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Women's Education and Its Impact on their Political Empowerment in *Malakand Division Khyber Pakhtunkhwa*, Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

Aim of the Study: Gender equality in education and women empowerment are essential to achieving United Nation Sustainable Development Goals 2030**.** The cumulative empirical evidence in the global north shows a strong connection between education and women increased political participation and empowerment. This study empirically examined the changing status of women education and their political empowerment in the socio-cultural context of *Malakand Division Khyber Pakhtunkhwa* (KP), Pakistan. This study's findings and a large body of literature reveal that women's education empowers them and enhance their political participation.

Methodology*:* This study employed quantitative research methods and techniques. The data used in this paper come from a sample of 700 respondents selected through disproportionate sampling technique. Survey method i.e., self-administered questionnaire was employed for the collection of data.

Findings and Conclusion: Drawing on quantitative evidence, the study suggests a vivid and measurable improvement in women access to education over the last decade. The study findings show that the changing status of women education in *Malakanad Division*, KP has increased their participation in political activities.

Keywords: Education, Empowerment, Political Participation, Feminism, Gender Equality.

Introduction

Gender equality and empowering women are among the key themes in the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals 2023. It is an established fact that education is a key towards socio-economic and political development of a nation (Kayani et al, 2017). There are empirical evidences that show that societies where literacy rate is low, are struggling to achieve development. He further mentioned that a society progress is not possible where both male and female are not getting equal opportunities of education. Ullah (2018) asserted that women education is one of the major factors for women empowerment and improving their role in the uplift of society. It is pertinent to mention here that in male dominated society, education is one of the essential tools with women to play their part in the socio-

cultural and political development of the society. Education empowers women because of their subdued and suppressed status in the society particularly in the traditional and male dominated societies. For instance, in Pakistan, women face a lot of problems in the way of their development. Ahmad (2009) asserted women have lesser mobility and find less opportunities to change their status and play their role in the development of the society. The situation is worst particularly in rural areas, where women having no opportunities to get education. It is imperative to assert that uneducated women are not aware of their roles and rights. In the last one and half decade, due to the changing status of women education, the political participation of women has significantly increased. However, there is lack of empirical evidences on the role of women education in their political participation. This study, thus is an attempt to investigate the changing status of women's education and its impact on their political empowerment in *Malakand Division* Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Why this Issue?

Globally, women remain underrepresented in political activities and positions. The case of Pakistan is no exception. In Pakistan women participation in political activities is neither encouraged by families nor accepted by the larger society, especially in the rural setups. Nevertheless, recent times have seen a noticeable change in women political participation, particularly in the urban centers in many technologically developing countries in including Pakistan. Women access to education is believed as the key force of this change and transformation. Like other technologically developing countries, women's education in Pakistan during the last few decades has received considerable attention which has in turn empowered women politically (Basu, 2009; Zia, 2009). Women access to education has improved their political participation, even in rural areas of Pakistan, (Noureen, 2011). She concluded her study by asserting women are aware about their political rights. Alam (2011) asserted that education provides a super highway for women's political empowerment by increasing autonomy of women to cast vote, contest election, ensure political participation, political expression and political demonstration, power politics, authority, decision-making and implementation regarding their actions, needs and priorities which make them independent and empower. Like other parts of the country, women's education has been improved in *Malakand Division.* This has positively affected women political participation. For instance, in *Malakand Division*, in the last local government election, women were actively involved in casting of votes, contesting election, carrying political campaigns and even as representative bodies against various posts range from councilors to district *Nazim*. In addition, Jan and Akhtar (2008) review that education gifted women with lucrative and worthy decisions like participation in political affairs, holding an authoritarian status, casting vote, awareness about basic political rights and making their association to work for the welfare of deprived and exploited women. The study thus, affirms that education an important tool for creating awareness among women political participation, and representation at the local and national body government which positively affect women's status and empowerment.

Objectives of the Study

This study was carried out with following key objectives.

- To investigate the improving trends of women's education in creating political awareness among women;
- To study the impact of education on women's political participation.

Hypotheses of the Study

This study was guided by the following hypotheses.

Hypothesis-I

H_o: Education has no association with women's political awareness.
H_A: Education has significant association with women's political awareness.

Hypothesis-II

H_o: Education has no association with women's political participation and empowerment.
H_A: Education has significant association with women's political participation.

