

ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTION

Exploring Substantive Representation Role of Lady Councilors in Local Governance of South Punjab

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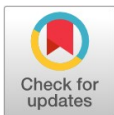
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Abstract— This study analyzes women's substantive representation in local governance of South Punjab, Pakistan. Substantive representation is believed to empower women against structural context. However, gendered representation in local governance has implications for women's political participation and empowerment. The first objective was to see women's substantive representation against the backdrop of structural settings of local governance in South Punjab, Pakistan. The second objective was to analyze women's political experiences with regard to their substantive representation in local governance. Qualitative approach was used to analyze social and political obstacles confronting women lay councilors with regard to their substantive representation in local governance. In-depth interviews were conducted from 15 lady councilors of Multan District situated in South Punjab, Pakistan. Interview guide was used as a tool for data collection. Thematic discourse analysis was carried out to analyze political experiences. Women substantive representation is undistinguishable in local governance system of Punjab, Pakistan. Local political structures increased resources of women's right awareness, promoting women's interaction social platform in the form of social women based political lobbying, and coordination among lady councilors for promoting their social and political rights. Their substantive representation also increases the chances of opportunities for empowering themselves socially, politically, academically and economically.

Index Terms— Local politics, Women's political participation, Empowerment, Lady councilor, Local political structure

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Introduction

The gender gap exists in political participation globally (Adnan, 2022). The political rights of women are vitally influenced by their representation in local bodies (Latif, 2020). In women's political representation, there are three major groups: formal representation, descriptive representation, and substantive representation (Paxton, 2006). Substantive women's political representation is the most discussed concept, in which women play their roles clearly and in responsive mode with their political attentiveness (Koyuncu, 2016). While the other groups are based on differences in color, creed, gender, and culture. With the increase in women's proportion in politics, they can encourage themselves to play a vital role in devising policies and strategies for women's empowerment in politics (Arnesen, 2019) women's unproductive political roles in different countries, but for an underdeveloped country like Pakistan, these numbers are very small. However, initial steps are being taken in Pakistan to empower women in local bodies (Gine, 2011). Women's survival in politics

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is very troublesome. The acceptance of the patriarchal social system and lack of political exposure make women lag behind in politics (Saeed, 2019). The lesser proportion of women in politics is due to men's contribution to contesting elections and taking positions in local bodies (Chhibber, 2002). In spite of progressing and modernizing the society, women still are facing gendered based social issues (Adnan, 2022). Women's political participation is a robust obligation for sexual characteristic inequality and real democracy. It empowers women to directly participate in public decision-making and guarantees better accountability for performing political acts (Latif, 2020; Waheed, & Leišytė, 2021). It is very important to quantify the mechanisms of empowerment in order to impact elections or communal strategy. Political procedures should be linked to power mechanisms and decision-making abilities in order to improve their substance in political institutions (Saeed, 2019).

Purpose of the study

This study will provide a new clear dimension and a foundation for policy makers to update the process and policies of local governance. The study attempts to deal with the vulnerable points by educating female councilors to get their rights and utilizing current finance to facilitate the common women of the area. It highlights the inequality (Patriarchy) and biased decision-making about the grant of tickets to female candidates. It shares the practical reports of the female councilors in order to be useful in making plans for the future to avoid queries.

Research objectives

The objectives of the research were;

- i. To explore the substantive role of local politics (internal political party hierarchy) in women's local political participation.
- ii. To find out socio-economic, cultural and political impediments influence women's local political participation and their empowerment in Multan District at tehsils level in Multan District.

Research question

The research questions for the current research are as

- i. Whether or not Women's substantive political representation is associated with their empowerment?
- ii. What is the role of local political dynamics in women's political participation and empowerment?

