
ANALYSIS OF GENDER GAP IN POLITICS OF PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

The gender gap in politics is a universal phenomenon analyzed and discussed by scholars around the World. Though the gender gap in Western democracies is about to close but it still exists in all forms of participatory activities in developing countries including Pakistan. The issue of female under-representation has been governmental concern under certain international commitments but gender gap in participation has not been addressed properly either by government or scholars working in the field of gender and politics in Pakistan. The study contributes to the existing literature by identifying the main actor responsible for this stigma of low participation.

Keywords: Gender Gap, Representation, Participation, Gender Quota, Pakistan

INTRODUCTION

The participation of all citizens in political activities is not only significant for successful working of democratic process but it increases the legitimacy of political institutions and provides an active dimension of citizenship (Childs, 2004; Martiniello, 2005). The research shows that gender gap still exists in the field of politics despite global advancements in political representation and participation (Burns, 2007; Norris, 2002).

Participation in voting is measured through turnout. Female participation in this regard can be analyzed by two ways, number of registered female voters and voting turnout. Unfortunately, sex segregated data is not available in Pakistan despite the recent claim of Election Commission of Pakistan to provide gender based voting turnout so the study is based on utilization of two sets of data. The first is Electoral Roll collected by Election Commission of Pakistan and second set is the voting turnout based on the data collected by Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN) as no sex segregated official data is available in Pakistan by Election Commission.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Many studies identified gender gap in US politics in terms of participation and found women less participatory as compare to men (Burrell, 2004; Baxter & Lansing, 1983; Verba, Nie, & Jae-on, 1978; Manza & Brooks, 1998). The scholars working on European politics found same kind of patterns in Western European countries (Childs, 2004). Though the participation gap in Western World is about to close (Burns, 2007; Norris, 2002) but it's been identified that this gap still exists in all forms of participatory activities like voting, communal activities in developing countries (Isaksson, 2014).

The modes of participation are many and list keeps getting longer (Deth, 2014; D.Ruedin, 2007)] etc. (Deth, 2014; Rokkan, 1960; Verba, Nie, & Jae-on, 1978). As it has been discussed before that modes of participation are many but this study focuses on the basic mode of participation called 'voting'. Voting is a formal act of participation though primary or basic, and requires minimum political commitment and presents passive or lowest level of political activism. Lester Millbrath, describes three levels of political activism; Spectator, Transitional and Gladiator. According to his typology, the Spectator activities are the lowest level of political activism including voting, wearing badges, putting sticker on one's car. Transitional level means participating in political campaigns, attending rallies or meetings. The highest level of political activism is gladiator activities which is working actively in a political party or running for party or public elections (Milbrath, 1965). Stein Rokkan distinguished five levels of political participation of which voting are the least intense (Rokkan, 1960). The studies show that gender gap in voting is due to cultural and social stigma (Gine & Mansuri, 2011) but the proposition of this study is that it is mainly because of institutional factors and fewer efforts have been made so far in Pakistan to bridge this gap as far as participation is considered.

PARTICIPATION IN PAKISTAN

The significance of women's presence and participation in politics cannot be denied. Equal participation of citizens either men or women in decision making process of the country is a prerequisite for democracy (Franklin, 1996) and it is argued that absence of women participation in political process is a key obstacle to democratic stability in the country (Women, 1997). Pakistan is a country which

stands very high on Gender Disparity Index (GDI) [According to World Economic Forum Pakistan was at 144th position out of 145 countries in 2015 (WEF, Global Gender Gap Report 2015, 2015)] and political under representation and participation is one of the key factors. Pakistan at present provides 17.5 percent reserved seats quota to ensure women representation in legislative bodies at national and sub-national level. This quota provision was adopted by Musharraf government in 2001. The quota at local bodies' level has been reduced from 33 percent and now varies from province to province after 18th amendment in the Constitution. First time reserved seats policy was adopted in Pakistan under Interim Constitution and three percent seats were reserved for women. The same practice was adopted in the first Constitution of Pakistan promulgated in 1956 though the demand was raised by women circles to reserve at least ten percent seats (Afzaal, 1999). This policy could not be implemented effectively as no general elections were held in Pakistan under this constitution till 1958, the imposition of first Martial Law. The second Constitution of 1962 did not provide women quota despite all hue and cry of the political parties and women activists. In 1973 Constitution ten seats were reserved for women for the period of ten years and after the expiry of that provision Pakistan held three elections without the women quota till the reservation of seventeen percent of seats in 2001 [Zia-ul-Haq reserved 20 seats for women in Majlis-e-Shura]. The reserved seats are meant to ensure women representation in legislative bodies where number of directly elected women is very low. The number of directly elected women in National Assembly, lower house of the Parliament is almost nil. The highest number of directly elected women was 17 in the National Assembly 2008-2013. This number has never been in double figure before the election of 2002 when first time 13 women were elected. But despite of that the goal of gender parity in politics as envisaged by international agreements is not achieved. Women comprise around 49 percent [According to World Bank 2013 statistics, women are 48.6 percent of the total population in Pakistan (Bank, 2014)] of the population of Pakistan but that number does not correspond with their share in politics. The government is responsible to minimize the gender gap under international commitments but still a lot more is required to bridge the gap in the field of representation.

