

MOTIVATIONAL FACTORS OF POLITICAL AWARENESS AMONG RURAL WOMEN IN THE PUNJAB, PAKISTAN: A CASE OF REGISTERED VOTERS

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the role of factors that motivate political awareness among rural women in Punjab, Pakistan. It is observed that women residing in villages acquire political awareness through several means i.e., their family income and wealth, family background, power and authority in family decisions, and information about political party manifestos and political campaigns. Any variation in these factors affects their political behavior accordingly. The conclusions of this study are based on the data collected for the Ph.D. dissertation, from December 2021 to March 2022. Following a cross-sectional quantitative research design, a well-structured questionnaire was developed and pretested before final data collection. A total of 1382 registered women voters responded out of the 1500 selected sample. The structural Equation Modeling (SEM) technique was applied to measure the direct, and indirect effect and covariation among study variables. Results revealed that the independent variables; income and wealth, family background, power, and authority, directly and indirectly, trigger political awareness among registered women voters in rural Punjab, Pakistan. The study outcome further confirmed that political party manifesto and political campaign knowledge facilitate the effects of independent variables.

Keywords: Political Campaign, Political Manifesto, Power and Authority, Political Awareness, Rural Women.

INTRODUCTION

Political awareness is widely conceived as the attentiveness and understanding of politics by an individual as stated by John Zaller, “the extent to which an individual pays attention to politics and understands what he or she has encountered”. It is the “intellectual engagement with public affairs” (Zaller, 1992). Another extensively cited view belongs to Micheal X. Carpini and Scott Keeter. In their combined work, *What Americans Know About Politics and Why It Matters*, they described political knowledge as “the range of factual information about politics that is stored in long-term memory”(Carpini & Keeter, 1996). It is important to mention here that the concept of political awareness has been studied under various labels including political knowledge (Soule, 2001), political consciousness (Dube, 2013), political sophistication (Luskin, 1987), political literacy (Cassel & Lo, 1997), political efficacy (Reichert, 2016), political engagement (Owen & Soule, 2015), etc. A unified definition of political awareness does not exist, but scholars agree that the determinant source of political awareness, would be an individual’s political context. In the same way, it is emphasized that political awareness is not a temporary competence of a citizen but an embedded understanding of the overall political culture (Milner, 2014).

Several studies have been produced on political awareness in developed and developing countries, but the field remains highly unexplored in Pakistan, particularly concerning women (Hussain, Sajid, & Jullandhry, 2018; Israelsen, 2019; Jahan, 1987). In Pakistan, the major proportion of the population lives in the rural areas of the Punjab province and depends on the agriculture sector (PBS, 2017; Ahmad & Anawar, 2018; Ahmad, Batool, & Dziegielewski, 2016) where women perform multiple household and agricultural activities at the same time. Consequently, they find least or no

opportunities at all to take an active part in political, recreational, or other leisure activities (Waqas & Torre, 2020; Wineinger & Nugent, 2020; Tripp, 2016; Naqvi & Riaz, 2015; Nazneen, Hossain, & Chopra, 2019; Zienkowski, 2014; Hapke, 2013; Haug, Aasland, & Aasen, 2020; Choi, 2019). They are often unable to participate even in local politics which is an instant source of political exposure (Geetha & Indira, 2010; Geha, 2019). Evidence suggests that varying socio-economic factors i.e., family income, family background, and authority in family decisions motivates rural women to learn more about politics (Mitra, 2013; Mlambo & Kapingura, 2019; Nanayakkara, 2012; Shaheed, 2010; Shahid, Hassan, & Sadaf, 2021). Similarly, a considerable number of studies supported the assisting role of political campaigns and political manifestos in terms of political awareness among women in developed and developing countries (Bari, 2010; Beauregard, 2018; Choi, 2019; Chowdhury, 2009; Dajnowicz, 2021; Fair, Malhotra, & Shapiro, 2010).