Literature Review

According to Anjum (2001), under the New Local Government System (2001), 33% of women were given representation quotas in the Local Government Elections in Pakistan. As Zia (2010) stated, carrying a dream and characterized the objectives of the "National Policy for Development and Empowerment of Women" in 2002. Moheyuddin (2005) stated in his article that the government of Pakistan amends the constitution and that 33% of seats in every rank of local government are reserved for women. In the National Assembly, out of 332 members, 60 seats are reserved for women, while 128 seats are reserved for women out of 728 seats in the provincial assemblies. Moreover, in the senate, 17 seats are occupied by women out of 100. For the protection of women, several laws were ratified, namely: the Protection and Empowerment of Women Bill (2004), the Pakistan Penal Code (Criminal Law Act 2009), the Acid Violence Act (2010), and the Protection against Harassment of Women in the Workplace (2010). During 2004-05, the government of Pakistan endorsed Gender Reform Action Plans (GRAPs) that recommended the mediation sector; for example, women's work in the public area, strategies and monetary changes, women's political participation, institutional rebuilding, and support activities to establish an empowering climate. The National Commission on the Status of Women was created under the National Commission on the Status of Women Act 2012 by the Punjab Local Government Department (2018). This commission's main task is to assess the policies and plans devised by the Federal Government for women's empowerment. It mainly assesses all federal orders, rules, and regulations that are against women's interests.

Politics, according to Latif (2020), is a social science that regulates the distribution of power and authority to manage social order and control affairs at the local and national levels. Saeed (2019) mentions in his article that the main component of women's empowerment is women's involvement in politics. This also helps to solve women's concerns at a social level and empowers them. The distinctive ideological-based categorization of men and women is an international topic. These concepts, along with disrespecting women's self-respect, lower women's social rank. Women's peer groups, especially relatives like husbands, brothers, or other male fellows, are the controlling factors for women's out-of-door activities (Saeed, 2019). Women get entangled in their daily household activities. Lack of literacy plays a very important role in ignoring their political roles (Khan, 2009).

According to Vecchione (2009), males and older people have a much greater chance of becoming involved in political activities. However, it is not applied to young people. They mainly feel isolated from this system. They feel excluded. The main causes of these types

of responses are their immaturity and financial dependence. Often, political parties do not engage young people in their parties for representation. Koyurcu (2016) clarified the fact that due to a large number of active women participants in politics, they have an impact on the behavior of male fellows which play a central role in social change, creating new ways where the old power system still governs the social lives of people. Umer (2016) has proposed a study that will depict the movements of democratization. In this way, women's empowerment is put forward in the perspective of Pakistan by the sociopolitical marshaling of women at a basic level. It has made women realize the maxim "the personal is political" by providing women with the required space and understanding for the process of democratization in Pakistan. Even women's participation is not enough to resolve their social and political concerns (Ahebwa, 2009). Actually, they can consider themselves as the changing factor in local bodies (Zakar, 2018). Therefore, it is necessary to know to what extent women's substantive roles help in progressive projects, productive engagements, economic commitments in council affairs, priorities and responsibilities, social support of their family and relatives, and decision power in political affairs.

Research Methodology

This study implements the Mix (quantitative and qualitative) research approach to find out the women's substantive representation in politics and its impacts on achieving their empowerment's tasks in South Punjab, Pakistan. This study analyzed concrete experiences of lady councilors and was conducted in Multan District. From the local government Act 2013 Punjab, two seats reserved for women in union council. Universe/population of the present study comprised of all women who participated in local government election held in 2015 in Multan Division. Women elected on reserved seats selected as a research population, while purposive sampling used to target sample size. From tehsils of Multan, 15 in-depth interviews conducted to evaluate substantive role of lady councilors. Six pre-developed themes established; women's economic engagements in council matters, decision power at political party concerns matters, social support from peer groups for political engagements, political duties, and responsibilities, Education Attainment, and their contribution to community development projects. Interpretive approach is used for data descriptive thematic understanding. It advocates the rationale of social happening (Ormston, 2014). The interview guide used as a qualitative research tool consisted of structured open-ended questions allowing respondents to narrate their experiences. While structured questionnaires by using a Likert scale designed for descriptive statistics analysis. Ethical consideration (Data secrecy) through verbal consent from respondents assured for the conduction of academic purpose.

The researcher adopted a qualitative research design. The universe/population of the present study is comprised of all women who participated in the local government election held in 2015 in Multan Division. While purposive sampling was used to target sample size, women were elected to reserve seats as a research population. In Multan Municipal Corporation, 15 in-depth interviews were conducted to evaluate the substantive role of lady councilors. Six pre-developed themes are established; women's economic engagements in council matters, decision power at political party concerns, social support from peer groups for political engagements, political duties and responsibilities, education attainment, and their contribution to community development projects. The interview guide was used as a research tool and consisted of structured open-ended questions that allowed respondents to narrate their experiences. Data consideration (data secrecy) through respondents' verbal consent is assured for academic purposes. Quantitative findings were analyzed by descriptive statistics, which included frequency, percentage, and standard deviation.