Methodology

The main concern of this study was to find out the impact of the changing status of women education on women political participation in *Malakand Division* Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Pakistan. This quantitative study covered seven districts of *Malakand Division* Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The data were collected from a sample of seven hundred (700) across the seven districts (see table-1). The sample size was selected through disproportionate sampling technique. Survey method i.e., self-administered questionnaire was employed for the collection of data. The analysis of the collected data has been done with the help Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. In the univariate analysis, we used frequency, percentage, measures of central tendency (mean, median and mode), and measures of dispersion (variance, standard deviation and standard error of mean). However, the primary information is also supported by secondary arguments in univariate analysis. Similarly, the bi-variate analysis has been used for testing the proposed relationships between women education and their political empowerment and political participation. Similarly, empirical findings skimmed for this study have been engaged throughout the results and discussion.

Table-1: *Sample Distribution of the study's respondents*

S/N	Districts	Sample Size	Method
1	District Malakand	100	
2	District Dir Lower	100	
3	District Dir Upper	100	**Stratified Random**
4	District Chitral	100	**Sampling**
5	District Bunir	100	**Disproportionate**
6	District Swat	100	**Method**
7	District Shangla	100	
Total		**700**	

Analysis and Discussion

The focus of the analysis of primary data is to find out the relationship between the changing status of women education and their political empowerment. In order to know the impact of women education on their political empower, we have built our analysis on the following main dependent and independent variables.

Table-2: *Education and Women's Political Awareness*

Responses (Categories)	Frequency	Percent	Mode	Median	Mean
1. Awareness about vote casting	92	13.1			
2.Awareness of carrying political campaign	96	13.7			
3. Awareness to select leader	96	13.7			
4. Awareness of making their own party	197	28.1			
5. Awareness of contesting election	103	14.7	4	4.00	3.69
6. Awareness about political gathering	105	15.0			
7. Awareness about political agenda	11	1.6			
Total	**700**	**100.0**			

Table 3: *Education and Women's Political Awareness (Descriptive Statistics)*

N Statistics	Variance Statistics	Std. Deviation Statistics	Std. Error of Mean	Skewness Statistics	Std. Error of Skewness
700	2.664	1.632	.062	**-.**115	.092

Table-2 & 3 shows the relationship between the changing status of women education and its impacts on women's political awareness. The statistics in the table shows that today due to the changing status of education, women participation in different political activities such as vote casting, political campaign, contesting election, political gathering have significantly increased. For instance, 92 (13.1%) respondents considered education is a motivating factor for them to cast vote. This is line with what Morrisson and Jütting (2004) have asserted. They stated that women turning out ratio during election were very low in developing countries however due to education and easy access to mass media, this rate has enormously increased even in low-income nations of the global north. Similarly, when it comes to demonstrating political campaign, women participation in such campaign has increased due to education in developing nations of the global south (Bari, 2006). The study findings also reveal that 96 (13.7%) participants agreed that women participation in political campaign has significantly increased. The data in the table further show that 96 (13.7%) participants opined that women know how to select a leader and party which was previously based on family politics. This is supported by Kabeer (1999), Alkan (2009), Morna and Mbadlanyana (2011) who asserted that education makes women enable to decide and choose a political party. It is pertinent to mention that even today women are aware of the fact that how to make their own party. In this regard, 97 (28.1%) respondents told that we are thinking to launch our own party that works for the issues and challenges confronted by women. The similar findings have been supported by Htun and Jones (2002) who asserted education has enabled women to take decisions that are in the best favor of them.

Similarly, the data in the table also show that 105 (15%) participants opined that education helps women to mobilize and hold political gathering, make associations and represent their rights. At the macro level, Grown, Gupta, and Khan (2003) have examined:

> *"The bivariate relationship between educational enrollment for girls and proportions of national legislatures those are female for 119 countries in the world, using the most recent available data. They find a modest positive correlation only between level of girl's secondary education and women's political representation. Using the same data, we ran correlations among various levels of girl's educational enrollment and completion rates for approximately 75 to 100 developing and transitional countries. We find a modest correlation (.21 for enrollment, and .24 for completion) only between girl's primary school enrollment or completion, and proportion of women in parliament".*

It is noteworthy to state here that a small portion of participants i.e. 11 (1.6%) described that education supports the political rights of women and helps in formulation of agenda necessary for their empowerment. Longwe (2000), Hust (2004), Lopez-Claros and Zahidi (2005), asserted that political parties have largely viewed women's wings as tools to support their agendas, and while getting education, women have made tremendous efforts to improve their wings or to mainstream them in political party. Thus, the crux of the argument here is that the level of political participation and political gathering of women continues to be improving as compared to past because of the fact that there have been marked improvements in the general rate of literacy and political awareness among women.

