

WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN THE SENATE OF PAKISTAN

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Abstract

This paper aims to explore patterns of women's representation in the senate of Pakistan. The study is based on collection and analysis of available secondary data. The basic argument of the paper is that there is a wide gender gap between men and women's representation in the Senate of Pakistan. Number of women elected in the senate has remained significantly lower than that of men throughout the bicameral parliamentary history of Pakistan. Women's representation in the house remained lower on both reserved and general seats. Quota for women's reserved seats was introduced very late but it had significantly increased women's over all representation in the senate of Pakistan. Simultaneously, the quota allocation also came with reduced number of women elected on general seats in further election.

Keywords: Pakistan, Women Representation, Senate, Gender Gap, Reserved Seats.

Introduction

The Senate is the upper house of bicameral parliamentary system introduced in the constitution of Pakistan 1973 (Senate of Pakistan 2013a). After independence, Pakistan has a parliamentary system comprises of one house that was national assembly till the year 1973. There was no any provision or mention of the senate in Pakistan in first two constitutions promulgated in 1956 and 1962 respectively. It was the third constitution in 1973 given by the first democratically elected government of Pakistan People's Party that Pakistan's introducing a bicameral parliamentary system in Pakistan. The constitution defined parliament as consisting of two houses; the upper house (i.e. Senate) and the lower house (i.e. national assembly). The membership in national assembly is used to be based on the size of population in each province. Therefore, the purpose of establishing another forum named as Senate was to give an equal representation to all federating units and removing the provincial inequality from political decision making and legislative formulations.

The senate has a term of 6 years. Elections to the half of the seats held after every three years. Its members are being elected through an indirect election by members of the provincial assemblies. The forum was established to remove any chance of political domination by any provincial and ethnic large sub-population in the country. But the forum failed to remove the most penetrating inequality existing across society on the basis of gender. The forum largely remained male dominated with no or marginal representation of women for long. There was no reservation for women's seats till the year 2002. Then a 17% quota was reserved for women in senate. It is essential to deeply study the dynamics of such forums established and characterized with significant gender inequality but simultaneously aiming to remove other forms of social inequalities in political and legislative decision making.

Scope of the Study

This study deals with women's representation in the senate of Pakistan. The scope of the study is limited to the upper house (i.e. senate) in the bicameral parliamentary system in Pakistan. The time period covered is from 1973, when the bicameral parliamentary system was introduced in the country and the first senate was elected. The population of the study was comprises of elected senators in Pakistan from the year 1973 to date.

Justification of the Study

Women's political participation in Pakistan has rarely been studied thoroughly. Wherever attention is being given to study the phenomenon in scholarly research, it has more been focused on the national assembly and provincial assemblies. The senate of Pakistan and women's representation in this political forum has rarely been the center of scholarly explorations. There was a lack of comprehensive study in this regard. Therefore, the present study is need of time as an initial step to fill this knowledge and research gap in the political history of Pakistan.

Objective of the Study

The main objective of the study is to explore the gendered patterns of women's overall representation in the Senate of Pakistan, in general, and on the reserved and general seats, in particular.

Hypotheses

The hypotheses to be tested through the analysis of collected secondary data are as following:

- Women's overall representation has remained significantly lower than that of men in the senate of Pakistan.
- Women's representation on general seats in the senate has remained significantly lower throughout the history.
- Quota allocation for women is likely to have a positive relationship with women's overall representation in the senate of Pakistan.
- Quota allocation for women is likely to have a negative relationship with women's representation on general seats in senate in Pakistan.

Method

The aim of the paper was to explore the patterns of women's representation in upper house of Pakistan's bicameral parliamentary system; that is the Senate. It reviews women's representation in the Senate of Pakistan in different periods of time throughout history. The paper used secondary data from the available reports, books, and internet, in general, and on official website of the senate, in particular. The gathered data was analyzed to find out the broader gendered patterns of women's overall representation, in general, and on reserved seats and general seats in particular. The data was made accessible and presented in the form of graphs in this paper for easy understanding of the reader.