Results and Discussion

Using a mixed research approach, major findings of qualitative evaluated through thematic analysis, while quantitative findings were analyzed by descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, and Standard Deviation. i. Qualitative Research Approach - Thematic Discussion on Qualitative Findings The emphasis of the analysis was to examine the developing refrains and recognize the life experiences of lady councilors. Six pre-developed themes were established for thematic analysis of qualitative collected data. The numerically presentation of findings also presented in Frequency and Percentage.

Theme No. 01 (Education attainment)

A small proportion of women in politics is critical for promoting women's social, economic, educational, and health issues. The perception of policy entrepreneurs is thoroughly correlated to a substantively represented political approach (Blomgren, 2010). The level of educational attainment of lady councilors correlated with their level of interest in political learning skills. The respondents were questioned, "To what extent does the level of education attainment influence the interest level of political learning skills?" One of the respondents replied, "My participation in the council's meeting is as challenging as my opinion on any agenda item is considered second or third on, and its written status is frequently pending for the next meeting schedule. Male fellows are regarded as uneducated and inexperienced for positions in political institutions. Mostly, workshops, meetings, and training are attended by male members. They mostly didn't even inform

us about their schedule. In fact, male councilors influenced the secretary of the local government council's views about lady councilors for avoiding female political, social, economic, health, and education issues".

Males and females have equal opportunities to become members of council committees. There is no restriction on any political participant's education and interest level. These committees are the monitoring local government committee, an ethics committee, local government development projects, and the public account committee (Local Government 2013, Punjab, Pakistan).

Theme No. 02 (Decision power at political party concerns matters)

Women can take the initiative for party power and political representation if the proportion of women in political parties increases during the election process. Women's attention influences the level of decision power in social and political events (Latif, 2020). The respondent questioned, "How do male councilors react to the decision-making power of female councilors in any party event?" The respondent replied, "Female opinion is not valuable in front of male members in any political event." Even female candidates visit door to door for the election campaigns of male members, as females have to stigmatize as political candidates to make election campaigns successful by advocating for lay women at their homes. They even pressurize females to make confirmation of every council family's vote for their party".

Theme No. 03 (Social support from peer group for political engagements)

Moral and social support from peers is very important for women's social mobility. Women's councilors are being held accountable for managing women's social and moral strength (Latif, 2020). Women councilors can easily organize and strengthen campaigns for lay women in their communities. They develop women-based social networks for highlighting women's social issues. The support of family, friends, and a strong social capital network is necessary to develop pressure on the government to eradicate women's social issues. The respondents were asked about the relationship between social support and empowerment, specifically, "to what extent social support from their peer group is required to empower themselves in politics?" "Yes!" was interpreted as the response. We intently arrange campaigns and meetings to enhance our social capital and take initiatives to access health and education resources. "

Theme No.04 (Political duties and responsibilities)

As a part of a political party, their participation influences party policies for their substantive representation and position of power in political events. The study respondents were asked, "Whether or not your political participation influences political party policies and events?" She replied, "In election campaigns, lady councilors play a vital role in limited financial resources and door-to-door election campaigns, but unfortunately, all political policies disrespect women's contribution."

The study respondents were asked about their political duties and responsibilities as a political component. One of them replied, "Women face hurdles from the first step of contesting party tickets, during election campaigns, and after being elected as a candidate for local government." Their male political members bind them to play their political role in society. A few women enjoy their political positions, but most of us fail to justify our duties and responsibilities at the political level

Theme No.05 (Women economic engagements in council matters)

In the Punjab Local Government Act 2013, local councils are legitimately enabled to develop their financial plans (PLGA, 2013). But the present condition of lady councilors was reversed in proportion as most women were not getting any economic support from councils or political parties. The study respondent asked for economic engagement in council matters. One of them replied, "Most women are not even financially supported in election campaigns." They utilize their personal economic resources for election campaigns and transportation for party concerns. Another respondent replied, "Women's political lobbying is very important to empower lady councilors as well as lay women." Despite this, access to economic resources and their use in resolving problems is the ultimate solution to empowering women at any social level. One of the respondents replied, "There has been no budget ratio proclaimed for women in local government till now." When we asked for women-based development projects from our male councilors, they mostly replied, "Women are a specific quota of society." The rest is more important than them. "

