The Obliterated Democracy Sociological Study of the Cultural Obstructions to Women's Political Participation in Pakistan

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Abstract

Women?s historic exclusion from political structures and processes is the result of multiple structural, functional and personal factors that vary in different social contexts across countries. Political empowerment is among the key issues in third world in general and in pakistan in particular. Despite the fact that there are 33

odern political discourse focuses on democracy and the relationship between people and politics; that is thought of as the way the government body or officials are chosen for the policy making and decision-making (Losco, 2010). Historically, the origin of politics or political institution is linked with the origin of state and the development of art of warfare and defense (Carneiro, 1977). Women political empowerment means the attainment of political rights by women to participate in the democratic process and have a share in the running of the affairs of the state (Aderinwale, 1997). Women have always faced disparity in terms of politics and women cannot possibly get empowered unless they are politically empowered (Eisenstein, 1984 andAli et al, 2010). The fact is evident that women are among the vulnerable segment in society (Waylen, 1998). However, women's political empowerment is not a goal in itself but it is instrumental in stimulating the society for political and social empowerment which would further stimulate the overall development of society (Asif, 2008 andAslam, 2002).

The development of a nation and establishment of a just, equitable, balanced, viable, healthy, and prosperous society depends, to a large extent, on the full and active participation of women in the political deliberations and key economic activities of that nation, beyond the window-dressing of featuring in the fanfare at political rallies and similar events (Bari, 2005). It is, therefore, arguable that addressing the issues surrounding women's inclusion in public life is a key to the emergence of an economically sustainable society (Basu, 2005). The level of political participation of women continues to be adversely affected by a myriad of environmental factors despite the fact that there have been marked improvements in the general rate of literacy and political awareness among women (Begum, 1987 andBeal, 1994). The customary and traditional laws, for instance, have always given more power and control over resources and decision-making processes to the men, hence making most systems largely undemocratic (Bose et al, 1983 andBell, 1984). However, most of the developing countries are patriarchal in nature where men remain at the helm of affairs and make decisions virtually exclusively, even when the issues border on women (Brand, 1998 andNaz, 2011).

The few women who venture into 'the man's world' feel inhibited to speak, especially when they are in large, male-dominated assemblies (Connell, 1987). Those who muster up enough courage and strength to speak receive very scant attention and respect and affected their status in regard of women's political empowerment (Farooq, 2003). In addition, women's historic exclusion from political structures and processes is the result of multiple structural, functional M and personal factors that vary in different social contexts across countries (Jagger, 1993). However, beyond these specificities of national and local contexts, there is a generic issue in women's political participation that relates to the wider context of national and international politics, liberal democracy and development (Mirza, 2002 andMahmood, 2004).

The challenge facing all advocates of gender equality in politics today is the wide gap between shared values reflected in the national and international policies and practices (Saiyid, 2001). With an increasing recognition

among international community of women's historic exclusion from structures of power, a global commitment has been made to redress gender imbalance in politics (Saleem, 2010). Women's enhanced participation in governance structures is viewed as the key to redress gender inequalities in societies (Shah, 1989 andSarho, 1997). The global debate on the promotion of women's political participation or representation has been surrounded by intrinsic and instrumentalist argument (Shaheed et al, 2009). The former argues for equal participation of women in politics from the human rights perspective (UNDP, 2005). Women constitute almost half of the world population and therefore, it is only fair that they should have equal participation and representation in world democracies (Anjum, 2001). Instrumentalist argument pushed for women's greater participation on the essentialist ground that men and women are different (Alam, 2004). Women have different vision and concepts of politics owning to their sex and their gender roles as mothers (Naz, 2011). Therefore, it is assumed that women in politics will bring a special caring focus and female values to politics **??**ADB, 2004).

The subordinate status of women vis-à-vis men is a universal phenomenon, though with a difference in the nature and extent of subordination across countries (Daraz, 2012). Gender role ideology does not only create duality of femininity and masculinity, it also places them in hierarchical fashion in which female sex is generally valued less than male sex because of their socially ascribed roles in reproductive sphere **??**ADB, 2008). The gender status quo is maintained through low resource allocation to women's human development by the state, society and the family (Aurat, 2001). This is reflected in the social indicators which reflect varying degrees of gender disparities in education, health, employment, ownership of productive resources and politics in all countries (Bari, 2000). Furthermore, the socio-cultural dependence of women is one of the key detrimental factors to their political participation in public political domain (Khan andNaz, 2012 andDaraz, 2012). Women also find it hard to participate in politics due to limited time available to them because of their dual roles in the productive and reproductive spheres (Naz and Rehman, 2011). With their primary roles as mothers and wives and competing domestic responsibilities and care work, they are left with little time to participate in politics (Buvinic, 1983).