History of Women's Representation in Senate of Pakistan

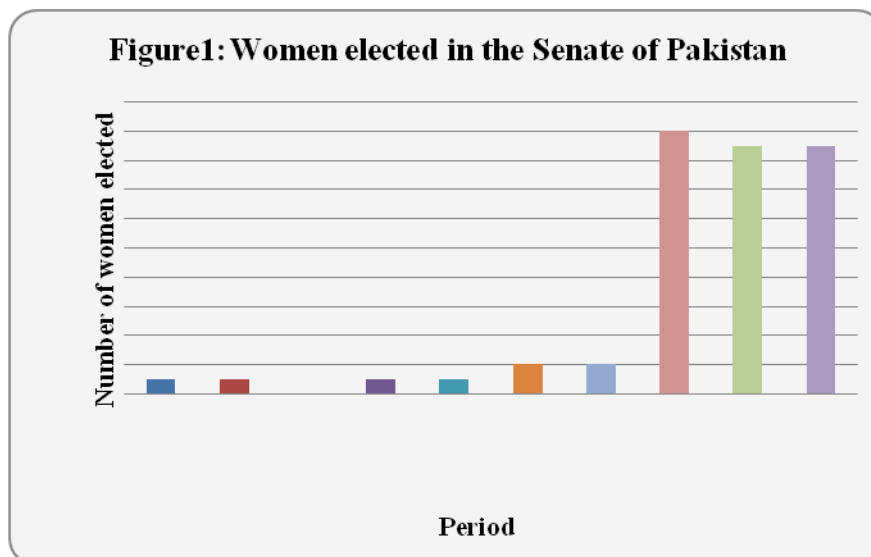
The 1973 constitution gave a bicameral system in which the parliament in Pakistan was defined as comprising of two houses: the upper house (i.e. Senate) and the lower house

(i.e. National Assembly). The first senate was established with its total strength of 45 members (Senate of Pakistan 2013a). There was no quota reservation defined for women. The senate had only one elected women member, Mrs. Samia Usman Fateh from Gujrat. She was elected from Pakistan People's Party. She served as senator for the term from 1973 to 1975 (Senate of Pakistan 2013c). She became first woman elected as member of senate in Pakistan (Women's Parliamentary Caucus 2010a). Then, Miss Asifa Farooqi from Jhang joined the senate in 1975 and continued her term till 1977 (Senate of Pakistan 2013d; Provincial Assembly of the Punjab 2013). She was the second women senator of Pakistan and she was again elected from Pakistan People's Party.

The total strength of the senate was raised in 1977 from 45 to 63 members (Senate of Pakistan 2013a). But in 1977 country faced a martial law imposed by General Zia Ul Haq. The military regime took hold of all the state institutions and remained in position till 1985. The constitution was abrogated for the whole period. In 1985, with the revival of the constitution the elections were held for both houses of the parliament. The membership of the senate was raised from 63 to 87 (Senate of Pakistan 2013a). During the period 1985 to 1988, there was no single woman elected as Senator in Pakistan (Zia & Bari 1999, 50).

The second elections after the martial law were done in the year 1988. Only one women senator was elected in the house of total 87 members making women's representation only 1.1% in Senate in the year 1988 (Government of Pakistan 2010, 92; Zia & Bari 1999, 50; Women Parliamentary Caucus 2010b). Dr. Noor Jehan Panezai from Baluchistan affiliated with Pakistan Muslim League Junejo (PML-J) was the only women senator elected to the house and remained in the office till 1994 (Zia & Bari 1999, 50; Women Parliamentary Caucus 2010b; Senate of Pakistan 2013e). She also served as first woman deputy chairperson of the senate during the period from 21 March 1991 to 20th March 1994 (Senate of Pakistan 2013b).