Theme No. 06 (Women's contribution in community developments projects)

Lady councilors have to assert themselves in political-based project committees to strengthen lay women's status. In this way, they could take initial steps to empower themselves socially and politically. The question asked by the study respondent was, "Are you satisfied with your present political position?" One respondent said, "Representation of women on substantive reserve seats is the superlative approach in local politics." Most of us are newcomers to politics and were elected as first-time candidates. In this way, we all have less awareness of

political understanding, which affects our role as lady councilors. Our male councilors often detect us. Mostly, we don't even know about present community development projects that are in process in our councils. Our opinions in meetings are mostly meaningless. Our questions about women's development-based projects are ignored. Male councilors rarely answered us in a rough way. They considered that women have less knowledge about politics than men.

Quantitative research approach-descriptive statistical findings

By quantitative research approach, the data collected by using 'Likert.' After conducting a response from the participants, the data entered and analyzed in SPSS Software. To predict the frequency and percentage of the education attainment, decision power in political party concerns/affairs, social support from peer group for political engagements, political duties, and responsibilities, women's economic engagements in councils matters, Women's contribution in community development projects of the respondents, descriptive analysis was applied.

Table I
Data analysis

Sr. No.	Variable	Category	Value	Frequency	Percentage
01	Education Attainment	Illiterate	02	02	13.3
		Middle	07	07	47.7
		Secondary	04	04	26.7
		High	01	01	6.7
		Others	01	01	6.7
02	Decision Power in political party concerns/Affairs	Very frequently	00	00	0
		Frequently	05	05	33.3
		Occasionally	03	03	20.0
		Rarely	03	03	20.0
		Never	04	04	26.7
03	Social support from peer group for political engagements	Very Frequently	01	01	6.7
		Frequently	08	08	53.3
		Occasionally	02	02	13.3
		Rarely	01	01	6.7
		Never	03	03	20.0
04	Political duties and responsibilities	Very Frequently	01	01	6.7
		Frequently	02	02	13.3
		Occasionally	07	07	46.7
		Rarely	03	03	20.0
		Never	02	02	13.3
05	Women economic engagements in council matters	Very Frequently	00	00	0
		Frequently	01	01	6.7
		Occasionally	02	02	13.3
		Rarely	09	09	60.0
		Never	03	03	20.0
06	Women's contribution in community development projects	Very Frequently	00	00	0
		Frequently	01	01	6.7
		Occasionally	03	03	6.7
		Rarely	10	10	20.0
		Never	01	01	66.7

Interpretation of data

The first variable, "Education Attainment," was evaluated by 5 categories in which most respondents are not highly qualified. The highest ratio of women passed middle class. It means that they have not much knowledge about politics. Thus other 5 variables measured by a Likert scale (Very Frequently, Frequently, Occasionally, rarely, and Never). The Second Variable, "Decision power in political party concerns/affairs," evaluated as mostly respondents frequently make decisions in political parties and have a right to take a decision and their decisions consider in political party in which they preferred to be part of it, or they linked politically). The third variable, "Social Support

from peer group for political engagement," was evaluated as most of the respondents answered 'Frequently' the peer group supports them for their political engagements. They found the people of peer groups supportive in performing their political activities. The moral support of peer groups is crucial to sustaining their political position. The fourth Variable "Political Duties and responsibilities," evaluated as mostly respondents are answered as they perform their political duties and responsibilities occasionally (not a regular basis). It means that they face hurdles in performing their duties and getting their political responsibilities. The fifth variable, "women economic engagements in political policies," evaluated by rarely answering to get any economic support. Women have less right to participate in economical engagements in council matters. It means that they have no power to manage the financial/economic matters of council. In the sixth variable, "women's contribution in community development projects," most respondents are agreed that women have less contribution in community development projects.

