



STUDY GUIDE

National Commission on the Status of Women

Introduction to Feminism

Unlike most other 'isms', feminism has been associated with a range of social movements, political movements, and ideologies that aim to define, establish, and achieve the political, economic, personal, and social equality of the sexes.

In the 19th century, the term 'feminism' was used to describe what people assumed to be 'feminine qualities' but that idea changed in 1982 after the First International Women's Conference held in Paris which in accordance with the French term féministe recognized the term 'feminism' in English and associated it with a belief and an advocacy based on equality of sexes i.e. equal rights for women. There are some feminists who associate the origin of the term to what most people now call "First Wave" feminism; these were the early movements in Europe and suffragette movement in the US in the 1800s and 1900s. They believe the movement to have been tailing off between 1920-1960 i.e. during a time of international political turmoil of the great wars. The movement then again picked up in the 60s and 70s and got referred to as "Second Wave" feminism. Recent activism and political stances in feminist movements in the past are understood as "Third Wave" feminism by them. There are other feminist historians who argue that such timelining of specific instances of activism in history takes away from the fact that there has always existed resistance to male domination at different points in history of various cultures that have to be considered "feminist" in their own right. This, they say, in order to point out that feminism has not arisen or is limited to a few women (particularly white women) who have come forward in the past few centuries. Furthermore, taking into account only the recent resistance to male domination in the West greatly undermines the activism between 1920s and 1960s that were not part of the mainstream politics of the time especially when during this time women of color and less privileged women were taking an active part in the resistance.

One should seek to solve these misunderstandings by remembering the etymology of the term itself that is, a commitment to equal participation of women in affairs. This acknowledges that commitment to and advocacy for women's rights has not been confined to the Women's Liberation Movement in the West. But this too raises controversy, for it frames feminism within a broadly Liberal approach to political and economic life. Although most feminists would probably agree that there is some sense of "rights" on which achieving equal rights for women is a necessary condition for feminism to succeed, most would also argue that this would not be sufficient. This is because women's oppression under male domination rarely if ever consists solely in depriving women of political and legal "rights", but also extends into the structure of our society and the content of our culture and permeates our consciousness.

A Summary of Feminist Movements in Pakistan

The circumstantial environment of each different form of the movement in the past was relative in terms of its social, political and historical context which resulted in issues that were specific to each era arising from particular moments in national and global histories. Right after the 1947 Partition, the focus was on welfare especially of the huge amount of refugees that had pooled into the newly formed state because that kind of work had social respectability within the traditional cultural milieu.

The new nation also inherited its own set of social issues namely child marriage, female right to education, divorce, inheritance and polygamy from pre-Partitioned India. The demands put forward to tackle these issues were mostly in accordance with the rulings in Islam and so there was little fear of women angering the religious figureheads by asking for legal and social reforms.

The All Pakistan Women's Association (APWA) became the face of revolution for female liberty in the 1960s when the development and welfare organizations were rising. Among APWA's achievements was the passage of the Muslim Family Laws Ordinance which reflected a minor ingress by the state in the private sphere and gave women some rights regarding child custody and maintenance while placing some limits of procedure on the men's arbitrary right of

divorce. During this time, the clerics responded to even the smallest push of ordinances with widespread controversy continuously asking for reversal.

In the 1980s came efforts of Women's Action Forum (WAF) in the urban areas and Sindhiani Tehreek in rural Sindh which became significant for their rather overt political inclinations. The country was under General Zia-ul-Haq's dictatorship. Naturally, both the movements challenged the military rule and the forcing of religion into politics in context of a hyper nationalist absolute dictatorship that relied on a particular version of religion for legitimacy. WAF struggled for a democratic, inclusive, plural and secular state while Sindhiani Tehreek strove for an end to feudalism and patriarchy, sought the restoration of democracy and championed the principle of federalism and provincial autonomy.

The movements launched in the 1980s were anchored in the ideas of democracy, socio-political change and basic rights. This was a dark era for the women of Pakistan despite their brave activism. They often engaged in protests and demonstrations on the streets and were consequently beaten, jailed, baton-charged and otherwise threatened by the dominant religious-military patriarchies of the time.

National Commission on the Status of Women

National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) was established in the year 2000 by General Pervez Musharraf with the intentions that it will examine policies, programs and other measures taken by the Government for women's development and gender equality.

Other expectations were that it will review laws, rules and regulations affecting the status of women; Monitor mechanisms and institutional procedures for redress of violations of women's rights and individual grievances; Encourage and sponsor research to generate information, analysis and studies relating to women and gender issues; Develop and maintain interaction and dialogue with NGOs, experts and individuals in society at the national, regional and international level; any other

function assigned to it by the Federal Government. The Commission comprises of a Chairperson and two members each from the four provinces, one each from Islamabad Capital Territory, Federally Administered Tribal Agencies, Gilgit Baltistan & Azad Jammu Kashmir, a representative of the religious minorities, chairperson or designated member of each provincial commission on status of women and five ex-officio members from Ministries of Law, Finance, Foreign Affairs, Interior, Human Rights.

As recent as 2017, the commission submitted three reports:

- 1) Prominent Invisibility: Women Officers in Pakistan's Federal Civil Services: The study analyses the data of women representation in the public sector and reveals that women's share amounts to meager 4.5 per cent in civil services. At higher level (grade 17-22), the percentage is less than one-fifth at 19.3 percent. There were 92 women in grade 20, 33 in grade 21 and 5 in grade 22. The report highlights the need for affirmative measures to include more women at the higher level of bureaucracy.
- 2) Access to Justice: For Survivors of Sexual Assault: The research examines cases of sexual violence with regard to the Protection of Women (Criminal Law Amendment) Act, 2006 and how higher courts' judgments have treated these cases. The report highlights the gender prejudice and lack of capacity of state institutions including police, prosecution, medical staff, and even the courts, often obstructing or even denying justice to survivors. It says that the sexuality of survivor remains under scrutiny. Medical and vital forensic evidence is not a priority of state or courts whereas, the general impression among law enforcement agencies is that most of these cases are fabricated by the survivors.
- 3) Women, Violence and Jirga reflects on the evolution and contemporary role of Jirgas and its anti-women practices, its prevalence and interface with the formal legal system. The report says that Jirgas pose a challenge to the formal justice system as it evolves from the consensus. The issues related to Jirgas with regards to women is the bizarre nature of decisions and commercialization of Jirgas, mutation of the old concept of Jirgas and constitution of Jirgas with no representation of women. Instead of fixing the crime or criminals, the objective of Jirgas is restoring balance.

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In December 2018, an observation report titled Women in Elections 2018 was launched by the National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW). The author of the report, Naheed Aziz, said: “There are structural concerns, such as patriarchy and issues of mobility, and until these are addressed it will not be possible to have full participation of women in the political process.

