

**Journal of Political Studies**

Vol. 28, No. 2, July–December, Winter 2021, pp.13–22

## **Political Empowerment of Women in Punjab: A Case Study of General Elections 2013 And 2018**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Nearly half of the world's population is women. Only 15% of women are represented in the legislature. Only 12 countries have women holding 33% or more of the seats in parliament (UNDP Report). Punjab is the most populous province in Pakistan. Compared with other provinces, women's participation in the political process is relatively high. The main purpose of this research is to analyze in detail the changing nature of women's politics in the traditional society of Punjab, Pakistan in the last two general elections in 2013 and 2018. There was an increase in the number of women contesting for general seats in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, particularly in the 2013 and 2018 General Elections. Women play major roles as Speaker of the National Assembly, Deputy Speaker of the Sindh Assembly, a woman minister presenting the yearly budget, Ambassador, and so on. The single component of the general elections in 2013 and 2018, the story was refuted domestically and globally, that either women are hesitant to enter mainstream politics or are not taking on electoral politics obligations at the local, provincial, or national levels. Gender equality and women's political involvement, on the other hand, are still necessary internationally on the basis of equality with males. It will take time to transform the political structure of a society that follows centuries-old customs and patterns, as it does in Pakistan. However, the good aspect is that in Pakistan, the process of political reform in terms of women's participation in state activities has already begun.*

**Keywords:** *Women Empowerment, Political Participation, General Elections, Electoral Politics*

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### Introduction

Women make up half of the world's population. Their engagement in the social and economic spheres is also quite important due to their dual roles in the production and production sectors. However, it is uncertain if they will join in politics. Politics is the most significant social institution that participates in the authority and administration procedures. Only 15 percent of the world's lawmakers are female, and only 12 nations hold 33 percent of the seats in women's legislatures. Women's political engagement is being hampered over the world. For economic and financial reasons, the current structure is considered a barrier to its development(UNDP, 2005). The Constitution of Pakistan allows women to cooperate fully in policy-making, However, their participation in politics at all levels is minimal due to social and constructive barriers. At different times in history, women's political representation in Pakistan was low, but in recent years, parliaments have represented women at the highest political level (Latif, 2015).

*“No nation can rise to the height of glory unless your women are side by side with you; we are victims of evil customs. It is crime against humanity that our women are shut up within the four walls of the houses as prisoners. There is no sanction anywhere for the deplorable condition in which our women have to live. You should take your women along with you as comrades in every sphere of life.” (Muhammad Ali Jinnah, 1944).*

It is remarkable that the social and linguistic barriers to political understanding that have existed throughout constitutional recognition have been eliminated from the above statement by Pakistan's founder. Men and women worked equally in the Pakistani effort to end British rule. Represented by women in Pakistan's First Constitution. Miss Fatima Jinnah later changed her name to Madar-e-Millat (National Mother), shared the same status with her brother, and later took part in the presidential opposition in the Ayub Khan elections. MS. Jahanzeb Ali Jennifer Musa Qazi is the first foreign Pakistani citizen. Ms. Ashraf Mika Abbasi was elected to the National Assembly in 1972, and Saima Usman became the first female senator in Pakistan in 1974; Khaleda Rana Riaz Ali Khan, the first female deputy speaker to play an important role in the movement, was subsequently elected as the governor of Sindh in 1974. Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto becomes the first Pakistani woman in history to be elected as Prime Minister. She was barely 35 years old when she was asked to create a government. Fahmida Mirza became the first female speaker of Pakistan's National Assembly in 2008. Hina Khar was Pakistan's first female Foreign Minister in 2011(Bari F. , 2009). Pakistani women now have it better position than other South Asian women. Despite the rise of new political trends, Pakistani women's engagement at the national and Pakistani levels continues to deliver vital services at the regional, national, and international levels.

### Literature Review

*“An Overview of Women Representation in National Assembly of Pakistan and their Career Persistency” (2019) by Naveeda Noreen.* She represents women in parliament in this study. She spoke on women's employment chances in the country, which has a tiny number of parliamentarians and numerous hidden barriers to their

## Political Empowerment of Women in Punjab: A Case Study of General Elections 2013 And 2018

political engagement. Women's career opportunities, given the country's limited number of legislators and the numerous hidden barriers to their political participation. Only 3% of women are elected to general seats and 17% to reserved seats, indicating that certain unspoken factors influence their presence in Pakistani politics.

*“The Role of Political Parties in Political Development of Pakistan” (2018)* by Iqra Mushtaq. She discussed the role of political parties in empowering women in Pakistan's political system in her research. She gives light on the political practices of political parties that lack a protagonist in the promotion of political contributions. Political parties must fulfil their roles effectively in order to strengthen democracy. Political parties in Pakistan do not operate effectively to advance women's political growth, and greater efforts are needed to increase their accountability in the country.

