

THE GEOGRAPHY OF REPRESENTATION: AN ANALYSIS OF WOMEN'S ELECTION ON GENERAL SEATS IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF PAKISTAN (2002-2018)

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to investigate the geographical characteristics that have an impact on the efficiency of electoral systems of a country. A variety of contextual factors, including the local social and economic conditions, locality networks (Biradari), and linkages between voters play a key role in success of any candidate in elections in Pakistan. The study is a critical analysis of women's participation in elections for constituency seats. In today's society, women are a socially marginalized category that led to uneven level of their representation in the national legislature. States have introduced different initiatives to increase women's number in political institutions. Because of General Musharraf's policy of reserving seats in parliament for women, there was a significant rise in the number of seats held by women from 2002 to 2018. Additionally, the Election Act of 2017 stipulated that political parties must allocate at least 10 percent of their total party tickets to female candidates. This research will include not only a critical analysis of women elections on constituency seats but also in which province and constituencies, women are elected frequently.

KEY WORDS: geographical factors, electoral systems, women's participation and gender quota

1. INTRODUCTION

The low level of women's representation in the arena of formal politics is a global phenomenon. In the present era, women have 24.9% representation in the world which has been 11.67% in 1995. There is a substantial cross-national variation; only in the Nordic, region do women have 43.9% representation whereas in Asia it is still only 20.4% (IPU, 2022). It is interesting to note till 2010, European countries dominate the list of 10 ten countries having the highest women's representation but recently this list has become diverse with having five countries from America, two from Sub-Sahara, and one from the MENA region. The United Nations has been trying to persuade the governments of the countries who are members of the organization to do away with gender inequalities in political positions. It is essential to have a significant number of women holding political office in order to effectively address pressing problems

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facing women. Following the world conference on the status of women that was hosted by the United Nations in 1975. There has been an increasing demand from women's rights organizations that states should implement gender equality legislation in addition to solving all forms of discrimination that are directed toward women. In later years, the United Nations adopted the approach of "Gender Mainstreaming" as part of its development initiatives. It was realized that despite the socioeconomic development and the growth of democracy, significant gender gaps still persisted in many of the world's nations (Ballington and Karam 2005). Inequalities of women and men in political positions are not only a threat to democratic processes, but also to the advancement of both economic and human rights. In the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, governments were urged to take proactive steps to guarantee that women have equal access to and full participation in decision-making processes. In later years, states began implementing gender quota policies in an effort to boost the number of women serving in legislative bodies. These affirmative action policies have been implemented in about one hundred nations at this point, including both democratic and authoritarian regimes (Dahlerup 2007). Throughout the past ten to fifteen years, there has been a significant increase in the number of gender quotas being implemented, making quota laws the most far-reaching electoral changes in recent years (Krook 2009). A greater public and academic debate on the effects of gender quotas has been started as a result of the increased representation of women in formal legislative bodies achieved through the use of gender quotas.

After Pakistan gained its independence from British rule in 1947, women in Pakistan were granted the ability to vote and to hold political office. Since then, there has been no constitutional or legal barrier to the participation and representation of women in politics; nevertheless, despite this, women's political participation and representation at the legislative and party levels has remained very low. In the general elections held in 1997, the percentage of seats held by women ranged anywhere from 0.4 percent to 4 percent, (Muhammad, Abbas, & Waris, 2022). General Musharraf, the President of Pakistan 2002 introduced 17% reserve seats for women in the parliament and four provincial assemblies whereas 33% seats for women in the local government. It is argued that the impetus behind this policy of increasing women's reserved seats was not to bring a 'women's broader political inclusion' rather than it allowed Musharraf to propagate his so-called vision of 'Enlightened moderation' (Mufti and Jalalzai, 2021). The election of 205 women to national and provincial legislatures can be attributed to the reserving of seats for women in these bodies. This new information also helped Pakistan get a

