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**RESEARCH PAPER**

## Evaluating the Importance of Female Leadership in Pakistan: Challenges and Opportunities

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**ABSTRACT**

The participation of Women in politics fosters gender equality, democratic progress and social development. The purpose of this article is to draw insights over the political culture of Pakistan to understand the challenges hindering the progress of women in political leadership, including cultural norms, values, beliefs, religious influences, and structural barriers. The importance of female leadership can be seen through the history of Pakistan, where female political personalities served the nation and brought women related policies as well. The women's role was neglected and ignored during the dark democratic past of Pakistani politics. However, the articles highlight the historical trends, failures and success stories. The analytical research design with qualitative approach is used to analyze the secondary sources to provide a better understanding of the challenges associated and opportunities. The article hence provides a nuanced understanding of political culture of Pakistan and finds that political system is the main reason of women under representation. The study provides recommendations and urges the governments, civic society, and other stakeholders to work together to prioritize gender equality and empower women to play a larger role in determining the country's future

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**KEYWORDS**

Female Leadership, Gender Equality, Pakistan, Political Culture, Political Participation

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**Introduction**

In the political career of Pakistan, female leadership patterns show compelling study of contrast and continuities. Since 1947, Pakistan have experienced dictatorship three times. Democracy in Pakistan always has always faced disruptions. Pakistan gained Feudal culture, where landlords are the owners of the region and have all power, in inheritance. Still marshal mindset and feudal values are great hindered for female's participation in politics. Amidst the backdrop of historical patriarchy and marshal mindset created the complexities that shaped the opportunities and challenges faced by female leaders in Pakistan. Religion is another factor. Misinterpretation of religion by dictators and religious political scholars for gaining power and authority presented greatest obstacle in the way of political journey for female.

Since the birth of Pakistan, female always remained underscored in political arena and faced challenges from military leader, religion and feudal lords along with cultural and traditional values of society. Women in Pakistan struggled a lot for political representation. As in the history of Pakistan only one woman became Prime Minister after

the four decades of the birth of Pakistan. Before that dictator gave very less or no representation to women in politics.

Political cultural theory serves as lens to examine the factors influencing women's ascent to power. This theory explains that the cultural milieu of society impacts significantly to the political behavior and attitudes due to which representation and effectiveness of female leadership also get effected. In Pakistan, politics is deeply in-rooted in history of Marshal Laws, feudal systems and religion misinterpretation, the female's political journey is both the reflection of changing tides and testament to the resilience against marshal mindset and patriarchy.

Today, female is still facing challenges such as cultural norms, religion, patriarchy, lack of education and economic dependence, discrimination based on gender, and harassment issues. Pakistan needs to address the gender inequality in political arena to ensure the democratic values and liberal ideas. There are number of steps that Pakistan can take to solve the issue of gender inequality such as providing educational and economic facilities, address the issue of harassment and discrimination, mentor-ship programs and spread awareness, change in cultural norms and end of Marshal mindset.

### **Literature Review**

Weinbaum examine that the public opinion, institutional frameworks, and elite interests all influence public policy in Pakistan. Also, it is essential to comprehend the fundamental effects of political culture. He emphasizes the significance of conflicting subcultures in understanding the obstacles to reaching a national identity consensus, the ambiguous reception of democratic institutions, and the challenges associated with enacting social and economic changes. Additionally, he argue that political culture is essential to understanding the nation's receptiveness to conspiracy theories, tolerance for corruption, and attitude toward national leadership also demonstrated that fundamental political society principles are partially responsible for the frequent difficulties in reformulating strategic foreign policy decisions.

Awan (2016) emphasis the historical understanding of Pakistani women's political participation. Examine the historical evolution and current circumstances also draws attention to the societal barriers that have made it difficult for women to engage in the democratic system. Being able to win election to the legislative assembly is not the essential requirement for political engagement. Further, covers other facets of women's engagement in the political system, structure, and process, such as their responsibilities as voters and party members. Analyses along these aspects can yield some useful suggestions for women's future broader political participation.

Rabia Mushtaq, Adnan (2022) explores women's political participation in Pakistan, revealing that despite being over 50% of the population, they have less voting and contested election participation. Women's involvement is crucial for a functioning democratic polity and economic growth. A developmental technique known as participation highlights the necessity of including marginalized groups in the formulation and application of laws that impact their welfare. As a result, without women actively participating in all facets of society's decision-making, economic prosperity cannot be fully realized. According to them, women are not given adequate support or resources to enable them to engage in politics. Even in certain fields where women are far more capable than men, they are still not given adequate chances.

