



## ROLE OF WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS IN BRINGING SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CHANGES AND INFLUENCING THE LEGISLATION IN PAKISTAN

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### ABSTRACT

*The role of women in Pakistan has remained a debatable topic. The history is full of struggles that women did and their successes they achieved. The main purpose of this study is to investigate how women parliamentarian play their role in changing the dimensions of politics, upbringing social changes and influencing the legislation of Pakistan for encouraging women to come up and play their parts and make Pakistan a balanced society for all genders to live. The study has used general entries and documents for the study due to volatile nature of the topic and lacks in approach to women parliamentarians. It is found that women parliamentarian in Pakistan have an alarming and prominent influence in active politics and will of the women to join them. Moreover, the reserved quota has encouraged women to come forward and play their part in society making, politics and legislation. It is found that women are active and productive in any decision making, social buildings and political issues of Pakistan. They not only encourage women to actively participate in affairs of the country but also welcome every gender to work side by side with them.*

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**Keywords:** Women, Woman empowerment, Social change, Politics, Legislation

### INTRODUCTION

**Background of the Study:** Without women the equal shape of any society cannot be created and a society cannot develop or grow (Ganle et.al., 2015). God has created women equal to men in all aspects. The ignorant and less privileged behavior of men towards women stems from human attitudes and behaviors. Over the past two decades, a progressive focus on women's empowerment has been

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observed, with gender shifting its place at the center of contemporary progressive debate. Global commitments such as the MDGs and CEDAW have contributed to the empowerment of women as an essential element of all progressive mediation globally, as noted by English, Devries et.al., (2013). It is generally assumed that political activity belongs to the "public spheres", women to the "private sphere" by nature, and that "politics" is "foreign" in nature. With reference to South Asian communities in particular, Sinha noted that "Talents" issues are often related to women and not to other peripheral regions that are mostly tied to a caste identity.

The mother of the nation, Mohtarma Fatima Jinnah, is the most prominent figure who is not only a dental surgeon but also a statesman, biographer and an ideal for all Pakistani women. She inspires not only women in the country, but women all over the world. Women often give up taking the initiative because they think they will have to work ten times harder to achieve the success of their male peers. The unlimited potential of Pakistani women is wasted. Syed et al (2015) mentioned that another prominent figure is a lady who has twice been elected as the Prime Minister of the nation, SMBB (Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto). She is not only an inspiration for women within the country but all across the world. They made unimaginable sacrifices and underwent intimidating challenges in order to achieve the tenacity, leadership, and fortitude. The women are mostly discouraged in taking initiative with a thought that they would have to work ten times harder so as to achieve the success that their male peers achieved.

**The Development of Parliamentary Women's Caucus (WPC):** Costa (2016) said that an important milestone reached by Pakistani women parliamentarians is that the former Speaker of the National Assembly, Dr. Fehmida Mirza established WPC. She was also SAARC's first female speaker in the democratic Muslim World. Launched in November 2008, the Caucus has consistently provided a catalyst forum for women parliamentarians from the Houses of Parliament for state citizens to freely raise, post and discuss issues that have an impact on their lives, especially women. According to Mirza (2011), the main point is the broader consensus that the stability of the WPC depends on the agenda of women's advancement and empowerment, thereby allowing them to function above and beyond borders. Despite she was honored speaker of NA of Pakistan, she was

a turning point in Pakistan's parliamentary history and supported the cause of women's rights in Pakistan. Today National Assembly has 90 legislators, and out of a total of 76 female members in the National Assembly, 17 were female senators. There was a lot of attention by the members to avoid the group meeting, which allowed a young forum to mature in a very short time (Chowdhury, 2018).

The origin of the WPC can be traced back to the extreme suffering of Pakistani women in their political as well as social and legal rights. It was such a powerful movement that it changed Pakistan's political journey in 62 years when the most famous voices of Pakistan's oppressed, marginalized and oppressed majority were women leaders, Gillani et.al., (2015). Women have always been among the messengers of the Pakistani movement. Rehman et.al., (2015) reported that politically women were given great importance by Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. He also encouraged women to join the struggle for an independent state. As a result, women like Mohtarma Fatima Jinnah, Begum Maulana Muhammed Ali Jauhar, Begum Rana Liaquat Ali Khan, Begum Jahanara Shah Nawaz, Anwari Begum, thus, even after the creation of Pakistan, this strong involvement in the sufferings of independent Pakistan could not be translated into an effective parliamentary presence.

