



Bridging the Gap: Understanding Challenges to Women's Role Elected on Reserved Seats in Local Government Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Latif Ullah ¹, Muhammad Asif ², Mansoor Ahmad ³, Majid Khan ⁴, Marjan Gul ⁵

¹ Lecturer, Department of Criminology, University of Malakand, Pakistan. Email: latifullahpo@gmail.com

² Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Sociology, School of Public Administration, Hohai University, Nanjing, China. Email: asif_soc53@yahoo.com

³ Lecturer, Department of Sociology, Government Post Graduate College Timergara, Pakistan. Email: mansoorsoc5@gmail.com

⁴ Lecturer, Department of Sociology, Government Post Graduate College Timergara, Pakistan. Email: majid.sociologist@gmail.com

⁵ M. Phil Scholar, Department of Pakistan Studies, Islamia College University, Peshawar, Pakistan. Email: marjanyousafzai5@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

Article History:

Received: April 30, 2024
Revised: June 28, 2024
Accepted: June 29, 2024
Available Online: June 30, 2024

Keywords:

Women Elected on Reserved Seats
Political Impediments
Political Role
Inadequate Political Skills
Political Achievements
Women Interest
Political Parties

Funding:

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

The study investigated the inadequate political skills of women elected on reserved seats, focusing on their failure to effectively represent women's issues in public forums. It examined political challenges that limit their roles and efforts, using a cross-sectional research design to assess the associations between political barriers and these women's political competencies. A sample of 231 respondents occupying reserved seats was selected through stratified random sampling. Data collection involved Likert scale-based interviews, and analysis was conducted using SPSS software, version 21, with a significance level set at 0.05. Key findings revealed that several political obstacles—such as discouragement from acquiring CNICs, difficulties in voter registration, threats from extremists, and unsuitable timing and venues of party meetings—adversely impacted women's political skills and representation. Women were often perceived as politically inexperienced, and political parties tended to prioritize male interests in decision-making processes. Economic barriers, including lack of asset ownership, inheritance rights, and access to business loans, further restricted their political participation and success. The study found a statistically significant association between women's inadequate political skills and their limited role in public forums, with their presence in local bodies being largely symbolic. To enhance women's political involvement, the study recommends addressing both practical and strategic gender needs, as well as implementing structural and policy changes within political parties to improve women's participation at local and national levels.

© 2024 The Authors, Published by iRASD. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial License

Corresponding Author's Email: mansoorsoc5@gmail.com

1. Introduction

Feminist theorists contend that menfolk are the predominant influencers of political actions and inactions (Ocran, 2014). They argue that menfolk consistently work to preserve the status quo, which has historically favored them. Conversely, women often encounter systemic challenges in competing with men for political power, education, and healthcare, largely attributable to their limited political engagement, inadequate familial backing, and constrained economic resources. Women participate in a political arena that has been established by men (Naz & Ahmad, 2012). Achieving political success in terms of advancing women's interests is unlikely unless the current male-dominated political structure is re-evaluated to empower women (Akhunzada, Khattak, & Ashraf, 2015). Women's ability to protect their interests depends on their capacity to challenge and replace the existing elite within the prevailing political system. Additionally, they must actively contribute to transforming existing socio-cultural and economic

values (Mofoluwawo, 2017). Women's political participation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is largely determined by their male members of the family (Naz & Ahmad, 2012). Women's exclusion from politics and their subordinate position in society is emphasized by feminist theorists, they characterized gender relations as matters of subordination and inequality, different roles are assigned to male and female in society (Blomgren & Rozenberg, 2015). Women are confined to domestic affairs while men enjoying power and prestige of society (Fleschenberg & Bari, 2015). The power, prestige and desirability of political office as factors determining the level of representation of women (Norris, 2009) since these characteristics are seen as male dominated where women strongly faced difficulties to compete with men (Lwanga & Vyas-Doorgaperesad, 2008). Women are to be considered empowered and developed when they have free choice to decide their private issues without the intervention of men. Women are faced with certain political obstacles when taking part in their political endeavors. The Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan (1973) encouraged women for their political events and circumvented every restriction imposed on them (Naz & Ahmad, 2012). However, literature on the issue observed that participation of women in politics is insignificant at national, provincial and local levels in Pakistan (Awan, 2023).

