependent variables. The study findings suggested that change in female formal literacy can transfer about better awareness and self-confidence. The study also recommends the significant involvement of government and non-government agencies for activating women clusters, as well as increasing women awareness level, political participation awareness, and learning skills. The study findings suggested that a woman leader can better empower women in the future, as well as a female candidate can better solve their problems as compared to male.

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## 1. Introduction

Political participation supposedly is one of the important factors of empowerment which creates awareness and consciousness among women about their rights in society. It ensures power and strength to women to choose those leaders who have the ability of know-how about women related issues and reduce gender disparity. Moreover, it offers a chance for women to select those leaders who know how to solve their local problems and to eliminate the gender gap (Mahmood,2010). But in Pakistani society and especially rural areas in Pakhtun society, women are restricted mostly and have no access to political participation and empowerment services (Naz, 2012). The political participation of women and women's empowerment are interconnected with each other. Through, the political participation of women can easily encourage women to address their issues and solve them according to their wishes and desire (Mahmood, 2010). The participation of women in politics is lower than males, but the Pakistani women's position in politics is encouraging as compared to other countries. The participation of women of Pakistan in politics is on the 50<sup>th</sup> position in the world ranking order (Hausmann et al.,2009).

According to Stromquist (1995) political participation is a prerequisite for women empowerment as through political support upgrade limit working among women to oversee, break down, and activate assets for social change. Another study which is conducted by Oxaal and Baden (1997) views that on their adjacent problems. Batliwala (1995) views that democracy plays a significant role in raising political awareness among the masses. Without democratic political systems, the process of empowerment is incomplete. Chandra (1997) favors the political participation of women at a grass root level which can help upgrade females' position and empower them. Moreover, to provide and develop a good political culture for women, endeavors ought to be made to increment political awareness among women at the nearby level that can bring a weight gathering of women for taking care of their related issues at the neighborhood level and showing their significant issues at a larger amount.

Similarly, Hust (2002) has inferred that the greatest number of women taking an interest in political improvement helps each other to challenge the current power structure, talk about sexual orientation connection issues, and additionally strengthens them to advance an enabling situation. Furthermore, McKenna (1999) views that political cooperation underpins women to build up a political culture that helps women cause and fuses more women in the essential leadership handle, as showed by Bari (2005) that political investment is enthusiastic not just to develop individual and aggregate movement but also is significant for making opportunities that lead women toward empowerment. Pini (2002) avows that five key components control women's contribution to agro-governmental issues. It comprises of time and area of gatherings, the absence of support, the conduct, gender-biased culture of association, women's absence of intrigue.

The study aimed to highlight the problems faced by women while participating in the political activities in district Charsada of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The study also tries to investigate that either their participation in political activities reduced their problem. The study further revealed that women's participation in political activities leads to their empowerment in day to day life.

## **2. The Methodology of the Study**

This study is quantitative and based on both primary and secondary data. The primary data was collected through the interview schedule while secondary data was taken from the existing literature on the subject issue. This study is carried out in two union councils (Behlola and Mohammad Nari) of Charsadda district. Married and unmarried women between the age (15-49) constitute the universe of the study. Though a sample of 200 female respondents was, selected for this study. The respondents were interviewed by a self-structured semi-interview through a simple random sampling technique. Structured and semi-structured questions were included in the interview schedule. The chi-square test was applied to find out the relationship between the dependent and independent variables.

## **3. Results and Discussion**

This section of the study consists of three parts. The first part is about the demographic information while the second part showed the Uni-variate relation of the findings and last but not least showed the Bi-variate association between dependent and independent variables. The above showed demographic information of the respondents in which 10.% of the respondents were the age between 16-20,12.5%were of the age 21-25, 19% were of the age 26-30 and 13%of the respondents were between the age 36-40. Further, the majority of the respondents 24% were illiterate, 21% primary level of education, 11% were matric level and only 2%were master-level education. Proceeding to marital status and family type in which 66% were married and 24% were unmarried respondents. While 44% of the respondents in the study area belonged to the nuclear family, 53% related to a joint family system and only 3% of the respondents were living in an extended family system.