*“Women in Pakistan” (2016)* written by Dr. Farzana Bari. The author goes into great length regarding women's empowerment. This book discusses the socio-cultural issues that women confront in society. It also addressed the many sorts of violence that women experienced. The book also includes a thorough note on women's political engagement in Pakistani decision-making. The book mostly addressed the challenges that Pakistani women confront in society.

*“Female Political Participation in South Asia: A Case Study of Pakistan” (2015)* by Arfan Latif. The gender gap in politics was examined in this article. Education, social environmental influences, and the feudal system are main hindrance to women's political empowerment. According to a UNDP study from 2005, overall women representation in the world population was just 15%, with only 33% of parliamentary seats in 12 nations. The author also analysed male attitudes toward female political engagement and devised three categories of barriers. The first barrier is a male-dominated culture that believes politics is solely for males; the second is cultural ideology, and the third is economic reliance.

*“Role of Women Legislators in Decision Making Process: An Assessment of Punjab Assembly” (2008-2013)* by Hina Rashid. Pakistan also took a number of efforts in support of women's rights, increasing their participation in both the Central and Provincial Bodies. It is true that a community's interests can be better represented and defended by its own representatives. In this regard, the purpose of this article is to emphasise the link between women's empowerment and decision-making, with a specific emphasis on the participation of women lawmakers in the Punjab Assembly from 2008 to 2013. Women of the Punjab Assembly do not have proportional participation in decision-making positions. Besides a handful, most female parliamentarians remained idle and ineffective during their terms. They were unable to fully participate in the legislative process as a group. They were also ineffective in advancing the interests of their gender society.

*“Women Role and Participation in the Politics of Punjab” (2019)* by Muhammad Yasir Ali. Only 15% of females are represented in the parliament. There are just 12 nations where women carry 33% or more of the parliamentary seats. Pakistan is a federal democratic republic with a parliamentary system. The country's society is diversified, with many cultural standards and social ideals. Women's conditions are no better than in any other third-world country. According to population, Punjab is Pakistan's most populous province. Women participate in the political process at a

higher rate than the rest of the provinces. This article examined the difficulties and obstacles that women experience in a male-dominated culture.

### History of Women Political Empowerment in Pakistan

Equal representation of men and women, particularly in the legislature and executive, is regarded as a necessary component for the implementation of real democracy. Women's involvement and representation in Pakistan's National and Provincial Assemblies has always been limited. From the 10th of August 1947 until the 24th of October 1954, the total number of participants in the first National Legislature was 30, with just two (3%) represented by females. Women had no seats in the second National Legislature, hence their participation in the decision-making assembly was 0% (Awan, 2018).

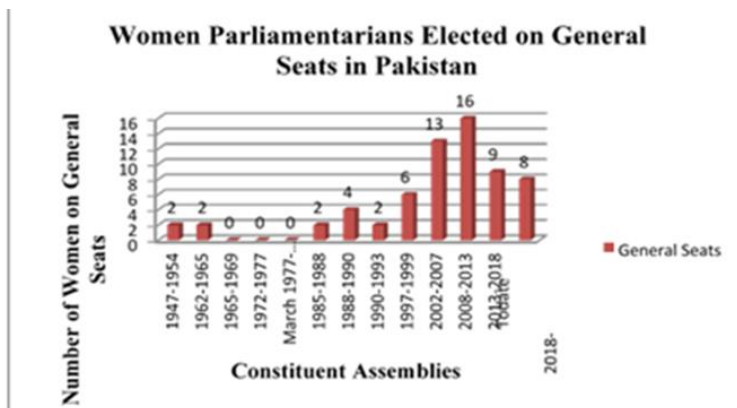
The acceptance of the notion of women's suffrage for their reserved seats, on the other hand, was a watershed moment in the 1956 constitution. These reserved seats were distributed according to unique geographical constituencies. This act might be seen as a watershed moment in the history of women's political independence since it granted women two voting rights: one for general seats and the other for reservation of seats. These initiatives, though, were in vain, since this regulation was repealed in the 1962 constitution and replaced with the process of proportional representation. That very same idea was preserved in the 1973 Constitution (Shami A. A., 2009).

