Women in Democracy: The political participation of women

Perempuan dalam Demokrasi: Partisipasi politik perempuan

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Abstract

Political participation of women has improved significantly in many western democracy settings; in Asian countries however, women are still left behind in terms of political participation. This article explores political participation of women in a gender-segregated society where women have disproportionate social status in a strongly patriarchal culture and political system. Femininity, political socialization, political interest, political efficacy, and patriarchal political culture were taken as predictors to assess the political participation of women. Structured interview schedules were administrated to 414 women voters from two randomly selected Tehsils, i.e. Jhang and Gujar Khan, of the Punjab Province in Pakistan. Data from the interviews were processed using Stepwise Multiple Linear Regression. The results revealed that predictors explained 58.3% of the variance in the political participation of women voters in Punjab. However, two constructs of femininity: morality and loyalty were not loaded in the model. The dominant, socially designed attributes that women should possess in Pakistani society are childbearing and rearing, love and care for parents/husband, homemaking, submissiveness, passivity, and dependence. The home/private sphere becomes the ideal, normative space for women to operate. On the other hand, men are characterized by decision making, production, independence, assertiveness, violence, and wider interaction. Thus, men are associated with the public and the public sphere. These feminine & masculine ideals are the basis of social practices and social relations in Pakistani society. These are internalized, taken for granted, and embedded into the culture, social structure, and social organization of Pakistani society.

Keywords: femininity; political socialization; political interest; political efficacy

Abstrak

Partisipasi politik perempuan telah meningkat secara signifikan di banyak negara demokrasi barat; namun di negara-negara Asia, perempuan masih tertinggal dalam hal partisipasi politik. Artikel ini mengeksplorasi partisipasi politik perempuan dalam masyarakat yang dipisahkan gender di mana perempuan memiliki status sosial yang tidak proporsional dalam budaya patriarki yang kuat dan sistem politik. Feminitas, sosialisasi politik, kepentingan politik, kemanjuran politik, dan budaya politik patriarki diambil sebagai prediktor untuk menilai partisipasi politik perempuan. Wawancara terstruktur dilakukan terhadap 414 pemilih perempuan dari dua Tehsils yang dipilih secara acak, yaitu Jhang dan Gujar Khan, dari Provinsi Punjab di Pakistan. Data dari wawancara diproses menggunakan Stepwise Multiple Linear Regression. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa prediktor menjelaskan 58,3% dari varians dalam partisipasi politik pemilih perempuan di Punjab. Namun, dua konstruksi feminitas: moralitas dan loyalitas tidak dimuat dalam model. Atribut dominan, yang dirancang secara sosial yang harus dimiliki perempuan dalam masyarakat Pakistan adalah melahirkan anak dan membesarkan, mencintai dan merawat orang tua / suami, kerumahtanggaan, kepatuhan, kepasifan, dan ketergantungan. Lingkungan rumah / pribadi menjadi ruang ideal dan normatif bagi perempuan untuk beroperasi. Di sisi lain, laki-laki dicirikan oleh pengambilan keputusan, produksi, kemandirian, ketegasan, kekerasan, dan interaksi yang lebih luas. Dengan demikian, laki-laki diasosiasikan dengan publik dan ruang publik. Cita-cita feminin & maskulin ini adalah dasar dari praktik sosial dan hubungan sosial dalam masyarakat Pakistan. Ini diinternalisasi, diterima begitu saja, dan tertanam ke dalam budaya, struktur sosial, dan organisasi sosial masyarakat Pakistan.

Kata kunci: *feminitas; sosialisasi politik; kepentingan politik; kemanjuran politik*

Introduction

Political participation of women has increased significantly, particularly in terms of voting. It is even practicing in many of the western industrialized democracies, including the United States of America (USA), United Kingdom (UK), and Europe in general (Currell 2005, Burns 2007, Paxton et al. 2007, Coffe & Bolzendahl 2010, Bericat & Sánchez Bermejo 2016). However, women still fall behind men in many forms of political participation (Inglihart & Noris 2003, Gidengil et at. 2004). One of the popular explanations of gender gaps in political participation is the desire to participate in politics (Burns et al. 2001). This desire justifies the willful investment of resources (time, money, and skills) necessary for political participation (Verba et al. 1997). It also predisposes the interest, efficacy, knowledge and political partisanship (Beauregard 2014). This article tries to explore the political participation of women in a gender-segregated society where women have disproportionate social status in a strongly patriarchal culture and political system.