The 5pc rule for political parties was barely met and in many cases it was met as a formality. Women were given tickets for unwinnable seats and not much support was provided to women in terms of resources and otherwise.”



Topic Area A: Preventing Violence against Women

Introduction:

The issue of violence against women and girls is the direct consequence of two United Nations' prominent issues: first, gender and social equality and second, decent standards of living.

Indeed, these principles are some of the fundamental rights enshrined in the preamble of the United Nations Charter (UN Charter), which defines the very first aims and objectives of the United Nations Organization itself: “We the peoples of the United Nations determined [...] to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small and [...] to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom [...]”¹

The UN noted a general definition of violence against women as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.”²

Delegates must tackle the issue of violence against women and girls through the different types of violence which exist (physical, sexual, psychological, all 3 being interdependent), and the main phenomenon linked to these types of violence (intimate partner violence, sexual violence, human trafficking and sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation, and child marriage). Economic violence against women can also be brought into debates, which may not

¹United Nations Charter, 1945, Preamble, <http://www.un.org/en/charter-united-nations/index.html>

² World Health Organization, Media Center, November 2014, Fact Sheet, Violence against women, Intimate partner and sexual violence against women, <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs239/en/>

be only limited to the point raised in this study guide. Delegates must also be cognizant of the unique dynamics surrounding violence against women in Pakistan.

The following topic is divided into two parts; the first part outlines the issue of gender-based violence from an international lens to give delegates a strong base as to what the issue entails, while the second part analyzes the issue and its nuances specific to Pakistan which will be directly relevant to the committee discussion.

Types of Violence:

Intimate Partner Violence

Violence by an intimate partner can be defined as a “behavior by an intimate partner or ex-partner that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm, including physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse and controlling behaviors.”³ It is the most common form of violence experienced by women and girls worldwide and refers to women being beaten, coerced into sex or abused in any other way.

Sexual Violence

Sexual violence is defined by the United Nations as “any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, or other act directed against a person’s sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting. It includes rape, defined as the physically forced or otherwise coerced penetration of the vulva or anus with a penis, other body part or object.”⁴ As a consequence, sexual violence refers to rape (within marriage, by stranger or during armed conflicts), unwanted sexual advances or sexual harassment, sexual abuse of children, and forced marriage or cohabitation. This type of violence is present in all countries. For instance, in the European Union, studies have shown that 45% to 55% of women have faced sexual harassment by the age of Sexual violence comes with many health risks for women and girls suffering of this violence. Indeed, there is a high risk of exposure to HIV/AIDS and possibilities of traumatic gynecologic fistula for instance

Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation

Human trafficking is defined as “the acquisition and exploitation of people, through means, such as force, fraud or deception.”⁵ This practice still occurs in the twenty-first century and often results in sexual exploitation. Of the 21 million people estimated to be forced to labor, 4.5 million would face sexual exploitation, and 98% of these people are women, according to UN Women.

³ Convention on the Rights of the Child, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx>

⁴ Ibid

⁵ UN Women, November 6th 2015, Infographic : Violence against women :

<http://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/multimedia/2015/11/infographic-violence-against-women>. ⁶

Ibid.



Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

Female genital mutilation refers to the “procedures that intentionally alter or cause injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons.”⁶ This practice causes extreme physical and psychological pain to women and girls enduring it. FGM is also a great risk to health, especially regarding HIV/AIDS, and diseases or infections women could be subjected to due to FGM. However, it is a common practice in twenty-nine countries of the African continent and Middle East, where more than 133 million women alive have suffered from this practice.

Child Marriage

Child marriage refers to forced marriages of young girls without their consent. 700 million women worldwide were married before the age of 18, and a third of them before 15. In many countries, child marriages results from poverty, and are a real threat to the education of young girls. Furthermore, young girls married under 18 are more exposed to intimate partner violence and sexual violence

Other forms of violence against women and girls

Violence against women and girls is expressed in many different ways, not only including the previously mentioned types of violence. There is also dowry murder, “honor killing”, violence during pregnancy, sexual harassment, economic violence, and many other forms of violence based on discrimination resulting from women’s ethnicity, caste, class, migrant or refugee status, age, religion, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, etc

Consequences of violence against women and girls

Violence can have a dramatic impact on the victim. Indeed, consequences are really diverse and occur in many different areas: physical, sexual and psychological consequences (highly linked to health issues) as well as economic, educational or cultural consequences. Indeed, some types

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of violence lead to lower levels of education, exposure to child maltreatment, antisocial personality disorders, or even to the acceptance of gender inequality as a normal practice. Many types of violence have direct or indirect consequences on health. The main risk for women and girls exposed to violence is the exposure to HIV/AIDS, especially in case of sexual violence. It can also result in more dramatic circumstances such as homicide or suicide.

Sexual violence in particular has many heavy consequences: injuries, unintended pregnancies (and abortions), gynecological problems, sexually transmitted infections (STDs, including HIV). Psychological effects of sexual violence are also very diverse: depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, sleep difficulties, eating disorders, and emotional distress and suicide attempts. Studies have shown that alcohol problems and addictions can result in such violence. Moreover, health effects can include headaches, back pain, abdominal pain, fibromyalgia, gastrointestinal disorders, limited mobility and poor overall health, especially in countries where access to healthcare is limited. Finally, violence during childhood can impact the behavior and attitudes of children regarding smoking, drug and alcohol issues. Children are also subject to mortality, malnutrition or diseases. It can also lead to sexual or violent behaviors in later life, mostly as perpetration for males and victims for females.



Potential Solutions

Prevention:

Violence against women and girls is a gender discrimination based on multiple stereotypes, which need to be deconstructed and eliminated. There are different ways to fight this type of violence, and prevention is a key in the response to the issue. Indeed, through prevention, violence can be reduced and avoided in many cases. Prevention is effective thanks to education for boys and girls, men and women but also thanks to a larger access to information and awareness campaigns.

Education:

Education is crucial in the prevention of violence against women. Indeed, developing education particularly in countries in the global south especially concerned by gender-based violence is a necessary first step. This type of prevention must start in the early life of children in order to promote gender equality in a better and durable way. It must concern boys in order to avoid them perpetrating acts of violence, but also girls to give them sufficient knowledge of their fundamental rights. Education also comes with the empowerment of women in order to reach gender equality. Programs such as “Voices against Violence” must be encouraged by the United Nations and Government. This program is “a co-educational curriculum designed for various age groups ranging from 5 to 25 years. It provides young people with tools and expertise to understand the root causes of violence in their communities, to educate and involve their peers and communities to prevent such violence, and to learn about where to access support if violence is experienced.”⁷

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This way of educating young people provides large prevention, covering the understanding of the issue, the ways of avoiding it, and even more important, services related to victims of gender-based violence. Furthermore, this specific program can be “adapted to national context, translated into local languages, and rolled out in schools and communities in partnership with youth organizations, UN partners and governments.”⁸Indeed, an educational program of prevention must be adapted to the population targeted in order to be efficient and largely diffused to urban areas, as well as local and rural ones.