**Azeema Begum (2023)** focus on economic dependency, lack of education, gender segregation, male dominance, traditional beliefs, political parties, financial issues, limited awareness of political rights, social and cultural norms, and religious interpretation and examines the opportunities and challenges facing women who want to participate in Pakistani politics. Also emphasizes the need for coordinated activities to address complex social dynamics and better decision-making on gender-based laws and regulations and investigate the need for effective tactics and policies to empower women and improve their engagement in politics.

Bux Naich, Ali Shah, Iqbal (2023) emphasis that the changes in gender perspectives and democratic decision-making depend on empowering women and giving them equal opportunity. Campaigns aimed at increasing awareness are necessary to empower women to recognize and exercise their rights. The Prophet Muhammad preached about women's fundamental rights and forbade abuse and murder; hence women's status plays a significant role in Pakistani society. After thorough analysis of women's empowerment in Pakistan indicates that gender stereotypes must be changed, unfavorable societal expectations must be eliminated, and women's participation in decision-making practices must be encouraged. Women should have easier access to money, healthcare, and education through national policies and programs.

### **Methodology**

The study examines the significance and challenges associated with female leadership in Pakistan. The analytical approach and a Qualitative research design was utilized for this study. The main aim was to unveil the barriers coming in the way of women political empowerment and to provide suggestions. For that purpose, the analysis of the secondary sources was conducted. The secondary sources included online research articles, literature on women leadership, opinions of scholars and other research articles on female leadership. The main findings were taken from these secondary sources, to analyze and explore the barriers through the lens of political culture and to recommend policy initiatives in order to foster gender inclusiveness in Pakistan.

### **Results**

#### **Female Leadership and Political Culture of Pakistan**

Female leadership in Pakistan is growing concern that challenges the existing political and societal structure. The social activists and feminist movements have enabled the women of Pakistan to take active part in politics and demand gender equality and inclusion. The women of Pakistan have become quite strong in comparison to the past and openly questions they're under representation due to various cultural and societal barriers. The global feminist movements have inspired the Asian women and they use social media as strong tool to spread their message. From political figures to activists' women are playing a visible role in shaping the country's future. Keeping in view the political culture of Pakistan, the female leadership faces several challenges which are important and compulsory to be resolved.

#### **The Concept of Political Culture**

The theory of political culture emphasizes on the shared beliefs, attitudes, values and viewpoints of a population regarding its country's political system. The viewpoints of citizens or individuals not only refer to the political officials, governors or presidents, but to the system as whole and its efficiency in dealing with challenges. It serves as a link

between citizens and their political system. The political scientists Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba has categorized the theory of political culture into three ways of level of participation and awareness:

**Table 1**  
**Categories of political culture**

Name of category	Examples
Parochial Political Culture	This form of political culture exists when the country's population are unaware of the central government and do not actively participate in its operations. Parochial political cultures are frequent in underdeveloped or developing countries. This could be due to lack of political will and knowledge of citizens. It can lead to under representation as well. The countries in Asia and Africa can be one of them.
Subject political culture	When the citizens are somehow aware of the political system of their country and usually take part, then it is called subject political culture, for instance Germany.
Participant political culture	When the citizens are highly participatory and they are well aware of their political system then it is called participant political culture, as in United states of America (Voinea & Neumann, 2019).

The long-term political history, colonialism and other historic events in the formation of a nation also plays a role in shaping the political culture as described by an American political scientist Louis Hartz's in his concept of 'fragment theory'. When citizens think of their political system, they expect a legal system that is responsible for the betterment of the state and society. A democratic system which can work efficiently for the citizens and does not provide space for corrupt activities. The role of government is very important in shaping the perspective of citizens about their political culture. They assume the political culture to be moralistic, as described by political scientist Daniel Elazar. His moralistic approach of political culture also emphasizes on the fare duty of the government and their role in making the society better.

Political culture is a lens through which individuals and citizens view their political system and build beliefs, attitudes and ideas. The citizens expect their government to be responsible and integrate with the public to deal with their issues. The women in Pakistan have also build some narratives and beliefs about their position that they have cultural, social and religious barriers and they are just struggling to gain position. However, that's reality actually but now the women in Pakistan have struggled much and gained positions.