#### **RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS**

The study is based on the following key hypothesis:

- I. The women parliamentarians have played a significant role in the social change in Pakistan.
- II. The women parliamentarians have played a significant role in the political change in Pakistan.
- III. The women parliamentarians have played a significant role in the legislation of the country.

#### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

- I. What is the role of women parliamentarians in bringing social and political changes in Pakistan?
- II. Determine the challenges faced by women parliamentarians while bringing up the social and political challenges.

#### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

**Research Philosophy:** The study is based on two research philosophies; positivism and constructivism. In fact, these are the basis

on which authors conduct the study on the topic. The former is adopted by the authors to determine the personal and previous experience of women in the parliament while the constructivism has aided the authors to find the natural part of an observation. Further, the study includes associated theoretical approaches by applying mix method approach and positivism and constructivism

#### **RESEARCH DESIGN**

The research is based on mixed method approach; qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. Qualitative research methodology will discuss the prominent females having parliamentarian profiles whereas the quantitative research methodology measures the women quota, their participation and their contribution in the parliament. The latter methodology gives the facts and data to make the study more authentic and reliable. Hence, the authors have used mix method approach for this study to maintain the balance in the arguments and the data.

#### **RESEARCH STRATEGY**

Research Strategy allows the researchers to determine the course of the data collection process (Azorin et.al., 2015). Due to volatile nature of the research topic and lack of the political links the study has included data from the secondary resources. In short, full protocols are observed to collect the authentic data for the study by the authors.

#### **DATA COLLECTION**

Primary data needs interaction of the researcher with the source and is hard to collect whereas the secondary data is already used or the indirect interaction with the sources. In fact, the two most widely used sources of data collection are primary and secondary (Creswell, 2013). The nature of the topic has directed the researchers to use the secondary data. For qualitative data, the researchers have referred to online journals, articles, textbooks, published and recorded interviews, transcripts, and manuals relating to the role of females in Pakistan's legislative houses, and how their role has brought a social and political change in the country. For quantitative data, the researchers have used facts and figures-based information while referring to political reports on quota systems, gender representation, and statistical databases relating to the female percentage in the parliament of Pakistan.

#### **DATA ANALYSIS PLAN**

Authors have used the content analysis to analyse the data considering the collected data for the research. The content analysis

technique has proved to be fit for analysing the online documents in either of these forms; texts, videos or images. This method on one side allows researchers to study the replicable ways of the topic and it easily examines the political phenomenon in a non-invasive manner.

#### **ETHICAL LIMITS**

The following research is purely based on secondary data and for the sake of this, the researchers have maintained ethical limits while giving credit to all scholars whose work have been used in the research paper. Proper citations and references are given to acknowledge the efforts of authors done in the field of political science.

#### **RESULTS**

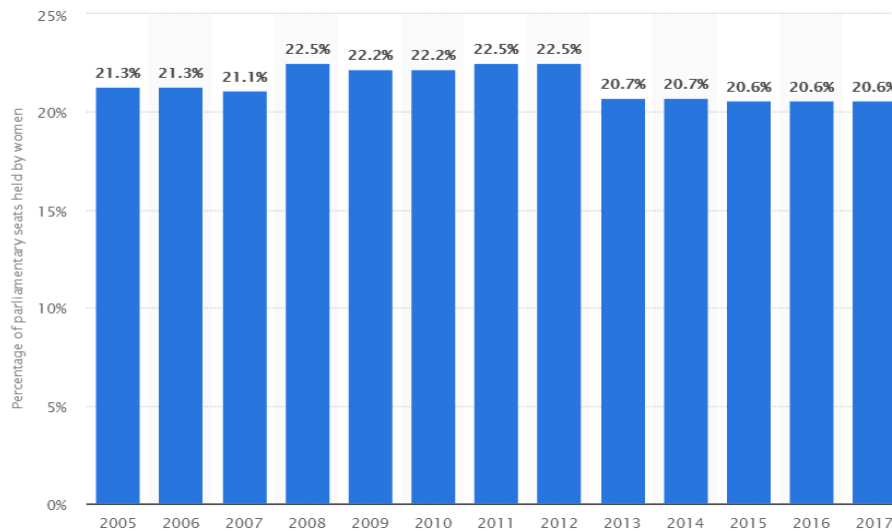
The women parliamentarian roles are considered crucial in issue raising terms and issues concerning women at public forums so these are reflected in all public policies. Also, to assure that women gain an equitable approach to resources, info and organisations, it is crucial to provide adequate representation of them as emphasized by Emadi. Through the multi-pronged endeavours of women parliamentarians in the 13th National Assembly, their existence in the House had a purpose.