Education and Women's Political Participation

As mentioned earlier and reiterated here again that women remained underrepresented in global political activities. The case of Pakistan was no exception. However, due to the improvement in women literacy rate, situations get improved even in some countryside such as *Malakand Division* of KP. The table-3 depicts the statistics that affirms the aforementioned statement.

Table-4: *Education and Women's Participation in Politics*

Responses (Categories)	Frequency	Percent	Mode	Median	Mean
1. As vote caster	127	18.1			
2. As political campaign leader	156	22.3			
3. As political party member	135	19.3			
4. As supporter	169	24.1	4	3.00	2.99
5. As political worker	103	14.7			
6. Any other	10	1.4			
Total	**700**	**100.0**			

Table 5: *Education and Women's Participation in Politics (Descriptive Statistics)*

N Statistics	Variance Statistics	Std. Deviation Statistics	Std. Error of Mean	Skewness Statistics	Std. Error of Skewness
700	1.910	1.382	.052	**.**065	.092

Table-4 & 5 explicates that education enables women to take active part in politics and become politically empowered. In this connection, 127 (18.1%) participants believed that in the past, women had no choice in political decisions and even did not cast vote but today education has enabled women to participate in politics and represent the nation at national and international levels. Despite fact that the Constitution of Pakistan ensures equal status to women and provides protection for their rights including the rights to vote and contesting elections. This is in line with the findings given by Dufour and Giraud (2007), Adams and Ferreira (2009) who argued that during the last few decades education empowered women politically and women ratio of casting votes in the recent election was above expectations. Moreover, 156 (22.3%) respondents stated that education enables women to participate in politics and work as political campaign leader and fight for their due rights. Similarly, 135 (19.3%) respondents argued that education made women independent to work as political party members. Education is road to development and women's political achievement, as a significant number of participants i.e. 169 (24.1%) described that education encourages women's political participation. Similarly, 103 (14.7%) participants believed that education encourages women to act as political worker which positively affect their political status. This is line with what Bari (2006) and Zafarullah and Huque (2006) has quoted:

> *"Educated women are aware of forming forum of women political workers and women from several parties joined solidarity fronts with women's rights groups in Punjab and Sindh. They actively collaborated with civil society organizations in their advocacy efforts relating to reserved seats for women and their empowerment".*

The above responses and empirical findings reveal that education is a key determinant for increasing women political participation. As it is mentioned that a decade before women involvement in political activities was very low due to lack of opportunities of education for them. Thus, the crux of the argument is that women participation in politics has increased due to education.

Bivariate Analysis

In bivariate analysis, we used directional and symmetric measures, correlation and regression in order to establish relationship between education and women's political empowerment.

Directional and Symmetric Measures

Directional and symmetric measures are the important tool for finding and establishing relationship between variables. The directional measures include, phi, contingency coefficient, Cramer V, Lambda and Goodman & Kruskal-tau whereas the symmetric measures consist of Gamma, Somer's d, Kendall tau-b and Kendall tau-c. The value of directional and symmetric measures range from -1 to +1, however, plus

value and close to one demonstrate positive relationship between independent and dependent variable (Newson, 2006).

Table-6: *Directional and Symmetric Measures*

Level of Measures	Tests	Value	Asymp. Std. Error	Approx. Tb	Approx. Sig
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	0.63[*]			.000
Nominal by Nominal	Contingency C	0.63[*]			.000
Nominal by Nominal	Cramer's V	0.63[*]			.000
Nominal by Nominal	Lambda	0.65[*]	.015	.550	.000
Nominal by Nominal	Goodman & K.	0.67[*]	.018	.550	.000
Ordinal by Ordinal	tau Gamma	0.66[*]	.018	.578	.000
Ordinal by Ordinal	Somers'd	0.81[**]	.018	.578	.000
Ordinal by Ordinal	Kendall's tau-b	0.82[**]	.036	.578	.000
Ordinal by Ordinal	Kendall's tau-c	0.82[**]	.016	.578	.000
N Valid Cases	700				

