

## SOCIO-CULTURAL IMPEDIMENTS TO WOMEN POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT IN PAKHTUN SOCIETY

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### ABSTRACT

*Equality in political participation is one of the major priorities for the advancement of women throughout the globe. However, women in Pakistan are living in quagmire of centuries old customs and traditions which barricade their political empowerment. The study investigates into various socio-cultural impediments to women political empowerment in pakhtun society. The study has been conducted in Tehsil Dargayi Malakand District Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Pakistan. The data has been collected from 200 graduates women through structured-interview schedule using purposive sampling method. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches have been used and data has been analyzed in the form of simple frequency and percentage while hypotheses have been tested with the help of chi-square test. The data reveals that there exist various socio-cultural impediments including discriminatory social structure, patriarchy, feudalism, pakhtunwali which decreases women political empowerment. It has been recommends that equal opportunities in politics, women political representation, flexibility in pakhtun codes and positive role of mass media will improve women political empowerment in pakhtun society.*

**Keywords:** Women, Political Empowerment, Social Impediments, Cultural Impediment, Pakhtunwali

### BACKGROUND

Women constitute almost half of the world population but are discriminated in various spheres of life and are more subjected to problems in many aspects because of gendered social structure (Naz, 2011; Khan, 2011; Daraz, 2012). The fact is evident that women are among the vulnerable segment in society (Bari, 2005). However, women's political empowerment is not a goal in itself but it is instrumental in stimulating the society for political and social empowerment which would further stimulate the overall development of society (Mahmood, 2004:151). Women's political empowerment means the autonomy of women to cast vote according to their consent, contest election, political participation, political expression and political demonstration, power politics, authority, decision-making and implementation regarding their actions, needs and priorities (Ibrahim, 2011).

Nature as well as the intensity of women's political participation and empowerment varies from country to country and region to region, the main reason is the variation in the socio-cultural and economic setup (Naz et al, 2011:45). In this regard, women are suffering from numerous vulnerabilities throughout the globe that predominantly includes gendered setup and discrimination, while the third world is on the verge of more catastrophes in this context (Naz, 2011; Khan, 2011; Daraz, 2012; Ibrahim, 2011). The position of women is secondary and they do not have their say in the economic and political affairs (Naz, 2011 and Khan, 2011). The employment and political activities are totally referred to sex and gender where men are assigned the superior positions to that of women. Women are not interested or do not take interest in the country's politics and to make any contribution to it. They have no knowledge about the political parties and the political system of the country (UNDP, 2005). In Pakistani society, women's political empowerment is obstructed by three distinct interconnected categories; socio-economic, societal structure and religious argumentation (Shaheed et.al, 2009:26). Each of these also prevents women from developing political skills and experiences. At the most physical level, the heavy burden of children bearing/rearing, hampers women's entry to

the political arena. Their lack of financial resources negatively effect on decision making powers within both family and community (Aderinwale, 1997). The cultural norms of Pakistani society promote the segregation and seclusion of women, often justified through the use of religion. As like, the Council of Islamic Ideology (a constitutionally created body) has been responsible for some of the most retrogressive opinion regarding women's legal and social status create immense problems in general and political participation in particular. For example, religiously formulated positions that argue for gender segregation and female seclusion (*purdha*) limits women's access to resources in general; restrict from the simple act of casting vote and their candidature (Shaheed et al, 2009:26-29).

The above mentioned discussion palpably indicates that disparity in the field of politics and political empowerment of women is deeply prevalent throughout the globe. In addition, the problem has worsened consequences in the rural areas where the code of life is mostly traditionally driven. Such traditions assign more power to male segment of the society who are savoring more privileges in the field of politics and powers (Akutu, 1997). In this context, the target area of this study i.e. a traditional *Pakhtun* society is also driven under the centuries old customary law of *Pakhtunwali* (Naz, 2011 and Khan, 2011). In *Pakhtun* society gender has been a major source of division along with socio-cultural, religious, economic and political lines. The problem of gender discrimination in politics and political empowerment is high because of *Pakhtunwali* and sex segregated socio-cultural setup. The problem spring from number of reasons as lower literacy rate, continuous negligence of women rights with special emphasis on the freedom of expressions and role in decision making both at household and societal level. The fact is that women are not the part of legislature done on account of their rights. In addition, male dominance, lack of economic emancipation, and religious misconception are the factors, which obstruct their political empowerment (Ali et.al, 2010). This sort of negligence is having a negative impact on national development. While development is a process necessarily united all factions of society and leading towards more and more participation in social, economic and political activities (Saleem, 2010:25). Consequently, women are compelled to live miserable lives under the strictly defined rules of *Pakhtunwali* and centuries old conservative conception of male among *pakhtun* of the research area.

