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Pressure Groups as a Hurdle to Women's Political Participation in Pakhtun Society

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ABSTRACT

There is widespread discrimination against women in the political system and with regard to their political empowerment. The harsh and strict traditions and practices of rural life generate significantly more suffering for rural women. This study was conducted in Wari, district Dir Upper, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan to evaluate the role of pressure groups in the political rights of women. Primary data regarding the objectives of the study were collected from 205 participants. Moreover, the relationship between the dependent variable (women's political participation) and independent variable, (Pressure groups) was examined through a Chi-square statistic test. It has been observed that Women's political participation has an inverse relation with pressure groups. The Pakhtun elders act as a pressure group against the rights of women, according to an investigation of the respondent's perspectives. The study concluded that starting developing general knowledge of women's rights and their contribution to national development by enlisting the help of political, religious, and social leaders to outlaw pressure group propaganda and promote women's involvement in political activities. putting into practice judicial rulings that election results should be canceled whenever there is evidence that women were not allowed to vote.

Keywords; Women, Politics, Pressure Group, Pakistan.

Introduction

The subjugation of women in cultural, political, and social arenas is reinforced by cultural patterns in the majority of nations. Due to the male-dominated society, men like husbands or fathers in the household make decisions. While women are confined to their houses and denied access to outdoor activities, men are seen as the legal representatives and authorities (Dagnino, 2018; Karim *et al.*, 2021; Makama, 2013). Due to regional customs and traditions, women are denied the right to vote. Additionally, in some regions, there is a well-organized anti-women movement in the form of pressure groups that prevent women from participating in politics, which results in subpar political engagement on their part (Bako & Syed, 2018; Naz & Ahmad, 2012; Shvedova, 2005; Stabile & Kumar, 2005). There is widespread discrimination against women in the political system and with regard to their political empowerment. The harsh and strict traditions and practices of rural life generate significantly more suffering for rural women. Male members

of society have higher statuses as a result, and they frequently hold more prestigious positions in politics than women(Gupta, 1987; Parish & Whyte, 1980)

The concept of "women's empowerment" indicated that women should be free in their choices, deciding jobs and self-worth; permission in terms of available resources; their right to manage their own lives both within public and private space, as well as the potential to influence social change in order to establish a highly just social and economic order at both the national and international levels (Cornwall, 2016; Gholipour et al., 2010; Richardson, 2018; Ullah, Ashraf, et al., 2021; Ullah et al., 2020). Women have nothing to do with politics, political activities belong to the public sector, women are naturally private sector employees, and women are inexperienced with politics. Sinha adds that the "Capabilities" issues are related to women and not to other marginalized groups because they are primarily built on the identification of the caste system, which women have historically been a part of. In Pakhtun civilization, gender is divided according to the political, religious, economic, and sociocultural systems(Baker, 2017; Moe, 2006; Norris, 1996). In addition, it is also observed that the majority of the religious leaders, Maliks, Khans, merchants, local government officials, and civil society representatives from many segments of Pashtun society are actively participating in political activities. Besides, women who took part in political activities were largely from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or civil society as these industries provide greater opportunities for women somehow. One of the primary causes for women's low participation in public areas is the problem of honor. Pashtun women who want to go to public places must first persuade their family to let them go, such as to college, university, or employment, and only then may she go. Such constrain have played a significant role in keeping women out of public settings, limiting their political involvement. Politics, on the other hand, is not a home-based activity, and public engagement is required for political involvement(Rahim, 2021).

The Present Study

Pakhtunwali and the inequitable socio-cultural framework, gender inequality in the political process, and political empowerment are considerably above the norm. Numerous factors, such as lesser literacy, ongoing disregard for women's rights, and the exclusion of women from freedom of expression and decision-making at the personal and societal levels have contributed to this issue. Women do not participate in legislative processes, which is a problem that affects their rights. Similarly, barriers to women's political empowerment, a lack of economic freedom, and incorrect interpretations of religion(Manganaro & Alozie, 2011). Thus the present study is designed to evaluate the following objectives;

Objectives of the Study

1. To evaluate the role of pressure groups on political participation.
2. To measure the association between pressure groups and women's political participation in Pakhtun society.