Politics and political activities are still considered as male domain and thus, putting woman aside. Femininity puts women out the political activities and casts them out of the political context (Cole & Sabik 2010). People do not want to have women in politics and take politics as a masculine domain (Romer 1990, Henderson –King & Stewart, 1994, Rudman & Fairchild 2007). Smith et al. (2007) explained that voters prefer masculine traits on candidates to run certain political offices. On the other hand, women candidates face discrimination when entering into the realm of masculine profession, including politics (Connell 2005, Heldman et al. 2005). Furthermore, voters expect politicians and leaders to have masculine traits instead of feminine. Masculine traits are more required to run higher offices (Rosenwasser & Dean 1989, Huddy & Terkildsen 1993a, 1993b, McGinley 2009).

Voters draw upon perceived political ability and personal character while evaluating a candidate for some political offices (Hacker 2004, Louden & McCauliff 2004). Rudman & Kilianski (2000) pointed out the categorization of political issues as "masculine" and "feminine". Healthcare, women rights, and social welfare are taken as feminine, while military, defense, crime, and economy are considered as masculine issues (Herrnson et al. 2003, Heldman et al. 2005, Han 2007, Major & Coleman 2008). Voters generally perceive feminine issues less important than masculine ones (Rosenwasser & Seale 1988). Emotion, warmth, honesty, and compassion are stereotypically taken as feminine; while strength, aggressiveness, independence, and confidence are masculine traits (Banwart & McKinney 2005, Connell 2005, Banwart 2010). Femininity and feminine characteristics are not coherent with politics and political activities, hence lowering the level of women political participation at electoral and representation.

Political trust is a very strong predictor of political participation (Inglehart and Norris, 2003). It ensures political opinion and marks political concerns to the authorities (Van Deth & Elff, 2004). A lower level of trust results in disadvantages in terms of political concerns and less influence on political decision making. It has been found that men are more interested in politics as compared to women (Burns et al. 2001, Chhibber 2002, Franzer & MacDonald 2003). Women are less interested in the politics and they do not find it effective and bear less knowledge regarding politics (DelliCarpini & Keeter 1996, Verba et al. 1997, Van Deth 2000, Gidengilet al. 2004). Women are less politically informed, they do not take interest and feel less effective in the United States (Verba et al. 1997). Women's unusual interests in politics or political activities have far-reaching social and political consequences. This can threaten the democratic tradition and sustainable development of any country.

Traditionally, the low political participation of women is associated with gender socialization, both at childhood and adult level, and is also considered an important factor in determining the level of political participation (Rapoport 1981, Verba et al. 1997, Lovenduski 2005, Burns 2007). Women are socialized to gender roles that are submissive, passive, subordinate, and more private-oriented, while men are socialized to adopt leadership, public, autonomous, and self-reliant roles (Brownmiller 1984, West & Zimmerman 1987, Fox & Lawless 2004). Men and women develop different notions, thoughts, and expectations about life courses including politics. These learned attitudes during the

childhood level remain and last during the entire life course of women and result in different political attitudes and subsequent political differences (Alwin et al. 1991, Hooghe & Stolle 2004, Kenny & Fridkin 2007). These socially learned experiences may result in a lower level of political participation of women (Rapoport 1981, Atkeson & Rapoport 2003).

Another explanation of women's low political participation is a strict division of public and private sphere it also depicted in the theory of politics (Okin 1979, Coole 1988, Pateman 1989). Women are supposed to be in custody of the domestic/private sphere. They have to take care of children, males, and elders of the family (Batalova & Cohen 2002, Knudsen & Waerness 2008). Family responsibilities consume much of the time and potential of women and they are left with little to invest/think of public sphere including politics and political activities (Rotolo 2000, Garcia-Albacete 2014). These explanations affect women political participation during the whole political process right from the decision to take part in politics, to party selection of candidates, and to voter's choice to vote for a women candidate (Paxton et al. 2007).