### THE PROBLEM RESTATED

The concept of women role and status vary in Pakistan (Shah, 1989) but there is consensus that their access to services and political empowerment is restricted (UNICEF, 1988: 69). Women in Pakistan have always been considered as second class citizens because of socio-cultural, economic and legal obstacles. Although half of the Pakistani population consists of women folk but their political empowerment is not encouraging. It is a fact that any efforts or programs taken for the uplift of society would be futile without women's representation and empowerment. As argued by Saiyid (2001) that women's deprivation in regard of socio-legal rights would be the failure of state and government.

In some districts of *Khyber Pakhtunkhwa* in April, 2010, social pressure and harassment were employed to prevent women from contesting or voting in the elections by religious groups and political parties, resulting in loss of approximately 650 seats. Consequently 32 union councils in Lower *Dir*, 38 in *Kohistan*, 20 in *Battagram*, 19 in Upper *Dir*, 11 in *Swabi* and 8 in *Mardan* had neither women representatives nor constituencies of political empowerment (Asif, 2008:20). Women's political empowerment were obstructed by religious group in the District of *Sawabi* and *Mardan*, Women were again denied their electoral rights in the name of local traditions and customs while in some cases the local authorities grew into an organized anti-women movement (Mirza, 2002:33-35).

In Pakistan, especially in *pakhtun* society the same situation are faced by women in regards of power politics because of centuries old tradition and others socially constructed realities (as like socio-cultural setup, lack of women economic emancipation, male dominant political and legal structure and mass media. The aforementioned socially constructed realities also hindered women's political participation, mobility and empowerment (Naz, 2011). Women's political empowerment is the prerequisite in achieving sustainable social, cultural, economic and political security among all individuals (Anita, 2010). As Naz (2011) augment that the power and politics in the world is in the hands of men, this hold is not restricted to the political chair rather it is true whether one considers party leadership, elected office, appointed officers or the policy making levels of the federal and state

civil services. The under representation of women at the political level is the outcome of masculine hold over the economic and other power resources (Aslam, 2002). Further, the socialization process and the institutional organization also reinforce male dominancy and patriarchy among female (Basu, 2005). The cultural values and misinterpretation of traditional and folk wisdom that women being a delicate sex are not in the position to bear the burden of political activities over their shoulders and could not perform political duties. Particularly in the third world countries women participation in the political affairs is mostly linked with socio-cultural, economic and religious environment which is male oriented and that ultimately restrained women participation (Khan, 2011). The 1973 constitution of Pakistan, Article 25 guarantees equality of rights to all citizens irrespective of sex, race and class and empower the government to take affirmative action to protect and provide women rights (Beal, 1994). Although, Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah said, "No nation can rise to the height of glory unless their women are side by side with them, we are victims of evil customs. It is crime against humanity that our women are shut up with in the four walls of the houses as prisoners. There is no sanction anywhere for the deplorable condition in which our women have to live; you should take your women along with you as comrades in every sphere of life" (Begum, 1987). Furthermore, the socio-cultural constraints such as patriarchal setup of society, discriminatory customs and traditions, and the blatant exploitation of religion as well as the reluctance of those in power to take fruitful affirmative action to encourage women and ensure their empowerment that worsen situation (Reyes and Socorro, 2002).