In the year 1994 two women, Ms. Fiza Junejo from PML-J and Mrs. Nasreen Jalil from Mutahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) both from Karachi, were elected as members to the house (Zia & Bari 1999, 50). These two women members remained in the house for next six years, till the year 2000 (Senate of Pakistan 2013g). Beside these two women members, one more women named Begum Nadira Khan Khakwani from Lahore entered the senate on a seat vacated during the term for only a period of less than five months (i.e. during 22nd September 1996 to 20th March 1997) (Senate of Pakistan 2013f). During the period from 1994 to 2000, the total strength of the house remained 87. Thus, the representation of women elected senators remained 2.29% (except Ms. Nadira Khan, who joined the senate for a short period) (Government of Pakistan 2010, 92).



In 1997 Pakistan again faced a military regime of General Parveez Musharraf from 1997 to 2007. After taking hold of state power, he introduced legislative and constitutional quota reservation for women in all political forums from parliament to the local government. The total strength of the senate was raised to 100 members. The quota reserved for women was 17% in the Senate. It included 4 women from each province and one from capital territory. It means, 17 seats were reserved for women members in the house. The next elections held after 2002 were done under same provisions of quota reservation. Consequently, a never precedent number of women reached to the upper house for the first time in political history of Pakistan. In the year 2003, there were 18% women sitting in senate as members (PILDAT 2004, 16; Government of Pakistan 2010, 92). Women were elected on 17 reserved seats and one general seat. The next elections in the years 2009 and 2013 were held with the same quota reservation. But the overall representation of women came down to 17% to the total strength of the house in both the elections.

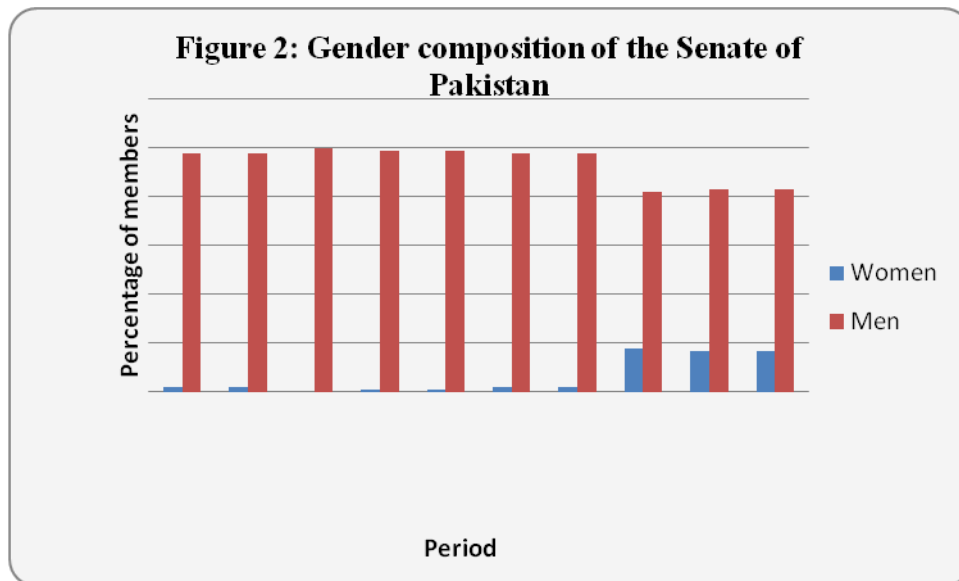
Patterns of Women's Representation in Senate of Pakistan

The detailed study of the parliamentary history of Pakistan with focus on the senate of Pakistan shows certain broader patterns of women's representation in senate of Pakistan. Following patterns are visible: 1) a wide gender gap exists in women's representation in the Senate, 2) Women's representation in senate remained marginal throughout history, 3) a marginal number of women were elected on general and technocrat seats, 4) the quota allocation for women's reserved seats in senate was introduced very late, 5) the quota allocation for women's reserved seats in senate enhanced women's overall representation in senate to some extent, and 6) this quota allocation led to women's absence from general or reserved seats for technocrat in the house. The following sections of this paper deals with each pattern in detail with the help of data analyzed.