higher position on the Gender Empowerment Measurement (GEM). It took Pakistan from the 100th position on the list of 102 countries in 1999 to the 58th position in 2005 as a result of this accomplishment. This ranking was even higher than both the United Kingdom and the United States (UNDP, 2005). Pakistan is the country in South Asia with the greatest percentage of women serving in parliament (IPU, 2008). A gender quota was first implemented by the British colonial government in India under the Government of India Act of 1935. This gender quota was carried over to Pakistan after the country gained its independence. A gender quota system based on reserved seats was also implemented in Pakistan. Provisions for women's reserved seats can be found in all three constitutions of Pakistan (1956, 1962, and 1973). The percentage of seats reserved for women was raised to 10 percent, or 20 seats, in 1985. This increase was to remain in effect for either ten years or three general elections, whichever came first. After three general elections (in 1977, 1985, and 1988), as specified in the legislation passed in 1985, this provision of reserved seats was allowed to expire in 1988. Once more in 2002, by the Legal Framework Order (LFO), 17.5 percent of seats in the parliament were reserved for women.

Table 1: Women Political Representation in Pakistan (1970–2018)

Tenure of the Assembly (Year)	Total Seats	Number of Women Legislators Elected on General Seats
1972–77	144	6
March 1977–July 05, 1977	210	1
1985–1988	217	1
1988–1990	217	4
1990–93	217	2
1993–96	217	4
1997–99	217	6
2002-07	342	13
2008-13	342	16
2013-18	342	10
2018-23	342	09

*One woman was elected in bi-elections

Sources: Data is compiled from official reports of Election Commission of Pakistan, <https://www.ecp.gov.pk/frmGenericPage.aspx?PageID=3051>

A large quantity of existing studies on gender quotas has been confined to a limited number of Western and Nordic countries where women have already achieved a high level of representation within national legislatures. These studies are not useful in studying women's political representation in developing countries like Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh. In Pakistan, there is modest research on this topic, particularly on the issue of gender quotas and women's substantive representation. Women

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have long enjoyed reasonable representation in all three tiers of governance in Pakistan, yet their capacity, efficiency, and performance in political institutions are still to be evaluated, and grassroots original research by impartial academics has yet to be carried out on this issue. There are a few studies in Pakistan that have critically assessed women's political representation. A few autobiographies (Shahnawaz, 2002; Ikramullah, 2002; Bhutto, 1989; Hussain, 2015, Rehman, 2021). have provided some insight into women's political role and struggle in the early years of Pakistan, and several research papers and articles have been written on the performance of female politicians since 1947 (Ayaz and Flesschenberg, 2009; Ali, 2009; Muller, 2009; Bano, 2008, Mumtaz, 1998; Afzal, 1999). Similarly, a few studies conducted by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have tried to discuss the political participation and representation of women (Bari, 2009; UNDP, 2005; Zia and Bari, 1999; Gulrez and Warraich, 1998). The study conducted by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), only focused on the current situation without making any comparisons, drawing from historical data. Additionally, the UNDP limited its study to only two year's proceedings of the parliament. Shirkat Gah published a report, but it is predominantly a chronological description of the events (Shaheed, Zia and Warraich, 1998). In her work, Bari (2009) attempted to evaluate the performance of female parliamentarians based on their participation in the proceedings of 34 sessions of the 12th National Assembly. Unfortunately, this was an NGO-sponsored project seeking some specific objectives.

2. MATERIAL AND METHOD

It is regrettable that not enough in-depth research has been conducted on the topic, which shows that there is a need to understand what are those factors that play a role in the success on any women candidate for a general seat. The majority of the research that has been done on this subject has been solely on describing how women are portrayed. It is challenging to generalize the findings of the substantial body of published material on this topic, and the majority of the study conducted up to this point has been descriptive in character. Pakistani academics such as among others have solely concentrated their attention on the legislative achievements of Pakistan's female lawmakers. The vast majority of the studies have ignored the problems that women legislators have not been able to solve. This study has shed light on the various aspects that have contributed to the ineffectiveness of women's representation in no parliamentary roles. An analysis of official reports provided by the Election Commission of Pakistan served as the foundation for this study. It is necessary, for the purpose of gaining an understanding of the geographical factors at play, to explain the provinces as well as the districts in Pakistan from 2002-2018 in which women have successfully competed for and

been elected to general seats in the Member of the National Assembly of Pakistan.