### **The Political Culture of Pakistan**

The political culture of Pakistan has been very complex and it has various categories as well. The colonial legacy, unstable political systems, corrupt leaders and military dictators have badly impacted the country's political culture. All of them have worked to gain personal benefits and no one continued the legacy of great historical leaders in the history of Pakistan. The ideology on which the Pakistan was made came in the way

of personal advantages. This culture and history of Pakistan has undoubtedly raised issues of women representation in the political sphere. They are supposed to be weak and ineligible for the leadership positions. Currently, the political culture of Pakistan is still unstable and needs inclusion of democratic principle. However, it's far better than the past trends. The representation of women is very necessary, it fosters gender inclusiveness, stable society, better decision making and representation of the country globally (Longley, 2023)

The political culture of Pakistan is categorized into several subcultures. Here are three most important cultures in Pakistan that shape the national identities and beliefs of citizens.

### **Military culture**

In case of Pakistan the political culture is supposed to be weak and undemocratic due to the military rule in the past and instability in Pakistan's political system. The military views itself as superior and the savior of country. It assumes to be the dominant feature of the country and play a significant role in foreign policy and defence of Pakistan. This undemocratic reality of Pakistan has faced criticism both domestically and internationally. The military dictators have taken wrong decisions in the past and secured their own benefits. These military rulers have stained the past of Pakistan. Therefore, the public opinions have also made that military rule is not suitable and fruitful for a country's future.

Civilian leaders who attempted to challenge the army, either by seizing authority or forcing it to share power, have failed miserably. Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's attempt to bypass the army with his own Federal Security Force was unsuccessful, while Muhammad Khan Junejo's attempt to wield independent powers led to his removal from office. All the military leaders wanted to alter the parliamentary system with presidential by using 58-2b as political weapon against the elected governments. The military dictator of 21<sup>st</sup> century, Pervez Musharraf also changed the system to presidential through the 17<sup>th</sup> amendment.

All these military rulings and unstable political culture has badly impacted the representation of women in public as well as social life. Due to conservative social norms and policies under military rulers, limited education and male dominated culture, women have faced challenges under this category of political culture. The male dominated culture also prioritize male in peace making processes and negotiations.

### **Feudal culture**

The feudal culture of Pakistan is pressing the voices of many middle- and lower-class personalities. The political candidates with a strong elite background get benefit and representation. It's only in the case of men, the discrimination on the basis of class is common among women as well. The elite class women are more represented and given leadership positions. Other than elite class, the candidate with a political background and family are also given priority. It makes a compromise on the position of the skilled and deserving women. It does not provide space for the recruitment of new and fresh social classes. It also affects the democratic values of a nation, as the citizens expect a moralistic and liberal culture from the existing political system. The citizens view their government from the lens of political culture and want individual rights. When the government fails to do so, the beliefs, attitudes and opinions of citizens change and hence the political culture of a nation fails.

## **Islamic culture**

Islamic culture has a considerable impact on Pakistan's political culture, impacting many facets of governance, law, and societal standards. Since Pakistan's independence in 1947, the concept of an Islamic state, as envisioned by its founding fathers, has defined the country's political environment. In the Islamic political culture, there are many Islamic political parties that urge to implement Islamic laws and principles. These Islamic parties are called conservative and extremist even though they are talking about the same Islam on which Pakistan was founded. The citizens of Pakistan have different viewpoints about their Islamic political culture. Some people think that inclusion of Islamic law is necessary, some people take it as a conservative approach as it can limit the access to rights. As our neighbouring country, Afghanistan has limited the education and other representative opportunities for the women.

The people of Pakistan think so because there have been some conservative Islamic rulers in the history. For instance, when we trace the first wave of feminism in Pakistan which stems from the Zia era and his Hudood ordinance. His vision of Islamization influenced many social and feminist activists and provided the space for feminist movements in Pakistan. Therefore, some female citizens found Islamic political culture limited and unequal. Some politicians use the name and slogans of Islam to entice the Muslim nationalists and to gain personal victories. Therefore, it is said that the role of government is very necessary in shaping the political culture of Pakistan. Even, though Islam has provided all the rights and equality, it's the social and cultural beliefs that come in the way and suppose women to be weak and ineligible (Mujahid, 2014)