Patriarchal political culture is an important determinant of women participation. Masculine politics signify over-representation of male in all public spheres including politics (Connell 2005). Men hold prime positions in political parties, hold important public offices in the government, and monopolize decision making in the public sphere. They largely set the rules of the game and standards for politics Political parties also become determinant in women political participation. Political parties play a very vital role for anybody to become part of politics. For a political office, support of the parties is very much important (Lovenduski 1998, Caul 2001, Sanbonmatsu 2002, Kunovich & Paxton 2005, Kittilson 2006, Masiha et al. 2018). Women in top leadership are significant factor in facilitating other women candidates in terms of their numbers in the party or their ability to hold important positions in the political party (Caul 1999 2001, Tremblay & Pelletier 2001, Kittilson 2006). Researchers found women quota important for the inclusion of women in politics (Dahlerup & Nordlund 2004, Dahlerup & Friedenvall 2005, Paxton & Hughes 2007).

Women have a very weak position in Pakistani society and have very little say in political affairs. Their gender/sex roles place them at the subordinated position. They have very little knowledge of politics, political parties, and political affairs of the country (UNDP 2005, Naz 2011, Khan 2011). Shaheed et al. (2009) pointed out socio-cultural and economic barriers as the key factors that restrict women's political participation. Another study concluded that sex segregation, illiteracy, and lack of political awareness are the key factors of women's low political participation in Pakistan (Naz & Waqar 2012). Women are generally restricted to take part in politics and exercise their political rights. Many religious political leaders and parties are against women's political participation and it is very difficult to counter those in Pakistani society (Zia 2013).

Pakistani political system exemplifies over-representation of men in all segments of politics. Men hold important positions in political parties, government offices, and other important offices. This hegemonic occupation of public sphere leaves minuscule space for women participation in politics. National Commission on the Status of Women (2014) stated that political parties are exploiting the women on the reserved seats. These women do not know their constituencies and have less interaction with voters. Party leaders do not share important information with women members. They do not consult or take their advice. Although there are women with a strong position in the party, they can only be consulted on limited issues. It was highlighted that female parliamentarians are considered inferior as compared to their male counterparts. Their funds are spent on the recommendations of male party leaders. They do not have a say or adequate presence in the parliament. Keeping this situation in view, this study is designed to find out the factors to predict women political participation in Pakistani society. Based on the above discussion, the following model was developed for the study:

On the basis of that conceptual model, the researchers developed following hypotheses: 1) political socialization predicts the political participation of women, 2) political interest predicts the political participation of women, 3) political efficacy predicts the political participation of women, 4) femininity predicts the political participation of women, and 5) patriarchal political culture predicts the political participation of women.
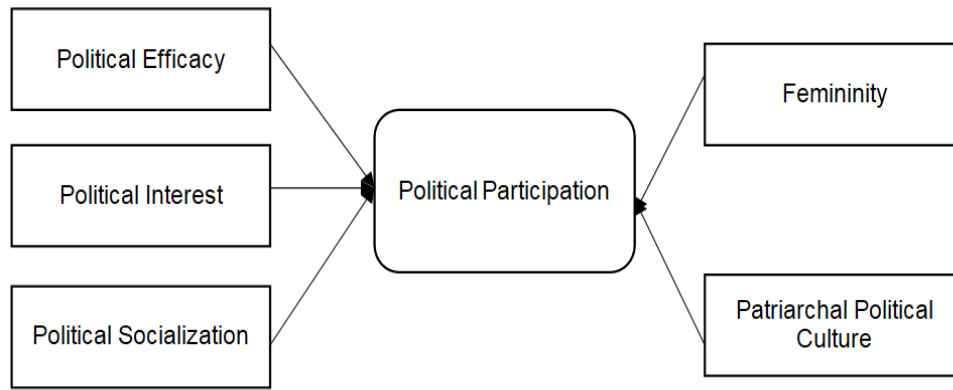
Figure 1.
Model Political Participation

Research Method

Analysis for this research is based on the interviews with 414 women voters living in two cities; and tehsils of Jhang and Gujar Khan of Punjab Province, Pakistan. The mean age of the participants was 29.52 years with SD 7.70. Marital status of the participants was identified in four categories: single, married, widowed, and divorced. Married participants comprises 57% (n =236) of the participants; followed by 29.71% (n =123) single, 11.35% (n =47) widowed, and 1.9% (n =08) divorced. Majority of the participants (61.6%, n =311) were literate up to graduation, with little involvement in income generating activity (19.8%, n =82); however, most of the participants were homemakers (80.19%, n =332). Participants were living predominantly in the joint family system (78.7%, n =326). Participants living in nuclear family comprise 17.6% (n =73); while those living in extended family comprise 3.6% (n =15). Mean household monthly income of the participants was Rs. 29,898.5 (USD 305.08).