2.1. The Geography of Representation: Women's Participation on Constituency Seats

The study of political geography is a broad and dynamic subfield of geography that is always expanding as a geographic investigation into the distribution and arrangement of power at various geographical scales (Loughlin, Vladimir, & Olga, 1997). The idea that a state is a "natural" political unit has been called into question by conventional political geography, which has been critical of the role of states and poses this question. Further critique is connected to the emphasis placed on traditional politics that are concentrated on the state while other key political issues are ignored (Ondrejka, 2016). At this point, the state is considered to be one of the actors towards whom attention must be directed. The study of political geography has been influenced by a wide range of factors, such as intellectual currents within the more general subject as well as political events and practices that occur outside of the academic setting. It is in the process of developing further and demonstrates a significant amount of vitality, both in terms of the breadth of the problems it addresses and the depth of the perspectives it adopts. The branch of political geography known as electoral geography examines the ways in which space, location, and election processes interact with one another. It also investigates the impact that regional setting has on the choices voters make, the techniques parties employ, and the functioning of electoral systems (Pattie & Johnston, 2009). Additionally, this serves as a link between the disciplines of human geography and political science. There are three primary considerations that can be extracted from the geographical analysis of election results. The geography of voting, the geography of representation, and the geography of elections are the three categories included here. The study of the geography of elections investigates the several methods in which power can be transferred, both through democratic elections as well as through "irregular" processes such as a military coup. The study of the geography of representation looks at a variety of topics, including the formation of electoral borders, the structure of electoral systems and whether or not they have the characteristics of centralized or federalized systems, and other related topics (Put, Maddens, & Verleden, 2017). In a perfect scenario, the boundaries of electoral districts would be drawn in such a way that would guarantee equal numbers of voters in each district. Nevertheless, shifts in population could make this challenging, and political parties might have vested interests in the issue (Walks, 2010). The examination of voting procedures and structures makes up the third major field of study in electoral geography.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to the data that is currently available, the number of women who were elected to general seats in the 2002 elections was thirteen, however in the 2018 elections, only nine women were elected to general seats. Even though the election act of 2017 made it mandatory for all political parties to give tickets to at least 10 percent of women candidates, the number of women elected to general seats in the 13th National Assembly was the highest ever recorded at 16. However, the following elections saw a trend of fewer women being elected, and this trend continued in the elections held in 2018. Despite this, the number of women elected to general seats in the 13th National Assembly was the highest ever recorded. Another momentous occasion occurred during the 12th National Assembly when Dr. Fahmeeda Mirza became the first woman to ever be elected to the position of speaker. When one looks at the number of women who ran for office in 2013, one can see that there was a significant rise in their representation at the polling station. There were a total of 60 women who ran for office in the elections held in 2002, whereas there were 72 women who ran for office in the elections held in 2008. 135 women stood for election to general seats in the following elections, which took place in 2013. (Figure 1).

The rise in the number of candidates led to an increase in the proportion of women candidates, both urban and rural, hailing from a wider range of Legislative districts. During this election, which began in 2002 and ended in 2018, women ran for office in a variety of different districts; nonetheless, winning candidates were from conventional constituency. In the elections held in 2002, women competed from 49 constituencies, in the elections held in 2008, women competed from 60 constituencies, and in the elections held in 2013, 135 women candidates competed from contesting 113 different constituencies on general seats. Between the years 2002 and 2018, there was a considerable leap in the proportion of female candidates who finished in second place in electoral contests. A certain level of acceptance of women's role in politics can be inferred from the rise in the number of women who are running for general seats in elections and the number of women who finish in second place. The highest ever number of women candidates (183) contested the 2018 election on general seats. This is partially attributed to a provision in the Election Act 2017 that bound all political parties to allocate at least 5 percent of tickets to women on general seats for NA and Provincial Assemblies.

“A political party shall make the selection of candidates for elective offices, including membership of Majlis-e-Shoora

(Parliament) and Provincial Assemblies, through a transparent and democratic procedure and while making this election of candidates on general seats shall ensure at least five percent representation of women candidates.” (Election Act, 2017, section 2006).