Methodology

This study was conducted in one of the Union Councils of Upper Dir namely Wari. Out of 363 registered female voters, a sample size of 205 was selected through a proportionally allocated method please see table 1 (Ullah, Shakir, et al., 2021). Moreover, data was collected through a closed-end questionnaire from the respondents. The collected data was analyzed through Univariate and Bivariate levels.

Table 1: *Proportional allocation of sample size in various villages in the study area*

Sr.	Village Name	Population	Sample size
1	Wari Payin	97	**55**
2	Wari Bala	83	**47**
3	Kakad	106	**60**
4	Das Kor	77	**43**
Total		**363**	**205**

Conceptual Frame Work

The present study consists of two variables namely pressure group and women's political participation.

Table 2: *Conceptual framework of the study*

Independent variable	Dependent variable
Pressure groups	Women political participation

Results & Discussions

In Pakistani society, the prevalence of pressure groups not only contributed to social instability but also increased gender-based discrimination which negatively affects women's rights and empowerment. Table 3 disclosed that about two third 71.2% of the participants opined that women in Pakhtun society are not allowed to work for their basic rights. In addition, the presence of pressure groups restraining women from political participation was disclosed by the majority 84.4% of the respondents. These findings are also supported by Naz (2011) who stated that in Paktoon society Pakhtun code of conduct ware mainly shaped by Pakhtunwali. Different studies reveal that the Pakhtun code of life leaves very little room for the independence of women and the guarantee of their equal rights. They said that because Pakhtun culture is built on centuries-old customs, Pakhtun women are unable to exercise their legal rights.

The findings of the study further elaborated social pressure negatively affected women's participation in outdoor activities said 95.1% of the study respondents. The previous report of IDEA (2002) also explored that the promotion of the current social balance is required by the culture of male supremacy. Some particular interest groups are opposed to women participating in politics because it disturbs the equilibrium. These organizations use coercion to stop social change. The Code of conduct for Pakhtun, 'Pakhtunwali' has a long history. The investigations also show that the Pakhtun code of life leaves very little room for the freedom of women and the guarantee of their equal rights. They added that because Pakhtun society is built on centuries-old traditions, Pakhtun women are unable to exercise their legal rights. Notwithstanding, the majority 68.8% of the respondents disclosed that the waste interest of the pressure group will be inversely affected by women's empowerment. As the work of Sarho (1997) claims that patriarchy is a male-dominated social structure in which men purposefully exert pressure on women in settings including the family, the ideology, social structure, and politics, through cultural norms and values such as customs and traditions, law, and rituals. The distribution of labor, decent manners, and education have all been neglected areas for women. Women are consistently in inferior positions as a result of this rigidity and inequity. Moreover, more than half of the study participants were 52.2%. Pakhtun culture negatively affects women's amalgamation and unity, 52.2% of respondents stated yes while 41.5% of respondents stated no and 6.3% of respondents had no idea about it. Pakhtun culture as lobbying organizations. According to Naz and Ahmad (2012), women are marginalized in every aspect of Pakhtun society. Because women are excluded from politics and the decision-making process, there are more instances of this in the political system. Women have been excluded from political engagement and from being empowered. This pressure prevents Pakhtun women from finding a way to unite and integrate. The study also highlighted the respondents' perceptions about pressure organizations that support conservatism in regard to women's empowerment and also actively suppress women's decision-making in order to maintain their influence in this area. In addition, more than two-thirds 77.6% of the respondents stated that conservatism about women was enhanced by pressure. Likewise, 76.6% decision-making power of the women to withstand oppression over women empowerment.

Due to Pakhtunwali and the inequitable socio-cultural framework, gender inequality in the political process and political empowerment is considerably above the norm. Numerous factors, such as lesser literacy, ongoing disregard for women's rights, and the exclusion of women from freedom of expression and decision-making at the personal and societal levels have contributed to this issue. Women do not participate in legislative processes, which is a problem that affects their rights. Similarly, barriers to women's political empowerment, a lack of economic freedom, and incorrect interpretations of religion.