The patriarchal structure of politics left out women from politics; women opinions for their issues are less valued in political parties. Women's positions in their political party are only for fulfilling formalities of election rules (Awan, 2023). Being representatives, women faced with certain challenges in local bodies as they are dependent on men to take part in council business. Usually, Secretaries and Nazims of the council of local bodies are male who discourage women from taking part in policy reforms initiatives (Begum, Faiz, & Akhtar, 2022). Keeping in view women's poor socio-economic position, women need special funds but they are restricted by patriarchal structures (Jafree, 2023). Although, women are facilitated through numerical representation in local bodies, they have an opportunity to represent women issues at district, tehsil and local levels. It is evident that women being elected on reserved seats are faced with numerous obstacles, but their election to local bodies has a positive impact nonetheless (Huidobro & Falcó-Gimeno, 2023). Women's 33% reserved seats representation policy came into the existence due to the hesitation of women to participate in politics. However, women reserved seats representation and quota are criticized by feminists view point. They believe that, gender quotas and reserved seats may act as a short-cut towards the advancement of women (Aktar, 2021). Reserved seats representation policy has been a hindrance to women for contesting election on the direct seats. They believe that quota/reserved seats representation itself is a discriminatory initiative which strengths male supremacy in politics. There is the only space for women to participate in politics through reserved seats or quota. Feminists opposed this policy, as it makes women dependent on political parties whose structures, processes and agendas are generally patriarchal (Tezcür, 2020). The supporters of substantive representation strongly oppose the role of women in local bodies. They argue that women do not represent their interest being part of legislative bodies but secure party policies and discipline (Sata & Karolewski, 2022). This study is an attempt to analyze political restriction on women which caused to their inadequacy of political role and women interest representation in public forums.

1.1. Research Question

What are the challenges that confronted to women elected on reserved seats in performing their political role as representation of women in local government Khyber Pakhtunkhwa?

2. Literature Review

Theory of feminism concentrates on the issue of women under-representation in politics. As they believed that gender power order is present in every society which shapes structures and current power relations in a society (Guizardi, González, & Stefoni, 2022). They believed that women representation in politics through reserved seats or quota is not enough to achieve their desirable status in politics. According to them, women and their situation are central to political analysis. Its interest lies in questioning the fact that men appear to have more power and privileges than women and asking how it could be changed (Rudman & Glick, 2021). They characterized gender relations as matters of subordination and inequality, different roles are assigned to male and female in every society (Guizardi, González, & Stefoni, 2022). Women are confined to domestic affairs while men enjoying power and prestige of the society (Brulé, 2023). Feminists viewed women are not a homogenous group; their role regarding their issue representation in legislative bodies is suffered by their differences in class, ethnicity, generation,

race and religion. It was observed also by various studies that women representatives often protect party interest and policies. Simply it can be said that women instead of representing women issues secure the interest of their male colleague (Aiston & Fo, 2021).

Liberal feminism asserts that the equality of male and female can be attained when wide-ranging political and legal reforms were carried out in the current patriarchal political structure. Their prime focus is on women's ability, it was argued that women's capacity is undermined by the existing male centered social and political structures. Consequently, feminists target eradication of institutional biasness. Moreover, they struggle for ensuring implementation of gender-balanced laws and rights (Belova & Ivanova, 2022). It was stated by Zhang and Rios (2022), that liberal feminism basically accepts societal structures and societal organization, meanwhile they highlight some issues of women's lack of access to the public sphere too. Discriminatory behaviors of the society cause to avoid women from the fruits of the existing structures. They are deprived from their rights not just because of their incapability but discourage their equal opportunity like men of having access to public sphere. This situation is referred to men's strategy of maintaining their status quo. Liberal feminists in this regard hold an opinion of introducing and implementing structural reforms and policies interventions to limit the supremacy of male and upgrade female social and political capital (Belova & Ivanova, 2022).

Women shall also have an easy and equal access to law and law enforcement agencies, voting and property rights. Besides, liberal feminists stress on equality in job opportunities for both men and women. They are demanding for powerful position of women in both governmental and private sectors. The current study has been conducted in a traditional Pashtun society where the real picture of Pashtun code of life (Pakhtunwali) is deeply prevalent. Studies show that Pashtun code of life has narrow space for women's liberation and equal rights provision (Ahmad, Alam, Khan, & Ullah, 2023). The situational analysis of Liberal feminists resembles to that of the community under study where institutional network and codes of life are patriarchal 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, where the overall decisions are made by males including women's political affiliation and empowerment. In addition, women are deprived to contest election and cast the vote and protect their formal and legal rights. 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.

The problem of women underrepresentation is viewed by feminists under the two broader approaches those are; descriptive and substantive representation of women (Siow, 2023). The current study attempted to contribute theoretical understanding to women's substantive representations. As a result the study analysed women's political achievement in local bodies Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Substantive representation deals with women's operative political role. It was discussed earlier that reserved seats or quota representation were given to women for women interest promotion. Their interests would not be one's individual but would be common to all women. Women have to represent all those issues in the legislative bodies which might cause to their marginalization in society (Ullah & Ahmad, 2020). Keeping in views women's political achievements or their substantive role, it is crucial to analyze questions: what does make it difficult for women representatives to perform their effective political role in Local Government, and what may facilitate and support them to act as agent of change.

