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An overview of Women Representation in National Assembly of Pakistan and their career persistency

Abstract

To examine the strength of women in National assembly of Pakistan, on general and reserve seats and their career persistency in all the constituent assemblies since the inception of Pakistan secondary date was used. The percentage of women who came through general seats and their career persistency in parliament is very low. The findings indicated that the majority of the women win the election only one time on general and selected on reserve seats once. As the number of tenures increases the strength of women parliamentarians decreases, which could increase the prevalence of glass ceiling.

Keywords: Women Parliamentarians; Political Glass Ceiling and Pakistan Politics, career persistency

Introduction

Women are about half of the world population but their participation and representation in politics are solemnly low. Globally, women are facing obstacles in their political careers. Existed structures of society and socio-economic factors are considered the cause of glass ceiling in their political advancement (Zardari, 2018). In 2019, only 24.3% of the total representation had achieved by women around the globe (The World Bank, 2019). This is evidence of glass ceiling for women in politics as about 50% population holds only 24.3% of representation in World (UN Women, 2017).

Women's representation in politics varies in different states and it is based on the societal patterns of society (Bano, 2009). Miserably, in Pakistan, the percentage of women is only 20% of the total number of parliamentarians (UN Women, 2017).

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Moreover, only 3% women Parliamentarians came in National Assembly of Pakistan through general election and 17% are those who entered on reserve seats (Zardari, 2018). These statistics indicate that there are some obstacles that hinder the political participation of women in Pakistan.

Like other social institutions of Pakistan, the political system is also male dominant. Women have to face social taboos, criticism, sexism and other cultural constraints to participate in Pakistani Politics as well as their entrance into parliament (Hadi, 2017). Currently three parties are the major stakeholders in the political scenario of Pakistan: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz and Pakistan People's Party (Mushtaq, 2018). These parties are dominated by male political elites of Pakistan. This class not only exploits values of democracy but also creates barriers to women's participation in Pakistan (Ali, 201).

According to research, barriers that hinders the women participation are related to lack of education, socialization in male-dominated political system, personal belief, socio-economic and political background, patriarchy, traditional gender roles, gender discrimination, prejudice and gender stereotype (Ali et al., 2012; Bari, 2010 & Iwanaga, 2008). The era 2000 is proved as a landmark for bringing more women into Pakistani politics when General Musharraf brings constitutional changes in Pakistan for women representation.

The present research was aimed to answer the following research questions.

1. What is strength and difference of number between women parliamentarians elected through the election and selected on reserve seats in all the constituents' assemblies since inception of Pakistan?
2. What is the career persistency of women parliamentarians on general seats in Pakistan?

Research Methodology

This research was based on secondary data; that was collected from the Library of National Assembly of Pakistan records. The collected data was organized on the basis of research objectives and entered into Microsoft Excel. This way, researchers made graphic presentation of answers to their research questions.

Research Results

This diagram is representing the number of women parliamentarians (elected as well as on reserved seats in the National Assembly of Pakistan). Two females were members of first constituent assembly of Pakistan. In next four constituent assemblies, the numbers of women parliamentarians were 8, 6, 6 and 10 respectively.

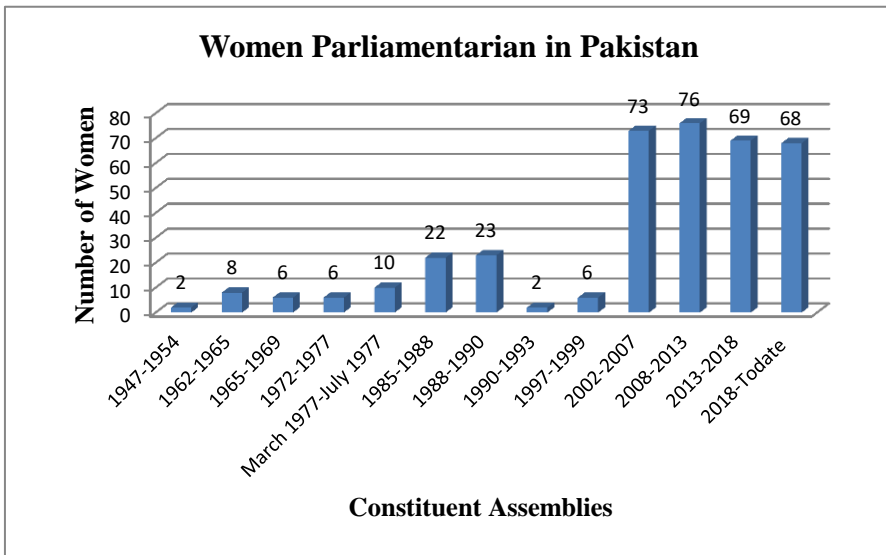


Table 1: Women Parliamentarians in Pakistan

The next two constituent assemblies sudden boom came as 22 women in 1985 and 23 women in 1988 came in National Assembly of Pakistan as women parliamentarians. Contrary to this, a significant fall occurred in the strength of women parliamentarians in the National Assembly of Pakistan in 1990 and 1997 as only 2 and 6 women entered parliament respectively. Interestingly, in 2002 elections due to constitutional changes and later, the presence of women parliamentarians in the National Assembly of Pakistan was significantly uplifted. It has jumped from 6 members in 1997 to 73 members in 2002. In 2013 and 2018 a slight decrease was seen but the number of women parliamentarians still remained justified on the basis of historical strengths of women in national assembly of Pakistan.