Table 3: *Participants' Perception towards pressure groups*

S. No	Statements	Yes	No	Don't Know
1	Women in Pakhtun society are not allowed to speak out about their fundamental rights.	146 (71.2)	58 (28.3)	01 (0.5)
2	Low participation of female in outdoor activities are because of social pressure in the society	195 (95.1)	10 (4.9)	0 (0)
3	Women empowerment in Pakhtun community negatively affected by pressure group	173 (84.4)	22 (10.7)	10 (4.9)
4	Pressure groups opined that women empowerment will adversely affect their self-interest	141 (68.8)	48 (23.4)	16 (7.8)
5	Elders of the community had a role in pressure group	113(55.1)	78(38)	14(6.8)
6	Norms and values of the Pakhtun restrain female from empowerment	107 (52.2)	85 (41.5)	13 (6.3)
7	Conservatism pertaining women empowerment was triggered by Pressure group	159 (77.6)	33 (16.1)	13 (6.3)
8	Denial of decision machining and maintaining oppression of female was due to pressure group	157 (76.6)	32 (15.6)	16 (7.8)

The prevailing societal structure of male supremacy stresses social equilibrium. However, the struggle and motivating women's political participation or bringing alteration of existing social structure is against the interest of interest groups in the study area. It is also observed that some of the groups adopt different pressure tactics to restrain women's active participation in the political realm. Results of the primary data regarding the correlation between study variables are presented in table 4. It has been inferences from the association that pressure groups in the study observed highly significant (P= .000) with dependent variable i.e. women's political participation. These results are supported by Sarho (1997) disclosed that patriarchy is a male-dominated social structure in which men purposefully exert pressure on women in settings including the family, the ideology, and the social structure of that society and culture. The distribution of labour, decent manners, and education have all been neglected areas for women. Women are consistently in inferior positions as a result of this rigidity and inequity.

Thus, it could be concluded that prevailing culture and values in the study area serve as driving forces for the promotion of pressure groups for obtaining their personal motives. In addition, these organizations employ propaganda methods to limit such activity that assures female political involvement. Interest groups use religion, conventions, and traditions, as well as leadership at local level, to uphold their ideals and prevent changes in the shape of female political engagement. Notwithstanding, Pashtun society is a traditionalist when it comes to women's appearance in public settings, they are less likely to participate in political activities. Individuality is not a prevalent idea in Pashtun civilization since women's behaviours are associated with household stability in Pashtun society, limiting them to households exclusively. Activities outside the house are not regarded to be conducted by women in Pashtun society due to religious and cultural constraints. Despite all of the challenges and obstacles, women throughout Pakistan's Pashtun community have continued to strive for their right to be heard in society and in politicians.

Table 4: *Pressure Groups & Their Association with Women's Political Participation*

Pressure Group	Women Political Participation			Total	Statistics
	Yes	No	Don't know		
Yes	149 (72.7%)	24 (11.7%)	0 (0.0%)	173 (84.4%)	P=149.986
No	0 (0.0%)	22 (10.7%)	0 (0.0%)	22 (10.7%)	χ^2 = (0.000)
Don't know	0 (0.0%)	7 (3.4%)	3 (1.5%)	10 (4.9%)	

Conclusion

In district Dir upper, union council Wari, the current study set out to ascertain the status of women's political engagement and their empowerment in Pakhtun society. Analyzing the unique pressure group environment, it has been determined that pressure groups significantly hinder women's empowerment. These gangs prevent women from moving around safely and freely, and they are forced to stay inside their houses. Pressure groups and local authorities work together to advance conservatism, undermine women's rights, and prevent women from speaking out in favour of political independence. The study suggested implementing such actions to empower women in Pakhtun culture in order to reduce gender inequality and guarantee women's political involvement. Starting developing general knowledge of women's rights and their contribution to national development by enlisting the help of political, religious, and social leaders to outlaw pressure group propaganda and promote women's involvement in political activities. putting into practice judicial rulings that election results should be canceled whenever there is evidence that women were not allowed to vote. The common consensus is that women have no place in politics, that political activities are related to the public sector while women naturally belong to the private sector, and that women are unaccustomed to politics. Women are the focus of the "Capabilities" issues, not other oppressed groups whose issues are primarily founded on the identification of a caste system in which women have historically been kept in inferior positions. The Pakhtun elders act as a pressure group against the rights of women, according to an investigation of the respondent's perspectives.

Limitations & Study Forwards

As it clearly mentioned in the method section that this study was confine to four villages of Union council Wari, District Dir Upper that may be limited the generalization of the study. In addition, the study find out the gap that further study on national level are supposed to be carried out to explore other factors that negatively affected women political participation.

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