In Pakistani society in general and in *Pakhtun* society in particular women is lagging behind in different spheres of life. As argued by Farooq (2003) a woman is denied from her own identity. Just like other spheres of life, women involvement in politics is not so encouraging. As for women involvement in politics, their participation, contribution and empowerment is concerned, *Pakhtun* women are deprived from majority of their basic political rights. Women in *Pakhtun* society have not equal access to political activities i.e. leadership, voting, contesting election, election campaigns, freedom of expression, freedom of will, decision making and decision implementation etc (Bose and Rossi 1983). Several factors are contributing in the increasing oppression and discrimination of women in political participation and empowerment, these are illiteracy, ignorance, lack of awareness, economic dependency, patriarchy, gender sensitivity, sex segregation, lack of security, back biting, unfavorable self-image, lack of interest and false conscious about self-etc. While government is also responsible which could not provide equal opportunities to both male and female to take part in the communal activities and to ensure their contribution in every sphere of life for the sake of national development?

In the nutshell, this research study predominantly focuses on the socio-cultural setup of *Pakhtun* society in regard of women's political empowerment. In addition, the ethnographic details of the research area primarily contribute to the process of disempowerment of women in their political sphere that brings them to a pathetic and miserable livelihood.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To identify various social factors depriving women from political participation
2. To study cultural barriers which obstruct women's political empowerment in *pakhtun* society
3. To investigate *Pakhtun* code of life as impediment in women's political empowerment

### HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

- I. Social impediment decreases women's political participation.
- II. Traditionalism and patriarchic system decreases women political empowerment.
- III. *Pakhtun* code of life and its practices reduces women's political participation.

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Feminist philosophy has been utilized as a theoretical model for the present study. Feminism primarily focuses on gender equality and equal rights. But with the passage of time it emphasizes over women's rights and domination. It was because women were subject to extensive deprivation in almost all walks of life, which used to spend miserable life. Feminism is also a political movement having the spectrum

of numerous thoughts while concentrating the subordination and suppression of women as well to formulate and develop policies in order to get rid of this situation.

In this regard, liberal feminism has been undertaken to justify the problem discussed in the current research. It has been formulated as the theoretical framework in the present research that has been linked with both the primary and secondary information regarding the issue. Basically the ethos of enlightenment was just like a milestone that gave birth to liberal feminism.

The philosophy of liberal feminism as argued by Ritzer (2000) expresses that women may claim equality with men and augment that gender inequality is a result of patriarchal and sexist patterning of division of labor, and that gender equality can be produced by transforming division of labor through re-patterning of key institutions—law, work, family, education, and media. The liberal philosophy asserts that equality of male and female is possible through political and legal reforms. It mainly focuses on issues of women's ability as they could maintain equality with men through it (Naz, 2011). To them, women have capability of achieving equality with men, but such kind of change need alteration in structure of society. As supported by Bell (1984), liberal feminist mainly focuses on issues including reproductive and abortion rights, sexual harassment, voting, education, "equal pay for equal work," affordable childcare, affordable health care, and bringing to light frequency of sexual and domestic violence against women. In the light of such conception, same is the case in the area under study where women are almost thoroughly deprived from the mentioned rights and particularly right to cast vote and contest election. The founders of Liberal feminism mainly focus on eradication of institutional bias and implementation of gender-balanced laws (Naz, 2011).