(The values of directional and symmetric measures are P=.000[**]<0.05 less than .05 and purifies the association between education and women's political awareness)

The values of directional measures (phi, contingency coefficient, cramer v, lambda and Goodman and Kruskal-tau) are positive and close to one (+1) which indicates positive association between education and women's political awareness. In this regard, Newson (2000) and Newson (2006) validate that positive value of directional measures shows significant association between predictor and predictand variables. Similarly, the values of symmetric measures indicate that education has significant relationship with women's political awareness. The symmetric measures are positive which indicate that with the increase in education, women's political awareness will also increase as Newson (2000) stated that significant value of .000[**] indicates the presence of relationship between regressor and regressed variables which provide statistical support for the verification of alternative hypothesis.

Pearson Correlation

Correlation measures the association and strength of relationship between or among variables, its value ranges from -1 to +1, zero means no association, negative value express negative association and positive value demonstrate positive association (Reitsma et al., 2005).

Table-7: *Correlation*

IV&DV	Measure	Education	Women's Political Awareness
Education	Pearson Correlation	1	0.90[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	**700**	**700**
Women's Political Awareness	Pearson Correlation	.90[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	**700**	**700**

([**]Correlation is highly significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed), r (700) =0.90[**]; p<.05. r^2=0.81)

(Since 81% of the variance is shared, the association is obviously a strong one)

The numerical value of correlation i.e. (p=.000<.05) indicates that both education and women's political awareness are interdependent i.e., strong relationship existing between education and women's political awareness. In this regard, Székely et al. (2007) suggested that positive correlation shows highly significant relationship exists between predictor and predictand variables. In addition, 81% shared variance is found between education and women's political awareness. It has been concluded from the results of correlation that education encourages women's political awareness.

Regression

Looking to the nature of the variable, we used regression to check the dependency of dependent variable on independent variables. The numerical values of beta and "t", Unstandardized and standardized coefficient explicates the impact of education on women's political status.

Table 8: *Regression Analysis of Education and Women's Political Awareness*

Regression Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Regression	
	B (Intercept)	Std. Error	Beta (Slope)			F	Sig.
DV (Constant)	.23	.012		5.38	.000	781.2	.000
IV Education	.112	.002	.879	67.11	.000		.000

(The values of R: 0.879 and R^2:0.772 are highly significant at the 0.05 level of significance (2-tailed),Predictor (x): Education, and Predictand (y): Women's Political Awareness)

In addition, the linear regression in the form of P-P Plot shows that the observations are perfectly positively increasing chronologically which tells the future dependency of women's political awareness on the basis of education.

Directional and Symmetric Measures

Directional measures are phi, contingency coefficient, Cramer V, Lambda and Goodman and Kruskal Tau which analyze qualitative data. Whereas ordinal measures include, Gamma, Somer d, Kendall Tau-b and Tau-c which analyze ordinal data in order to make relationship between independent and dependent variables.

Table-9: *Directional and Symmetric Measures*

Level of Measures	Tests	Value	Asymp. Std. Error	Approx. Tb	Approx. Sig
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	0.75**			.000
Nominal by Nominal	Contingency C	0.75**			.000
Nominal by Nominal	Cramer's V	0.75**			.000
Nominal by Nominal	Lambda	0.70*	.010	.650	.000
Nominal by Nominal	Goodman & K.	0.64*	.007	.650	.000
Ordinal by Ordinal	tau Gamma	0.66*	.010	.702	.000
Ordinal by Ordinal	Somers'd	0.83**	.018	.702	.000
Ordinal by Ordinal	Kendall's tau-b	.0.88**	.035	.702	.000
Ordinal by Ordinal	Kendall's tau-c	.0.80**	.015	.702	.000
N Valid Cases	700				

(The values of directional and symmetric measures are P=.000**<0.05 less than .05 and purifies the association between education and women's political participation)