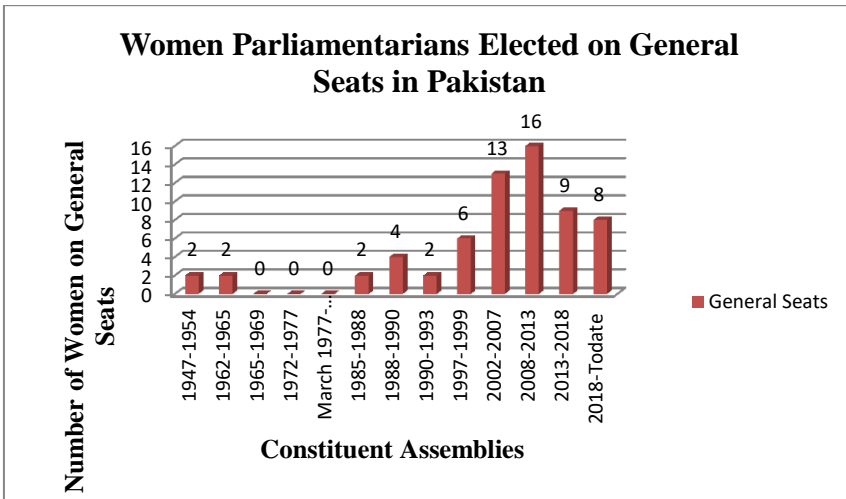


Table 2: Women Parliamentarians Elected on General Seats in Pakistan

This chart represents the presence of women in the National Assembly of Pakistan on general seats. These women participated in general elections and contested against other candidates and secure their seats. In first two constituent assemblies there were only two women members who secure their seats in National Assembly. Later, incoming three constituent assemblies there were no women parliamentarian in National assembly who came on general seats. In 1985 and next three constituent assemblies 2, 4, 2 and 6 women secured their seats on general seats. In 2002, 13 women candidates won the election and with the increase of 03 in 2008, 16 women won the election on general seat. It was highest number in the history of the national assembly. Later, in 2013 and 2018, the strength of women parliamentarians was 9 and 8 respectively.

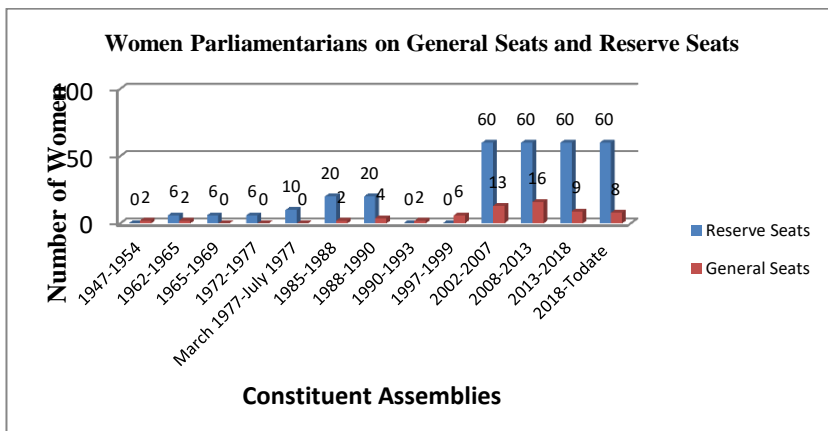


Table 3: Women Parliamentarians on General Seats and Reserve Seats

This chart provides a comparison between women parliamentarians who achieved membership on general seats and on reserve seats. There is a significant difference seen between these two categories. In three constituent assemblies including 1947-1954, 1990-1993 and 1997-1999, the reserved seats for women were excluded that is why in these constituencies the strength of women parliamentarians was lowest. Except these three constituencies, in all the constituent assemblies of Pakistan women parliamentarians selected on reserve seats remained higher than those who elected in general elections. With the passage of time the strength of women parliamentarians on reserved seats increased. In 1962-1965, 1965-1969 and 1972-1977 the reserve seats for women was 6. In March 1977-July 1977 this number was increased to 10. In 1985-1988 and 1988-1990, the reserve seats for women were 20. In next two constituent assemblies, women’s reserve seats were excluded but in 2002 to onward the reserve seats for women are 60. Contrary to reserve seats the highest members of women parliamentarians who elected on general seats are 16. This shows the strength of women elected on general seats is very less than those who selected on reserve seats.