The gender gap in participatory activities is even worse than that. As it has been described earlier that modes of participation are many but study only focuses voting as mode of participation. Gender gap in voting is analyzed in term of total registered voters and voting turn out. Statistics show that despite an increase seen in electoral roll during the last two elections of 2008 and 2013, gender gap still exists between male and female registered voters in Pakistan and the situation is not even in all provinces/regions as number of registered voters in Balochistan and Sind has been recorded less in election 2013 as compare to election 2008.

TABLE-1
NUMBER OF REGISTERED VOTERS IN ELECTION 2013& 2008

Area	2013			2008		
	Total Voters	Male	Female	Total Voters	Male	Female
Balochistan	3,336,659	57.40	42.60	4,363,610	54.06	45.94
FATA	1,738,313	65.70	34.29	1,410,326	69.91	30.09
Federal Area	625,964	53.98	46.01	482,801	54.20	45.80
KPK	12,266,157	57.14	42.86	10,661,212	59.31	40.68
Punjab	49,259,334	56.22	43.77	44,486,626	55.03	44.97
Sind	18,963,375	55.32	44.68	19,506,473	55.85	44.15
Total	86,189,802	56.38	43.62	80,911,048	55.99	44.01

Source: (ECP, 2013; ECP, 2008)

The table above reveals the gender gap in registered voters in election 2008 and 2013 but the situation before 2008 was even worst. The electoral rolls were updated [Election Commission of Pakistan announced to formulate new computerized electoral rolls based on NADRA Database and only CNIC holders were eligible to get registered. But political parties were not in favor of this new formula and PPPP took the case to the Supreme Court which ordered to revert the decision and to update the old electoral lists (Researchers, 2008)] before election 2008 and around 8 million new voters were registered. Though a slight increase has been seen in number of female registered voters in election 2013 across the country as compare to previous elections [In 2007 number of registered women was only 43 percent and male were 51 percent (Pakistan, 2010)] but decrease in women voters was also witnessed in around 171 constituencies mainly in rural areas of Punjab. 124 constituencies were located in Punjab, 22 in Sindh, 13 in Balochistan and 7 in KPK. Certain constituencies witness increase

in female voters out of which the highest number was in Sindh province with 37 constituencies followed by 28 in KPK, 22 Punjab, 5 Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), 2 in ICT and one in Balochistan (FAFEN b., 2013; Usman, 2013). In the election of 2002, the women were 33.2 million (46.1%) out of 71.9 million total registered voters while male voters were 38.8 million (53.9%) thus making the difference of 7.6% less as registered voters (FAFEN(d), 2008). Government has not been successful to ensure registration of all women particularly in FATA despite its claims to achieve the goal of gender parity.

Gender gap in voting is measured by voting turnout but so far there is no official method in Pakistan to count gender based voting turn out. Election Commission of Pakistan, despite its pre-election announcement could not be able to declare sex segregated voting turnout [Form xiv were provided by ECP to presiding officers to prepare sex segregated voting turn out but it was reported by many sources that data was not entered by presiding officers in the final result sheet (Tribune, 2013)] (FAFEN, 2013). The reports from different nonprofit organizations depict that women cast less vote as compare to men in Pakistan. According to data prepared by Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN) during elections 2008 and 2013 voting turn out at female polling station was less than all male or combines polling stations. FAFEN prepared this gender based voting turnout data on the basis of polling stations. Election Commission establishes three types of polling stations, all male, all female and combines polling stations where both men and women can cast vote. So total female turn out is not possible to determine at national level.