⁷ UN Women, Ending Violence against Women, Focusing on Prevention to Stop the Violence: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/prevention>

Awareness Campaigns:

Raising awareness is a complementary tool to education. It provides information, not only to the youth, but also to the general populous. The aim of such an action is to change attitudes and behavior towards women and girls, and mobilize populations to promote gender equality (through local projects, global petitions, information on women's rights, etc.).

The United Nations Secretary General's Campaign to End Violence against Women (UNITE campaign) has been implemented in order to fulfill awareness objectives but not only. It aims the end of gender-based violence through different means and awareness is one of the main ones. The campaign established 5 goals, the fourth one being "Increase Political

Awareness and Social Mobilization"⁹, which proves the relevance of communication and prevention through awareness campaigns. This campaign is however not the only one which has been launched regarding violence towards women and girls. Many more exist, added to the international days focusing on the different types of violence. There are many specific awareness campaigns, regarding a precise form of violence regarding women and girls. Finally, awareness must adapt itself to countries and populations targeted. As a consequence, in a globalized world, internet and social media represent a key point for the prevention of violence against women and girls

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ UN Secretary General's campaign UNiTE to end violence against women official website : <http://endviolence.un.org/index.shtml>

Providing direct assistance to victims of violence

Prevention is crucial to tackle gender-based violence. However, despite efforts of prevention, women in many different areas of the world, and particularly Pakistan, remain vulnerable to the threat of violence. This is the reason why, it is absolutely necessary to create structures which can bring help to the victims of violence. These structures are implemented in “multi-sectoral national action plans.”¹⁰ It means that each country must internally provide support to women and girls who experience violence, through many different ways (multi-sectoral plans). Direct support can be brought with centers providing health services for victims of violence. Hotlines and helplines can also provide information to women and girls, but essentially support to avoid any dramatic psychological condition for instance. The existence of free legal services for women and girls into these centers is also required to organize a complete support of victims. Finally, measures such as the creation of safe spaces or more recently “safe cities” would provide women and girls the security they require, even if they never experienced gender-based violence. These fundamental and basic services must be accessible to any woman or girl victim of violence, without any distinction on religion, sexual orientation, class, social status, etc. Vulnerable groups such as refugees, women with disabilities, indigenous or women living in rural areas must benefit equality of such services.

¹⁰UN Women, Ending violence against Women, Services for All Women :

<http://www.unwomen.org/en/whatwe-do/ending-violence-against-women/services-for-all-women>

The need to strengthen domestic legal frameworks

At the global stage, progress has been made in the last two decades in order to create legislation to protect women and girls from violence. As a consequence, international legislation has been largely enforced. However, this legal framework is useless if countries do not take internal measures to punish the perpetrators of violence against women and ensure women's fundamental rights. Indeed, laws and policies of many countries do not criminalize some types of violence against women and girls, arguing that it only relies on private matters. As a result, there is a clear tolerance of gender-based violence. The United Nations bodies and specialized agencies such as UN Women, and NGOs work to encourage the adoption of a legal framework regarding gender-based violence by all countries. Indeed, the aim is the punishment of perpetrators and the recognition of women's rights, but also to provide human and financial resources to create awareness campaigns and ensure a mechanism of direct assistance to women and girls victims of violence and provide security to all women and girls.

Case Study – Pakistan

As we have established, the dynamics surrounding violence against women are complex. Hence, this requires adequate attention, as it gendered violence leads to severe wide ranging impacts. The term violence against women has been defined as the range of sexually, psychologically, and physically exploitative acts used against women by current or former male intimate partners.¹¹ It is one of the most abhorrent yet least recognized human rights abuse in the world.

Other terms that are used synonymously to describe the issue include intimate partner violence, courtship violence, domestic violence, domestic abuse, spouse abuse, battering, and marital rape.¹² It is difficult to gauge the true extent of the impact of violence against women in Pakistan due to the inconsistency in definitions, under reporting, and lack of concrete studies concerning the subject.^{13,14}

However, available statistics from around the globe indicate that one out of every three women experiences violence in an intimate relationship at some point in her life. In forty research studies from various parts of the world, ten to sixty nine percent (10- 69%) of the women reported having been assaulted by a partner during their lifetime.¹⁵ A woman is battered, usually by her intimate partner; every 15 seconds and more than three women are killed by their intimate partners every day in the United States.¹⁶

¹¹ World Health Organization (WHO). Violence against women. A health priority issue. Geneva, 1997.

¹² Saltzman LE, Fanslow JL, McMahon PM, Shelley GA. Intimate partner violence surveillance: uniform definitions and recommended data elements, Version 1.0. Atlanta: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1999

¹³ Raphael B. Domestic violence. Med J Aust 2000; 173: 513-4.

¹⁴ Bradley F, Smith, M, Long, J, O'Dowd T. Reported frequency of domestic violence: cross sectional survey of women attending general practice.

¹⁵ Krug EG, Mercy JA, Dahlberg LL, Zwi AB. The world report on violence and health. Lancet 2002; 360:1083-8.

¹⁶ Rennison C. Intimate partner violence, 1993-2001. Washington (DC): Bureau of Justice Statistics, Department of Justice (US); 2003. Publication No. NCJ197838.

Domestic violence, in Pakistan, is not considered a public matter, as it occurs in the family, and therefore not an appropriate focus for assessment, intervention or policy changes.¹⁷ Women have to face discrimination and persecution on a daily basis due to the cultural and religious traditions that Pakistani society embraces.¹⁸ According to an estimate, approximately seventy to ninety percent of Pakistani women are subjected to domestic violence.¹⁹ Several forms of domestic violence in the country include physical, mental and emotional abuse. Some common types include honor killing, spousal abuse including marital rape, acid attacks and being burned by family members. The striking thing is that abuse by an intimate partner is not considered a crime socially unless it takes an extreme form of murder or attempted murder which could range from pushing a woman to the point suicide or engineering an accident (frequently the bursting of a kitchen stove).²⁰ According to a survey conducted on thousand women in the Punjab province, thirty-five percent of the women admitted in the hospitals reported being physically targeted by their intimate partners. The survey reported that at least two women, on average, reported a burn injury every day in household violence incidents and approximately seventy to ninety percent of women experienced other forms of domestic abuse. In 1998, 282 burn cases of women and girls were reported in just the Punjab province. Out of the reported cases, 65% died of their injuries. The official figures given for murder of women during the year 1998 were 1974 including 885 murder cases reported in only Punjab.

A Karachi based reported that a substantial number of women are subjected to physical violence

¹⁷Fikree FF, Bhatti LI. Domestic violence and health of Pakistani women. International J Gynaecol Obstet 1999; 65:195-201.