3. Materials and Methods

The dataset utilized in this research was derived from the primary author's Ph.D. thesis, conducted under the guidance of the Institute of Social and Cultural Studies (ISCS) at the University of the Punjab, Lahore. The study adopted a quantitative methodology, employing a cross-sectional research design to explore the correlation between political barriers and the deficient political competencies of women elected on reserved seats, which impedes their capacity to adequately advocate for women's interests in public forums. The design is capable of establishing a statistical association between data collected from study participants concerning political barriers and data regarding women's political achievements or their representation of interests in public forums. A total of 231 women holding reserved seats in the local government council of District Mardan were selected as respondents for this study. The current study adopts stratified random sampling technique for collecting information from women councilors of V/NCs

of district Mardan. All the elected representatives for V/NCs district Mardan (2934) are the target population taken by the current study, out of the total 2472 are men and 462 are women. Reserved seats women (462) for V/NCs of district Mardan are taken by study as study population. The target and study population are identified from the secondary data with the support of district local government department Mardan. District Mardan is divided into three strata as, Tehsil Mardan, Katlang and Takhtbhai. Reserved seats women as sample size (231) is then randomly selected from every tehsil.

The Likert scale method was utilized to facilitate data collection, comprising a series of statements that respondents selected to express their level of agreement or disagreement with evaluative questions. The Likert scale questions in this study were designed in alignment with the study's objectives and research questions. Given the quantitative nature of the research, a structured interview schedule was employed to gather information from respondents. All statistical analyses were conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21. A significance level of 0.05 was established for all statistical tests, with a P-value less than 0.05 indicating a significant association between variables (Liu & Xie, 2020). The statistical relationship in the bivariate analysis was assessed using confidence intervals, p-values, and odds ratios. An odds ratio (OR) is a measure of association between an exposure and an outcome. The OR represents the odds that an outcome will occur given a particular exposure, compared to the odds of the outcome occurring in the absence of that exposure. Odds ratios are most commonly used in case-control studies; however they can also be used in cross-sectional and cohort study designs as well (with some modifications and/or assumptions). While the confidence interval is the range of values that you expect your estimate to fall between a certain percentage of the time if you run your experiment again or re-sample the population in the same way.

In the bivariate analysis, cross-tabulation and binary logistic regression were employed to investigate the relationship between political impediments and women's inadequate political skills. Likert scale questions of SPSS data set as Q.26.8, Q.26.9, Q. 26.10, Q.26.11, Q.26.12 and Q. 26.21 are about women's political skills which is computed to single outcome variable and then recoded as RQ.28.3 of the data set, followed by 02 categories as, *never inadequate* and *always inadequate political skills*.

The list of political barriers extracted from the available literature on '*women political participation*' which, might be resisting women's political activities include; the intensity of the agreement or disagreement of the study respondents about discouragement to women for claiming CNIC & cast vote, voter registration, distant polling stations, and women generally don't cast vote due to threats by extremists are assessed by Likert scale questions which are tailed by strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree and strongly agree. Likert scale question collects information while asks respondents to pick an option from the given scale as; strongly disagree, disagree; neither agrees nor disagrees, agree and strongly agree to find the intensity of the agreement or disagreement about discouragement from political parties to take part in election campaigns, women can't carry out effective political campaign, and women generally don't hold powerful position in political parties. Women are believed politically inexperienced by political parties, women aren't preferred for tickets in general election, party meeting's timing and venue are generally not suitable to women political workers and political parties tend to secure male interest in party decisions are analyzed by Likert scale questions which are followed by strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree and strongly agree. All Likert scale questions related to women's political impairments were recoded into categorical variables with three categories: strongly disagree, neither agree nor disagree and strongly agree, to facilitate further analysis. Participants provided informed consent to partake in the study, having been briefed on its general objectives and assured of their right to withdraw at any stage of the interview. In line with ethical research standards, the study was structured to mitigate any risk of physical or psychological harm to participants. The researcher ensured the confidentiality of all collected data, and no personal identifiers, such as names, phone numbers, or addresses, were solicited during the data collection process.

4. Bivariate and Multi Variate Results of the Study Data

A bivariate association was established between political restrictions confronted to women elected on reserved seats with their inadequate political skills to represent women issues in the local government council. Cross tabulation and binary logistic regression testes were employed for statistical association of the dependent and independent variables of the study.