TABLE-2
COMPARISON OF SEX BASED PROVINCIAL TURNOUT

Region	Male		Combine		Women	
	2008	2013	2008	2013	2008	2013
Punjab	50.9	61.0	53.7	59.4	39.7	58.6
Sindh	50.6	58.6	47.2	54.4	47.3	55.0
KPK	45.9	54.7	38.7	43.1	23.3	44.5
Balochistan	-----	44.6	-----	41.2	-----	40.5
FATA	37.1	41.5	42.0	35.8	12.4	36.1
ICT	53.2	65.5	51.4	60.0	39.3	62.3

Source: (FAFEN(d), 2008; FAFEN b. , 2013).

The table above reveals that turnout at all female polling stations is less than all male or combines polling stations. Though an increase in voting turnout at all women polling stations is witnessed in the national election 2013 as compare to 2008 but still the difference remains especially in KPK and FATA. The total turnout was 55.2 percent in the election 2013, much higher than the past elections (ECP, 2013).

The low female turnout is not the only issue needs to be addressed but the real alarming situation is where women turnout remains zero due to agreements among group elders or contesting candidates. Many incidents were reported in election 2008 where women were barred to vote by written or verbal agreements mostly in KPK and Punjab. In KPK 478 female polling stations showed zero turnout followed by 31 polling stations [The percentage of pooling stations with zero turnout was 84.8 percent in KPK and 5.5 in Punjab] in Punjab. It was witnessed in Punjab during elections 2008 that women were barred to vote. It was reported that no woman voter showed up in 17 constituencies of Punjab. There were seven polling stations in NA-57 Attock-I where women turnout was zero while the number of registered women voters in these polling stations was 5,464. In NA-64 Sargodha I and NA-65 Sargodha II, there were seven polling stations where 7,768 registered women voters were present but the turnout remained zero. Women's turnout remained zero at polling station number 6 in NA-88 Jhang-III, while 772 women voters were registered there. At three polling stations in NA-71 Mianwali-I, where a total of 1,852 women voters were registered, but the turnout remained zero. In NA-61 Chakwal-II, polling station number 323, a total of 394 women voters were registered but none cast their vote. In NA-76 Faisalabad II, NA-78 Faisalabad IV, NA-80 Faisalabad VI and NA-81 Faisalabad VII there were five polling stations that had 3,935 registered female voters but the turnout remained zero. In NA-128 Lahore-XI at polling station number 209, there were 882 registered women voters but none cast their vote. In NA-171 DG Khan-I there were 718 registered women voters at polling station number 267 but the turnout remained zero. In NA-160 Sahiwal-I, NA-161 Sahiwal-II, NA-163 Sahiwal-IV, there were three polling stations with 1,755 registered women voters but the turnout remained zero. In NA-105 Gujrat-II there were 1,482 registered women voters at polling station number 226 but none cast their vote. In NA-117 Narowal-III there

were 920 registered women voters at polling station number 90 but the turnout remained zero. Total 25,942 women registered in those polling stations were barred from voting (Usman, 2013). Sindh witnessed zero turn out at twenty all women polling stations, Balochistan twenty, FATA twenty three and one polling station in Islamabad area. The percentage of female polling stations with zero turn out remained 2 in Sindh, 3.5 in Balochistan, 4.1 in FATA and 0.2 in Islamabad. The same trend was seen in election 2013 when 272 women polling stations in KPK showed zero turn-out. FAFEN claims that nine incidents were reported to bare women to cast their votes, five in Punjab, three in KPK and one incident from Balochistan (FAFEN(c), 2014).

Generally Patriarchal social structures are being held responsible for less women participation in country (GEM, 2013; ADB, 2000; Aurat, 2013; NCSW, 2010) and it is argued that women in remote or tribal region are dependent on their male family members to exercise their right to vote or are barred to cast their vote either by their male family members or some times by mutual agreement of the elders of their areas (Mumtaz, 2005; GEM, 2013) making the issue of female participation more crucial. But if the situation is analyzed in depth it is evident that governmental and political structures are equally responsible to keep the women out of political arena. An organization called Blue Veins claims that due to social taboos and poor organization to conduct elections women are barred to exercise their right to vote (DAWN, 2013). There are many constituencies where women were barred to vote in elections 2013 but unfortunately this did not happen first time. Election Commission was warned before election 2013 to make necessary arrangement to ensure women voting by human and women rights organizations. The Commission before election directed all political parties contesting elections to ensure the emancipation of women in election specially voting process [Clause 20 of ECP election rule states that women cannot be barred from voting] and also made it clear to not accept the results of any constituency if female turnout was less than 10 percent. But despite of that the violations regarding women participation were reported in the elections 2013 (Usman, 2013). Commission did not take any concrete action against these violations though it was authorized to declare the results of any constituency null and void if not satisfied (Usman, 2013). The issue of zero female