¹⁸Bettencourt A. Violence against women in Pakistan. Human Rights Advocacy Clinic; Litigation Report Spring 2000.

¹⁹Human Rights Watch, 'Crime or Custom? Violence against Women in Pakistan, Report of Human Rights Watch 1999.

²⁰Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP).State of human rights in 1999. Lahore: HRCP, 2000.

that has serious physical and mental health consequences. Honor killing is another form of familial violence against women in Pakistan. The practice of karo kari is known to occur in many parts of the country. Official figures show that more than 4000 people including 2800 women have died during 1998 to 2004. Previous figures reveal that in 1997 there were eighty-six karo kari killings in Larkana, Sindh, alone, with fifty-three of the victims being women. The entire scenario clearly depicts the grave nature of the issue of violence against women, and the social implications of it on a societal level. It also highlights how the inaction of the government on such a serious matter is a matter of concern.

Personal factors

Biological and personal factors influence individual behavior. This includes personal characteristics like age, education, income, personality influences and acceptance of interpersonal violence. The effects of the factors stemming from childhood experience like substance abuse, witnessing marital violence as a child, being abused as a child, absentee or rejecting father on the personality of a person are also considered intrinsic factors.

Studies have shown that younger women are more prone to experience violence.²¹ In a cross-sectional study, no association was found between the younger age and prevalence of domestic violence in Pakistan. The findings suggested that as far as the Pakistani culture was concerned, the age of the women did not play any role in protecting her from domestic violence.

²¹Schuler SR, Hashemi SM, Riley AP, Akhter S. Credit programs, patriarchy 202 and men's violence against women in rural Bangladesh. Soc Sci Med 1996;43: 1729-42.

Therefore, women abuse occurs in all ages.²² Women whose educational attainment levels are inferior to those of their husbands are more likely to suffer beating and intimidation than those women whose educational attainment levels are equal or exceed their husbands.²³

Research suggests that there are deep rooted personality traits that predispose some men to behave in a violent and threatening manner towards other people, especially genders different from their own. These habits are deeply ingrained and difficult to change. Violent intimate partners report more depression, lower self-esteem, and more aggression than in non-violent intimate partners. Studies suggest that such people are more likely to suffer from personality problems such as schizophrenia, borderline personality, antisocial or narcissistic behaviors, dependency and attachment problems.²⁴ In Pakistan, where awareness and acceptance of mental health problems is limited, no attempt has been made to study the relationship between influences on personality and violence against women. Hence, this factor needs to be explored in detail.

Substance abuse, especially alcohol usage, is frequently found to be strongly correlated with violence between intimate partners, and violence in general. In a study, out of 150 women participants, only 3.3% perceived use of drugs as a reason for marital conflict in the society. There is, however, room for further research and investigation with regards to this factor.

²² Shaikh MA. Is domestic violence endemic in Pakistan: perspective from Pakistani wives. Pak J Med Sci 2003; 19:23-8.

²³ Visaria L. Violence against women in India: Evidence from rural Gujarat. Domestic violence in India; A summary report of three studies. Washington, DC: International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), 1999; pp 14-25.

²⁴ Holtzworth-Monroe A, Bates L, Smutzler N, Sandin E. A brief review of the research on husband violence: part I: Martialy violent versus nonviolent men. Aggression and Violent behavior 1997.

According to literature, males who witness marital violence in their formative years i.e. childhood are more likely to exhibit violent behavior when they are in an intimate relationship. It is also mentioned that experiencing violence from caregivers as a child increases one's risk of both perpetrating violence against women and becoming a victim of domestic violence. Bandura's (1977) social learning theory concentrates on the power of example. The major premise of the theory is that one can learn by observing others. This phenomenon is known as modeling which has as much impact as direct experiences.

Majority of the families especially in Pakistani cultures are close knit and tribal, where parents and elders are the role models. Therefore, if the father beats his wife then his son would beat his wife. When parents/elders beat their daughters then their sons beat their daughters. As this phenomenon is very common in this society, it is one of the major determinants of domestic violence

External Factors:

External factors constitute the context within which the abuse takes place. These factors include male dominance in the family, male control of wealth, and marital/ verbal conflict. Other factors include employment opportunities, economic influences, women access over power and resources, social support network and societal norms regarding gender roles, and power hierarchies. Male dominance is frequently mentioned as a determinant of domestic violence. Decision making authority makes the man more dominant in the family and society and increases the likelihood of violence against women. Pakistani society is a patriarchal society in which, male members who bear the decision-making authority, head the families. Women are usually not included in making decisions and are considered socially and economically dependent on men. Women "consider themselves insecure, incomplete, ineffective and inefficient without males".²⁵ Therefore, the male dominance becomes one of the significant predictor of the violence against women in the country. Marital conflict has been found to be related with the domestic violence. Majority of the studies around the globe have shown that marital conflict associated with verbal and physical abuse is common in all strata of the society regardless of

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geographic, cultural, psychosocial and financial differences. In a study, out of 150 participants, 34% reported to be physically abused by their husbands due to marital conflicts. The reason of the marital conflict included financial constraints, presence of in-laws, children and absence of a male child. Studies have found that unemployment increases the risk of depression, aggressiveness and violent behaviors which in turn can result in an increased risk of physical, sexual and emotional abuse. As unemployment is one of the big problems in the country, it is one of the important determinants of the violence against women.

Economic independence of the people in any society has an impact on women. If the women are allowed to work and are economically independent, they are less likely to become the victims of violence. However, the statement cannot be generalized, as the studies have shown that economic independence of women does not protect them from domestic violence. In some places, especially urban areas women have been encouraged to work outside the house and contribute to the economy of the family. However, it is considered as a privilege granted by men. It is "permission" and not a right. Economic independence could be a sign of women getting

²⁵Niaz U. Violence against women in South Asian countries. Arch Women's Ment Health 2003; 6:173-84.



power, which is not acceptable in many societies. Therefore, when the women try to be economically independent, the men try to regain control by violent acts.

In the region of Southeast Asia, people usually live in extended families, where mothers-in-law have major influences on family size, family planning and household decision-making. It is believed that interference from the mother-in-law is a factor that precipitates violence against the daughter-in-law. Thirty percent (30%) of the participants in a study reported presence of in-laws as a common reason of marital conflict leading to verbal and physical abuse of the wife by her husband. Various studies, however, have found no evidence which suggest that women who co-reside with their mothers-in-law are more prone to suffer beating from their husbands than are other women. In patriarchal societies such as Pakistan, "sons are perceived to have economic, social, or religious utility; daughters are often felt to be an economic liability..."

Studies have revealed that women who have more daughters are more likely to suffer from violence than the women who have more sons. In a similar manner, women who do not have children are subjected to not only violence by their husbands and in-laws, but are harassed by the society as well.