In the table directional measure include phi, contingency coefficient, Cramer's V, Lambda and Goodman and Kruskal's tau. The range of numerical value of directional measure is -1 to +1. The directional measure is nominal in character i.e. apply to qualitative attribute. The symmetric measures include, Gamma, Somer's d, Kendall-tau-b and kendall-tau c which indicates ordinal measures and similarly, like directional measure it also ranges from -1 to +1. The numerical values of phi, contingency coefficient and Cramer's v suggested that there is strong relationship between education and political participation/ empowerment. The numerical values of the mentioned tests is 0.75** which indicates that both independent and dependent variable are correlated i.e. education empowers women participation in politics. The numerical value of Lambda indicates high association between education and women political participation/empowerment. Similarly, the p value for Lambda and Goodman and Kruskal tau appear as p=.000<.05 which shows strong association between the cause-and-effect variable. In addition, the symmetric measure Gamma is the sub component of chi-square test and value of p=.000<.05 which

measure and demonstrate that symmetric measure further furnishes the relationship between education and women's political participation/empowerment. Similarly, Somers' d is statistically significant; it shows that there are about 83% +/- 2% more concordant pairs than discordant ones, excluding ties on the independent variable (Gautret, Fort, & Mellier, 2000). In addition, the Kendall tau-b and tau-c gives fairly strong positive correlation between independent and dependent variables. The numerical value of the mentioned test statistically interprets as p=.000<.05 highly association between education and women's political participation which authenticate the alternative hypothesis of the study.

Pearson Correlation

Correlation is the association, relationship, interaction and interdependency between two variable (Benesty et al., 2009). The researcher in this study takes education as independent variable and women's political participation as dependent variable to establish the relationship.

Table-10: *Correlation*

IV&DV	Measure	Education	Women's Political Participation
Education	Pearson Correlation	1	0.920^{**}
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	**700**	**700**
Women's Political Participation	Pearson Correlation	$.920^{**}$	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	**700**	**700**

(**Correlation is highly significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed), r (700) =0.920^{**}; p<.01. r^2=0.85)

(Since 85% of the variance is shared, the association is obviously a strong one)

The Pearson product moment or coefficient of correlation is used to establish the relationship between education and women's political participation to validate the alternative hypothesis. The numerical value of coefficient of correlation is $.920^{**}$ which indicates positive and strong association between the two variables. Moreover, positive correlation means that both independent and dependent variables vary in the same direction i.e., if education increases, women political participation will also increases. The correlation further authenticates the alternative hypothesis in manner (**Correlation is highly significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed), r (700) =0.920^{**}; p<.01. r^2=0.85; Since 85% of the variance is shared, the association is obviously a strong one). It has been concluded that the numerical values of directional and symmetric measure, and Pearson Product Moment supported the alternative hypothesis which shows that education has strong association with women's political participation and empowerment.

Regression Analysis

In order to verify the hypothesis and make it a theory, the researcher used linear regression to predict the impact and dependency of women's political empowerment on education. The numerical value of beta, t and F shows higher dependency of dependent variable on independent variable which further highlights that women's political participation is dependent on education. The deterministic model shows that there is exact relationship between DV and IV if education increase women's political participation and empowerment will tend to increase and vice versa.

Table-11: *Regression Analysis of Education and Women's Political Participation/Empowerment*

Regression Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Regression	
	B (Intercept)	Std. Error	Beta (Slope)			F	Sig.
DV (Constant)	.136	.030		6.765	.000	654.2	.000
IV Education	.678	.005	.891	96.61	.000		.000

(The values of R: .891 and R^2:.793 are highly significant at the 0.05 level of significance (2-tailed), Predictor (x): Education, and Predictand (y) Women's Political Participation/Empowerment)

The researcher also utilized normal P-P Plot of regression standardized residual to observe the future impact of women's political participation and empowerment on the biases of education. The observations are in the middle of linear regression and increasing on the basis of observed and expected probability, which shows that in future, education will help to promote women political participation and empowerment.

Conclusion

It is noteworthy to conclude that this study examined an important link between women education and its impacts on their political empowerment. The study concludes and identifies a strong link between women's education and their political empowerment. The multilevel analysis suggests that women's increased access to education has empowered women in political domain. Unlike past, when women in the region were neither encouraged to cast vote nor allowed to contest election, the educational shift (women's increased access to education) has not only to capacitate to cast vote, but has also liberated them to contest elections. This change-women's political empowerment and participation is vividly evident from the local bodies' elections in 2021 in which women, for the 1st time, zealously participated in political settings and have astonishingly won several seats. This change is significant in the context of KP but may not be celebrated as "goal achieved" as a lot and tireless concerted efforts are needed to ensure gender equality in political participation in the area.

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