The Empirical Evidence of Gender Dimensions in Ethnic Identity Politics: A Study on Balochistan

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This study critically identifies empirical evidence on gender dynamics of ethnic identity politics in Balochistan. The study found how patriarchal norms and conservative mindsets have curtailed the socio-economic roles of women and their participation in politics in Balochistan. However, the study further investigated the fact that despite the systemic marginalization of women and their due rights, could not stop them from taking part in the political movements in Balochistan. The empirical studies show that women have been resilient and have faced hurdles, yet they created space for their political participation in political processes. The study points out the need to incorporate gender views into policy initiatives to promote peace and social justice. The study has been qualitative where different facts and historical pieces of evidence were taken into account to address the question of what factors hindered the women's roles in politics in Balochistan and how the study identified a roadmap for them to be involved in the political representation and decision-making process.

Introduction

Ethnic identity politics, a universal phenomenon in many societies, frequently serves as a prism through which people perceive and interact in political processes in different ways. The gender dimension adds another layer of complexity to this study, influencing power dynamics, representation, and sociopolitical discourse of women's participation in political movements and political decision-making bodies. Balochistan, with its rich ethnic diversity and historical grievances, serves as a fascinating setting to investigate these complex interactions.[1]

Balochistan is the largest province of Pakistan by geographical size, falling over around 44 percent of the total territory of the country[2], is home to a diverse range of ethnic groups, including Baloch, Pashtuns, Brahuis, and Hazaras, each having their own cultural identity and historical story. The province's tumultuous history, characterized by socioeconomic marginalization, political unrest, and armed insurgency, emphasizes the importance of ethnicity in defining its political landscape. However, in ethnicity discourses, individuals' gender experiences and viewpoints have been frequently neglected, despite their substantial impact on the formulation and evolution of ethnic identity politics of Balochistan for a longer period.[3] However, after the murder of Nawab Abkar Khan Bugti in 2006, Balochistan has been the home of political and social movements which were often led by female communities.

Gender is a social structure that helps integrate ethnicity with distinct power dynamics and sociopolitical structures so strongly. There is no doubt that Balochistan like other provinces of Pakistan, practices patriarchal norms and frameworks women males dominate the social and political powers, influence resource access, decision-making involvement, and political narrative building as compared with the female.[4] Therefore, this study has been taken to understand the gendered features which create imbalance political and social inequality and unjust.

Empirical evidence is a key pillar to this study to understand the complexity of gender biasedness in political movements and other decision-making processes in Balochistan's involvement of women. Different studies have been taken into account which show that women have been more active in leading social and political rallies, protests and movements. The participation of political possessions and movements of different Baloch

women, like Mrs Zubaida Jalal, Banok Karima, Sami Deen, Mehrang Balochistan, Mrs Meena Majeed Baloch, Mrs Kalsoom Baloch and Shakeela Naveed Dawar are certain examples of women politics in Balochistan. Therefore, this study aims to illuminate the real-life experiences of people navigating the connection of gender and ethnicity in Balochistan by examining quantitative data such as gender differences in political representation, access to education, and socioeconomic indicators, as well as qualitative insights obtained from interviews, surveys, and ethnographic research to bring more validity and ethnicity in the work. It uses a critical lens to identify patterns, paradoxes, and power imbalances that have been shaped by gendered ethnic identities.There is no denying the fact that women's politics and their participation in decision-making bodies are very rare in Balochistan due to the tribal and Sardari systems. However, with time, the mindset of people has changed, and women have been more active in different political movements and involvement in recent different cases in Balochistan. The social and political situation of the society has driven the women to get their political and social rights forcefully. By identifying and highlighting gender in ethnicity investigation and guaranteeing their socio-political rights, it indorses wider and gender-approachable tactics for conflict resolution, and progression in ethnically diversified groups in Balochistan.

This study was conducted via observed and empirical proof to explore the complex relationship between gender ethnicity in Balochistan and their participation in politics and other decision making process.

Significance

The gender dimension and their identity politics in Balochistan is an extremely important area of the study which needs empirical based investigation to explore new insights on the topic. Because it is new area where the interaction between gender and ethnicity and their involvement in the politics and other decision making process has to be explored in detail. The study is important since it aims to know that how women in Balochistan have been involved in decision making process and how they have been contributing socially and politically.

Second, this work is vital for identifying and resolving the problems of sidelined classes, particularly females, in racially distinct societies in the province. It will present a plan for the distinctive gender-sociable strategies

by displaying contrasts in political participation, access to sources, and other opportunities among the male and female in the province.