turn-out was raised in media after the elections in constituency PK95 of Lower Dir. According to media reports, the contesting candidates of Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarians (PPPP), Jamiet Ulema-e-Islam (Fazlur Rehman Group) (JUI [F]), Jamaat-i-Islami (JI), Awami National Party (ANP) and Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) (PML [N]) had agreement not to let the women to cast their votes (Nation, 2013), PK78 Buner and PK80 in Swat, PK93 of Upper Dir [Agreement was reported to be signed among Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf (PTI), JI, PML (N), ANP and PPPP (DAWN, 2013)] in KPK and Paikhel, Mianwali in Punjab due to written or verbal agreements among the contesting candidates of different political parties (Nation, 2013). Only female vote was cast out of 138,910 registered female voters in NA 32 Upper Dir of KPK province. Similarly 11 polling stations showed zero result in NA 28 Buner of KPK and in other female polling stations of the same constituency only 17655 women voters cast their votes out of 164,821 registered women votes (DAWN, More Agreements Surface Barring Women from Voting, 2013). But despite of all hue and cries by media and women right group, the Election Commission ordered re-polling at only two polling stations (GEM, 2013). The women turnout at these polling stations remained zero in re-polls. Even after the general election 2013 [Even after realizing this fact ECP, decided to establish a gender affairs wing to educate women about the importance of their vote after election 2013 (Dawn, 2013)], an incident happened in Lower Dir area of KPK where women were barred to vote in the constituency PK 95 during a by-election on 7 May, 2015 where not a single woman cast her vote at 85 polling stations (Dawn, 2013). But this time the agreement was verbal not the written one to avoid legal complications. The 'Returning Officer' of that Constituency accepted the result and declared Aziz-ul-Mulk of Jamat-e-Islami a winner. This issue was highlighted and suo moto action was taken by Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) who ordered to hold an enquiry to investigate the issue. A fact-finding mission conducted by Aurat Foundation claims that verbal agreement [Shabeena Ayyaz, the resident director of the Aurat Foundation in Peshawar claims that many women whom she interviewed told her that they wanted to cast the vote but there were baton laden men on the streets who forced them to return to their houses (Ayyaz, 2015)] was mutually decided by contesting candidates at the Deputy Commissioner Office (DCO's)

in Lower Dir between Mr.Afkari and Haji Bahadur Khan in the presence of a district returning officer. In Paikhel tehsil of Mianwali, Punjab, women had not exercised their right to vote since 1950s because of an agreement among local elders of the area and no attention has ever been paid either by the government or the Election Commission to observe women voting (FAFEN, 2015; Uelect, 2012). Election Commission is not the only one responsible of low female participation in electoral process but the government is equally responsible of gender disparity in the field of political participation. For example, the Election Commission sent a proposal to Ministry of Law which was forwarded to Parliament in September 2012 to declare election null and void if the female turnout remains less than 10 percent to prevent the social and political groups to bare women voting but bill was not passed by the National Assembly (GEM, 2013). It is responsibility of the government to ensure women participation and take certain affirmative actions to bridge the gender gap in politics under national Constitution and international agreements signed by the government. The Constitution of Pakistan ensures gender equality and its government's responsibility to implement the provisions of the Constitution. International agreements like CEDAW also makes governments responsible to take such actions against customs and practices which discriminate against women (Article-2, Clause-F).

CONCLUSION

The discussion above clearly reveals that gender gap exists in the field of politics in Pakistan. Women are not only less represented but their participation in voting is either discouraged or barred in certain parts of the country. Unfortunately the issue of low or zero female turnouts has never been addressed seriously. It is violation of the Constitution of Pakistan to pressurize someone not to exercise his or her fundamental right. The patriarchal or social structures cannot be held responsible of this marginalization because it is the governmental responsibility to ensure women participation and representation in politics. The government of Pakistan is required to adopt certain laws to ensure women participation in electoral politics and create an environment where all women can be able to exercise their right to vote according to their will and wishes.

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