Table 1: Political Impediments Associated to Women’s Inadequate Political Skills to represent their Issues in Public Forums

Political impediments	Men believed that women councillors have inadequate political skills to resolve their issues in local council		OR, 95% C.I	P. Value
	Never inadequate	Always inadequate		
	Frequency, %	Frequency, %		
Women generally don't claim CNIC & cast vote				
Strongly disagree	24(64.9%)	28(14.4%)	1.00	
Neither agree nor disagree	9(24.3%)	34(17.5%)	3, (1.297-8.084)	.012
Strongly agree	4(10.8%)	132(68.0%)	28, (9.098-87.944)	.000
Women are discouraged for voter registration				
Strongly disagree	14(37.8%)	18(9.3%)	1.00	
Neither agree nor disagree	17(45.9%)	17(8.8%)	.7, (.295-2.051)	.611
Strongly agree	6(16.2%)	159(82.0%)	20, (7.046-60.294)	.000
Distant polling stations limits women to cast vote				
Strongly disagree	6(16.2%)	15(7.7%)	1.00	
Neither agree nor disagree	12(32.4%)	14(7.2%)	.4, (.138-1.582)	.221
Strongly agree	19(51.4%)	165(85.1%)	3, (1.204-10.018)	.021
Women generally don't cast vote due to threats by extremists				
Strongly disagree	20(54.1%)	30(15.5%)	1.00	
Neither agree nor disagree	7(18.9%)	39(20.1%)	3, (1.389-9.932)	.009
Strongly agree	10(27.0%)	125(64.4%)	8, (3.536-19.640)	.000
Political parties don't encourage women participation in election campaigns				
Strongly disagree	10(27.0%)	24(12.4%)	1.00	
Neither agree nor disagree	11(29.7%)	34(17.5%)	1.2, (.472-3.512)	.621
Strongly agree	16(43.2%)	136(70.1%)	3, (1.438-8.723)	.006
Women can't carry out effective political campaign				
Strongly disagree	10(27.0%)	99(51.0%)	2, (1.108-6.088)	.028
Neither agree nor disagree	11(29.7%)	34(17.5)	.8, (.338-1.944)	.638
Strongly agree	16(43.2%)	61(31.4%)	1.00	
Women generally don't hold powerful position in political parties				
Strongly disagree	13(35.1%)	16(8.2%)	1.00	
Neither agree nor disagree	9(24.3%)	21(10.8%)	1.8, (.650-5.528)	.241
Strongly agree	15(40.5%)	157(80.9%)	8, (3.446-20.988)	.000
Women are believed politically inexperienced by political parties				
Strongly disagree	15(40.5%)	16(8.2%)	1.00	
Neither agree nor disagree	8(21.6%)	19(9.8%)	2, (.752-6.593)	.148
Strongly agree	14(37.8%)	159(82.0%)	10, (4.366-25.966)	.000
Women aren't preferred for tickets in general election				
Strongly disagree	7(18.9%)	18(9.3%)	1.00	
Neither agree nor disagree	15(40.5%)	34(17.6%)	.8, (.304-2.553)	.816
Strongly agree	15(40.5%)	141(73.1%)	3, (1.315-10.163)	.013
Meeting's timing is generally not suitable to women political workers				
Strongly disagree	18(48.6%)	28(14.4%)	1.00	
Neither agree nor disagree	6(16.2%)	27(13.9%)	2, (.998-8.387)	.050
Strongly agree	13(35.1%)	139(71.6%)	6, (3.025-15.619)	.000
Meetings' venues are largely not suitable to women political workers				
Strongly disagree	17(45.9%)	16(8.2%)	1.00	
Neither agree nor disagree	12(32.4%)	26(13.4%)	2, (.876-6.051)	.091
Strongly agree	8(21.6%)	152(78.4%)	20, (7.534-54.094)	.000
Political parties tend to secure male interest in party decisions				
Strongly disagree	4(10.8%)	16(8.2%)	1.00	
Neither agree nor disagree	12(32.4%)	23(11.9%)	.4, (.131-1.757)	.267
Strongly agree	21(56.8%)	155(79.9%)	1.8, (.563-6.045)	.312

4.1. Impediments to the Political Role of Women Elected on Reserved Seats in Representation Women Interest in Local Government Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Out of the total sample of elected women representatives, 4(10.8%) representatives strongly agreed that their political skills are never inadequate for representing women issues in the council while, 132(68.0%) representatives' political skills are always inadequate for representing women interest in their respective VCs/NCs. The odds ratio for the likelihood of consistently inadequate political skills among women representatives who strongly agreed was 28 times higher than that of those who strongly disagreed. The variable indicating that women generally do not claim CNICs or cast votes was found to be highly significant in relation to the

outcome variable, where men believe that women's political skills are insufficient for representing women's interests. The confidence interval for this significant association is (9.098-87.944). After adjusting for sociocultural barriers—such as the role of procreation hindering women's participation in political activities, the lack of importance placed on women's political participation by tribal or clan leaders, the restrictive nature of the veil (purdah), and the preference against politically engaged women for marriage—it was found that the issue of women generally not claiming CNICs or casting votes remains statistically associated with inadequate political skills for addressing their issues in the local council. Their adjusted odd ratio is (adjusted OR, 95% CI. 6.75, (1.473-30.979)).