Moreover, by identifying the gendered based ethnic identity politics in in the province, this paper brings leading stories that repeatedly overlook females' capabilities, roles and ideas in Balochistan. It highlights the implication of improving females' tone of voice in modeling political discussion and policymaking-making channels, subsequently improving crucial justice and social fairness for women in Balochistan

Besides, the pragmatic indication shaped by this work is an vital source for legislators, experts, and researchers similarly to get more challenges and prospects which both deter women's contribution in politics or permit womenfolk to prime social and political activities. It assigns a sound evidence-grounded methods and policy changes to resolve the main factors of gender and ethnic disparity by attaching investigation in limited data and perceptions.

Whole, the importance of this work rests in its capacity to update hidden and wider methods to domination, conflict solution, and improvement in racially various identities of equal woman and man participation in politics in the province. By highlighting gender in the paper of ethnic identity politics, it admits for open identification and more real attitudes to encourage group unity, reconciliation, and balanced progress in the province.

In conclusion, the critical importance of this study draws from its ability to discover unheard voices, interrogation power structures, effect policy and attempt, and stimulate social justice in racially diversified groups in the province. By resolving the connection of gender and ethnicity, this research support a greater and wider thoughtful of political procedures and social dynamics eventually important to bring peace and harmony amongst male and female groups in power distribution and decision-making procedure in the province.

Problem Statement

There is no fact that ethnic identity politics is an essential part of Balochistan politics, however, still there has no existing literature that could support the ethnic identity politics in Balochistan. So there exists a gap in

the literature. No doubt, there is strong say and influence of the ethnic identity politics in Balochistan, but still the very issue is overlooked and limited information on it that would ultimately have been result to deter women in participating in politics in Balochistan. The existing literature identity the fact that political and social rights of women have been ignored in Balochistan since ages. The paper found that women in Balochistan have been ignored and they were not permitted to take part in decision making bodies.

This underrepresentation not only silences their voices and opinions, but also reinforces disparities in access to resources, opportunities, and rights. They have been out from political participation due to the tribal and Sardari setup of Balochistan. Moreover, Women's responsibilities, contributions, and problems in ethnic communities are often unseen, resulting in a lack of acknowledgement and support for addressing their unique needs and concerns that have been unheard of. This needs to be understood that ethnic identity politics interacts with patriarchal norms and structures, exacerbating existing gender inequities and power disparities at large. This reinforcement further marginalizes women and oppressed genders, reducing their political opportunities within perpetuating cycles of oppression and exclusion. There is also limited policies and decisions of the government which would strengthen and encourages the rights of women to be implemented and protected unless and until the ethnic identity politics is researched properly. It has been a disappointment to resolve gender-related prejudice which have finally excluded women from political structure in Balochistan.

Therefore, this study has been taken into account on empirical evidence bases to identify the gup of policies which discouraged women in taking parts in political structure of Balochistan. This paper would also investigate a pathway that could make setup certain policies which could allow ethnic identity politics to flourish in Balochistan.

Literature Review

There is no fact that Balochistan is the largest province of Pakistan geographically; however, it has been experiencing political instability and poverty and law and order situation.

Therefore, the ethnic identity politics of Balochistan has been a complicated study to find out the causes and opportunities of women's sociopolitical participation and involvement. This study explores the relations of gender and ethnic identity politics in Balochistan on the application of the certain empirical proofs that establishes Baloch women's definite roles, issues, and influences. The review tries to provide a complete understanding of how gender is influenced by ethnic identity politics, using a variety of scholarly sources, reports, and case studies.

The ethnic conflict history of Balochistan has had a tremendous impact on its political and social framework. Balochistan's ethnic identity politics has taken out from a long history of resistance and insurgency that started in the late 1948s as a group of Baloch went to the mountains against the decision of Khan of Kalat who had decided to merge Balochistan with Pakistan.[5] Several historians, including Harrison[6] and Baloch[7], have examined historical complaints and political movements that highlight ethnic conflicts in Balochistan. These works provide context for understanding the gender dimensions of these fights. However, there are so many challenges which have been a hindrance to women's political participation. The Patriarchy remains a powerful influence in Baloch society which dominated both the public and private sectors strongly for a long period. Fischer-Tahir[8] and Makama[9] show how patriarchal norms confine women's roles to the home which have limited them to their public and political engagement. No doubt, there has been certain barriers to women politics in Balochistan, however, they have struggled to participate in politics in Balochistan one way or the other.

History witnesses that Baloch females have maintained a crucial role to preserve and maintain their socio-cultural norms and tradition into many forms. As Ahmed explores that women have played a key role to handling the cultural norms and traditions in Balochistan from generation.[10]

Women have resisted against tribal setup to maintain ethnic identity politics in Balochistan for ages. The Baloch women have been witnessed to organize and lead cultural programs and traditional events in different areas of Balochistan. They have also been involved in mobilizing social gatherings and cultural events as mentioned by Bansal[11] and Khan.[12]

This work focuses the fact that females in Balochistan have been organizing cultural programs and events. emphasize that women have been involved in holding cultural events and leading political possession, and movements.