Marriage at an early age is another factor, which predisposes women to violence by intimate partners. Early marriages are a very common practice in the Southeast Asian countries particularly in Pakistan as the girls are considered a social, economic and religious liability on the families, which needs to be disposed of as soon as possible. Research reports have indicated that marriage at a young age makes women vulnerable to abuse in the husband's home. Furthermore, the practice of dowry also plays an important role in precipitation of violence against women in the country. According to literature, women whose dowries are perceived inadequate, by their husband and in-laws, suffer considerably more harassment in the husband's home than do women whose dowries are more substantial.

Historically, in the subcontinent's tribal and rural cultures, women were treated as the property of men. Role of women has been submission, to serve as a commodity and to sacrifice herself for

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the sake of values determined by man. When there used to be disputes between tribes, goats, sheep and women were traded for reconciliation. Marriages, for political and tribal peace were common.

Similar practices are still ongoing and many families do not allow their women to marry in case someone out of the family would share their ancestral lands. These restrictions are applied to control women from inheriting land, property and precluding their offspring's, from another man, to inherit the family land and influence. She is beaten and killed, for the sake of man's ethics and man-made values.

If a woman is respected in a culture, she is less likely to be abused and beaten. It is important to note that in many countries like Pakistan, one of the very interesting phenomena is that older women are respected but the young women are not. This does not necessarily mean that older women are not abused. Wife beating is even considered normal in the culture and therefore, is unreported. Unfortunately, Pakistani and Indian societies still run on tribal and feudal systems and the majority of the population lives under rural and feudal control. In feudal system, there is no education; no freedom and women are treated like slaves or prisoners in the households making violence against women in these societies very common.

Some tribal societies consider women as the source of all evils and men are not mentioned in any evil doing. There is a famous proverb, used and believed so universally, in such societies, "Zan, Zar, Zameen" (Woman, Money, Land) being the source of everything evil. This is a sound wisdom in these cultures. This is used, not as a source of learning but as a tool to put blame on the women and not on the men in case of any undesirable behaviour on the part of the men. In such societies, women's personality is determined by the man's wishes. If she is non-compliant, and rebellious, she is punished through beatings, isolation, and virtual imprisonment and sometimes murdered.

In summary, it is the interplay of the identified determinants that violence against women may be analyzed. Factors which are found in persons makes them either vulnerable to be abused or to have the tendency to be violent and abusive. The conditions which set the stage for violence



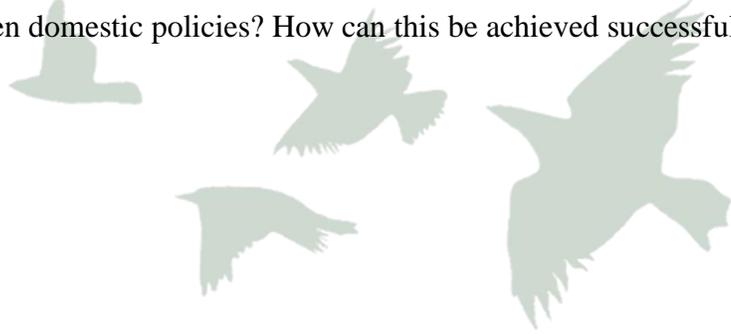
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against women are found in the extrinsic factors which are heavily present in the culture of Pakistan. The prevailing system of patriarchy both in Pakistan and its neighboring countries supports and influences violence against women.



Question a Resolution Must Answer (QARMA)

1. How should violence against women and girls be defined in the context of Pakistan?
2. What are the causes and consequences of gender-based violence in Pakistan? How do these impact the lives of women?
3. What kind of support can be provided to the victims of this type of violence?
4. What are the main ways of action to reduce and end gender-based violence? How can policymakers ensure that these mechanisms are implemented successfully in Pakistan?
5. Is education a viable way to transform the mindsets of Pakistani society? What should a framework to achieve this entail?
6. Is the cooperation of UN agencies with the local government in Pakistan an effective mechanism to strengthen domestic policies? How can this be achieved successfully?



Topic B: Ensuring the political participation of Women

“The Global Gender Gap Index, in 2016 ranked Pakistan as the second lowest country in the world for gender equality”²⁶ While Pakistan’s constitution guarantees freedom and equality to all its citizens, women have remained marginalized in various spheres of life, especially the political sphere. Despite being the first Muslim country to have a female head of state, women have seldom been recognized as important political agents in Pakistan. The historically low percentage of female participation in general elections as compared to male participation, as voters and candidates is an evidence of this inequality.

Female Voters

A gender gap in voting²⁷ exists in Pakistan, as the proportion of male registered voters is much higher than that of female registered voters and subsequently the male voter-turnout is also higher than the female voter turn-out. “In the recent 2018 general elections, the male-female gap in voter turnout stood at 9.1 percent with 11 million fewer women exercising their right to vote than men”.²⁸ It is generally assumed that a high gender gap in turnout is due to traditionally conservative beliefs and customs in rural constituencies, as compared to urban areas where local elites encourage female voting.

²⁶“Pakistan’s Participation Puzzle: A Look at the Voting Gender Gap.” United States Institute of Peace, July 19, 2019. <https://www.usip.org/blog/2019/07/pakistans-participation-puzzle-look-voting-gender-gap>.

However, research has found a larger gender gap in voting in metropolitan cities than in rural constituencies'.²⁹ After all, the highest female voter turnout for the National Assembly elections in 2013 was recorded in Sindh's Thar district.³⁰ This is a testament to the fact that the issue is much more deep-rooted and cannot be reduced to the rural versus urban dichotomy. To find a solution, we must first explore all the factors that widen the gender disparity in voting.

Causes

In 2018, only 40 percent of the 46 million registered female voters eventually cast their votes in the 2018 elections.³¹ There are various factors which hinder the greater political participation of women. Firstly, these include societal norms and values which are inherently patriarchal for e.g. believing a woman's role in society is strictly that of a child bearer or that a woman is the family's honor. Often, agreements between village leaders and election candidates are made to restrain women from voting.

²⁷ "Gender Gap in Voting." CAWP, November 12, 2018. https://cawp.rutgers.edu/facts/voters/gender_gap.

²⁸ "Pakistan's Participation Puzzle: A Look at the Voting Gender Gap." United States Institute of Peace, July 19, 2019. <https://www.usip.org/blog/2019/07/pakistans-participation-puzzle-look-voting-gender-gap>.

²⁹ Ibid

³⁰ Farrukh, Aisha. "Pakistan Elections 2018: Gender Gap in Voting Offsets Increase in Women Voter Turnout." Media for Transparency, August 8, 2018. <http://pakrtidata.org/2018/08/08/pakistan-elections-2018-women-voters-gender-gap/>.