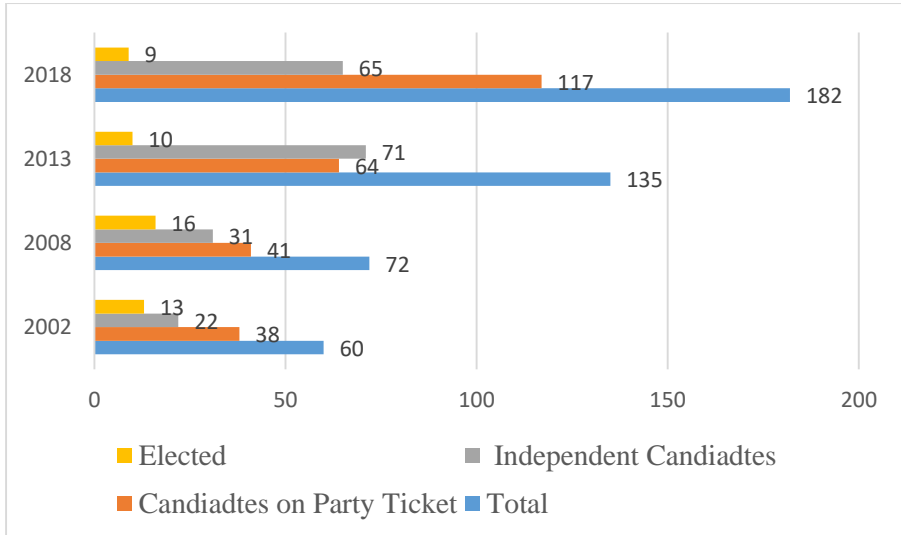


Figure 1: Comparison of Women’s Participation in Elections on Constituency Seats (2002-2018) in Pakistan

Source: Data is compiled from official reports of Election Commission of Pakistan, <https://www.ecp.gov.pk/frmGenericPage.aspx?PageID=3051>

Only 9 women were elected as a member of the National Assembly in the 2018 election. The analyses of the family background of the elected MNAs on general seats support the statement quoted above as most of the tickets in the general seats were awarded to women candidates with feudal backgrounds. Only a handful of activists were given the ticket. Political parties did not show any kind of enthusiasm in the election campaign for these candidates.

Table 2: Women Elected on Constituency Seats in National Assembly Elections (2002-2018)

Province	2002-07	2008-13	2013-18	2018-23
Punjab	Attock	Faisalabad	Hafizabad	D.G.Khan
	Jhang (2)	Hafizbad	Jhang	Jhang
	Khushab	Jhang (2)	Lahore (2)	Narrowal
	Lahore	Khushab	Nankana Shahib	Sialkot
	Muzafargarh (2)	Lahore	Narrowal	
	Narowal	Muzafargarh		
	Okara	Narrowal		
		Sialkot		
		T.T.Singh		
		Vehari		
Total	09	11	06	04
Sindh	Badin	Badin	Badin	Badin
	Hyderabad	Hyderabad	Nawabshah	Khairpoor
	Nawabshah	Karachi	Sanghar	Sanghar
		Larkana	Thata	Thata
		Nawabshah-		
Total	03	05	04	04
Balochistan	Kech-cum-Gawadar			Kech
Total	01	0	0	01
KPK				
G. Total	13	16	10	09

Table 2 is self-explanatory and makes it evident that there are a diversity of districts within provinces that have a majority of women elected to constituency seats from the years 2002 to 2018. These results are based on the elections that took place. It is also evident in the table that no women were elected to the constituency seat from KPK in the elections held in 2002 and 2018, and that just one woman was elected from Baluchistan during those same elections. There is a pattern that repeats itself within provinces, and that pattern is that there are numerous Districts in which women are consistently elected to general seats. There are particular parliamentary constituencies in the provinces of Punjab and Sindh that regularly elect women to office. Fahmida Mirza, a former speaker of the National Assembly, has been continuously elected to represent Sindh's Badin constituency in elections from 2002 till the most recent ones in 2018. In the elections that took place in 2002, nine of the thirteen women who were elected to general seats were elected from the province of Punjab. However, there are very few areas within Punjab where women are elected to General seats. Because women have always been elected from District Jhang, it has maintained its prominence. In addition to the election of Seyda Abida Hussain as the representative for this district, another member of the powerful Bharwana family has been elected to one of the general seats. In certain districts of Sindh, women are eligible for election to constituency seats. This is the case in certain