Though more than half of the women parliamentarians were elected first-ever, they expressed an eager interest to apply and learn the rules. For instance, a total of 27% total questions were asked; altogether calling attention was 30%; bills of private members were 42% and a total of 24% resolutions. Gatherings could advance and guarantee more prominent consideration of women in basic leadership and administration positions amid gatherings and the political gatherings could be required to designate a base extent of women contenders to challenge on winnable general seats.

***Women Quota in Parliament:*** In the parliamentary session, a female lawyer has an average of 50 (67 percent) seats, while a male lawyer has an average of 42 (56 percent) seats. Female lawyers sponsored 36 (50 percent) of the 72 resolutions in NA and worked with their male counterparts to transfer 16 additional (22 percent) resolutions (Chowdhury, 2018). In addition, women of NA lawyers substituted 31 (32 percent) of 98 accounts on their own and 22 (22 percent) bills in cooperation with their male colleagues. A comparison of women's and men's workplaces in both parliamentarians showed that women's members actively participated in the regular attendance process, especially in NA during reporting periods ranging from May

2017 to February 2018 for NA and March 2017 to March 2018 for the Senate (Chowdhury, 2018). In conjunction with their male counterparts, women's lawyers accounted for 39 percent of the parliamentary session (NA) and Senate in 2017-18. On average, a woman's lawyer grew 23 programs individually in both Houses of Parliament, while a male lawyer strengthened an average of 10 agenda items. In addition, they supported 36 (80 percent) proposals under Rule 259 of NA and 48 (42 percent) proposals under Rule 218 of the Senate (Jabeen and Muhammad, 2017). In the Senate, women contributed about 15 percent of the parliamentary session and three percent in common. In the Senate, a woman attorney had an average of 64 (64%) sitting while male police attended an average of 59 (59%) sitting (Jabeen and Awan, 2017). In the Senate, a woman's lawyer strengthened an average of 17 programs compared to 21 program items on a male lawyer. They asked 1,595 (50 percent) questions and transferred 64 (86 percent) CAN in NA. Women MPs also support their male counterparts in support of a three percent additional program.

**THE PROPORTION OF SEATS HELD BY WOMEN IN NATIONAL PARLIAMENTS IN PAKISTAN FROM 2005 TO 2017**



Source: Statista (2018)

***Issues and Challenges Faced by Women Parliamentarians:***

Women's activists challenge the conventional idea of governmental issues that confines political movement to the general society field and renders the private circle of family life as objective (O'Brien, 2015). The rambling dichotomy of private-public gives shape and reshapes the cultural barriers prominently which leads to less resource allotment for the human progress of women by the family, country and the society. The rambling division of private-public: limits the opportunities of women to move into formal politics by giving shape to attitudes of societies and institutional structures. Fatherly rambling context: a transformable role is not played by the women who are the private citizens in changing the political and gender's nature. While researching, it was confined by several female politicians that they were forced to give sexual benefits to a higher position in the party so as to move upward in national politics as well as party hierarchy.

Khattak (2010) wrote that the deficiency of disaggregated data and gender expertise in exploration personnel posed troubles to them to raise issues regarding gender in the parliament. Carli et.al., (2016) said that the social indicators reflect the changing degrees of gender dissimilarities in academic, employment, entrepreneurship, health of politics and productive resources. The political parties which are dominated by men are the guardians of the entry of women in politics. More than half of the respondents quoted the concerned opinion which was encountered by them in the society as well as political parties and parliament as the major challenge.