Under Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's presidency, a surge of self-definition women's rights swept the globe. The primary goal of this strategy was to raise awareness of women's issues and concerns. MsNusrat Bhutto, the First Lady, attended the World Conference on Women in 1975. The international community saw this as a positive sign that the state of Pakistan was concerned about women's rights and concerns. A commission on the status of women was also constituted the same year. Consequently, no more major progress was made as a result of the establishment of "indirect elections" on women's reserved seats. The abovementioned law eventually limited women's political rights and involvement (Khan, 2013). Following Zia's reign, a significant turning point is seen. In 1988, the government established a quota for women and boosted it to 10% from 3%. As a result, women received 22 seats in the National Assembly (21 on reserved seats and 1 directly elected) and 5 percent of positions in Provincial Assemblies. In 1990, women had 0.9 percent of the seats (only 2 women were directly elected from 217 seats). It was just 1.8 percent in 1993 (4 women out of 217) and 2.8 percent in 1997. (6 women, out of total 217 members) (Awan, 2018). At the beginning of the twenty-first century, approximately 95 percent of the world's governments guaranteed women two fundamental rights. These included the ability to run for office and vote in elections. Efforts have been undertaken all around the world to expand women's involvement in various political processes by enacting legal and constitutional provisions. (Hina, 2018). The proportion of women in National Parliament has risen from 19 percent in 2010 to roughly 23 percent in 2018 (Riaz, 2019). In Pakistan, the twenty-first century will see a noticeable increase in the proportion of women in both locally and nationally decision-making organisations. General Pervez Musharraf issued a Legal Framework Order (LFO) on August 21, 2002, instituting processes to reintroduce women's quotas, especially in politics. It was raised to 33% in all state assembly and decision-making bodies. It raised the number of general seats for women in the

## Political Empowerment of Women in Punjab: A Case Study of General Elections 2013 And 2018

twelfth National Assembly from 1.4 percent in the 11th National Assembly to 20percent in the 12th National Assembly (1997- 1999). Women received 60 out of 342 seats in the National Assembly and 17 out of 100 seats in the Upper House, based on the given quota (Senate) (Hina, 2018).

according PILDAT, the same allotment law was implemented in the Provincial Assemblies, as such women received (17.8 percent) political representation in the Punjab Assembly and 66 out of 371 seats, 29 out of 168 (17.3 percent) in the Sindh Assembly, 22 out of 124 (17.7 percent) in the KP, and 11 out of 65 (16.9 percent) in the Balochistan Assembly(PILDAT, 2004). During the 13th National Assembly General Elections in 2008, 75 women fought from 62 divisions, with 16 receiving seats by contesting directly. 60 women were given reserved seats in the National Assembly(Ahmad, 2018). Women filled 76 of the 342 regular and reserved seats in the National Assembly, accounting for 22.23 percent of the total. There were 139 women elected to Provincial Assemblies, among 128 elected on reserved seats (Punjab 66, Sindh 29, KP 22, and Balochistan 11) and 11 elected directly. 36 women were nominated by political parties in the 2013 election. Similarly, in 2013, 108 women competed for the 272 National Assembly seats. This figure is greater than in the 2008 election, when 76 women campaigned for office in total. Since the 2013 election, several political parties, including as the Pml (Nawaz) and the MutahidaMqam Movement, have boosted women's involvement on party tickets in comparison to the 2008 election. Several political parties, such as the Pakistan People Party and the Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid-e-Azam, showed a reduction in women's involvement in the 2013 election as comparing to the 2008 election.



Source: Women Representation in National assembly (Noreen Z. &, 2019)

### Women Representation in National Assembly (2013 Elections)

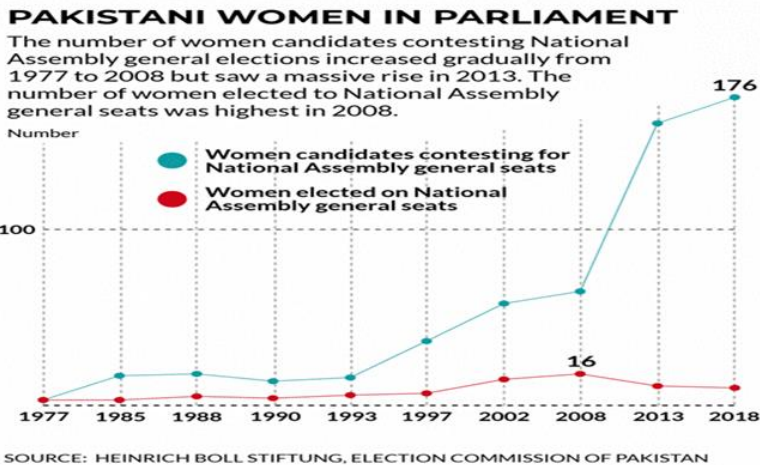
The results for national elections 2013 on general seats where women participated demonstrate an overall rising trend: for example, 61 women contested election on party ticket in 2013, though 41 women earned party ticket in 2008. Correspondingly, the number of women running as independent candidates in 2013 increased to 74 from 31 in 2008.