³¹ Tribune.com.pk, "Beyond Women Voter Turnout in Elections," The Express Tribune, September 11, 2018, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1800497/1-beyond-women-voter-turnout-elections/>

Research was carried out, by the Mittal South Asian Institute, in Lahore to understand the idea ordinary citizens, both male and female, have behind restricting female political participation.³² When asked, men believed that it was appropriate for them to restrict women from voting in various situations for e.g. the lines are too long, there's a chance of violence at the polling station etc. And in the situation where voting was a hindrance in women carrying out their household chores, more women than men believed it was appropriate for the men to stop women from voting.³³

This is an example of how men gate keep political participation for women and mediate a woman's ability to vote. Although this may not be an actively coercive practice, however the expectation that women have to seek permission from the men of their family is indicative of the power men possess in restricting access to the basic right to vote for women. All these factors are essentially barriers to the inclusion of women in the electoral process. Consequently, not only are women less likely to be registered to vote, but even those who are registered are not allowed to vote.

Additionally, political parties also make little effort to recognize women as significant constituents they need to cater to. This can be explained by the poor political knowledge among women which is then also strongly correlated with low levels of interest in politics and

³²“How Can We Shrink the Voter Gender Gap in Pakistan? • The Lakshmi Mittal and Family South Asia Institute,”
The Lakshmi Mittal and Family South Asia Institute, April 18, 2019,
<https://mittalsouthasiainstitute.harvard.edu/2019/04/shrink-voter-gender-gap-pakistan/>

³³Ibid

subsequent low levels of interaction between political parties and female voters. The gendered nature of political mobilization is such that most political party members and workers who often conduct door-to-door campaigns are men and thus address men and do not make an effort to engage with the women. These political parties then rely on men to mobilize the women in their households. In a research conducted by USIP, “only 22 percent of women reported that a political party representative had visited their household in the days leading up to the previous general election. Out of these, almost half (47%) reported that the party representative did not attempt to speak to the women in the household”.³⁴ This is evidence of the failure of political parties to recruit female party workers and leaders which subsequently leads to the disengagement and disillusion of women from politics.

Secondly, bureaucratic issues due to the lack of government infrastructure also pose a hindrance to the electoral process and in turn, disproportionately harm women. Election commission of Punjab conducted surveys and found that the basic hurdle to voting was national ID cards. ID cards were often denied to women by male family members, to retain their control over household finances and determine the women’s mobility. Additionally, many parents did not see the utility of obtaining an ID card, especially to register a daughter for school as they believed that their daughters should rather participate in household chores; others could not afford the cost of registering an ID card at all.³⁵

³⁴“Pakistan's Participation Puzzle: A Look at the Voting Gender Gap.” United States Institute of Peace, July 19, 2019. <https://www.usip.org/blog/2019/07/pakistans-participation-puzzle-look-voting-gender-gap>.

³⁵Toppa, Sabrina. “Where Are Pakistan's Female Voters?” Devex. Devex, July 24, 2018. <https://www.devex.com/news/where-are-pakistan-s-female-voters-93157>.

The ECP administration also claimed that logistical shortcomings on their part could have played a part in widening the gender gap in voting in some areas. There were areas where the lack of polling staff resulted in common polling stations for male and female voters but with separate voting booths. Moreover, the lack of voting staff in many areas also led to a genuine dearth of female polling agents. This hindered men from allowing the women in their family to vote, as the voting process would involve the intermingling between men and women which they deemed un-Islamic.

All these barriers render millions of Pakistani women absent in the political process and unable to voice their concerns, elect their political representatives and hold them accountable, just as any other male citizen would be able to do. This reflects the lack of focus on female-centric policies and the failure to address female issues in a party's mandate as female voters are considered dispensable as compared to male voters and thus their issues remain arbitrary and insignificant.

Past Efforts

In 2015 numerous civil society groups called for a women's voter registration emergency³⁶. The Election Commission in Pakistan responded to this by dedicating a gender affairs wing to it.

³⁶"FAFEN Calls for Women's Voter Registration Emergency." Free and Fair Election Network, November 26, 2015. <https://fafen.org/fafen-calls-for-womens-voter-registration-emergency/>.

³⁷Hafsah Sarfraz, "Be Heard: The Power of Women Voters," The News International: Latest News Breaking, Pakistan News, accessed January 21, 2020, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/magazine/you/339964-be-heard-the-power-of-women-voters>

Through it, the ECP developed a consortium of 8 universities all over Pakistan to motivate youth and to engage them as agents for mobilizing women. ECP also initiated a ‘Female NIC and Voter Registration Campaign’³⁷ in 79 districts of Pakistan. The Free and Fair Election Network’s (Fafen) member organizations across the country helped to identify and list one million unregistered women in 24 districts. The initiative targeted women and mobilized them to NADRA registration centers for acquisition of the NIC. Through these efforts, the number of registered women voters actually grew by 24 percent between 2013 and 2018. But around the same time, male registered voters grew by 22 percent. As these are roughly similar rates, the gap still exists.

NGOs have also played an important role in encouraging female political participation. For example, Oxfam in Pakistan worked in specific provinces to ensure marginalized groups including women, persons living with disabilities and excluded groups like transgender and religious minorities are brought into the fold of the voter’s lists, are trained and motivated to demand political parties represent these groups’ distinct needs.³⁸

Similarly, before the 2013 general elections, ECP and UN Women partnered to conduct a public awareness campaign aimed to increase outreach to women through local civil society networks. Seminars and community fairs were held in district election commission offices and educational institutions to create political awareness and mobilize young women to be more politically active.

³⁸Ibid

³⁹Mughal, Bilal k. “3.8m More Women Added to Electoral Rolls Due to Registration Drive, Says ECP Representative.” DAWN.COM, July 14, 2018. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1419860>.

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As a result of these efforts, approximately 3.8 million women³⁹ were registered as voters.

Additionally, the Election Act of 2017 brought changes to the election law. Section 9 of the Act empowered the ECP by giving them the authority to declare the results of the constituency or some of its polling stations as null & void where the female voter turnout is less than 10 percent of the women on the voter rolls. Consequently, the 2018 elections, the Election Commission counted women votes separately on polling day and released gender disaggregated statistics for votes polled. In 95% of the 268 National Assembly constituencies, the female voter turnout was 25% or higher. In 126 constituencies, 50% or more female voters cast their votes. Although this indicates a positive trend in the female voter turnout, however anecdotal evidence from the 2013 general elections suggested that the disparity between votes cast by women and men in the 2018 elections persisted.

This disparity was most significant in 12 National Assembly constituencies where the ratio of male voters to female voters was three to one or higher⁴⁰. All of these constituencies are in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and adjoining tribal areas. Only in one National Assembly constituency — NA-64 Chakwal-I — more than half of the votes cast were by women voters.

⁴⁰Dastageer, Ghulam, Sairah Zaidi, and Rizwan Safdar. "A Look into the Turnout of Women Voters for the 2018 Elections." Herald Magazine, September 18, 2018. <https://herald.dawn.com/news/1398671>.