***Women's Parliamentary Causes as Agents of Change:*** At present, 85 females in the Parliament and more or less 130 females MPAs from more than 20 political caucuses are working in collaboration for legislation that considers gender into concern and successful execution of rules and regulations that impact the lives of females and their family units (PA, 2018). These Bills are not only representational of females' parliamentarians showing their eagerness to make certain that gender disparities go beyond party division, but also of their shared purpose to highlight one Pakistan's persistent democratic shortfalls - the underrepresentation of females in governance systems. These include the change of women in emergency and detention companies which provide for compulsory financial and legal assistance to prisoners in prisons; domestic violence (prevention and protection) protection against women's

harassment at the workplace (Mirza, 2011); Establishment of the Benazir Income Tax Act, which proved to be a useful income insurance initiative; Criminal Law (Second Amendment) Act of Acute Crimes; Prevention of women's work against women (Act on Legislative Legislation) and the Commission on Women's Status (Mirza, 2011). One underlines the 10% authorization of giving tickets to females for general seats, whilst the other, if approved, will make certain that election processes be considered invalid in any region where females are prevented to cast their vote. The Punjab Female's Group has already initiated a strong tactical plan for the present years that considers work on domestic issues, acid attack cases, divorce, needed changes in the bills relating to sexual persecution and many other serious issues relating to females (Bari, 2009). Whilst in 2002 females serving in parliamentarian houses majorly worked in an independent manner, without getting enough share of inter and intra party experiences, in 2008 they had started to work as a team on sensitive matters. Compared and contrasted to around 13 females in 2002, 16 of them got success in winning general seats in 2008, whilst just 8 of them got seats in the National Assembly in 2013. For instance, without their support for females IDPs after armed force operations in Swat, gender receptive relief attempts, treatment of affected people and significant discourse on budget allotments in healthcare and educational field, most of the discussion regarding governance in such areas will have been incomplete. In spite of reporting for 22% of the federal legislative body, from 2002 till 2007, females cannot attain much with respect to law-making with the exception of Women's Protection Act (Ali, n.d). In the following directive of 2008 - 2013 nonetheless, females showed more improvement, managing policy execution and lifting up sensitive matters in the legislative bodies or parliament.

It is evident from the study by the Associated Press of Pakistan (2018) that a nation cannot achieve its developmental goals if females are denied from participating in meaningful political activities. Gender-based quota systems only, as worldwide experience has exposed, can never change the quality of females' presentation (Afzal, 1999). The success of WPCs as a center of attention to developing cross-party agreements amid females' parliamentarians has been shown twice in current times.



***The Women's Movement in Pakistan:*** While the number of organizations working for the realization of women's rights through democracy and universal human rights, these objects will mainly focus on one particular institution. The Women's Action Forum, founded in 1981, was founded with the aim of claiming Islamism. Although the group was limited and criticized for not bridging the field of education and exchange between rural and urban communities, it was very successful given the political conditions that assumed the basic rights of people. Citizens, especially women. It was mainly a women's movement because Zia's time worked for women's rights in the state of modernization and when Zia changed the political environment, they turned out to be responsive to performance rather than reformist states. Secularism was defined as not being anti-religion, but belief was a private matter and not that of states. The women's activity has largely answered questions concerning the public with minimal civil liability. However, the relationship between these private and public spheres is something that women cannot forget.

It will be a problem for women's action, as women ignore the public affairs created by public procedures and the risk of creating more problems than solutions (Othman, 2006). The main objective here is to find out that the ISM is an anti-citizen plan, which means that it violates the rights of citizens rather than granting those rights. More importantly, women claim that discrimination is justified by religious texts and theories to call for an end to the interpretation of both. In doing so, women not only take legal steps to seek justice but also incorporate religious arguments.

***Impact of Women's Presence in Legislative Bodies:*** While no concrete determination has been made regarding women's legislation and policy in the presence of women, great importance has been attached to the parliament's interest in women's issues. The positive impact of women's political presence can be attributed to the cultural front, where women's greater visibility in politics has a major impact on women's cultural perceptions of politics, leading to increased public recognition and legitimacy. Hannan and Shah and others have developed a genuine interest in politics among female parliamentarians with their presence in politics, aided by the entry of women into politics through the gender quota. A clear effect was seen in the 2007 General Elections, when the number of women who took part was 180.

Roofi noted that female MPs face a high level of gender awareness. A large number of women parliamentarians escaped from such groups and organizations and supported women's rights, creating a constituency and legitimizing themselves. Finally, with the gender quota, women were given the opportunity to assume the role of “public representative”.