In the selected respondents, 6(16.2%) respondents strongly agreed that their political skills are never inadequate to resolve their issues while, 159(82.0%) women's political skills are always inadequate to represent their issues in village/neighborhood council. The odds ratio for women who strongly agreed that they consistently lack adequate political skills is 20 times higher than for those who strongly disagreed. The variable indicating that women are discouraged from voter registration is strongly associated with the outcome variable, as men perceive that women councilors lack the political skills necessary to address issues in the VC/NC. The confidence interval for this significant association is (7.046-60.294). After adjusting for sociocultural barriers—such as the hindrance of women's political participation due to procreation roles, the lower importance ascribed to women's political involvement by tribal/clan leaders, the restrictive influence of purdah, and the preference against politically active women in marriage—the discouragement of women from voter registration remains highly significant in relation to their inadequate political skills for addressing issues within the local council. Their adjusted odd ratio is (adjusted OR, 95% CI. 8.71, (2.037-37.272)). Within the entire sample of women chosen for reserved seats, 19(51.4%) women strongly agreed that their political skills are never while 165(85.1%) women strongly agreed that their political skills are always inadequate to represent their interest in local bodies. The odd ratio for always inadequate political skills of strongly agreed women is 03 times higher than strongly disagreed women. Distant polling stations limits women to cast vote is statistically associated to men believed that women have inadequate political skills for representing their interest in local council. Their confidence interval value is (1.204-10.018).

Out of the total sample of elected women representatives, 10(27.0%) representatives strongly agreed that their political skills are never inadequate for representing women issues in the council while, 125(64.4%) representatives' political skills are always inadequate for representing women interest in their respective VCs/NCs. The odds ratio for consistently inadequate political skills among women representatives who strongly agreed is 8 times higher than among those who strongly disagreed. The variable indicating that women generally do not vote due to threats from extremists is strongly associated with the outcome variable, wherein men believe that women's political skills are insufficient to represent women's interests. The confidence interval for this significant association is (3.536-19.640). Within the entire sample of women chosen for reserved seats, 16(43.2%) women strongly agreed that their political skills are never while 136(70.1%) women strongly agreed that their political skills are always inadequate to represent their interest in local bodies. The odd ratio for always inadequate political skills of strongly agreed women is 03 times higher than strongly disagreed women. Political parties don't encourage women participation in election campaigns is statistically associated to men believed that women have inadequate political skills for representing their interest in local council. Their confidence interval value is (1.438-8.723). In the selected respondents, 10(27.0%) respondents strongly disagreed that their political skills are never inadequate to resolve their issues while, 99(51.0%) women were strongly disagreed that their political skills are always inadequate to represent their issues in village/neighborhood council. The odd ratio for always inadequate political skills of strongly disagreed women is 02 times greater than strongly agreed women. Women can't carry out effective political campaign is significant to men believed that women councilors have inadequate political skills to resolve their issues in VC/NC.

The confidence interval for this association is (1.108-6.088). Among the total sample of elected women representatives, 15 (40.5%) strongly agreed that their political skills are never inadequate for addressing women's issues in the council, while 157 (80.9%) indicated that their political skills are always inadequate for representing women's interests in their respective VCs/NCs. The odds ratio for consistently inadequate political skills among those who strongly agreed is 8 times higher compared to those who strongly disagreed. The lack of women in powerful positions within political parties is strongly associated with the outcome variable, where

men perceive women's political skills as inadequate for representing women's interests. The confidence interval for this association is (3.446-20.988). Among the selected sample of women elected to reserved seats, 14 (37.8%) strongly agreed that their political skills are never inadequate, whereas 159 (82.0%) strongly agreed that their political skills are always inadequate for representing their interests in local bodies. The odd ratio for always inadequate political skills of strongly agreed women is 10 times higher than strongly disagreed women. Women are believed politically inexperienced by political parties is statistically associated to men believed that women have inadequate political skills for representing their interest in local council. Their confidence interval value is (4.366-25.966). In the selected respondents, 15(40.5%) respondents strongly agreed that their political skills are never inadequate to resolve their issues while, 141(73.1%) women were strongly agreed that their political skills are always inadequate to represent their issues in village/neighborhood council. The odd ratio for always inadequate political skills of strongly agreed women is 03 times greater than strongly disagreed women. Women aren't preferred for a ticket in general election is significant to men believed that women councilors have inadequate political skills to resolve their issues in VC/NC. The confidence interval value of their significance is (1.315-10.163). Out of the total sample of elected women representatives, 13(35.1%) representatives strongly agreed that their political skills are never inadequate for representing women issues in the council while, 139(71.6%) representatives' political skills are always inadequate for representing women interest in their respective VCs/NCs. The odd ratio for always inadequate political skill of strongly agreed women representatives is 06 times higher than strongly disagreed representatives. Meeting's timing is generally not suitable to women political workers is strongly significant to the outcome variable (men believed that women political skills are inadequate to represent women interest). The confidence interval value of their significance association is (3.025-15.619).