Gender Wise Composition of Senate in Pakistan

The data analysis shows a visible pattern of wide gender gap between men and women's representation in the Senate membership. It is observed that women's membership in senate started in the year 1973 with only 2.2% representation and could not exceed more than 2.29% till the year 2000. Women's representation reached to its peak in 2003 as 18% of the total strength of the house. After reaching its peak, it again started declining from 18% to

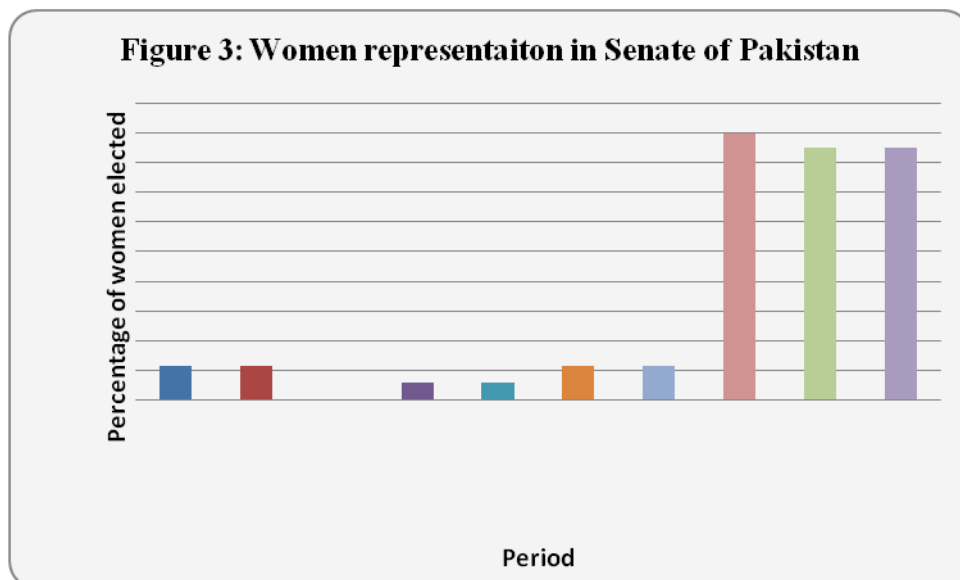
17% in the period from 2009 onwards. During the years 1985 to 1988 no woman was elected to senate making the body single gender forum during this period. In short, it can be said that women's representation dwell between 2% to 18% throughout the history of the senate in Pakistan.



On the other hand, the representation of men in the senate started with 97.7% in the year 1973 and reached to its peak as 100% during 1985 to 1988. Men comprised 99% of the total strength of the house during 1998 to 1994, 97% during 1994 to 2000, 82% during 2003 to 2009 and finally it is 83% since 2009. In short, the representation of men in the senate of Pakistan remained too high as more than 82% throughout the history. It is observed that a wide gender gap existed in representation of men and women in the senate of Pakistan. Women's representation could even not reached a quarter of the total membership in the senate in any period of history while men are highly represented as more than 80% to 90% of the total membership of the senate throughout history of Pakistan.

Women's Marginal Representation in the Senate of Pakistan

Zia and Bari (1999, 50) claim that "Women's representation in the senate has thus been sporadic and their proportionate share even less than in the [National Assembly]". It is not only a gender gap but the evident marginal representation of women that is critical issue. Women either remain absent or marginally represented in the senate throughout political history of Pakistan till 2013.