The liberal Feminists worked on basic philosophy of women's liberation and equality as stated by Jagger (1993), "Liberal feminists accept basic organization of our society, but hold that women do not yet share same rights as men that is ultimately applicable in the research area. For Wollstonecraft, considering women inferiority as based on her biology and intellect is not just and right. It seems to be found in their inferior education and inequality found in formal and informal laws. In this regard, need of reforms and modification in old values remain primary concern for liberal feminists. Liberal Feminism is primarily concerned with giving equal and same opportunities to both men and women in education (Daraz, 2012 and Naz, 2011). Women shall also have easy and equal access to law and law enforcement agencies, voting and property rights. Besides, liberal feminists stress on equality in job opportunities for both men and women. They are demanding for powerful position for women in both governmental and private sectors. For them, discrimination is not an outcome of laws, rather male dominancy and male oriented values create such discrimination against women (Naz, 2011; Daraz; 2012; Khan, 2011). With the passage of time, liberal feminists emerged as a unified group, representing women as a whole. In evidence to the mentioned factual information regarding liberal feminism and its ideology, the fact is patent that women in the area under study comprises of the defined scarcities by women. The current study has been conducted in a tradition *Pakhtun* society where the real picture of *Pakhtun* code of life (*Pakhtunwali*) is deeply prevalent. Studies show that *Pakhtun* code of life has narrow space for women's liberation and equal rights provision (Naz, 2011 and Khan, 2011). Besides, they want to bring changes in the form of law and its implementation in gender balanced way. The situational analysis of Liberal feminists resembles to that of the community under study where institutional network and codes of life are patriarchic and role of traditionalism (*Pakhtunwali*) governs life of female. Such males drove institutions and male interpreted laws (both formal and traditional) that tend to make women inferior and subordinated where the overall decisions are made by males including women's political affiliation and empowerment. In addition, women are deprived to contest election and cast the vote and savor their formal and legal rights. The liberal philosophy provides a base of information and technique for bringing changes and implementation of rules within society which can make women as equal citizens to male counterparts. This kind of approach is very much productive in *Pakhtun* society under study. In addition, the relational analyses of liberal feminism's philosophy and ethnographic structure of the research show a strong correlation with each other that justifies the position of researcher to select liberal feminism as the theoretical framework of the study.

## METHODS AND PROCEDURE

The research focuses to empirically analyze various socio-cultural constraints to women's political empowerment in pakhtun society. This research study was conducted in *Tehsil Dargai*, in relation to two union council's i.e. union council *Dargai* and *kharkai* respectively. While actual population of the target community is 38907 both male and female (DSR, 2010). Data has been collected through structured-interview schedule from 200 graduate females' respondents. Keeping in view the specified criteria of respondent's i.e. graduate female and age limit of 20 and above, the total target population was 373. The researcher has utilized purposive sampling technique. Data has been entered through SPSS and analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively with statistical application of chi-square test in order to verify the concerned hypotheses and judge their validity. Besides, the research has been approached through a theoretical discussion while selecting liberal feminism because of compatibility with current study.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Results and discussion of the study have been made under various heading as suitable according to the objectives and theoretical framework of the study.

### Social Impediments to Women's Political Empowerment

The gender role ideology is used as an ideological tool to place women with in the private arena of home as mother and wives. This is one of the vital factors that strongly obstruct women political empowerment globally. The boundaries between public and private in regards of women lives project something negative to women politics. Although, the gender role ideology is not static rather remain in flux while intersecting with economic, social and political systems of a particular society. Women continue to be defined as private across countries which result in their exclusion from politics (Bari, 2005:4).

**Table 1: Social Impediments to Women's Political Empowerment**

Social Impediments	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
<i>Pakhtun</i> Social Structure	29	14.5	14.5
Stereo Typical Image of Women	21	10.5	25.0
Gender Segregation	29	14.5	39.5
Religious Misinterpretation	32	16.0	55.5
Illiteracy and Ignorance	28	14.0	69.5
Women are for domestic chores	35	17.5	87.0
Strict <i>Purdha</i> system	26	13.0	100.0
Total	200	100.0	

Male domination of formal political structure is another factor that hindered women political empowerment (Bari, 2005:4). In addition to this the socio-cultural dependency of women is one of the key factors to their political participation in public political domain (Connell, 1987). Women economic dependency and lack of access to ownership of productive resources limiting the scope of their political work (Eisenstein, 1984). As like supported by (Naz & Rehman, 2011:65), in *pakhtun* code of conduct (*Pukhtunwali*), there are certain traits like *Tor* (stigma), *Peghor* (satire), which strongly discourage women political empowerment. The following table shows impediments to women political empowerment. According to *Pukhtoonwali* (*pakhtun* code of conduct) women are either for home or for grave. In this regard, 29 (14.5%) data shows that *Pakhtun* social structure strongly discourages women's political empowerment, where 21 (10.5%) respondents were of the opinion that stereotypical or predetermined images in the mind of women especially in *Pakhtun* belt also restrict women's political empowerment. In addition to this, 29 (15.5%) data correlates gender segregation as of one of the impediments. In this context, 32 (16%) data shows that religious interpretations, self-made *Mullahs'* argumentation on Friday sermon and traditional religious knowledge also hinder women's political empowerment. In such a run, illiteracy and ignorance of women folk regarding their rights and duties in relation to politics hinder women's political empowerment. As the data reveals