Among the total selected sample size of women elected on reserved seats, 8(21.6%) women strongly agreed that their political skills are never while 152(78.4%) women strongly agreed that their political skills are always inadequate to represent their interest in local bodies. The odd ratio for always inadequate political skills of strongly agreed women is 20 times higher than strongly disagreed women. Meetings' venues are largely not suitable to women political workers is statistically associated to men believed that women have inadequate political skills for representing their interest in local council. Their confidence interval value is (7.534-54.094). After accounting for the socio-cultural barriers model, which includes factors such as the role of procreation limiting women's participation in political activities, tribal or clan leaders undervaluing women's political involvement compared to men, the restrictions imposed by the practice of purdah, and the societal preference against politically active women in marriage, it was found that the unsuitability of meeting venues for female political workers significantly contributes to their inadequate political skills for addressing issues within the local council. Their adjusted odd ratio is (adjusted OR, 95% CI. 7.42, (1.724-31.970)). In the selected respondents, 21(56.8%) respondents strongly agreed that their political skills are never inadequate to resolve their issues while, 155(79.9%) women were strongly agreed that their political skills are always inadequate to represent their issues in village/neighborhood council. Political parties tend to secure male interest in party decisions is insignificant to men believed that women councilors have inadequate political skills to resolve their issues in VC/NC.

The present study has certain limitations which might influence the study results and findings as well as methodology. Since the major objective of the present study was to ascertain information about various domains of political participation and achievement of women councillors elected on reserved seats, quantitative approach with structured tool of data collection was used to attain information on underscored items of various domains on the subject. However, qualitative data is of high importance in providing deep insights into the phenomena and this is major limitation of the study that it lacked interpretive and contextual understanding of challenges and opportunities for women political participation in KP. Given the tribal culture, women in KP are generally reluctant to provide detailed information related to impediments to their political participation and empowerment. Therefore, the present study lacked qualitative data to supplement quantitative information. The data were attained on scheduled council meeting dates. The data of the study was limited to women elected on reserved seats for V/NCs of District Mardan. Women members of Tehsil Council, District Council as well as men members of all the three tier of LG were ignored in this regards due to limited time and resources.

Table 2: Multivariate Association of Impediments to Women with their Inadequate Political Skills for resolving Women Issues in local bodies

Impediments to women political activities	M 1 AOR, 95%, CI	M 2 AOR, 95%, CI	M3 AOR, 95 CI	M 4 AOR, 95% CI	M 5 AOR, 95% CI	M6 AOR, 95% CI
Role of procreation	15.86,	15.34,	16.79,	10.75,	10.51,	13.53,
Strongly agree	(3.980- 63.220)	(3.233- 72.836)	(3.529- 79.943)	(2.526- 45.810)	(2.481- 44.576)	(.648- 282.918)
Tribes/family discouraged W. politics	17.15,	23.06,	7.86,	21.61,	15.37,	31.23,
Strongly agree	(3.491- 84.318)	(3.747- 141.928)	(1.390- 44.530)	(3.592- 130.028)	(3.012- 78.476)	(1.889- 516.300)
Veil purdah restrictions	7.51,	7.92,	5.02,	5.03,	5.01,	4.09,
Strongly agree	(1.879- 30.043)	(1.674- 37.508)	(1.023- 24.640)	(1.223- 20.750)	(1.162- 21.611)	(.270- 62.270)
Women political workers not preferred for marriage	8.09,	5.09,	5.176,	5.19,	7.38,	2.601,
Strongly agree	(2.305- 28.437)	(1.303- 19.910)	(1.366- 19.608)	(1.400- 19.246)	(2.008- 27.133)	(.380- 17.816)
No claim of CNIC & cast vote		6.75,				.49, (.034- 7.088)
Strongly agree		(1.473- 30.979)				
Discouragement to voter registration			8.71,			5.04,
Strongly agree			(2.037- 37.272)			(.323- 78.793)
Unsuitable meetings' venues				7.42,		2.18,
Strongly agree				(1.724- 31.970)		(.177- 27.011)