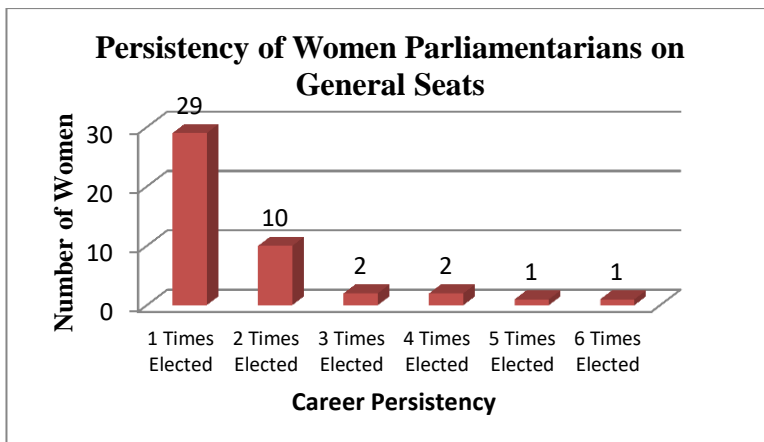


Table 4: Persistency of Women Parliamentarians on General Seats

The above chart represents the persistency of women parliamentarians on general seats in the National Assembly of Pakistan. There is lower persistency of women on general seats. Statistics showed that 29 women elected 1 time and 10 women elected 2 times as a member of National assembly. 2 women elected 3 times and 2 elected 4 times as a member of National assembly. The women parliamentarians who were elected 5 times are 1 and who was elected 6 times was also 1. The chart represents that as elected times increase the number of women decreases.

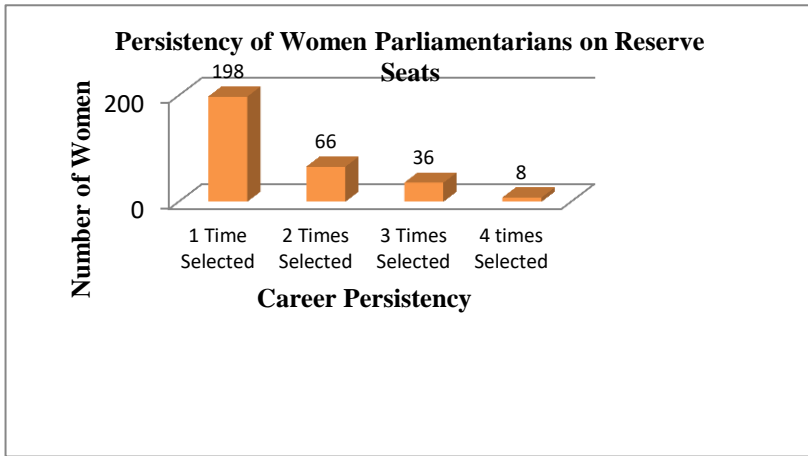


Table 5: Persistency of Women Parliamentarians on Reserve Seats

The majority of the women parliamentarians serve in National Assembly of Pakistan by availing opportunity of reserve seats. The statistics showed persistency of women on reserved seats is extremely lower in the National Assembly of Pakistan as greater proportion of the women served only one time in the National Assembly of Pakistan. The strength of women who were elected two times is 66 which is significantly lower than those (198) who elected once only. Same way, the strength of those women parliamentarians highly dropped who selected three times (36) and four times (8).

Conclusion

The present research aims to evaluate the strength of women in National assembly of Pakistan in all constituent assemblies on general seats and on reserve seats since 1947. Moreover, this research aims to evaluate the career persistency of women parliamentarians on general seats of National Assembly.

This research was based on secondary data. The collected data was organized on the basis of research objectives and entered into Microsoft Excel. This way, researchers made graphic presentation of answers to their research questions.

The strength of women parliamentarians was increased historically. In first constituent assembly of Pakistan the strength of women was two and in the constituent assembly of 2018, the strength was 68. Ups and downs occurred in the strength of women parliamentarians but overall strength is significantly increased.

No doubt, the strength of women parliamentarians is significantly increased in the National Assembly of Pakistan but it does not mean women have overcome political glass ceiling in Pakistan. The basic reason for women's increased strength

in parliament is reserved seats. The overall strength women who came by contesting general election is still low. In 2008, highest figure of the women abled to win the general seats in the history of Pakistan that figure was thirteen. It shows, in Pakistan women are still facing glass ceiling and unable to participate and win the general seats.

The career persistency of women parliamentarians is very low on general seats. The majority of the women win the election only one time. As the number of wining times increases then winner women decrease. Only 1 woman elected 4 times and only 1 woman elected 5 times as a member of National Assembly in the history of Pakistan. Contrary to this, 29 women elected 1 time. It shows lower career persistency of women parliamentarians in Pakistan. Similarly, the career persistency of women parliamentarians is lower on reserve seats. The majority of them selected only once. The strength of women who selected two times, three times and four times was 66, 36 and 8 respectively. This proves lower persistency of women parliamentarians on reserved seats. Although one reason for this lower consistency might depend on winning of their respective party overall, however if comparison of career persistency is done with number of times a party win, then it still has lower career persistency of those who were chosen in last terms. This lead to infer that there is some other reason that hinders women to firstly contest election, secondly if selected for reserve seats, then there are some factors responsible for their selection in second time in case if their party win.

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