⁴¹Ibid



In accordance with the election act of 2017, the election in Kerai was declared null & void due to the female voter turnout being less than 10% and a re-election was scheduled. “We will not let our women cast votes. Voting by women violates our tradition of haya [modesty]” said Bahr-i-Rome, an 85-year-old resident of the village⁴¹. This statement is indicative of the patriarchal norms that are at the heart of the voter-gap and the ECP’s efforts don’t tackle the root of the problem.

There were also many loopholes within the election act itself. Various news reports suggested that while women participated, they were coerced to do so just to meet the requirements marked by the ECP to avoid the chance of a re-poll. This shows how the statistics of female voter-turnout at the constituency level may mask many variations. Hence, increased turnout by women may not be reflective of more politically empowered women in the country. The latter requires active collaboration between the civil society, political actors and the bureaucracy. Instead, the law could be more effective by pinpointing polling stations, identify areas with large gender gaps in turnout and target those areas for interventions in the lead-up to the next election, rather than constituencies with less than 10% women’s turnout⁴².

Potential Solutions:

Civil society can play an important role in collaborating with the government sector to run educational and motivational campaigns to boost women’s turnout in the metropolitan context. Political parties should be incentivized to recognize the value of female voters to the electoral process, recruit more female party workers, and broaden their mobilization efforts by actively targeting women and their issues in their election campaigns and in their mandate. Providing women with public spaces in their communities to partake in political discourse and reflect on their role, responsibilities and rights as political agents.

Women as politicians

Around the world, women are increasingly occupying key roles in governance. Despite Pakistan electing Benazir Bhutto as its first female prime minister, the truth is that there exist many barriers to women contesting elections, let alone, be elected. These barriers persist despite the fact that female parliamentarians have proven themselves to be fairly competent, at times, even more than their male counterparts. Their presence in parliament is particularly important to raise issues which concern women and push for policies which work to socio-economically uplift women. They can play a role in changing the current, masculine dominated, patriarchal nature of politics and adopt a more democratic outlook by working towards making gender perspectives mainstream⁴³ into civil and political discourse. This can be done by allowing women to perform key roles in policy-making particularly on female-centred issues.⁴⁴

Pakistan is a federation with local, provincial and national tiers of government. All constitutions, from 1956 until 1985, ensured some reserved seats for women at the national and sub-national levels. In the 1956 Constitution, a minimum of 3 percent of seats were reserved for women at all levels of government.

⁴²Farrukh, Aisha. "Pakistan Elections 2018: Gender Gap in Voting Offsets Increase in Women Voter Turnout." Media for Transparency, August 8, 2018. <http://pakrtidata.org/2018/08/08/pakistan-elections-2018-women-voters-gender-gap/>.

The constitutions in 1962 and 1973, also reserved seats for women—”2.75 per cent in the National Assembly and 5 per cent in each of the provincial assemblies”. These were implemented through indirect elections. In 1985, the number of reserved seats for women in the national assembly was increased to 10 per cent⁴⁵ However, this provision expired in 1988, and for elections held in the 1990s the number of women in parliament did not increase beyond 4 per cent.⁴⁶

The National consultations in the Ministry of Women and Development, the National Campaign for Restoration of Women’s Reserved Seats, the Report of the Commission of Inquiry for Women, and the National Plan for Action all demand a greater number of reservations during the late 1990s and early 2000s, thus providing for the 30 per cent quota of reserved seats.⁴⁷

Currently, 17% of seats in the National Assembly are reserved for women. The 272 general seats are elected by a direct vote through a first-past-the-post system in single-member constituencies across four main provinces, and the Islamabad capital territory. 35 seats are reserved for Punjab, 14 seats for Sindh, 8 seats for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and 3 seats for Balochistan

⁴³ “Mainstreaming Gender.” Making Gender Equality Happen, 2017, 18–

⁴⁵. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315658544-3>.

⁴⁴ “Twelfth Sustainable Development Conference (SDC) 2009.” SDPI. Accessed January 21, 2020. http://www.sdpi.org/sdc/12thsdcr/role_of_women_parliamentarians.html.

⁴⁵ Rai, Shirin M. “Gender and Development.” Palgrave Advances in Development Studies, 2005, 226–46. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230502864_11.

⁴⁶ “Gender Quotas Database.” | International IDEA. Accessed January 21, 2020.

<https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas/country-view/241/35>.

⁴⁷ Ibid



According to the constitution, there are 17 seats in the Senate, reserved for women⁴⁸ A total of 4 women senators are elected in each of the 4 provinces and 1 additional seat is reserved for a woman in the total of 4 seats elected from Islamabad. Members of the Senate are indirectly elected by members of provincial councils and of the lower house through the single transferable vote system. They submit their lists of women candidates for reserved seats to the Election Commission before the election. After the election results for general seats are announced, the reserved seats are allocated to the political parties in proportion to the number of general seats obtained by these parties in each province.⁴⁹

Moreover, there are also reserved seats for women in their Provincial Assemblies, with 66 seats in Punjab, 29 seats in Sindh, 22 seats in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and 11 seats in Balochistan. General seats are elected based on first-past-the-post or simple majority rule, while reserved seats for women are proportionally distributed among parties based on the number of general seats secured by each political party in the Provincial Assembly.

Sindh and Punjab adopted local government laws in 2013 with reduced number of reserved seats for women: 1 out of 9 in the directly elected first tier of local government in Sindh, and two in every 13 in Punjab.,

⁴⁸ Pakistan: Constitution. Genève, 1974.

⁴⁹ Ibid

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At higher, indirectly elected tiers, Sindh law provides for a 22% of the reserved seats for women and Punjab has legislated for about 10% of the reserved seats for women at that level.

Legislation is under preparation in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with proposals to set the minimum number of seats reserved for women at 33%, which carries the same standard that previously applied to all local councils in all provinces, as set by the Devolution of Power Plan (DPP), adopted in 2000 and expired in 2009. After the 18th amendment to the constitution was passed in 2010, the provincial governments gained more autonomy to legislate from the center. Since then, the local government law of all provinces, presented in 2013, has implemented a system of reserved seats for women, but their success varies across provinces. For instance, in 2015 cantonment elections, only two women were elected out of total 199 seats, thus failing to meet the 33 percent quota. In Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and other areas with relatively conservative populations, the rate of female contestation for reserved seats is so low that most female councilors elected ran unopposed. In Punjab and Sindh, where women's participation is much higher than the other two provinces, the quota for female councilors was reduced to 15 and 22 percent respectively.