## **Female Political participation Pakistan**

Political participation encompasses various activities beyond voting, including speaking out, assembling, and participating in public affairs. It allows individuals to register as candidates, be elected, campaign, and hold office at all government levels. Female political participation is a significant milestone in female empowerment, allowing them to exercise their right to vote, run for office, and participate in political protests. It is also crucial for gender equality, peace, sustainable development and democracy, facilitating direct female involvement in public decision-making and ensuring accountability. The extent of female participation and access to decision-making is a significant indicator of gender equality because Females' right to equality cannot be touched without equivalence in the political decision-making process. Pakistan has a 50 percent female population, but because of patriarchy and gender inequality, women's political engagement is still low. Gender equality has not been achieved even with the quota system's increasing representation of men. Proper strategies and policies are required to enhance women's political participation and empower them. In order to increase the presence of women in decision-making bodies, notably in the fields of education, health, and the workplace, gender quotas are essential. But raising the female quota does not mean that all obstacles will be removed. Women play a limited role in the formulation of social and economic policies, and their exclusion from entities that make decisions does not boost their political participation or sense of ownership. Pakistan's politics still have a low proportion of female members because of social, cultural, and economic limitations. Female participation is characterized as individuals, not group members. The rate of female participation varies across different governments and provinces, highlighting the need for greater gender equality in politics. (Awan, 2016)

**Table 2**  
**Developments in women political representation 1947-2013**

Legislative assembly	Female representation from total seats
The first legislative assembly (1947 - 1954)	Only 3 percent seats
The second legislative assembly (1955 - 1958)	No representation
Zia era (1978 to 1988)	10 percent seats in national and 5 percent in provisional assembly
IN 1990, 1993, and 1997	No representation
Under military rule in 2000 Musharraf circulate a "Legal Framework Order"	17 percent seats in national and provincial assemblies and 33 representation percent at the local government level
2008 election	19.9 percent representation
2013 election	Women won 70 out of 342 lower house seats, representing 20.5% of the total, and 17 out of 100 upper house seats, representing 17% of the total.

Throughout history women in Pakistan has been underrepresented in political participation increase gradually with alignment of legal commitments to international community like Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the government has implemented a number of initiatives to increase women's political and electoral involvement. Furthermore the Pakistani Constitution of 1973 also had a significant impact on women's political advancement and few more laws that have supported women's political participation in the political system are the Election Commission (EC) Order of 2002, the Political Parties Order of 2002, and the National Assembly and Provincial Assemblies Allocation of Reserved Seats for Women and Non-Muslims Rules of 2002. Currently women make about 20% of the parliament, with 17 Senate seats and 70 National Assembly . In fact, political parties are now required under the "Elections Act 2017" to provide a minimum amount of female representation in local elections. The Act required political parties to **"ensure at least five percent representation of women nominees"** in choosing the best candidates for general assembly seats at the federal, state, and local levels. (Rabia Mushtaq, 2022)

Despite the Constitution's protections and the legislative framework improvement. Women's involvement in Pakistani politics has always been restricted, both on a provincial and national level. Women's participation in mainstream politics has been impeded by socioeconomic limitations, which have limited them to supporting positions within their political families in Pakistani politics. In the male-dominated power dynamics of national politics, gender biases and prejudices against female candidates remain in restricting women from actively participating in public life. Improving the execution of laws and regulations and changing unfavorable social norms are crucial for bringing about significant change in election systems. Women involved in politics at all levels must be empowered to take an active part in the political process by strengthening their leadership roles and creating a safer political environment so they may participate effectively in public life and decision-making.

### **Importance of women in leadership**

Attaining Leadership and decision- making power is very difficult for Pakistani women due to the male- dominated political structure, social and religious and culture constraints. To reduce the gender- based discrimination in all sector social, political,

cultural, economic and also in home and attaining equality women leaders are important because women are more well known about the issues, challenges of women and if women at leadership position and decision-making position, they make decision for the women and have ability to enforce these like Benazir Bhutto

### **Benazir Bhutto**

Benazir broke down boundaries between genders and established a model for women to participate in politics in the nation, becoming the first elected female leader in a patriarchal, male-dominated Muslim nation. Women all throughout Pakistan and the world were inspired by this achievement in and of itself. She led Pakistan as prime minister twice, from 1993 to 1996 and again from 1988 to 1990. In 1988, the prime minister gave women's legal rights and empowerment first priority. She established laws against domestic abuse and separate family courts, among other improvements. In order to provide fundamental necessities, also built maternity and child health centers in remote areas. In an effort to increase access and lower maternal mortality, she also highlighted family planning and reproductive health services. She also establishes The First Women Bank, aimed to empower and finance women in Pakistan. It offered micro credit, small business loans, and financial products, with a focus on underserved areas and rural communities. The bank also provided financial literacy programs and entrepreneurship training. Prime Minister Benazir opened Pakistan's first women's police station in 1993. These stations sought to meet the needs of women and offer a secure setting for reporting crimes. The program empowered women to seek justice and promoted a gender-sensitive approach to law enforcement by encouraging them to report cases. She also makes decision for women empowerment in many other sectors and promote gender equality and become role model for other women in Pakistan (Weiss, 1990)