***Positive Changes in Political Situation Due to Women Legislators:*** At the time when male members began to take women legislators in parliaments seriously, those MPs worked actively. In addition to this, gender quotas gave women the opportunity to act as representatives of the public. In KP, women have committed themselves to resolve barriers and forming a new coward that goes beyond the minimum program of women's strengths that extend beyond the interests of the parties. Pakistani women in reserved seats have turned to a seat in the parliament.

This bill has been introduced by her in the Senate which proposed cancelling the election process in case women cast a minimum of 10% of the vote. The pressure of NGOs and women's rights groups to work on women-related issues, as their mandate was specifically required in matters relating to Hudood Ordinance, the law of the story, Qisas, and Diyat, indicates that women's rights groups have been working for so long.

***Positive Changes in Social Situation due to Women Legislators:*** The presence of women in parliamentarians and provincial assemblies is certainly an important element of a recent parliamentary parliament over the past 7-8 years. Women lawmakers have shown interest and are rushing to do something for women in Pakistan, where they have had the opportunity to do so. This shows a real interest among women's legislation to have some kind of positive legislation in favor of women by themselves or the perceptions of the parties. Some milestones in accordance with the policy and institutional frameworks on women's rights and their intensity have been carried out and followed by women's laws on women, mainly in the last two decades.

In 2008, the Women's Parliamentary Caucus was established in the Federal Republic. Not only that, citizens and communities were better able to prevent violence in a peaceful manner thanks to the laws passed by women parliamentarians.

### **THE YOUTH FACTOR**

From the beginning, the Pakistan People's Party has been among the few to provide a safe, dignified and dedicated stage for women to raise their voices against important economic and social issues at the international and national levels. Women have been truly empowered by the work of the PPP, under the reign of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, through real steps such as the introduction of women into higher courts, the establishment of the Women's Bank and the establishment of a separate Ministry of Women's Affairs. She also established for the first time the political space for women, in which women from other parties are now investing.

PTI and PML-N are focusing mainly on young people and have set up special systems, new policies and are offering 25% tickets for young people to surprise them. PML-N has started a laptop program and extended loans to youth so they can support their education. To some extent, the role of Imran Khan, a former cricketer is also attracting the attention of young people joining his political party.

The PTI Political Party has also been actively working to develop social networks, which is an innovative strategy to be introduced in the political world; they have specific tile units that have worked quickly on recent updates. A comment against the President of PTI and such sites turns into a breeding ground for comments and rebuttals. But whether this networking aspect can play its role at election time remains to be seen. The middle class across Pakistan, similar to India, is excluded from the country, so it is important to see if social media at this time brings this social class into their political sphere or not.

### **DISCUSSION**

Pakistan is a country where a woman prime minister, Benazir Bhutto, was elected twice. Despite of the fact it faces multiple challenges to up bring woman in any of the leading roles. Factually discussing, Pakistan was ranked 55th out of 86 in 2012 on social institutions and survey index. The Human Development Index in 2011 was 0.504 and placed in 145th place (out of 187 countries). The imbalance index of the survey was 0.373 and the global gender index for 2011 0.5583 and placed in 133<sup>rd</sup> place (out of 135 countries). However, Pakistan is doing a great deal of women's political strength due to gender quota in legislation. It is ranked 52nd level at the

political level of science in the Global Gender Gap Index (Hausmann et.al., 2012). The exclusion of women in formal political processes is the result of the interaction of many organisational, institutional and functional barriers that exist in the country.

Comparatively Pakistan has improved in much in women participation in legislation due to quota. In current situation, in Pakistan the liberty of women essentially does not make any opinion as there is no charismatic leader after Benazir Bhutto who can get selected on its own power in candid populations and as well as it will take long period for freedom of women to spread levels acceptably that is dominant in more democratic civilization such as India. Women of parliament have played an important role in pushing this policy for women. Women's constituencies were particularly active in measuring and bringing the matter to the Althingi criticizing women's legislation. The benchmark for the reserved women was increased to 17% in 2002 (distributed in four provinces); although there is criticism that women nominated are usually hailed by politically well-known and influential families. It did not recognize the fact that private violence against women was the blast of violence against women in the public.

In Pakistan, despite being a region in which a woman was twice elected prime minister, gender equality at the political level is still a big dream for the majority of women, who often cannot even vote in certain parts of the country. From now onwards women are taking part in the process of politics in Pakistan as many political parties are getting ready for the political authorization. Numerous new elected men and women (2013-18) have a new role in the parliament and lack of strong experience and knowledge of gender and female rights. A vital need for political parties is required to announce women party shares internally whether willingly or made compulsory upon by the state via law amendment (Toor, 2011).