Participants showed their political affiliation with different political parties (79.2%, n =328); however, 20.8% (n =86) of the participants did not identify themselves with any political party. The number of participants who cast their votes in the last general elections held in 2013 were 58.4% (n =242).

Participants were asked of whom suggested them to cast votes. The results showed that 41% (n =194) of the participants cast their votes on the suggestion of their male family members (husband, brother, or father), while 11.5 % (n =48) of the respondents independently cast vote for candidate/political party of their own choice.

The interviews with the respondents were conducted by female enumerators hired for this study. Informed consent was obtained from the respondents before the start of the interviews. Every respondent was briefed about the purpose and utilization of the data obtained. They were free to discontinue the interview if they want to. The participants were assured of the confidentiality of the information obtained.

Femininity was designed to access the degree to which women adhere to traditional femininity. The current scale includes eight factors with 35 normative statements with 4-points Likert type scale. For the present study, numbers of items for each factor were: Morality, 5, .82: Loyalty, 5, .83; Leadership, 5, .87; Purity, 5, .89; Competitiveness, 5, .81; Beauty, 5, .87; Autonomy, 5, .86.

Political Socialization (PS) measurement was specifically constructed for this study. The scale has 4 normative statements in which score 1 shows strong disagreement while 4 indicates strong agreement. The scale covers having political discussion with family, friends, educational organization/ community, and watching political content on the television. The scale has 0.8 value of alpha.

Political Interest (PI) of the respondents was measured by the scale developed for this study. The scale has 5 normative statements regarding the interest of respondents in politics. The scale is 4-points Likert scale. Score 1 points out strong disagreement while 4 shows strong agreement. The

Cronbach's alpha for this scale was 0.802. Political Efficacy (PE) scale was developed by Niemi and Craig (1991). This scale has been adapted for the current study. The scale has 5 normative statements regarding beliefs about the perceived effectiveness of women. The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was 0.767.

Patriarchal Political Culture (PPC) scale was developed for this study to measure the masculine political culture in Pakistani society. The scale has 10 normative statements regarding the suitability of males for politics on 4-point Likert scale. The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was 0.83. Political Participation (PP) scale was also developed for this study whereas, Van Deth (2001) comprehensively discussed about political participation in detail. The scale covered both conventional and non-conventional political participation. The scale has 4 normative statements regarding the involvement of respondents in political activities. The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was 0.80.

Results and Discussion

This study deployed stepwise multiple linear regression analysis to explain the variance of women political participation. The predictors include eight femininity attributes and four political behaviors. The regression model fulfilled the major assumptions of multiple linear regression. An analysis of the standard residuals showed the data contain no outlier (Std. Residual Min = -3.34, Std. Residual Max = 3.25). VIF test confirmed that multicollinearity was not a concern (VIF of Model; P^1=2.43, P^2=1.22, P^3=1.40, P^4=2.34, P^5=1.35, P^6=1.23, P^7=1.51, P^8=1.26, P^9=1.26, P^{10}=1.23). The data also met the assumption of independent errors (Durbin-Watson value = 1.568).

Table 1.
Stepwise multiple linear regression predicting the variance of women political participation

Predic-tors	Standardized Coefficients (β)									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
H1(PS)	.61***	.60***	.57***	.38***	.34***	.34***	.33***	.32***	.31***	.31***
H2(FL)	-	.28***	.26***	.26***	.25***	.22***	.21***	.19***	.19***	.17***
H3(FP)	-	-	-.21***	-.19***	-.19**	-.18***	-.14***	-.15***	-.14***	-.15***
H4(PI)	-	-	-	.25***	.23***	.24***	.23***	.239***	.22***	.22***
H5(PE)	-	-	-	-	.14***	.12***	.13***	.13**	.14***	.13***
H6(FC)	-	-	-	-	-	.10***	.11**	.14**	.10**	.05**
H7(FD)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-.10**	-.14**	-.13**	-.13**
H8(FB)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.11**	.12**	.12***
H9(PPC)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-.07**	-.08**
H10(FA)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.08**
R²	.375	.457	.505	.529	.545	.555	.563	.573	.577	.583
ΔR²	-	.082	.043	.030	.016	.010	.008	.010	.005	.005
F-test	245.3	171.5	135.4	114.1	96.9	83.9	74.0	67.3	60.8	55.8