The above mentioned discussion indicates that women are suffering from vulnerability throughout the globe in political context while the case in South Asian countries particularly Pakistan is highly a blistering one (Coleman, 2004). Relationally, the rural areas of the country witness more hurdles in this way where the problem has worsened consequences and the code of life is mostly traditionally driven (Ali et al, 2010). Such traditions assign more power to male segment of the society who are savoring more privileges in the field of politics and powers (Akutu, 1997). In this context, the target area of this study i.e. a traditional Pakhtun society is also driven under the centuries old customary law of Pakhtunwali (Naz, 2011 andKhan, 2011) where gender is socio-cultural, religious, economic and political source of division (Ibrahim, 2012). The problem of gender discrimination in politics and political empowerment is high because of Pakhtunwali and sex segregated socio-cultural setup. The fact is that women are not the part of legislature done on account of their rights. In addition, male dominance, conservatism, and religious misconception etc are the factors, which obstruct their political empowerment (Ali et al, 2010).

1   II. The Argument

Despite all claims of enlightenment in modern societies, women still on one way or the other considered as institutionalized commodities (Aderinwale, 1997). To empower the women is to empower human beings as women make up more than half of human species and are numerically the majority but politically they are still a minority group (Akutu, 1997 andAli et al, 2010). Women as a majority segment have dual contribution to the social and economic development of societies by virtue of their dual roles in the productive and reproductive spheres (Naz, 2011;Khan andNaz, 2012 andDaraz, 2012). Yet their participation in formal political structures and processes, where decisions regarding the use of societal resources generated by both men and women are made, remains insignificant (Naz and Rehman, 2011) and access to formal political structure varies across countries (Cornwall and Gaventa, 2006). There is a steady upward trend in women's political participation and representation in developed countries particularly in Nordic countries and out of twelve countries where women representation in parliament is more than 33%, nine of them are ranked in the high human development category **??**UNDP, 2005).

This research study deals with the cultural constraints to women's political empowerment in a traditional Pakhtun society where the ethnographic details and other research materials show that these cultural constraints are mostly the outcome of existing (Naz, 2011, Khan, 2011, Daraz, 2012). The cultural set-up of area plays a pivotal role in shaping women's lives (Anita, 2010). However, in Pakhtun society where there is strong hold of strict customs and traditions that restrict women to the four walls of their homes and are exploited economically and politically (Naz, 2011 andDaraz, 2012) that further shapes women's relationship in politics (Khan, 2011). It transforms male and females into men and women and construct the hierarchy of gender relations where men are privileged (Eisenstein 1984). The gender role ideology is used as an ideological tool by patriarchy to place women within the private arena of home as mothers and wives and men in the public sphere which further decreases women's political empowerment **??**DFID, 2007).

In addition, the conception regarding obligation over women to offer domestic activities and the myth i.e. 'women are for home or grave' further decreases women's political status (Drage, 2001). In this regard Grindle (2007) argue that domestic domain continues to be perceived in the North as well as in the South as the legitimate space for women while public space is associated with men. Women have to negotiate their entry into and claim on public space according to the discursive and material opportunities available in a given culture and society.

Although the gender role ideology is not static rather remained in a flux while intersecting with economic, social and political systems of a particular society, women continue to be defined as private across countries, which resulted in their exclusion from politics (Aslam, 2002).

Besides, the traditions of the area and Pakhtun code of life (Pakhtunwali) including Nang, Haya, Ghairat and Namus describe Purdah observing system as compulsory for female and women who do not observe Purdah are termed as Be-Purdah (unveiled), and such kind of stigma mostly stick to those women who move outside family for political activities, jobs or education and it certainly makes hurdles in women's political empowerment (Naz, 2011;and Naz and Rehman, 2011). Similarly, education is perceived as a gateway towards liberalism and such kind of thinking on part of local people restricts women to home or Chardewari which further decreases their political empowerment.

2 III. Objectives of The Study

? To study the various cultural impediments to women's political empowerment.

? To glimpse the role of Pakhtunwali (Pakhtuncodes) in regard of women's political empowerment .

3 IV. Hypotheses of The Study

? Cultural impediments have strong association with women's political empowerment.

? Pakhtun codes negatively influences women's political empowerment.

4 V. Theoretical Frame Work

The current study is predominantly approached through a sophisticated approach and is designed under the prominent Liberal Feminism that emphasizes over women's education, culture and law as the restricting forces for women's subordination. The philosophy of liberal feminism as argued by Ritzer (2000), expresses that women may claim equality with men on the basis of an essential human capacity for reasoned moral agency, that gender inequality is a result of patriarchal and sexist patterning of division of labor. Gender equality can be produced by transforming division of labor through re-pattering of key institutions law, work, family, education, and media ??Bodichon et al, 2011). The liberal philosophy asserts that equality of male and female is possible through political and legal reforms that focus on women's ability to maintain equality with men (Brody, 1983). These feminists believe that personal interaction of both male and female is a ground, which could transform society and culture into a gender-balanced system (Robson et al, 1970). To them, women have capability of achieving equality with men, but such kind of change need alteration in structure of society (Roded, 2006).