Although the Government of Pakistan notified the reserved quota for women as per legislation (Bari, 2010; Beauregard, 2018) yet their participation remains nominal (Kerevel & Atkeson, 2017; Khan, Jawed, & Qidwai, 2021; Kim, 2022). It is necessary to mention here that Pakistani society is patriarchal where women's political activism is strictly handled by their male family members (Shahid, Hassan, & Sadaf, 2021; Spark & Corbett, 2018; Sumbas, 2022). That is why, rural women in Punjab, Pakistan, remain absent from politics even on polling day as compared to other similar settings in the world (A. Ahmad & Anawar, 2018; Abdo-Katsipis, 2017). The media and women's organizations keep highlighting the case of rural women, but they seem detached from mainstream politics such as political campaigns and activities of political parties in the region (Mangi, Shah, & Ali Soomro, 2019; Mangi, Soomro, & Larik, 2021). This specific status of women in society, their level of political participation, and their level of political awareness rest on various socio-political and economic factors. These factors need to be investigated to evaluate political awareness among rural women in Punjab, Pakistan. Hence, this study would contribute in terms of women's political awareness in rural areas in the field of political science discipline along with other interlinked factors. The study is limited to registered women voters of the rural areas in the Punjab province of Pakistan.

The Punjab province is the largest in terms of population and second in terms of area. It is divided into three administrative regions (Northern, Central, and Southern). It has nine divisions and 36 districts. More than half of the total population of Pakistan lives in this province. It is bordered by all the federating units of Pakistan. Lahore is the capital city of Punjab which has become the administrative, cultural, and economic hub in the province (PBS, 2017). Punjabi is the mother tongue of the majority of the population here. The study districts; Faisalabad, Multan, and Rawalpindi are among the major cities of Punjab, Pakistan. The agricultural sector is the main earning and employment source in Punjab, Pakistan (Britannica, 2022).

Political Awareness

Political awareness is at the core of public opinion (Zaller, 1992), democratic support (Dahl, 1956), and party identification (Niaz, 2021; Sadie, 2005; Rossetti, 2012). It leads to wise political choices (Milner, 2008) and motivates qualitative political participation (Kunovich & Kunovich, 2016; Carpini & Keeter, 1996; Sue Tolleson-Rinehart, 2005; Galston, 2004). It has been observed popular model of public opinion 'Receive-Accept-Sample' (RAS) thrives on the concept of political awareness (Zaller, 1992). A politically aware citizen is a *modernist*, independent in her personal and political decisions (Almond A. & Powell Jr., 1978). She responds better to a politically charged environment, (Carpini & Keeter, 1996; Althaus, 2003) has stable political behavior, and is consistent in her opinions on national affairs. She is more able to align her ideological attachment to political parties. Carpini and Keeter argue that aware citizenry tends to make government institutions accountable which in turn motivates the latter to perform better (Carpini & Keeter, 1996). A global principle of representative democracy suggests that citizens who are the subject to a policy must have a say in its making (Rubal, 2012; Giné & Mansuri, 2018; Lambert et al., 2022; Grönlund & Milner, 2006; Lee & Matsuo, 2018; Görtz & Dahl, 2020; Galston, 2001). Scholars emphasize that citizens should possess minimum know-how of their political environment for useful candidate choice (Niemi G. & Junn, 2005) and protect their basic rights which is more important for women (Ghafoor, 2020; Amer, 2009). Studies suggest that individuals with the least political awareness are more inclined towards propaganda campaigns (Claassen, 2011; Owen & Soule, 2015). Also, political awareness is seen as an unconventional way of political participation (Zetra et al., 2022).

Measurement of Political Awareness: The ‘Generalist’ Framework

Measuring political awareness is a relatively debated field in behavioral studies (Carpini & Keeter, 1993; Hansen, 2009). The concept becomes more important when it comes to assessing women’s political orientations. Also, the discipline lacks any consolidated measure for this purpose. Carpini and Keeter concluded that citizens are political *generalists*, not *specialists*. It means that they tend to have a general knowledge of all aspects of a political system and awareness of one aspect results in awareness about related aspects as well. They developed a five-point knowledge scale after extensive analysis of the American National Survey (ANS) items and a telephonic survey consisting of more than 600 citizens (Carpini & Keeter, 1993). Earlier, Zaller had suggested a similar general factual knowledge scale to measure political awareness (Zaller, 1990). Their suggested scales may suit best in developing countries or areas where literacy rates are higher as they include pin-pointed information questions (Carpini & Keeter, 1993).