Note: p<.05*, p<.001**, p<.000*** , Durbin Watson=1.568, Standardized Residuals (-3.34 – 3.25), N=414; VIF of Last Model (H¹=2.43, H²=1.22, H³=1.40, H⁴=2.34, H⁵=1.35, H⁶=1.23, H⁷=1.51, H⁸=1.26, HP⁹=1.26, H¹⁰=1.23); Excluded Variables: Fem Morality and Fem Loyalty;

Abbreviations:
PS=Political Socialization, FL=Fem Leadership, FP=Fem Purity, PI=Political Interest, PE=Political Efficacy, FC=Fem Competitiveness, FD=Fem Dependency, FB=Fem Beauty, PPC=Patriarchal Political Culture, FA=Fem Autonomy

The findings revealed that political socialization (β=.31, p<.001), political interest (β=.22, p<.001), political efficacy (β=.13, p<.001) and patriarchal political culture (β=-.08, p<.01) have significant contribution. This explained the variance in women political participation. Femininity with its different attributes: leadership (β=.17, p<.001), purity (β=-.15, p<.001) competitiveness (β=.05, p<.01) dependence (β=-.13, p<.001), beauty (β=.12, p<.001) and

autonomy (β=.08, p<.01), predicted the political participation of women. However, two constructs of femininity were not loaded. Overall model explained 58.3 percent variance of political participation of women voters (F= 55.8, p < .001, R^2 = .583). The current research assumes that femininity with its constructs, political interest, political socialization, political efficacy, and patriarchal political culture are the major predictors of political participation in Punjab, Pakistan.

Socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of the respondents confirmed the current scholarship on individual resources required for political participation. The results of the present study are in accordance with academic literature available on the socio-economic resources driving and motivating individuals to take part in politics (Verba & Nie 1972, Verba, Nie, & Kim 1978, Verba, Schlozman & Brady 1995, Rosenstone & Hansen 2003, Armingeon 2007, Schlozman, Brady & Verba 2012, Henn & Ford 2014). However, the current research put forth an interesting fact that majority of the respondents (i.e. 58.4%, *n* =242) cast their votes during the last election and they were motivated by their male members of the family including father, brother and/ or husband. The fact highlights gender organization of women in Punjab. The women are allowed to cast their votes but mostly under the influence or upon the suggestions of the male members of the family.

The study also finds that political socialization, political interest, and political efficacy are significantly predicting variance in women political participation. The data signify the gendered relationships between men and women in Pakistani society. The results confirmed that women's engagement in private sphere is the gender norm in Pakistani society. Gender socialization and strong adherence to traditional gender roles instruct women more for home and home-related activities and less prepared for the public domain (Norris 2002, Pattie & Seyd 2003, Rosenstone & Hansen 2003, Dalton 2004, Armingeon 2007, Dalton 2008).

Conclusion

The findings point out that femininity with its constructs of leadership, purity, competitiveness, dependence, beauty, and autonomy are also contributing while explaining the variance of women political participation; however, purity and dependence are negatively related to participation. Since the stereotypical image of women signifies physical attractiveness and beauty, they are reared and socialized to cover their sexuality and physical features. They are supposed to follow the family and accompanied by a male family member when they are out of the house. Religious dictum to cover physical beauty and observe veil is also reinforcing this cultural practices. The strong observance to the cultural codes is very much essential, particularly in rural areas. Therefore, women of the study area were very much convinced that physical attribute, being a private matter, has nothing to do with a public sphere like politics or political activities. Academic literatures on gender and politics assert that feminine attributes of women, namely submissiveness, dependence, and passiveness, are incompatible with political activities (Jackman 1994, Philips 1998, Arneil 1999, Hollows 2000, Rai 2003, Holmes 2008, Bari 2010).

The dominant, socially designed attributes that women should possess in Pakistani society are childbearing and rearing, love and care for parents/husband, homemaking, submissiveness, passivity, and dependence. The home/private sphere becomes the ideal, normative space for women to operate. On the other hand, men are characterized by decision making, production, independence, assertiveness, violence, and wider interaction. Thus, men are associated with the public and the public sphere. These feminine & masculine ideals are the basis of social practices and social relations in Pakistani society. These are internalized, taken for granted, and embedded into the culture, social structure, and social organization of Pakistani society.

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