which is collected from respondents 28 (14%), politics is a commercialized game which needs money as well as economic resources but women in *Pakhtun* society are totally dependent and not economically emancipated. In this context, 35 (17.5%) data shows that women are only restricted to the four walls of their houses and engage with domestic chores which adversely affect women political empowerment. *Pakhtun* culture is whole-heartedly based on customary laws, while *pakhtun* women follow their tradition and never deviate from the existing order and norms. In this regard, *Purdah* system is one of the prevalent norms in area where deviation from these norms create further complexities of security measures and problems. Further, 26 (13%) data highlights strict *Purdah* system as well as security problems in regard of *pakhtun* women have negative impacts on women's political empowerment.

### Application of Chi-Square Test

With respect to the mentioned observations and analysis of different variables in tables along-with the strong support of respondents and the application of Chi Square test, the hypothesis-1 has been proved as valid and authentic. The results of the applied test palpably show that the independent variables are in a strong connection and association with dependant variable that are favoring to influence each other in the mentioned settings of *Pakhtun* society in accordance to the socio-cultural constraints to women's political empowerment. The value of chi-square test is  $P=0.000^{**} < .05$ , with the Chi-square value  $\chi^2 = 2.364$  and the degree of freedom value D.f. =6, shows highly significant association among the independent and dependant variable. In nutshell it has been concluded that social impediments decreases women's political empowerment in *Pakhtun* society.

### Patriarchy and Women's Political Empowerment

Patriarchy as a system of male domination shapes women relation in politics. It transforms male and female into man and women and construct the hierarchy of gender relation where man is privileged (Eisenstein, 1984). In addition to this, Adrienne rich defines patriarchy " a familial- social, ideological, political system in which man by force, direct pressure or through rituals, tradition, law, language, custom etiquette, education, and the division of labor, determine what part women shall or shall not play in which the female is everywhere subsumed under the male" (Sarho, 1997). Patriarchy is the norms practiced throughout Pakistan and especially in *pakhtun* society that influence all other dimension of social life. The table explicitly explain that 33 (16.5%) women has no such power to take initiative of political activities because power politics is best suited to man instead of women. 47 (23.5%) data shows that in patriarchal structure man is more superior instead of women in politics. The table elucidate 31 (15.5%) of respondents were of the view that decision relating to her carrier, selection of life partner, vote casting, political affiliation and contesting of elections as well as political demonstration is man oriented in nature. 22 (11%) data shows that women in *pakhtun* areas are considered as like second class citizens and not enjoying the same status as like men in power politics. In addition to this 33 (16.5%) represents that women role and status is confined to domestic activities and they are not allowed to public sphere to participate in political activities. In this regard 15 (7.5%) and 19 (9.5%) respondents demonstrate that feudalistic nature of society influence women's political empowerment in *pakhtun* society. (See table below)

**Table 2: Patriarchy and Women's Political Empowerment**

Patriarchy and Women's Political Empowerment	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
In <i>Pakhtun</i> Social Structure Women have no power	33	16.5	16.5
Males Superiority Over Women	47	23.5	40.0
Males Hold Over Decision Making Process	31	15.5	55.5
Women are Consider as a Second Class Citizen	22	11.0	66.5
Women are for Home or for Grave	33	16.5	83.0
Women Dependency over Men	15	7.5	90.5
Feudalism	19	9.5	100.0
Total	200	100.0	

### Application of Chi-Square Test

The statistical analysis in the form of chi-square test express as ( $P=.000^{**} < .05$ , with the Chi-square value  $\chi^2 = 1.234$  and the degree of freedom value D.f. =6), the relationship of dependant and independent variables is highly significant that validates the proposed hypothesis.