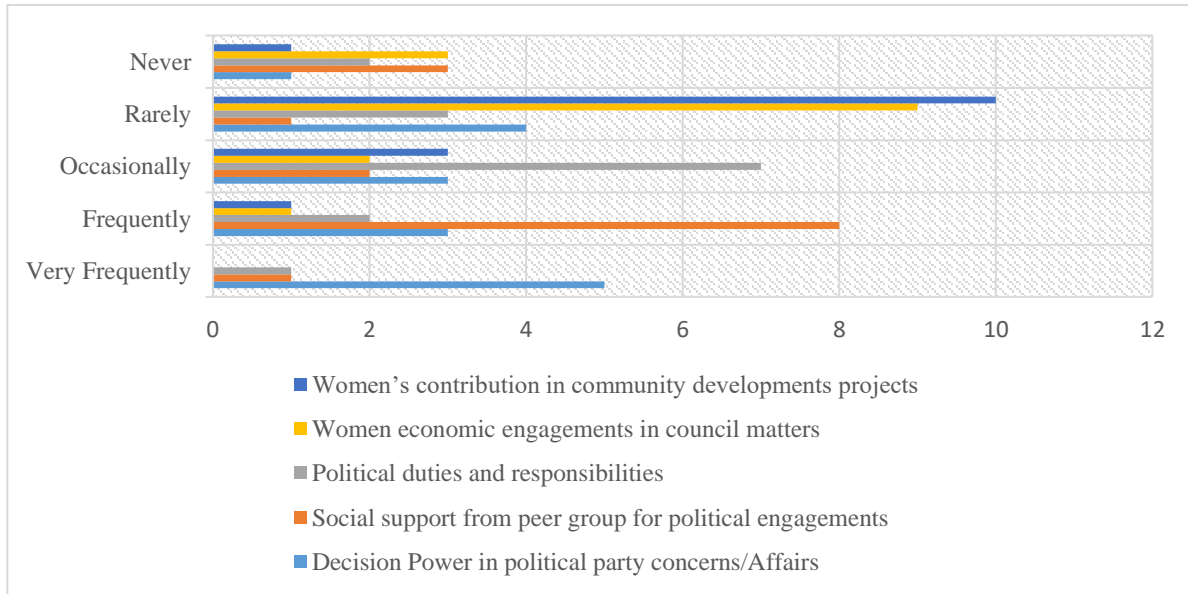


Fig. 1. Graphical representation of quantitative analysis

Conclusion

As a substantive representation, women face issues and challenges in politics. They have to manage impending opportunities to perform their duties. Lacking self-abilities and skills, women are incapable of participating in politics (Latif, 2020). The number of women's development political projects remains very low (Chhibber, 2002). Women can act as an element of change due to a lack of political understanding and political exposure. Still, women are neglected by their male councilors due to a lack of political understanding and political exposure (Shvedova, 2005). The study's major finding is that women are politically dependent on men. Their substantive role in politics is basically the contribution of men's struggle. By obeying the patriarchal system of society, women secure their social and political status. By merging themselves into politics, women can play a vibrant role in promoting their social issues at the local governance level. Newcomers to politics should train themselves and educate themselves about political understanding. Socio-cultural and economic impediments create issues for women in political participation. Male councilors' responses and behavior are so narrow about women's political experiences in local bodies (Gopalan, 2012; Jam, Rauf, Husnain, Bilal, Yasir, & Mashood, 2014). The patriarchal system promotes male dominance in politics and disrespects women in political campaigns. They considered women just for domestic tasks (Saeed, 2019). There is a need to take initiatives to promote women's political rights and strengthen their political status (Ocran, 2014). According to the current study, women's decision-making power in politics depends on male will; their education level is important for political empowerment, and political understating can promote women's political status in local bodies. The specific budget for women's social development projects can also endorse women's political-based strategies and policies. Bias against women running for political office in political parties is unavoidable (Anwar, & Khan, 2021; Zakar, 2018). This study also showed that women weren't encouraged to become part of any local governance-based committee. This means women have an equal legal right to participate in politics (Ocran, 2014).

The present study also explored that the moral support of peers plays a very important role in promoting women's political and social rights-based strategies. The current study concluded that the representation of women on reserved seats in the obtainable male-controlled administrative erection in politics generates substantial benefits for women by representing women's interests at the grass-roots in local government.

Recommendations

1. Lady councilors should take initiatives for their women's-based lobbying to enhance their social support.
2. Women activists should promote lady councilors' contribution to women's development projects from the councils' budget.
3. Lady councilors should be united at the district and divisional level to highlight their and lay women's issues to empower themselves and the common woman.
4. Every woman should have a female peer group who supports her socially, morally, politically, economically, and individually.
5. Civil society should take the initiative to promote women's rights through campaigns in print media and social media.

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