Liberal feminists focus on various issues such as eradication of institutional bias and implementation of gender-balanced laws (Bell, 1984) and hold that women do not yet share same rights (Jagger, 1993). They strongly believe in individual rights and liberty and do not think women as an isolated creature of society (Buenaventura-Posso and Susan, 1977) and stress that, women's empowerment lies under legal and cultural barriers. Wollstonecraft (1792) was the first woman liberal western feminist who wrote a book A Vindication of the Rights of Woman with Structures on Political and Moral Subjects which addresses that women's capacity to reason is equal to that of men and that biological sex differences are irrelevant to granting of political rights (Butler, 1995). Women shall also have easy and equal access to law and law enforcement agencies, voting and property rights (Carolyn, 2004) where Claire (1974) reveals that male dominance and male oriented values create discrimination against women. Moreover, contemporary liberal feminists focus their concentration on issues as domestic violence, sexual harassment, dual workload on women, economic exploitation, and they want to protect women from such harms to ensure her well-being (Condorcet, 1790; (Collins, 1998).

The study of liberal philosophy and its implementation carries an elegant role in this research about Pakhtun society. The focus of liberal thinkers is upon women's capacity and an institutional set-up along-with changes in law and its implementation in(D D D D) C Year

gender-balanced way. The situational analysis of Liberal feminists resembles to that of the target area in this study where the institutional network and codes of life are patriarchic and role of traditionalism (Pakhtunwali) governs life of female. Such males drove institutions and male interpreted laws (both formal and traditional) tend to make women inferior and subordinated. The liberal philosophy provides a base of information and technique for bringing changes and implementation of rules within society which can make women as equal citizens to male counterparts where such approach is very much productive in Pakhtun society.

5 VI. Methodology

A community-based, study was conducted in Ramora village Tehsil Adenzai District Dir Lower Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Pakistan. The population of village Ramora is 19456 with the residence of 8345 families, the average family size being 6.3 (District Survey Report, 2011). A total of 150 samples were purposively selected and interviewed through semi-structure interview schedule. The collected information is statistically analyzed with the application of chi-square test alongwith Gamma, lambda and correlation methods for proportion and binary logistic regression. The responses of the respondents were recorded on two point scale that to some extent and to greater extent abbreviated as TSE and TGE. However pictorial representation has also been made in order to simplify the data for understanding.

6   VII. Results and Discussion

The collected information is analyzed in the form of descriptive and inferential statistics. In descriptive statistic; the data is presented in simple frequency and percentage while chi-square test and correlation are implied with the help SPSS in inferential statistics. Odds ratios (OR) with a 95% confidence interval (CI) level were used in the bivariate and multivariate analyses to estimate associations between cultural constraints and women's political empowerment. Statistically significant variables in the bivariate analyses were entered into the multivariate model, one at a time for test.

7   a) Cultural Impediments and Women's Political Empowerment

Culture is one of the influential and effective ways of molding human's behavior, attitude and the pattern of interaction that is prevalent throughout the globe (Kendall, 2008). In this context, the research area is predominantly occupied by the strong hold of patriarchy and male dominancy; ideologically, women have been given domestic spheres to reside in, which further influences women's status in regard of political empowerment. The statistical interpretation and discussion elaborates that the area is guided by strict customary laws in which there is little or in fact no space available for women's politics. In addition, the quantitative analysis demonstrates that Purdah is institutionalized and it is considered as an honor and dignity for women and mostly family honor is linked to female sexual behaviors, which resultantly restricts their mobility and affects women's political participation and emancipation. Furthermore the strong hold of feudalism, conservatism and religious misperception demote women's rights particularly in political scenario (see table-1 and Fig- **??**). ; $p<.01$. $r 2$ $=0.86$) (Since 86% of the variance is shared, the association is obviously a strong one)

The correlation further validates the result in manner that Correlation is highly significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed), $r (150) =0.925$ ** ; $p<.01$. $r 2 =0.86$); since 86% of the variance is shared, the association is obviously a strong one. It has been concluded that there is positive correlation between independent variable i.e. cultural impediments and dependent variable women's political empowerment.