### Pakhtunwali and Women's Political Empowerment

*Pakhtun* being a different nation practice the specific and centuries old codes, which direct, redirect and channelize their activities in daily life. *Pakhtunwali* restricts women political empowerment to high extent. *Pakhtun* culture is mostly male dominated that only ensure male power and authority. In *pakhtun* code of conduct women are considered delicate and home is considered as best and suited area for her services. In addition, *pakhtun* code of life includes few traits that are mostly linked with man e.g., *Ghairat* (valor), *Badal* (revenge), *Jirga* (Informal power structure), *Hujra* (Common guest house) etc, where men control the above mentioned traits. These are the traits which are mostly linked with power, authority and prestige .while women are linked with the traits of *Tor* (stigma), *peghor* (satire), such traits are mostly considered subordinate and lacking power, authority and prestige. In this regard it is evident that women political empowerment is mostly impeded by *pakhtun* code of life (Naz & Rehman, 2011, 65). The table shows that 66 (33%) women political empowerment in most condition a threat to family honor and projected as like *Tor* (social stigma), *Peghor* (satire) in the prevailing strict condition of *pakhtunwali*, while 74 (37%) refers as women political empowerment is threat to *pakhtun ghairat* (valor). In addition to this 35 (17.5%) marked that *pakhtun* traditions and customary law do not allowed women to power politics. In this regard 25 (12.5%) respondents were o the opinion that socially constructed reality is not conducive to provide ground to women political empowerment. It is clear from the above discussion that the strict norms of *Tor* and *Peghor* strictly discourage women voting behavior, party affiliation, and political demonstration and contesting elections because it is considered a threat to *pakhtun* honor and dignity. (See table below)

Table 3: *Pakhtunwali* and Women's Political Empowerment

<i>Pakhtunwali</i> and Women's Political Empowerment	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Honor of the family ( <i>Tor</i> or <i>Peghor</i> )	66	33.0	33.0
It is Threat to <i>Pakhtun Ghairat</i>	74	37.0	70.0
It is Threat to <i>Pakhtun</i> Traditions	35	17.5	87.5
It is Consider as Socially Undesirable	25	12.5	100.0
Total	200	100.0	

### Application of Chi-Square Test

Besides the simple discussion in the form of frequency and percentage the statistical tool has been used with the help chi-square test which express as ( $P=.000^{**} < .05$ , with the Chi-square value  $\chi^2 = 1.324$  and the degree of freedom value D.f. =6). The numerical value of chi-square test illustrate that there is strong association between regressor and regressand which validate the hypothetical statement "Pakhtunwali has a close association with women subordination in political spares"

### CONCLUSIONS

Women exclusion from political structure and process is the result of multiple structural, functional and personal factors that vary in different social context across the countries in this modern time. Women in politics are contradictory concept which possesses limitations on women's effective participation and empowerment. Therefore, one thing is common among that is gender discrimination. Generally in Pakistan and particularly in *Pakhtun* society women are influenced by the norms and values of the culture into which they are socialized. Their social lives status and role are also crucially influenced by dominant cultural ideology and discriminatory social structure. In this regard, this research study primarily aims to explore socio-cultural constraints to women political empowerment in *Tehsil Dargai* district *Malakand, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa*, Pakistan.

In addition to obstructing entry into politics, the research community is run under the code of *Pakhtunwali* that include centuries old customary laws and traditions. The socially constructed reality

*Pakhtunwali* has been observed as source of deprivation. In this regard according to *Pakhtun code* of conduct politics and empowerment is supremely public process requiring high mobility for interaction and constant public appearance while cultural norms of *Pakhtunwali* promote the segregation and seclusion of women often justified through the use of religion. At the most physical level they heavy burden of child bearing/ rearing hampered women's entry into the political arena especially in the research community. Results of the study and ethnographic detail reveals, women power politics is highly commercial game which need money.