### Women MNA's in Punjab (2013 Elections)

21 women were elected to general seats in the National Assembly and Provincial Assemblies out of a total of 419 women candidates. Nine of these 21 were elected to the National Assembly, nine to the Punjab Provincial Assembly, two to the Sindh Provincial Assembly, and one to the Balochistan Provincial Assembly. (See Table 9 on Page 8-9). All of the candidates affiliated to political parties, and no independents were elected. There are 76 out of 371 total (20.5 percent). Sixty-six of the 76 seats are allocated for women. There are 9 general seats available. 1 seats designated for non-Muslims(S.Zia, 2013).

#### Women Representation in National Assembly (2018 Elections)

In 2018, eight female lawmakers were elected to the National Assembly through direct elections. While the number of women who were able to win elections on general seats declined as compared 2008 and 2013, the number of women competitors in Election 2018 grew. Among the 464 female candidates, who made up 5.2% of the overall field, 289 were given tickets by political parties, while 175 ran as independents. There were five transgender candidates, whereas male candidates made up more than 94% of the total(Imran, 2018).



#### Women MNA's from Punjab (2018 elections)

Four of the eight female MNAs-elect are from Sindh, three from Punjab, and one from Balochistan. Women's political representation in Pakistan has gradually improved in the twenty-first century. The main reason is the enlarged reserved seat for women in the legislature, but it is also worth noting that the majority of these women have a strong political background.

## Political Empowerment of Women in Punjab: A Case Study of General Elections 2013 And 2018

Female Candidates against Female Elected on General Seats

Sr No	Election Year	Number of Female Candidates on General seats	Number of Female Elected on General Seats	Number of Females Elected from Punjab
1	2008	72	16	12
2	2013	135	9	4
3	2018	171	8	3

Source: Female Representation in Previous Elections (Khan I. A, 2018).

### Conclusion

Women's political engagement in Pakistan has expanded since the beginning of the twenty-first century, as the constitution grants them political rights such as the ability to vote, participate in elections, and run for public office. Women voted for their political rights in Pakistan's previous three general elections. This isn't to say that Pakistani women in the twentieth century couldn't attain these rights; it only means that they couldn't exercise them because of social, cultural, and educational issues. We know that women make with over half of the population of the state.

Pakistani women can be split into three groups based on their adult suffrage and dedication to national politics. Ordinary working-class women were among the earliest cadres. They remained faithful to national politics through party affiliation despite their strong political or ideological connection. These are women from the middle class who are more loyal to political parties based on their motivations and feelings. They voted for their party and headed the political camps. Second-generation women inherit political power and electoral districts from their families and continue to play a significant part in national politics as politicians and leaders. The third cadre woman at the party or constituency level, they have a lot of authority in national politics. Women who are elected to reserve seats in Pakistan's Provincial Assembly and National Assembly are frequently paid by their male relatives who are legislators. Furthermore, women in the third cadre do not directly participate in politics but rely on political luck. When their relatives' political parties gain power, they will receive voting rights and be appointed to government positions.

New steps have been implemented with the introduction of the 2017 Electoral Law to guarantee that women's involvement in any electoral district (including re-voting) where the number of women is less than 10% grows. In addition, a law prohibiting women from voting or running for office was deemed to be unconstitutional. For at least five viable seats, all political parties must nominate to female candidate.

The National Commission on Women's Participation observed after the 2018 elections that, while the number of women candidates has grown, the number of women who have won general seats has declined (Malik, 2020). In comparison to the 2008 and 2013 general elections, the number of female candidates has decreased, while women have grown in the 2018 general election. A total of 5.2 percent of the 469 female candidates took part in the election, with 289 political parties receiving tickets and 175 women participated in elections. A total of 5 transgender contenders

competed, with more than 94 percent of male candidates (only 7 women) and 157 non-Muslim candidates nominated by political parties (Imran, 2018).

Women from powerful political backgrounds play larger roles in political matters, but women without political support do not enter the political sphere in Pakistan. Mehnaz Aziz, for example, is the wife of Daniyal Aziz, a former federal minister. Meanwhile, Ghulam Bibi Bhrwana is the granddaughter of Ghulam Haider Bhrwana, a former member of the National Assembly. She has been elected three times since her family has a considerable political clout in Jhang. Shazia Marri, Nafeesa Shah, Fehmida Mirza, and other prominent women come from powerful political families. Although the current scenario is far from perfect, it is relatively tolerable when compared to the rest of the globe, particularly the Muslim world. More women must be directly elected by the people rather than through reserved seats. It will build their morale, and our society's social structure must likewise accommodate their changing and various roles.



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