districts. Banazir Bhutto and Nusrat Bhutto have both been victorious in past elections, and now Fahmida Mirza of Badin has been elected as a member of the National Assembly for the fourth year in a row. Both of these women come from the Bhutto political dynasty. In the elections that took place in 2008, it was once again clear to see that out of the 16 women elected to the national assembly on general seats, 11 women were from the province of Punjab and five women were from the province of Sindh. No women were elected from KPK and Balochistan. There is another instance of the same pattern that we have seen, which is that there are particular constituencies in which women are always elected. It would appear that the impact of families in the community is one of the most important factors in determining whether or not a woman is elected to one of the constituency seats. This familial history is readily apparent in all regions, regardless of whether one is in Punjab or Sindh. It has been suggested that the elections of these women are nothing more than an extension of the interests of male politicians (Chandia, 2016); yet, one research asserts that these women are subject to "double scrutiny for their political dynastic background" (Basu, 2016). The influence of these dynasty politics can be seen in every region and province of Pakistan. Even though the Election Act of 2017 made it mandatory for all political parties to give tickets to at least 10 percent of women candidates in the 2018 elections, unfortunately, the number of women candidates increased substantially but only a small number of women (only 9) were elected on general seats. This pattern suggests that there are certain additional processes at work in the political system of Pakistan that are extremely important in the success of female candidates for general seats. It is not only so that the party list may accommodate a greater number of prospective candidates. Alterations must also be made to a number of other aspects in order to increase the number of women who win general elections for seats in the parliament. In the elections of 2018, a woman was elected for the very first time to represent DG Khan. In order for PTI woman candidates to succeed in this constituency, which is the Laghari family's traditional stronghold, they had to put in a lot of hard effort. It is clear that the bulk of the women who have been elected to general seats come from politically powerful families when one examines the districts in which they were elected as well as their personal histories. These dynastic families play a vital role in this regard; yet, due to the nature of Pakistani politics, middle-class women in Pakistan are kept a great distance from the corridors of power.

4. CONCLUSION

Throughout this overview of the women's rights movement in Pakistan, it is demonstrated that women were first restricted to the field of social welfare. During the reign of Ayub Khan, a number of women-friendly

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regulations pertaining to family problems were enacted, resulting in a more favorable atmosphere for women's empowerment. The government of Benazir Bhutto was unable to restore the provision of women's reserved seats, but she was successful in creating a liberal environment for women by involving them in the political process. During the Zia-ul-Haq administration, the role of women was reinterpreted in terms of religious affiliation. A number of the actions and policies of his political adversary's government had an impact on the position of women. Among Pakistani women, he was responsible for the Hudood Ordinance, which had been a major cause of dissatisfaction for many years. Despite the hopes of women's rights organizations and female activists, Benazir Bhutto was unable to reform or overturn the discriminatory laws enacted by Zia. She lacked the political will as well as the necessary majority in the parliament to do so. Pakistan has implemented a slew of legislative and administrative reforms to better the position of women and girls. In addition, it is asserted that if existing habits, traditions, and structures are not altered, women's rights will not progress to the next critical stage of growth. In Pakistan, women's political representation has not yet reached a major or acceptable level of representation. Women had only nominal representation in Pakistan's first constitutional legislature, and by 1997, after fifty years, there were only six women in the country's 217-member National Assembly, which was dominated by men. One woman journalist is of the opinion that:

“As long as the doctrine of devolving power to women, instead of accepting it as their inalienable right, forms a partial part of the government's manifesto, political representation of the 50 percent of the population will always remain under male sponsorship” (Khan, 2007).

The women's movement in Pakistan has achieved some success in a number of areas, but there is still much work to be done. Despite all of the improvements, Pakistan is still seen as a patriarchal country with minimal modifications to old systems, with the majority of the population living in rural areas. Women's roles and social standing vary depending on their social level and geographic location. Women from the middle class are further separated into two groups: those who have received an education and are working professionals, and those who have received a less formal education. Women from the lower and lower middle classes have some influence in home decision-making, but women from the lower and lower middle classes are mostly ignored. It is argued that the success of women in general seats is due to the stronghold of their families. Women elected on general seats in Pakistan normally belonged to established political families. Well-known women members of the parliament such as Banazir

Bhutto, Nusrat Bhutto, Syda Abida Hussain, Begum Nasim Wali Khan, and Tehmina Dultana all belong to powerful and influential political families. In the 2002 elections, all women elected on general seats were from influential

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