Similarly, the content validity of awareness scales remains under scrutiny as various comparative and non-comparative studies, in both developed and developing countries, found women with the lowest political awareness. Counter research challenged those results and raised many questions on the content and format of questions used in such studies (Lizotte & Sidman, 2009). It is reported that survey items related to women’s social and political context and social services have better assess their political behavior. Zaller revealed that the aim of the survey items is to best assess the concept under study, "the extent to which a set of items taps the content of some domain of interest" (Zaller, Richard A., 1980), and "the adequacy with which important content been cast in the form of test items" (Nunnally, 1978). Therefore, the content of survey questions needs to be aligned with the social and political environment of the sampled population so the research problem may be addressed properly. Consequently, considering the above discussion; definition, significance, and measurement question of political awareness, the present study adopts the *generalist* approach as a guiding principle to measure political awareness among rural women in Punjab, Pakistan.

Motivational Factors of Political Awareness Among Women

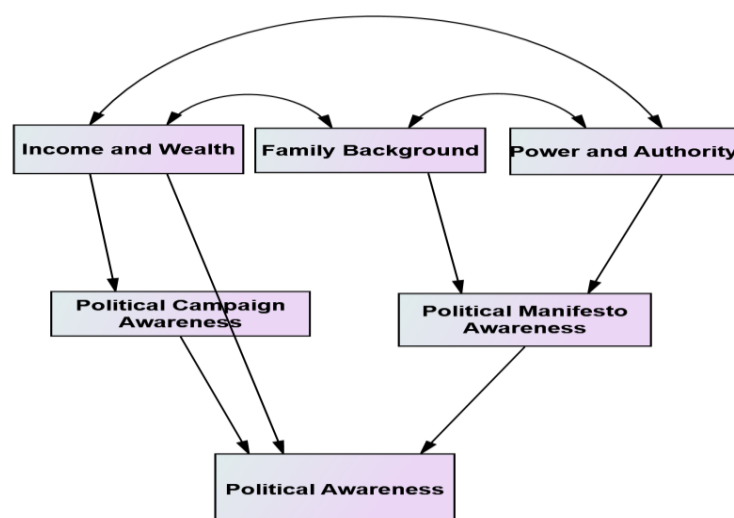
A large body of knowledge studies analyzed the role of societal factors from rural background to explain their relationship with the political orientations of women. A broad consensus had developed on the point that socio-economic characteristics i.e., age, education, occupation, and gender influence political awareness (Jamieson, 2000; Bartels, 1996; Carpini & Keeter, 1996; Jennings, 1996). Milbrath (1969) reveals that socio-economic status, gender, age, education, residential area, political environment, and background affect political associations of the public. Carpini and Keeter emphasize that age is an important determinant of political awareness as citizens get more political exposure and maturity with increasing years of life. Similarly, gender plays a significant role because existing social and political structures provide favorable political opportunities to men as compared to women (Carpini & Keeter, 1996). The study of Patgiri (2015) concluded that middle-aged (35-51) respondents were more politically aware than the younger ones. Likewise, the crux of the study by Kaur (1989) commissioned that socio-economic and cultural factors influenced the political awareness level of the rural population in the Punjab (Kaur, 1989). Moreover, education level is another significant determinant of political awareness (Galston, 2001; Verba et al., 2005). The summary of a study by Sasikala and Francisca (2017) pointed out that college-level education and residential facilities were the main causes of political awareness among the respondents whereas citizens with lower education scored lower on the awareness scale. In addition to it, Lazarsfeld and fellows endorsed that individuals with higher socioeconomic status would have a higher level of political awareness (Lazarsfeld et al., 1948). A similar conclusion is made by Pandhya K.S. and Choudhary S. (1980) that respondents from wealthier families scored highest on the political awareness scale (Pandhya & Choudhary, 1980). The study of Cornelio (2003) confirmed the concurrent argument that parents’ wealth has a positive link with women’s political awareness level.

In the same manner, the educational and social standing of women’s families is strongly connected to their know-how in politics. Parents’ economic and educational status motivates girl children to learn more about domestic and national politics (Cornelio, 2003). Likewise, the study of Ramcharan suggested that high caste women had more political awareness as compared to low caste groups mainly due to their higher economic and social background. Moreover, Gidengil and fellows argued that politically active mothers are role models for their daughters’ political socialization and this impact is recorded among families of less educated but politically active mothers (Gidengil et al., 2010).

Additionally, women's power and authority in the household and political decisions are among the chief determinants of political awareness. The study findings of Rajendran and Rajasekaran (2014) pointed out that women had no information about quotas, Panchayats, and rural development programs. Half of the respondents knew about voting but were not allowed to do so by their families. Similarly, the key findings of the study by Agnihotri (2010) suggested that the majority of the respondents were engaged in agricultural activities and had no role in family decisions. They did not know women-related laws. Only a small proportion knew about divorce provisions (Agnihotri, 2010). Likewise, Kaur (2022) contributed to the discussion that the high majority of women interviewees were educated but mainly unaware of politics and followed instructions from their families about whom to vote and whom not (Kaur, 2022).