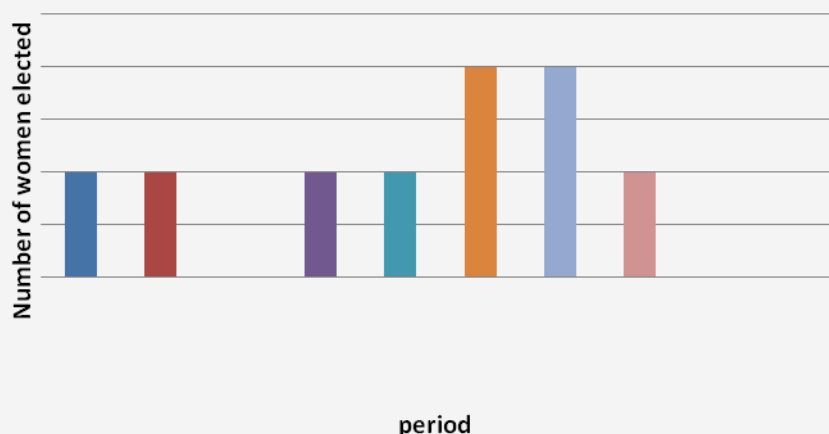


The marginal representation is evident as women's membership in senate could never exceed more than 2% throughout history till the year 2000. Rather, women were absent from the upper house during 1985 to 1988. It was only after the introduction of special quota reservation for women in the year 2002 that women's representation in the house reached to 18% of its total membership. But it is still marginal as compared to 83% representation of men.

Women on General Seats in the Senate of Pakistan

It is claimed that senate is always a forum where members are indirectly elected thus it was relatively easy for political parties to ensure women representation at that forum (Zia and Bari 1999, 50). But the irony was indicated by Zia & Bari (1999, 50) by further claiming that women's low representation in senate shows that none of the party ever made any hard effort to bring them in house. The claim was also supported by women's marginal representation in the year 2000. Mostly parties did not get their women candidates to be elected on general or reserved seats available for indirect election still the year 2000. Thus women's representation remained sporadic and marginal as one or two women at most were present on the general seats in senate.

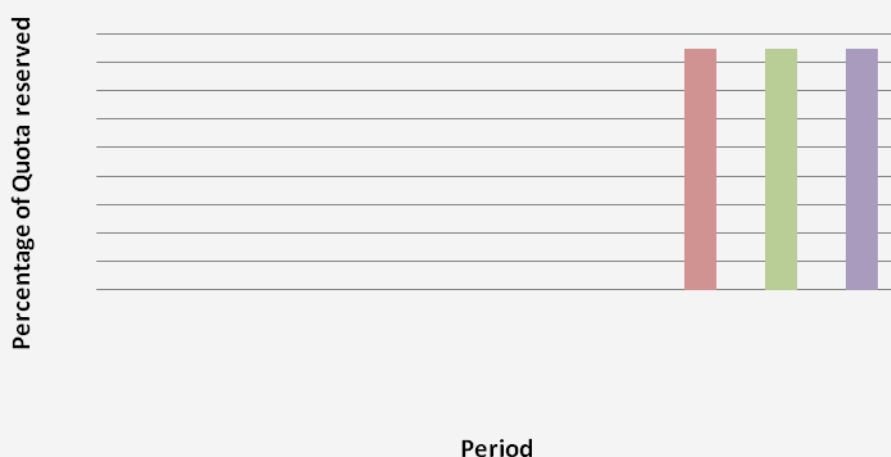
Figure 4: Women elected on generral seats in senate of Pakistan



Quota Reservation and Women's Enhanced Representation in Senate of Pakistan

The data analysis shows that there was no allocation of reserved seats for women in senate during large part of history till today. It was very late when for the first time in the year 2002 constitutional quota was reserved for women in Senate and national assembly of Pakistan. The reserved seats for women were defined as 17% of the total strength of the house. It is visible that the quota was introduced very late but has positive effect causing unprecedented rise in women's membership in the house.