8   b) Pakhtun Codes and Women's Political

Empowerment Pakhtunwali revolves primarily around generosity, hospitality, courage, obligation to take revenge, and to other warrior virtues. There is no written and defined record to Pakhtun code of life, however, they are in regular practice and are treated as normal routine activities (Lindholm, 1996;Spain, 1990 andNaz, 2011). The quantitative discussion explicate Pakhtun code as the hindering factors in women's political empowerment that include the local maxims, myths, proverbs, folklores and folkways such as Nang, Haya, Ghairat and Namus directly affect women status and decreases their political participation as Pakhtun are very sensitive about the chastity and modesty of women honor. The discussion further expounds that gender biased social structure and women's involvement in domestic activities decrease their status in regard of their political empowerment (see table-2 and Fig- **??**). In addition, the correlation further authorize the result like (** Correlation is highly significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed), $r (150) =0.946$ ** ; $p<.01$. $r 2 =0.89$); since 89% of the variance is shared, the association is obviously a strong one), which shows that there is positive and simple correlation between the dependent and independent variable.

9   VIII. Conclusion

Women; being half of the overall population (as discussed in introduction) have been generally ignored in most of the familial, communal and public spheres of empowerment.

The secondary information in collaboration with the empirical analyses reflects that women are dis-privileged in public and domestic life, professional engagements, which consequentially influence their overall empowerment. The social organization of the area and communal relations explicitly reflect the patriarchic hold and male dominance, centuries old customs, traditions, norms and values, which barricade women's political empowerment to a greater extent. The study thus concludes that the feudalistic nature of the area as well as the negative perception and over-strict practice of Purdah have key role to block women from attaining political empowerment where males have the overall control of decision-making regarding women's fate.

In addition, the study reveals that the traditional pattern of thinking guides the communal relations and more specifically the formal relations that are regarded as political empowerment. Similarly, the gender-biased social structure and women involvement in domestic chores restrict women to the four walls of their home and affect women's status in regard of their political empowerment. In the nutshell, the over all discussion in collaboration with the experiential and literary facts; the study reaches to the result that most of the women are subject to vulnerability having pathetic life standard through deprivation from political involvement and then empowerment.

10   IX. Recommendations

However, without changing socio-cultural, political and economic structural barriers at the national and international levels, the goal of gender equality or women's equal participation in politics and development will remain impossible to attain.

Area of the study is patriarchic and male oriented values prevail dominantly with centuries old traditions are the main socialization agents. In this regard, it is compulsory to provide gender equal socialization; equal facilitation and access to mass media for reduction of conservative thinking and improvement of gender balanced political environment.

Human capacities are dependent on the availability of resources such as education, health and employment that build capabilities and enlarge human choices. Access to education, health and employment is directly linked with women's ability to create space for themselves in politics and development. Women's consciousness of their political rights is another critical element for women's individual and collective agency. Political consciousness through building transformative communities is the sustainable way to transform women politics and development.

A strong women's movement and civil society is another condition of enabling environment that can influence the direction of politics and development in favor of women. Equal opportunities of politics should be provided both to male and female that will erase the concept of male dominance.

The number of female parliamentarians and counselors should be increased as there is lack of female representatives while funds' allocation for women's political emancipation should be ensured. [1] [2] [3] [4]

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Cultural Impediments	Political Empowerment	
	To Some Extent	To Greater Extent
Male dominancy affect women's political empowerment	02 (06%)	31 (94%)
Strict customs and tradition affect women's political empowerment	03 (11%)	25 (89%)
Purdah decreases women political empowerment	01 (03%)	30 (97%)
Feudalism influence women political participation	04 (20%)	16 (80%)
Conservatism decreases women political involvement	02 (11%)	16 (89%)
Religious misperception affect women political participation	03 (15%)	17 (85%)
Total	15 (10%)	135 (90%)
Chi-square = 2.456	Significance = 0.000 **	Lambda = 0.12 Gamma = 0.025

(P=.000 ** < .05 there is highly significance relationship between patriarchy and women's political empower = 2.456, D.f=6)

*[Note: C**]*

Figure 1: Table 1 :

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Pakhtun codes	Political Empowerment		Total
	To Some Extent	To Greater Extent	
Nang affect women's political empowerment	02 (07%)	28 (93%)	30 (100%)
Haya influence women's political empowerment	03 (12%)	22 (88%)	25 (100%)
Ghairat decreases women political empowerment	03 (09%)	30 (91%)	33 (100%)
Domestic chores influence women political participation	02 (06%)	30 (94%)	32 (100%)
Namus decreases women political involvement	03 (19%)	13 (81%)	16 (100%)
Gender bias structure affect women political participation	04 (29%)	10 (71%)	14 (100%)
Total Chi-square = 1.256 Significance = 0.000	**17 (13%) Lambda = 0.08	133 (87%)	Gamma = 0.017

*[Note: CYear(P=.000 ** < .05 there is highly significance relationship between Pakhtun codes and women's political empowerment ($?2 = 1.256$, D.f=6)]*

Figure 2: Table 2 :

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