5. Discussion

Women's presence in public sphere is the result of struggling initiated by liberal feminists. They support the view point of state intervention for accommodation of the marginalized group (women) of the society. They believe state intervention in this regards is an effective strategy to create an unprejudiced society. Early supporters of liberal feminists pursued to ensure right to vote and access to education on equal basis. However, the current agenda of the liberal feminists aim to protect women's equal political, social, and economic opportunities. The most prominent agenda point of the liberal feminists is its claim that women are socially oppressed. They argue that society is structured in a way that support men's view point and discourage women for their participation in public sphere (Epstein, 2023). Liberal feminists are not in favor of structural changes, they believe that individual woman cannot perform an effective role for addressing women issues; therefore, state intervention is prerequisite. As a result under the local government act, 2013 Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, women are equipped with reserved seat representation. However their reserved seat representation with respect to their political achievements is subjected to major criticism. Naz et al. (2012) found that Pashtunwali influenced women's behaviors as a result majority of women in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are lacking CNICs and resists for calming vote casting in elections. In this regards, the present study stated, that women no claim to CNICs & vote cast (adjusted OR, CI. 6.75, (1.473-30.979)), and women's discouragement for voter registration (8.71, (adjusted OR, CI. 2.037-37.272)) were significant to women's inadequate political skills to resolve their issues. Culture of KP supports the notion of, 'women are supposed to be led not to lead'. Pashtun society perceived women leadership as stigma; Khan, Shah, and Ullah (2019) declared that traditional attitudes towards gender equality influence women's advancement in political participation. In this regard the multivariate results of the present study stated, that meetings venue is not suitable to women (adjusted OR, CI. 7.42, (1.724-31.970)) were statistically associated to women's inadequate political skills to resolve their issues in local bodies.

6. Conclusion, Major Findings and Study Implications

The study found that overall women's numerical representation (02 seats reserved for every V/NCs) in local bodies Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was satisfactory but their role of influencing elected forums against the degradation of gender equality was too insubstantial. It was found that women's political achievement was mostly discouraged by patriarchal structure of Pakhtun society (Pukhtunwali). It was concluded by the study that women elected on reserved seats need sensitization about their political rights. Woman especially elected on reserved seats must be aware about the importance of their political role. They must realize the strength of unity and

cohesion for a common goal of representing women interests as their access to politics, education and health. The study concluded that women elected representative must strengthen their voice against the illegal utilization of their financial shares in local government. They need to update women political activists and women rights organizations about the discriminatory behaviors of their male counterpart with respect to the allocation of their financial resources for women uplift and incorporation of their development projects in council budget.

6.1. Findings

The patriarchal structure of both the family and political parties in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) hindered women's registration for CNICs and voter rolls, resulting in their inability to participate in elections. The distance of polling stations and threats from extremists further impeded women's political involvement. In KP, men dominate political parties, leading to the discouragement of women's participation in election campaigns, holding of influential party positions, and contesting elections. Political parties in KP perceived women as lacking experience, communication, and lobbying skills. Additionally, men's avoidance of women's participation in party meetings was due to the timing and locations of these meetings conflicting with women's domestic responsibilities. It was founded by the study that Women are not accepted as active member of the politics to involve them actively in political endeavors, elect them on powerful positions and gave them chance to contest an election as party candidate. Even their participation in party meetings is avoided by various tactics. Women views for their issues in local bodies are not supported by their male colleagues. Moreover, women are lacking lobbying, communication and leadership skills to defend their viewpoints in local council to resolve women issues at grass root level.

6.2. Study Implications

1. The relevant stakeholders of local bodies Khyber Pakhtunkhwa should deeply observe the track record of women participation in local bodies whether they act on behalf of women or working for protecting their personal interests.
2. Women's political rights activists should organize local awareness seminars to educate women about their roles before entering politics and the potential consequences of their exclusion from the political arena. These seminars should also aim to equip women with the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively fulfill their political responsibilities.
3. A media campaign should be launched to promote awareness of the legal measures implemented for the advancement of women. This campaign should emphasize the opportunities available to women and the significance of their inclusion in politics.
4. Given that women often experience insecurity and heightened vulnerability to violence and harassment, the government should enact and enforce effective legislation to protect women in both public and private spheres. In this context, local community-based committees should be established to promptly report incidents of violence and harassment against women to the appropriate authorities.