Figure 5: Reserved seats for women in senate of Pakistan

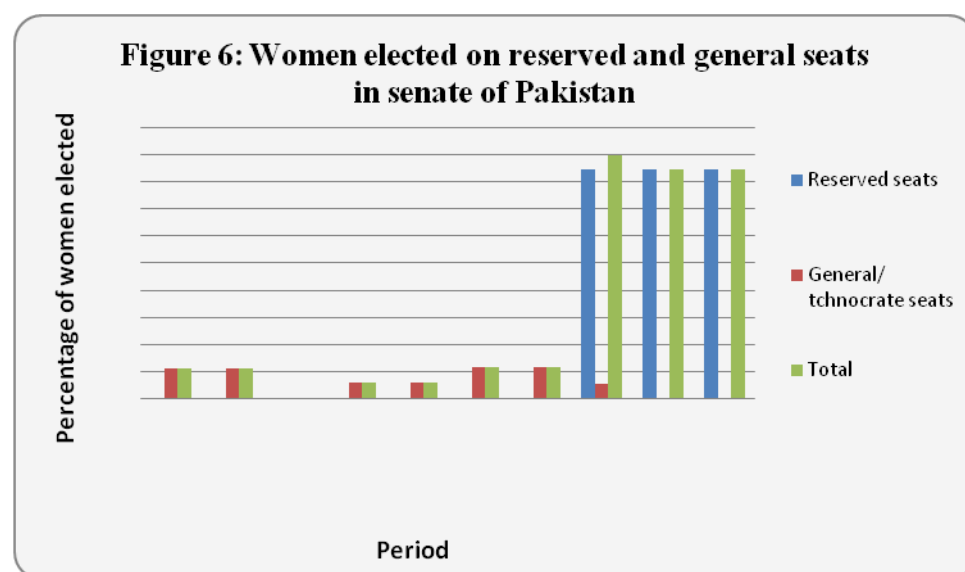


In the year 2002, the then military regime introduced a 17% quota allocation for women representation in senate. It means, 17 seats were reserved for women in the house of 100 members. Prior to this quota allocation, as there was not compulsion for parties to bring women in senate body, political parties were least considering women candidates for election on general or technocrats seats in the presence of a plenty of male candidates available. Women could only get elected to 2% seats in the senate till the year 2000; as no specifically reserved seats in the house were available for women. It was only after the quota reservation for women in senate that women could get enhanced representation after 2002. Women

representation rose sharply from 2% to 18% due to the quota reservation. It is observed that women elected senators outnumbered the reserved seats for them during 2003 to 2009; as 18% women got elected despite 17% reserved seats in the year 2003.

Quota Allocation and Absence of Women from General or Technocrat Seats

The data analysis also indicates a pattern of quota allocation and reduction of women's representation on general or technocrat's seats. It is observed that women were elected on the general seats during the period when there was no specific quota of reserved seats was introduced in the senate. But as soon as the data was introduced there came a reduction in the number of women elected on general or technocrat seats. It is observed that soon women became completely absent from the general seats and this absence continued for next two elections held after the year 2009.



Conclusion

The paper was aimed to give a picture of women's representation in the senate of Pakistan from the year 1973 to data. It analyzed the number of women elected senators in the house in different periods of time. The data was gathered from secondary sources and compiled, analyzed and presented in graphical form by the research for establishing the basic arguments of the paper. The basic argument paper made is that there has remained a wide gender gap in representation of women and men in the senate of Pakistan in all periods of the bicameral parliamentary history in the country. It is found that women were marginally represented on the general seats (as one or two women in the house) in different periods of time. The worst was that women were absent from the house during 1985 to 1988. The quota reservation for women in the senate was introduced very late but it has provided a significant boost to women's overall representation in the house. The quota allocation is also found having different impact on women's overall representation in the house and their representation on general seats. The quota allocation has brought a significant increase in number of women elected in the house but it is potentially seen to bringing a decrease in the possibility of women being elected on general seats.

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