There is hardly first-hand information on the gender mechanisms of ethnic identity politics in Balochistan, Jaffar and Abbas performed a qualitative analysis on the practices of Baloch women and their participation in politics. Their conclusions highlight that women face massive encounters, they also display surprising persistence and resistance in political participation and negotiation.[13] Similarly, Shah used mixed techniques to investigate Baloch women's participation in local governance, indicating both improvement and ongoing obstacles.[14]

In addition to this, the political militarization of women in Balochistan has serious gender consequences. Yousaf[15] and Mushtaq[16] studied how conflict and governmental approaches disproportionately affected women which ultimately resulted in increasing violence, relocation, and economic hardship for women in Balochistan. These findings emphasize the importance of taking a gender-sensitive approach to evaluate the effects of violence on ethnic identity politics in Balochistan.

Government policy in Balochistan concerning women to bring them into the mainstream of politics has been so weak. Malik[17] and Haq[18] suggested that development projects and political reforms of government have been incorporated and ineffective in gender development in Balochistan. There should have been certain policies that improved women's access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities, allowing them to take more active roles in political processes.

The empirical evidence on gender dynamics in Balochistan ethnic identity politics indicates the complexities and diversified nature of women's roles and perspectives. While patriarchal traditions and the tribal setup of Balochistan present considerable hurdles for women in Balochistan. Baloch women no doubt continue to play critical roles in cultural preservation and political action.

Causes of Ethnic Identity Politics

The following causes have curtained women's social, political, personal and educational rights in Balochistan. As a result, they have been pushed backwards.

Patriarchal Society and Cultural Values

Alike other provinces of Pakistan, Balochistan experiences similar cultural norms and patriarchal setup that don't only value male leadership and politics, but the same culture creates hindrances and hurdles for women. Nobody can deny the fact that the patriarchal norms which originated from the Sardari system in Balochistan greatly denied giving educational, political and social rights to women.[19] The patriarchal society in Balochistan believes that women are inferior and they are to be subordinate to male partners. As a result, they are restricted from being involved in political processes.[20] In ethnic identity politics, patriarchal systems clash with ethnic identities which marginalizes women and stops them from political involvement, decision-making processes and social and political representation at the national level. Gender roles in Baloch society are determined by patriarchal values deeply, which frequently exclude women from official political participation.[21] However, they are assigned critical roles in cultural preservation and community cohesion. Historical events and cultural traditions in Balochistan have created a distinct framework in which gender and ethnic identity are indivisibly linked. The study has found that the patriarchal setup and cultural norms in Balochistan are major causes to hinder the political participation of women in Balochistan.

Political Marginalization and Illiteracy

Women and minority genders in Balochistan have historically been marginalized by both ethnic communities and society as a whole. Colonial legacies, tribal structures, and socioeconomic inequities have all led to their isolation from political and social circles. This historical marginalization continues to impact gender dynamics in ethnic identity politics that reinforced inequality and limited chances for women's participation and leadership. No doubt, the recent year has witnessed a strong rise of women in Balochistan under the young leadership of Dr. Mahrung. Apart from this, the Baloch women's participation in politics has been shaping day by day. however, a great number of Baloch women are still away from political

awareness due to illiteracy and political margination mostly from the family side. History repletes with so many examples where Baloch women have been confined to their houses, to only housewives. However, student organizations, such as the Baloch Students Organization and others have played a major role in uprising women's politics and women's involvement in different cultural and political activities.[22] Women's participation and activism in politics have also been motivated by continuous ethnic movements and cultural rights in Balochistan. Women frequently join these movements in ways that reflect both their ethnic and gender identities which contributed to their efforts while dealing with gender-specific obstacles.

Tribal and Conservative Mindset

Balochistan has a history of Tribal setup and the Sardari System since 1948. There is no doubt, that the societies in Balochistan also grew under the aegis of Sardars and Tribal mindset. Therefore, such an environment generated insecurity that ultimately worsened gender disparities in ethnic identity politics.[23] Conflict-related violence, displacement, and restriction of women's education and politics disproportionately affected women which ultimately restricted their political participation and worsened their socioeconomic marginalization and finally, they were exposed to violence and discrimination.

Lack of Gender-related Policies and Institutions in Balochistan

Balochistan is the least literate and least developed province of Pakistan which lacks educational facilities, social fabric, and gender-related institutions which could protect and promote women's rights in Balochistan.[24] Therefore, the lack of gender-based policies and structures in Balochistan reinforces gender inequities in ethnic identity politics. Government institutions and political parties frequently ignore gender issues in policy formulation and execution which result in insufficient representation and involvement of women in political participation and other decision-making bodies. This lack of institutional support further marginalizes women and further limits their ability to advocate for their rights and interests within ethnic communities.