Connecting to the above discussion, political campaigns and party manifesto information are among major indicators and sources of political awareness, especially in rural areas where the female citizens mostly live a busy life and find no time to learn about politics on their own. Ryan 2010, argued that political campaigns and political awareness have a positive mediating relationship (Claassen, 2011). Zaller viewed the campaign as the main tool to shift public opinion in favor of the campaigners. The campaign along with political awareness is one of the pillars of Zaller's popular public opinion model (Zaller, 1990). In the Pakistani rural context, X. Giné and G. Mansuri got evidence in support of the campaign effect. They provided campaign information to selected women and analyzed their political participation patterns. They found out that women voter turnout increased up to 7 additional female votes at the polling station level. A variation in party vote share and independent voting choice among women was also observed (Giné & Mansuri, 2018). Similarly, a sufficient number of studies have found the positive role of political campaigns and political manifestos on political awareness among women in developed and developing countries (Bari, 2010; Beauregard, 2018; Choi, 2019; Chowdhury, 2009; Dajnowicz, 2021; Fair, Malhotra, & Shapiro, 2010).

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework Model



The following hypothesis is tested through the model:

Hypothesis 1: Family income and wealth and political campaign awareness have a direct effect on political awareness of rural women in Punjab, Pakistan.

Hypothesis 2: Family background and power and authority have a positive relationship with political manifesto awareness among rural women in Punjab, Pakistan.

Hypothesis 3: Political campaign awareness and political manifesto awareness have a direct and positive impact on rural women's political awareness in Punjab, Pakistan.

Hypothesis 4: Family income and wealth indirectly impact political awareness among rural women in the Punjab province through political campaign awareness.

Hypothesis 5: Family background and power and authority indirectly affect political awareness via political manifesto awareness among rural women in the Punjab province of Pakistan.

Hypothesis 6: Family income and wealth positively correlate with family background and the power and authority of rural women in the Punjab province, Pakistan.

Hypothesis 7: The family background has positive covariance with power and authority among rural women in Punjab, Pakistan.

THE DATA AND METHODS

The present research follows a quantitative study design. This study is conducted in the Punjab which ranks first in terms of population and second in terms of geography. Women residing in the villages of the Punjab province are the unit of analysis for this study. Punjab province is divided into three administrative and geographic zones i.e., Northern, Central, and Southern. Study districts Rawalpindi, Faisalabad, and Multan are among its major districts. Voter lists were obtained from the district election commission offices. A multistage random sampling technique was adopted to reach the respondents. All the sampled villages were given equal representation. A well-structured questionnaire was prepared and pretested from 30 rural women voters using a 6-point attitudinal scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The questionnaire was translated into Urdu and Punjabi. However, for data collection purposes, Urdu translation was preferred. A 13-member team was hired for data collection consisting of 1 supervisor, 6 males, and 6 females. Field enumerators were hired from the sampled villages i.e., one male and one female from each village for better correspondence in the local dialect of the Punjabi language. Moreover, one member in each data collection team was designated as a field supervisor. A brief online training session was conducted with the data collection team via Zoom before the final distribution of questionnaires. A total of 1382 responses were received. Microsoft Excel was used to compute and clean data while the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and Analysis of Moment Structure (Amos) were utilized for data analysis. The structural Equation Modeling technique is adopted to measure the direct, indirect, and covariance among study variables used in the model. It is important to mention here that the model also has mediating variables such as political campaign awareness and political manifesto awareness. However, one dependent variable named political awareness has been used in the model.