In addition, women in *Pakhtun* society are not economically independent and emancipated that barricade their empowerment. At most of the level in research area women either for home or for grave further intensifies their lack of education. In this regard lack of education and illiteracy in major cases too hamper their empowerment. *Pakhtun* socio cultural set up is intensively influenced by the patriarchal structure and male dominancy. This sort of situation favors male authority and empowerment in all spheres of life including political. This research study is highly compatible and has significant ground for conduction. Women are suffering from all sort of discrimination from birth onward throughout their lives in *Pakhtun* socio cultural set up. In this context, results and analysis of the current study show that women are socially inferior as compare to men. They are facing the problem of illiteracy, sex segregation, gender sensitivity, lack of awareness in regards of their political rights. In this context as the field data reveals the socially marginalized position and unfavorable self-image of women in regards of power politics also hinder their political empowerment.

In cultural context as the data highlights *Purdah* restricts women's mobility and visibility both of which negatively affect their political participation at all levels from the simple act of casting vote, to standing as candidate. Further, the data explicitly show that women political empowerment is culturally undesirable and has been considered as like social stigma under *Pakhtun* code of conduct. In connection to this, the field study also reveals that women political empowerment is something contrary to traditional environment of home. In addition to this, women political empowerment is against the modesty and piousness of women which has been considering an immoral act. However in the research community where all sphere of life is male dominated and women political empowerment is considered as a threat to male authority.

Details of the study show that women are economically dependent and not emancipated. The economic structure is monopolized by male where the property and inheritance rights are under the control of male in the research community. As the data reveals, women are doing (full time job like cooking, washing, laundry and raring / caring of the children without any wages. The patriarchic structure of the area project male as the breadwinner and symbol of authority and power. In this connection, women economic emancipation has been considered like social stigma which is the main hurdle in their political empowerment as the field study highlights.

In relevance to the mentioned factual and empirical information collected during the research; the theoretical framework patently supports the ideology. The work of Marry Wollstonecraft and John Stuart Mills explicitly represents that the prevalence of gender biased educational policies, male oriented law and the rigidity and male dominated cultural setup bring discriminatory practice in the social structure. In addition, the findings of the selected theoretical perspective i.e. Liberal Feminism expresses that women in a traditional society are living the miserable lives and are mostly deprived from most of the social and economic rights along-with more prominent political affiliation, contest and casting the vote. In connection to the theoretical approach, the area under study is traditionally governed where women have very less or no chances for political affiliation and participation.

In regard to various objectives of the study, hypotheses in relations to variable and empirical finding with verification of hypotheses, the study concludes that the dominant *pakhtun* cultural ideology, century old traditions and discriminatory social structure barricade women's political empowerment.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Women Political empowerment needs a holistic approach. The following steps are suggested for the political empowerment of women in Pakistan.

As the data reveals in *pakhtun* society women education is not up to the mark as like men, we need to understand the importance of women education and their contribution. Even the coming generation depends on the performance of women today. Likewise, educated mother can grantee an educated society. It is therefore time we should change our self-regarding women. Women should be given maximum chances to get quality in education because education provides base for economic, social, political and gender empowerment. When women are educated they get awareness and definitely this awareness leads them towards political empowerment.

Women should be registered in registration center so that they get the right to vote. Many women do not have their national identity cards, thus they do not exercise the right to vote. There is the game of power imbalance which needs to be squeezed in *Pakhtun* society. The right that men have should also be given to women to keep the gender balance and equality in society. Freedom should be for both, these days the family, social cultural and tribal norms do not allow and encourage women to take part in open election, there is need for more reserved seats. This way they will be encouraged to take part in general election. They will show their strength that they can deliver better than men in politics, too

Women in *Pakhtun* society are ignoring in all spheres of life especially in politics there is no place in politics or decision making. They are being kept away from political participation and empowerment. Women should be provided protection from harassment. In our society women do not feel safe when they are way from their homes. They cannot work as free as men do in different place. The recent legislation on women harassment of women in the national assembly in Pakistan has encouraged women in work environment; there is the need of more such legislation. When a woman decides to take part in general election for provincial or national assembly, she should be provided security by the government agencies. It will not only provide safety to the particular women who is contesting election but it will also boost up the courage of other women to come out and play their role in politics just like other fields where they excel men.

Training and awareness programmes should be arranged periodically and on monthly basis for women at local or union council level regarding women power politics. At National level the budget give priority to women in social sectors i.e. education, health, political, family and economic initiatives, in order to minimize patriarchal perception.

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