At the occupational level, 6.5% of the respondents connected with a Government job, 7.5% of the respondents belonged to private occupation and 72% were housewives. While in monthly income, 61% have no monthly income (jobless), 21.5% of the respondents have a monthly income between Rs1001-10000, 1% of the respondents had a monthly income between Rs20001-30000 and only 1% of the respondents had monthly income above than Rs30000.

**Table 1: Demographic Information of the Respondents**

Attributes	Items	Frequency	Percentage
Age of Respondent	16-20	20	10
	21-25	25	12.5
	26-30	38	19
	31-35	36	18
	36-40	26	13
	41-45	37	18
	Above 45	18	8
Educational Level	Illiterate	48	24
	Primary	42	21
	Matric	22	11
	Intermediate	8	4
	Graduate	9	4.5
	Master	4	2.0
Marital Status	Married	133	66.5
	Unmarried	48	24
	Divorce	3	1.5
	Widow	16	8
Type of Family	Nuclear family	88	44
	Joint family	106	53
	Extended family	6	3
Respondent Occupation	Government	13	6.5
	Private	15	7.5
	Semi-Government	20	10.5
	Housewife	144	72
	Others	8	4
Income Level	No income	122	61
	1 up to1000	25	12.5
	1001 up to 10000	43	21.5
	10001 up to 20000	6	3
	20001 up to 30000	2	1
	Above 30000	2	1

**Table 2: Univariate Analysis of Political Participation and Women Empowerment**

Statements	Agree	Disagree	Don't Know	Total
You cast your vote for the propose of empowerment	38 (19)	151(75.5)	11(5.5)	200(100)
You cast your vote by your own choice	24(12)	144(72)	32(16)	200(100)
You cast your vote as dictated by husband/ father or brother's choice	120(60)	66(33)	14(7)	200(100)
A woman leader can better empower women in the future	173(86)	13(6.5)	14(7)	200(100)
A female can do ate can solve your problem bitterly as compared to a male	181(90.5)	17(8.5)	2(1)	200(100)
Women should personally participate in elections	20(10)	161(80.5)	19(9.5)	200(100)

Table values in each cell indicate frequency while the value of parenthesis indicated percentage. Table showing the response categories in which 38(19%) of the respondents viewed that they cast their vote for the propose of empowerment while 151 (75.5%) disagreed with the statement. Further, 24 (12%) of the respondents thought that they cast their votes by their own choice. While majority 144(72%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement and expressed that they cannot cast vote my own choice but due to some cultural and social pressures. In cultural context 120 (55%) of the respondents viewed that women cast their vote as dictated by husband/father or brother's choice. While 66(33%) disagreed. A maximum number of the respondents 173(86%) preferred that a women leader can better empower women in the future whereas, 13(6.5) disagreed with the statement. Most of the respondents 181 (90.5%) agreed that female candidates can better solve your problem as compared to a male candidate. While 17 (8.5%) disagreed with the statement and only 2(1%) did not answer

the statement. About 20 (10%) viewed that women should personally participate in elections. While the majority of respondents disagreed 161 (80.5) with this statement and 19 (9.5%) did not answer the statement which was shown as the "don't know" option in the table below.