There are individuals who argue that women MNAs and MPAs, who returned to the seats in the parliament, do not have a constituency like their colleagues in general. Their performance will, therefore, be more commendable when you see that women's legislation has generally had much less impact and experience of political and parliamentary affairs than their male colleagues. Even though the concept that 60% of seats are held for women is considered achievement in Pakistan, the query arises that how many will get succeeded on the seats directly. The cultural environment is generally

unfavorable for women and most political organizations tend to exclude them from decision making.

Only 22.2 percent of the parliament 2013-2018 and 18.6 percent of parliamentary assemblies are women (Adeney, 2012). They were at that time part of a small but vital number of women who have manifested their place in the political ground of the country. However, Pakistan is doing a great deal of women's political strength due to gender quota in legislation. The exclusion of women in formal political processes is the result of the interaction of many organizational, institutional and functional barriers that exist in the country. Both provincial and national assemblies of Pakistan have reserved seats for women, and candidates are appointed for this on the basis of their electorate officers. The current environment in Pakistan offers many opportunities for women to play a more active role in politics and decision-making. At the localized level, 33% of women's seats are dominant for elections in the district, municipality and union council. Based on initiatives taken by WPC as highlighted in results, it is discussed that a very positive setup for the future is being presented by WPC hoping that this thought collectively would stretch to outline these assemblies among women parliamentarians.

Consequently, the casual attitude in the existing organizations lacks a serious trust between the organizations and the women themselves which results in the non-immunity harassment even by the parliament's policymakers. As a result of its efforts, Pakistan has recently made progress on the protection of women by completing new crimes and rape laws, although their implementation is still a challenge. With violence here I am referring to actions that harm women, it is physical violence or lack of rights. However, it is still challenging how women MPs can use their critical mass to influence public policy and effectively perform their roles. This argument may be valid, but it should not be forgotten that women, generally and especially in a society like us, assume much more responsibility at home than men. Practicing reserved seats for women has been the subject of debate, not only in Pakistan but throughout the world.

## **CONCLUSION**

The study discussed briefly about the important and integral role of women in Pakistani politics. This role leads the participation of women in legislation, framing of new rules and building social

structure of the nation with a capacity to welcome women in many other fields. The presence of women parliamentarians can be evidenced in both National and Provincial Assemblies. Further, it is found that these women parliamentarians faced multiple challenges to reach the contemporary. In short, they have been successful enough equalize the rights of women in Pakistan.

Though there have been many challenges faced by Pakistani women starting from Mohtarma Fatima Jinnah to Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, but now those changes have given the right of decision to women to up bring any desired change for the betterment of women and choice of the role in any fields. In short, the social norms can be reset by the women, laws can be enforced for betterment of women and a chance to run the country is also there to women. So, the women can now face a totally change, a positive approach keeping country for them.

Whereas it has been identified that women movement in Pakistan have strengthened the women to join the politics which in short results in major political changes favoring women. Firstly, the representation of women in political parties have been increased. Secondly, they have been given major roles in the cabinets and in opposition as well. Thirdly, a quota has been reserved for them in senate and parliament Pakistan. Apart from reserved quota and active participation in politics women find their places in courts, law and enforcement institutes of Pakistan. This all is being noted down in the history making to encourage other women to actively participate in any of the field they wish. In short, equal participation is resulted by a long struggle of women in Pakistan.

The active participation of women in politics, social structure and legislative bodies is largely in favor of Pakistan. Previous studies have found and my study has determined that equal participation of women in politics up bring the social changes for women and permit them to play their productive role community management, industrial enhancement, and economy to contribute their part and make Pakistan prosper.

Conclusively, with the time the significance has emerged for the women role in Pakistan. In the beginning, their ratio was very low but contemporarily it has increased to considerable level where women have been playing part in politics, changing the dimensions of the society and contributing in decision making bodies. The women

movement despite of being strong didn't survive for a long, but their influence has balanced the society. This upbringing has encouraged women to participate in other bodies of the countries like education, industries, commerce, law and enforcement agencies and research fields. In short, it is high time for the country to accept equal participation of women to make all hurdles in its prosperity and meet the modern needs of the world.

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