References

- Ahmad, I., Alam, A., Khan, N., & Ullah, R. (2023). Inequality Regimes, Patriarchal Connectivity, And Women's Right To Property Inheritance In Rural Pakistan. *Journal of Positive School Psychology*, 1251-1267.
- Aiston, S. J., & Fo, C. K. (2021). The silence/ing of academic women. *Gender and Education*, 33(2), 138-155. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2020.1716955>
- Akhunzada, Z. U., Khattak, M. K., & Ashraf, A. (2015). Socio-Cultural Barriers To Women Empowerment: A Case Study Of Women Working In Vocational Training Institutes Of District Kohat. *Pakistan Journal of Applied Social Sciences*, 2(1), 89-98. doi:<https://doi.org/10.46568/pjass.v2i1.286>
- Aktar, S. (2021). *Empowering Women in Bangladesh: Gender and the Politics of Reserved Seats* (1 ed.). London: Routledge India.
- Awan, S. Z. (2023). Women's political participation in the socio-cultural environment of Pakistan: A critical review of mainstream political parties (2018-2022). *Simulacra*, 6(2), 277-292. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.21107/sml.v6i2.22741>
- Begum, K., Faiz, M. A., & Akhtar, S. (2022). Analytical Study of the Governance and Politics of PML-Q 2002-2007. *Competitive Social Science Research Journal*, 3(2), 1-17.
- Belova, G., & Ivanova, A. (2022). EU Institutions: Revisiting Gender Balance and Women's Empowerment. *Laws*, 12(1), 3. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.3390/laws12010003>

- Blomgren, M., & Rozenberg, O. (2015). *Parliamentary roles in modern legislatures*: Routledge.
- Brulé, R. E. (2023). Women and Power in the Developing World. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 26(1), 33-54. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-062121-081831>
- Epstein, C. F. (2023). *Woman's Place: Options and Limits in Professional Careers* (1 ed.): University of California Press.
- Fleschenberg, A., & Bari, F. (2015). Unmaking Political Patriarchy Through Gender Quotas. *Heinrich Boll Stiftung Policy Brief*.
- Guizardi, M., González, H., & Stefoni, C. (2022). The Shoemaker and Her Barefooted Daughter: Power Relations and Gender Violence in University Contexts. *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, 43(1), 32-67. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/fro.2022.0001>
- Huidobro, A., & Falcó-Gimeno, A. (2023). Women Who Win but Do Not Rule: The Effect of Gender in the Formation of Governments. *The Journal of Politics*, 85(4), 1562-1568. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1086/724956>
- Jafree, S. R. (2023). Introduction: Protection and Patriarchy, Can They Co-exist? In *Social Policy for Women in Pakistan* (pp. 1-19). Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland.
- Khan, Y., Shah, M., & Ullah, A. (2019). ECONOMIC IMPEDIMENTS TO WOMEN POLITICAL STATUS IN DISTRICT DIR LOWER KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA, PAKISTAN. *Pakistan Journal of Society, Education and Language (PJSEL)*, 5(1), 102-116.
- Liu, Y., & Xie, J. (2020). Cauchy Combination Test: A Powerful Test With Analytic p -Value Calculation Under Arbitrary Dependency Structures. *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, 115(529), 393-402. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01621459.2018.1554485>
- Lwanga, M., & Vyas-Doorgaperesad, S. (2008). Analysing performance of services through restructuring of state owned enterprises in Uganda. *Journal of Public Administration*, 43(si-1), 181-196.
- Mofoluwawo, O. M. (2017). Diversification: A Panacea for Sustained Economic Recovery and Development. Available at SSRN 3008622. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3008622>
- Naz, A., & Ahmad, W. (2012). Socio-cultural impediments to women political empowerment in Pakhtun society. *Academic Research International*, 3(1), 163.
- Norris, P. (2009). Political Activism: New Challenges, New Opportunities. In C. Boix & S. C. Stokes (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics* (1 ed., pp. 628-650): Oxford University Press.
- Ocran, R. K. (2014). *Women's political participation: a comparative study on Ghana and Tanzania*. Itä-Suomen yliopisto,
- Rudman, L. A., & Glick, P. (2021). *The social psychology of gender: How power and intimacy shape gender relations*: Guilford Publications.
- Sata, R., & Karolewski, I. P. (2022). Caesarean politics in Hungary and Poland. In *The (Not So) Surprising Longevity of Identity Politics* (1 ed., pp. 60-79). London: Routledge.
- Siow, O. (2023). Needles in a haystack: an intersectional analysis of the descriptive, constitutive and substantive representation of minoritised women. *European Journal of Politics and Gender*, 6(3), 328-358. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1332/251510821X16739744241737>
- Tezcür, G. M. (2020). A Path out of Patriarchy? Political Agency and Social Identity of Women Fighters. *Perspectives on Politics*, 18(3), 722-739. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S1537592719000288>
- Ullah, L., & Ahmad, K. (2020). Women's Substantive Role in Local Government Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Challenges and Opportunities. *Pakistan Journal of Gender Studies*, 20(1), 73-88. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.46568/pjgs.v20i1.66>
- Zhang, Y., & Rios, K. (2022). Understanding Perceptions of Radical and Liberal Feminists: The Nuanced Roles of Warmth and Competence. *Sex Roles*, 86(3-4), 143-158. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11199-021-01257-y>