### **Challenges to female leadership**

Female participation in politics face complex interplay of cultural norms, religious and structural barriers running from the very history of Pakistan. Cultural norms deeply enshrined in Pakistani traditional values often limit the women's role to domestic responsibilities and prohibit their participation in public and professional domains. Pakistan's marshal mindset, feudal system and structural barriers have greatly shaped these norms. Religious interpretations also play significant role in shaping societal norms and shaping gender roles. Structurally women encounter number of challenges such as economic dependency on male counterpart, lack of education and awareness, harassment, gender segregation and most importantly patriarchy. Male dominated mindset, running from Marshall history of Pakistan, is great hindrance in women's political participation and leadership. Social and cultural norms, along with limited awareness of political rights and financial issues exacerbate the situation. Despite these hurdles, there are some events even women break through class ceiling, specially in academic and public universities where female leaders navigate their path to leadership by overcoming the challenges in personal life and system.

### **Religious Challenges**

Many people think that west provide the women equal rights first but in reality, it is Islam. In Islam both genders are equal, however it is misinterpretation by male scholars because of biases and to get power. In male dominated society, Islamic laws interpretation have not received any significant theological education. Extremist Islamic political parties and military dictators have always created hurdles for female representation in politics and in society. women's religious affiliation strongly affect her political participation.



These hindrances are major cause of low female political and public participation in Pakistan as most conservative minds tend to hinder and oppose women's involvement. In many, tribes and rural areas, religious groups and feudal systems do not provide women with voting right. They injected this notion in women's mind that they are subordinate to men. In rural and tribal areas in Pakistan, extremist parties organize meetings to convince where representatives from different political parties signed an agreement to prevent challenges to election result. In such areas, women not allowed to submit their candidacy papers. Such conservative forces of society and traditions are significant barriers for women to be the part of leadership process.

Misinterpretation of Islamic Laws, particularly, related to the term "Sharia Law" is a great challenge. Religious parties and individuals create significant barriers for women, while religious extremist actively hinder women's leadership process. Islam, in a true sense, promotes equality, certain individuals impose limitations to the achievement of this equality. Qur'an and Sunnah prohibit the gender base inequality. Islam emphasizes that woman and man are treated equally without any expectation. In patriarchal society of Pakistan, where most of the interpretations are conducted by male scholars, allow the discrimination against women and are biased and only favor man.

### **Harassment and Discrimination against women**

Pakistan is the member of United Nations and comply with the mission to provide human rights under its charter. Pakistan has also ratified the Convention of Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women 1979 that aims to provide equal rights to women and girls and to eradicate gender base violence against them. Pakistan has also added its conditions in constitution, still women and girls are facing gender-based discrimination as primary obstacle to women's authority and participation in decision making process at various levels such as family, society and state. Harassment and discrimination are biggest issue in bureaucratic structure of Pakistan. Low number of women in political and bureaucratic level is perceived as potential barrier in national consolidation and societal progress. Male gender perceives that women as female gender have distinct political stand point because of their mother nature. This discrimination is biggest challenge at electoral process due to which political parties do feel hesitated choosing female candidates. Discrimination can also be felt within bureaucracy and political parties where female represents illustrated as individuals not as member and only for responsible for minor functions of party, not involved in decision making or leadership position.

On the other hand, sexual harassment is also the biggest enemy of female participation at political and administrative structure. There is no mechanism to protect women against harassment within and outside the political party and administration. Female administrators, candidates and voters also complaint about the harassment and threats they face during elections (Begam, 2023).

Harassment and sexual abuse are major reason of women's low representation in politics. Women politicians face abusive remarks and actions from the opposite parties. Bad language is used against them to demoralize them, breach their privacy and do their character assassination.