Socio-Economic Factors

The social structure of Balochistan has been dominated by men which could never afford to allow women to be equally involved in socio-economic activities.[25] The men are considered to be stronger physically and superior by nature; as a result, they are assigned to carry out all social and economic activities by themselves. Therefore, economic and social gaps between males and females in Balochistan have intensified gender inequities and social injustice. History has witnessed so many examples where women have been facing disproportionately discrimination as they had limited access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities which ultimately influenced their political engagement and social role.

Positive Effects of Ethnic Identity Politics

Women are the major contributors in an ethnic identity society as they play a crucial role in leading a political uprising, preserving cultural activities and resisting any oppression. Therefore, it is important to identify the role of women in ethnic identity politics in Balochistan.

Empowerment and Advocacy for the Society

Gender dimensions strengthen women by acknowledging their specific challenges and contributions which results in increasing support for women for their rights and encourages them to be more involved in political movements within ethnic societies. There is no doubt that an empowered group of women make a strong society which males can never make. It is generally believed that societies which are led by women can never be down, disappointed and collapsed. The movements which were led by women, became successful since it is extremely hard to oppress women's community. Similar, cases have been witnessed in Balochistan in the recent era where females have led social and political movements which all got strong support across the province.

Enhanced Community Cohesion

The interdependence of gender and ethnic identity can promote community cohesiveness by encouraging mutual respect and understanding of varied roles and contributions within the ethnic group. The contributions of women prosper society and lessen the burden on men as well. Therefore,

the involvement of women in social, political and cultural bodies would not only develop the society as a whole but also share the burden of both genders on an equal basis. Thus, a society stands with social justice and equality. Therefore, Balochistan has witnessed a dramatic change from a conservative society to a female-led society. Thus, the empirical evidence of gender dimensions shows that the patriarchal norms have been greatly changed and the acceptance of women in political and social movements has been greatly witnessed.[26]

Reduction of Gender Violence

The involvement of women in politics and decision-making bodies has greatly reduced ethnic disputes and gender-based violence in Balochistan. The involvement and representation of women in politics and bureaucracy have forced the system to formulate policies and practices that respect women's rights and keep them safe in the general societies of Balochistan. It also reduced gender disparities and allowed them to access economic, social and educational opportunities in Balochistan. Ethnic identity politics has been highly witnessed in recent eras throughout Balochistan as most rallies and protests are led by men and women equally.[27]

The empirical evidence of gender dimensions of ethnic identity politics in Balochistan emphasizes the critical need for gender-based policies and initiatives to reduce inequities, empower women, and build inclusive governance and development which could accept women as equal contributors. Otherwise, if the government fails to address these challenges, it will further women's marginalization, disturb peace and security, and create an environment of fear and inequality. Therefore, gender dimensions within ethnic identity politics need to be explored in Balochistan.

Critical Analysis

The study of gender dimensions in ethnic identity politics in Balochistan is an important area to be researched but frequently it has been ignored and overlooked; therefore, the gender dimensions on ethnic identity politics have rarely been highlighted. No doubt, traditional research has been carried out on ethnic identity politics, but they never supported women as the key stakeholders in the political participation and decision-making process. Patriarchal norms and values have a strong influence on society

structures and roles which limited women's participation in political and social movements. This gendered lens is required to be researched, identified and comprehended to encounter the challenges and problems which are faced by Baloch women, who, despite institutional marginalization, perform critical roles in cultural preservation, resistance, and advocacy of the society in Balochistan. Nonetheless, the study has identified a few important factors which are to be considered to ensure proper and free involvement in politics in Balochistan.

First, facts must be carefully obtained and assessed to prevent propagating misconceptions or oversimplifying the complicated realities of Baloch women's life and their roles in politics. Second, investigators need to highlight the fair and rational restraints of doing exploration in Balochistan where the male-controlled and patriarchal thinking has a deep ground. Third, it is important to ensure that Baloch women are honestly allowed in political process in Balochistan. Additionally, the results must be used in the greater political and socioeconomic frame to identify how worldwide and countrywide strategies impact local gender and ethnic dynamic range. This method would require a immersed comprehension of how gender and ethnic identity politics overlap in Balochistan, supporting constructive perceptions for developing broad and operative documents.

Conclusion

The ethnic identity politics in Balochistan need to be supported via the empirical evidence features in underlying the essential of insights how gender and ethnicity overlap to identity socioeconomic realities and political dynamics in Balochistan. It is aimed to recognize the displays and changes in empirical data, which promote to a more detailed perception of power dynamics, illustration, and control in ethnically diversified groups in Balochistan.

While conducting research on such areas surely puts barriers, such as discussing traditional and cultural sensitivity, the findings have immense capability to update hidden and reasonable strategies.

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