Single/Lower House

Majlis-E-Shoora/National Assembly

Total seats:	341
Total Women:	69
% Women:	20%
Election Year:	2018
Electoral System:	Parallel
Quota Type:	Reserved seats
Election details:	IDEA Voter Turnout - JPU Parline



Upper House	
Majlis-E-Shoorah/Senate	
Total seats:	104
Total Women:	20
% Women:	19%
Election Year:	2018
Electoral System:	Indirectly elected
Quota Type:	Reserved seats
Election details:	IPU Parline

Although, female representation in Pakistan’s national assembly has significantly increased in the past two decades. From only “1.8% of members in 1995, in 2015 women accounted for an aggregate of 20.7% of the total membership of National Assembly and the Senate”. Female parliamentarians have also demonstrated consistently superior performance when juxtaposed to the performance of their male counterparts in almost all elected houses⁵⁰. In 2003, a majority of the female parliamentarians were elected for the first time, despite this they were significantly more productive as compared to their male colleagues in key areas of legislative interventions, for example “they asked 27% of the total questions; 30% of the total calling attentions notices; 42% of the total private members bills; and 24% of the total resolutions”.⁵¹

⁵⁰“Making Gender Quota Meaningful.” Heinrich Böll Stiftung Pakistan. Accessed January 21, 2020. <https://pk.boell.org/2018/07/05/making-gender-quota-meaningful>.

⁵¹Zaka, Rashid Mafzool. “Role of Women Parliamentarians and Research Practices in ...” Accessed January 21, 2020. https://pips.gov.pk/sites/default/files/Role_of_Women_Parliamentarians_and_Research_Practices_in_Pakistan.pdf.

⁵² “Making Gender Quota Meaningful.” Heinrich Böll Stiftung Pakistan. Accessed January 21, 2020. <https://pk.boell.org/2018/07/05/making-gender-quota-meaningful>.



However, there are issues in terms of the nature of the quota and its implementation. Reserved seats for women were originally envisioned to be a temporary special measure used as a starting point to eventually normalize and actively encourage aspiring female politicians.⁵² However, there are a number of issues which restrict the growth of such an environment.

A constituency is the group in which a citizen's vote is counted for the purpose of electing a political representative.⁵³ Since the indirect election system is used to elect women on the reserved seats, political parties are allotted women's reserved seats in proportion to the number of general seats they win through direct elections. But this also makes the women's reserved seats contingent on the winning and losing of often male candidates in the general elections. As a result, women who are eventually elected on these seats do not have a territorial constituency and do not necessarily represent the people of that constituency as they aren't the candidate the constituents voted for. This system gives parties, rather than voters, more control over women elected on the reserved seats. Therefore, women chosen on such seats often feel more accountable to their parties than to the voters⁵⁴ weakening the democratic nature of the process. Secondly, the presence of reserved seats for women undermines their representation on general seats. Parties realize that women can even be elected through reserved seats, hence they prioritize male candidates while awarding general seat tickets. This shows their inability to understand the purpose of reserved seats as a temporary measure and how the essence behind the act is to encourage women in the political sphere by contesting the general seats as well. The rationale behind this is grounded in the assumption that women cannot run mass election campaigns; hence, it's best for them to represent through reserved seats. In 2013 general elections, more women contested on general seats than ever before, but many ran as independent candidates.

⁵³Rehfeld, Andrew. "The Concept of Constituency," 2005. <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511509674>.

⁵⁴ "Making Gender Quota Meaningful." Heinrich Böll Stiftung Pakistan. Accessed January 21, 2020. <https://pk.boell.org/2018/07/05/making-gender-quota-meaningful>.

Moreover, the number of women elected on general seats dropped compared to 2008 (nine women were elected on general seats in 2013 compared to 16 in 2008). On the other hand, women's appointment within ministerial and other vital public offices remains insignificant.⁵⁵

The Election Act of 2017 criminalizes any effort to hinder female participation in elections, as voters or candidates. It demands political parties to have a minimum of five percent of female candidates contesting in general elections for both national and provincial assemblies. In the 2018 elections, all mainstream national parties kept close to the minimum percentage, while over 45 percent of political parties did not field a single female candidate. Thus, parties either did not comply with the act, or chose female candidates to barely meet the quota. Most female candidates were strategically given tickets for constituencies in which the party had no chance of winning. Many of these contestants did not organize a campaign for elections like their male counterparts. This shows how the political culture is such that there are limited opportunities for women to grow and mature as politicians.

The system of indirect elections also gives leeway to political parties award these reserved seats through nepotism instead of meritocracy or recognition of the issue of gender disparity. For example, the list of female candidates for reserved seats by Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) has remained confined to women that have close familial links with the party's male leadership, thus female politicians often remain a product of dynastic politics. Hence, the victory of these female politicians is often shared with their families rather than their political parties close the gender gap.⁵⁶ The situation is worse for minority women — almost entirely politically excluded, deprived of rights and access to opportunities. The problem persists despite exceptions such as Senator Krishna Kumari⁵⁷, who has advocated for legislation to safeguard the rights of the Hindu community she belongs to. Women who dare to stand as independent candidates don't have the same access to campaign funds and support as or the same power in their area as someone who is being supported by a powerful political family. The current system offers no incentives for political parties to field independent female candidates who were initially party workers and have risen above the hierarchy.

Hence Pakistan's current method of reserved seats might improve the gender gap on the surface. However, on a much closer look one can observe how it would only do the bare minimum in terms of increasing female representation and might not translate into tangible change through better legislation on women's issues as the process excludes women from marginalized groups.

Potential Solutions

Women's representation should not be limited to 'quotas through nominations. Political parties should be incentivized to encourage women, perhaps through reforms that target internal party structures, to develop their own constituencies through an established mechanism.⁵⁸

The current quota system must be reviewed to find solutions to tackle the differential impact of reserved seats in enhancing the political participation of women.

Women are either treated as a political liability or considered as a passive vote bank. It is important that the members of the commission indulge in discourse which is targeted to uproot the patriarchal narrative which legitimizes the exclusion of women from the political sphere, in both electoral and non-electoral forms of participation. They must also look to empower female political agents, and only put forth policy suggestions while remaining cognizant of the legal barriers they face and the religious and cultural context they are trying to bring change in.

⁵⁶ Batool, Fizza, Sajid Shapoo, Mohammed Sinan Siyech, and Beenish Pervaiz. "Female Representation in the Parliament: What Pakistan Can Learn from India." South Asian Voices, August 20, 2019.

<https://southasianvoices.org/female-representation-in-the-parliament-what-pakistan-can-learn-from-india/>.

⁵⁷ Nizamani, Shazia. "Women in Politics." DAWN.COM, June 12, 2018. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1401914>.

⁵⁸ "Twelfth Sustainable Development Conference (SDC) 2009." SDPI. Accessed January 21, 2020. http://www.sdpi.org/sdc/12thsdc/role_of_women_parliamentarians.html.

Questions a Resolution Must Answer (QARMA)

1. How have women been historically excluded from politics in Pakistan?
2. What are the causes of lack of female participation?
3. What past actions have been taken to tackle this issue? To what extent have these been successful?
4. How has the absence of adequate female representation impacted the political sphere of Pakistan?
5. What are the potential solutions to this issue? How can they be implemented in the form of an all-encompassing framework?



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