### **Lack of education and economic dependency**

Female face hurdles in politics due to low education level. Women in Pakistan, especially in rural areas lack educational facilities. They are not aware of their basic rights

and political process. Moreover, conservative societal structure is also against girl's education. As a result, female lack confidence for socialization and job opportunities for resources. Lack of education hinders the economic empowerment of women and without economic empowerment, women cannot be empowered politically. Without job, strong background and finances, they are dependent on male counterpart. Politics is commercial game. Political process requires economic resources and socialization process. It requires capabilities to increase funds for parties. Women lack of confidence and resources due to illiteracy cannot compete for leadership position. Lack of resources and financial dependence on male impact the decision-making power of female in family and society (Naich, 2023). They cannot participate in political processes without the permission of their males.

The women who are part of politics are mostly from powerful and wealthy background. They obtain leadership positions in inheritance. Such women cannot understand the problems and issue that poor and rural women face. As urban women have more access to educational and economic facilities than rural. Urban women have more access to health facilities than rural women. Urban women face less restriction due to traditional beliefs than rural women. Urban and rural women enter into labour market with different conditions and unequal terms. Choice for profession is also limited for rural women due to cultural constrains. As a result, they cannot make effective legislation and policies for all women as issues that poor and rural women face are particularly different from wealthy women.

### **Patriarchy and Socio-cultural challenges**

Social norms and cultural constrain are major hurdles in structure of Pakistani society. Pakistani society, by nature is patriarchal. In Pakistan's culture, women are only for giving birth to children for society and taking care of family. Out activities outside of house are male dominated. Women who work in public and participated in politics are considered as bad. They are not for politics and not supposed to lead any group or business. This narrative is deeply injected in mindset of women from a very early of Pakistani history. Women interacting to men and public consider as whore in some serious cases and often face issues of regarding breaking of marriage with husband. Women's only job is reproduction. Traditions dictate the female's main role as mother and house wife.

Politics is domain of men. Political process and system is patriarchal. Patriarchy can be defined as complete superiority and authority of men over women in society. It is major constrain in female political participation. Having no participation in decision-making in family also hinder their participation in public life. But the degree and nature of this oppression is not same in all the places and classes. Patriarchal structure is strong in rural and tribal areas of Pakistan. Female have limited rights for their lives to bring about positive change. This strong traditional based gender segregation in gender roles in the context of so-called traditional cultural values influence the progression, evaluation and contribution of women in politics. Traditional societies are dominated by the ideology that is related with a female space which assume that women should only play the role of mother and house wife. Such cultural and social norms have greater impact on rural and tribal women. These cultural, socialite and traditional values prohibits the female's education, voting right, mobility and even restrict them to come outside of house with female members of family in tribal areas.

Male dominated politics often ignore issues related to women and focus on using resources for their personal gain at the expense of women in society. These cultural values limit the female participation in decision making. On the other hand, male domination in

political structure has also discourage female in shape of lack of support, perception of female and misinterpretation of religious quotes. Even if a woman enters in politics, she will have to face number of different challenges to sustain her political career.

### **Conclusion**

Military culture along with feudal system and misinterpretation of religion by male leaders still haunting the female political participation in Pakistan. Firstly, dictatorship resist the women`s participation in politics and in current times, marshal mindset that inject the female mind with sense of inferiority and male minds with superiority, hinders the female leadership in Pakistan. Political culture theory provides the lens to identify the cultural, religious and patriarchal challenges for female, both in direct and indirect process of politics. Although, there has been some female political representatives in Pakistan and they have played a crucial role in the development. Benazir Bhutto was the first female Prime Minister, but she also faced assassination and could not complete her tenure. Along with developments the challenges and barriers still prevail in the society that impacts the overall performance of women in politics.

### **Recommendations**

Pakistan needs extensive reforms in bureaucratic, political and societal structure to boost the growth of female participation in politics. It requires multifaceted approach. Such as

- Strengthening of women`s parliamentary Caucuses to boost the female political participation.
- Enhance the capacity of female politicians through training and mentor-ship where young women can learn from the experience of senior female political leaders and can get inspiration from them.
- Improvement in gender-sensitive policies and mechanism to protect females from any discrimination, harassment or any harm.
- In bureaucratic structure, there should be implementation of inclusive policies that support the retention and empowerment of female leaders and promote gender equality.
- There is need to develop gender responsive budgeting to ensure equal distribution of all resources for both genders. Allocation of resources should be equitable for women`s leadership programs.
- Urgent need to address social norms and spread awareness for women`s participation in public offices and leadership positions.
- Educational facilities also be improved for increasing the female access to educational and professional development.
- True interpretation of Islam by religious scholars and educational systems is very important to understand the provision of women rights in Quran and Sunnah.

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