**Table 3: Bi-variate Analysis of Political Participation in Women Empowerment**

Statement	Response	Agree	Disagree	Don't know	Total	Chi-Square
Women cast their vote for the propose of empowerment	Agree	19(9.5)	18(9)	1(0.5)	38(19.0)	$\chi^2=10.291$ ( $p=0.036$ )
	Disagree	99(48.5)	50(25)	2(1)	151(70.5)	
	Don't know	3(1.5)	7(3.5)	1(1)	11(5.5)	
	Total	121(60.5)	75(37.5)	4(2)	200(100)	
Women's cast their vote by own choice	Agree	19(9.5)	3(1.5)	2(1)	24(12)	$\chi^2=14.796$ ( $p=0.005$ )
	Disagree	79(39.5)	63(31.5)	2(1)	144(72)	
	Don't know	23(11.5)	94.5)	0	32(16)	
	Total	121(60.5)	75(37.5)	4(2)	200(100)	
Women's cast their vote as dictated by husband/ father or brother choice	Agree	80(40)	39(19.5)	1(0.5)	120(60)	$\chi^2=9.484$ ( $p=0.050$ )
	Disagree	31(15.5)	32(16)	3(1.5)	66(33)	
	Don't know	10(5)	4(2)	0	14(7)	
	Total	121(60.5)	75(37.5)	4(2)	(200(100)	
A better women leader can empower women	Agree	103(51.1)	68(39)	2(1)	173(86.5)	$\chi^2=14.831$ ( $p=0.005$ )
	Disagree	11(5.5)	2(1)	0	13(6.5)	
	Don't know	7(3.5)	5(2.5)	2(1)	14(7)	
	Total	121(60.5)	75(37.5)	4(2)	(200(100)	
A female candidate can better resolve your problem as compared to a male candidate	Agree	108(54)	70(35)	3(1.5)	181(90.5)	$\chi^2=2.805$ ( $p=0.591$ )
	Disagree	12(6)	4(2)	1(0.5)	17(8.5)	
	Don't know	1(0.5)	1(0.5)	0	2(1)	
	Total	121(60.5)	75(37.5)	4(2)	(200(100)	
Women personally participate in elections	Agree	12(6.0)	8(4.0)	0	20(10.0)	$\chi^2=1.490$ ( $p=0.828$ )
	Disagree	98(49.0)	60(30.0)	3(1.5)	161(80.5)	
	Don't know	11(5.5)	7(3.5)	1(.5)	9(4.5)	
	Total	121(60.5)	75(37.5)	4(2.0)	(200(100)	

Table values in each cell indicate frequency while the value of parenthesis indicated percentage. Based on findings in the table highlighted that the significant association ( $P=.036$ ) existed between the independent variable women cast their vote for the propose of empowerment with the dependent variable women empowerment. The data explored significant association ( $P=.005$ ) was found between the statements women's cast their vote by their own choice with women empowerment. This statement fully negates the opinion of Naz, (2012) that in our country Pakistan women in rural have restricted to cast their vote for the resolution of their problems. Furthermore, the information regarding independent variable women's cast their vote as dictated by husband/father or brother choice with dependent variable women empowerment was found a significant association( $P=.050$ ). The table further explores a strong significant association ( $P=.005$ ) that exists between a better women leader can empower women in the future with women empowerment. The said finding favored the idea of Chandra (1997) that awareness in women regarding their empowerment is slightly created due to participation in politics. On the contrary, a non-significant association ( $P=.591$ ) found between the statements a female candidate can better resolve your problem as compared to a male candidate with women empowerment. Similarly, the result revealed a non- significant association ( $P=(.828)$ ) was found between the independent variable statement women personally participate in elections with the dependent variable statement women empowerment. This finding of the study fully supports the statement of Hust (2002), that if women participate in active politics can leads towards the hurdle in their day to day life.

#### 4. Conclusion

Based on quantitative analysis and information provided, there are significant results to realize the phenomenon of political participation and women's empowerment. The study also explored that women do not cast their vote for their own choice, but mostly cast their vote dictated by their husband/ father or brother's choice. The study has also investigated that a women leader can better empower women. Furthermore, a female leader can better resolve

women related issues as compared to male candidates. It concludes that women have a low perception of how to cast their votes for women's empowerment. This is further concluded that the political participation of women and women's empowerment are interconnected with each other. Through the political participation of women, it can easily encourage and award women to address their issues and solve them according to their wishes and desire.

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