Elements of the Study Variables

Income and wealth variable is based on family income, agricultural land and cattle ownership, work nature of earning family members, family bank balance, average jewelry, and property inheritance to women. Similarly, the concept of family background is measured through family relations with relatives, support to marginalized individuals, participation in community decisions and local politics, link of present family status with their elders' status, and feelings of pride with that. Likewise, the power and authority variable consists of women's worth in their families, decision making in personal and family life, contributing role in family disputes, the role of family elders in family decisions, autonomy to share an opinion in front of their family, especially male family members. In the same way, a political party manifesto explores women's awareness about the nature of the manifesto in party political activities, manifesto as party's official program, as a document entails development plans, the role of manifesto in party performance and win in elections, practical approach of parties towards manifesto and as a measure for choosing the suitable voting destination. Additionally, the political campaign awareness variable was materialized by women's familiarity with door-to-door and media campaigns, political banners, slogans, voter mobilization campaigns, identification of political campaigns, and holding party flags during campaigns. The dependent variable in the model consists of questions about women's awareness of political parties, local politics, national political leaders, political gatherings, manifestos, and campaigns.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The model explains the relationship between independent, mediating, and dependent variables. It also highlights the direct and indirect links among the variables. Also, it highlights the direct, indirect effect, and mediating effects of variables. independent variables consist of income and wealth (INAW), family background (FABA), and power and authority (POAA). Mediating variables are political campaign awareness (POCA) and political manifesto awareness (POMA) besides the dependent variable political awareness (POAW). The model elaborates how rural women's family income, background, and personal autonomy influence their political awareness. Similarly, the model presents a correlation among independent, dependent, and mediating variables along with their combined impact on political know-how among rural women in the Punjab province of Pakistan.

Socio-economic Characteristics of Female Voters

Analysis revealed that the majority of registered women voters were aged between 26 to 35 years and the maximum (44.5%) of them had primary education. Moreover, 57 percent of the respondents were housewives and a high majority (70 %) monthly income was 25000 monthly. Similarly, a high majority (75.3%) of them were married.

Direct Effect of Model

A model was established to explain the structural relationship between the socio-economic factors and political awareness of rural women. The impact of these factors was analyzed on the political awareness of rural women. All of the variables were framed after a brief review of available literature and consulting the experts in the field. The independent variables consist of socio-economic factors such as income and wealth, family background, and rural women's worth in their families. The dependent variable political awareness reveals women's awareness of the political environment and activities in their surroundings. Also, political awareness indicators are used as mediating variables in this model. The direct and indirect effect of the model is shown in the conceptual framework model.

Table 1 describes the model fit index. An acceptably fit index indicates perfect compatibility between the proposed matrix and the observed matrix. The chi-square of the suggested conceptual model was 115.619, (degree of freedom=6) with a p-value of .000. Overall, the model fit summary fulfills the global criteria. It indicates the proposed value of GFI (.974), AGFI (.909), CFI (.974), TLI (.939), and IFI (.976). Furthermore, the RMSEA value was .080 which also confirmed the model is statistically standard.

Hypothesis 1: Family income and wealth and political campaign awareness have a direct effect on political awareness of rural women in Punjab, Pakistan.

The model supports the hypothesis of a direct relationship between family income and wealth and political awareness with a standardized β -value of .075 and between political campaign awareness and political awareness with a β -value of .777. The p-value of .000 also signified the direct relationship between family income and wealth and political campaign awareness, and political awareness.

Table No.1 Model Fit Summary and Regression Weights of Model

Model Fit Summary							
Model	Chi square	GFI	AGFI	CFI	TLI	IFI	RMSEA
Recommended		$\geq .90$	$\geq .90$	$\geq .90$	$\geq .90$	$\geq .90$	$> .08$
Proposed	Value- 115.619, p- .000, df=6	.974	.909	.974	.939	.976	.080

Table No.2 Regression Weights and Variance of the Model

Variables		Standardized Regression Weights	Unstandardized Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
INAW	---> POCA	.397	.460	.029	16.087	***
FABA	---> POMA	.464	.582	.033	17.875	***
POAA	---> POMA	.239	.271	.029	9.185	***
POCA	---> POAW	.777	4.007	.063	63.161	***
POMA	---> POAW	.320	1.446	.053	27.265	***
INAW	---> POAW	.075	.449	.076	5.918	***
Covariance						
INAW	<--> FABA		20.364	1.661	12.258	***
FABA	<--> POAA		40.904	2.132	19.183	***
INAW	<--> POAA		29.158	1.903	15.319	***
Variance						
INAW			55.343	2.106	26.277	***
FABA			61.375	2.336	26.277	***
POAA			75.044	2.856	26.277	***
e1			62.512	2.379	26.277	***
e2			57.301	2.181	26.277	***

e3	347.431	13.222	26.277	***
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Hypothesis 2: Family background and power and authority have a positive relationship with political manifesto awareness among rural women in Punjab, Pakistan.

Results confirm the positive direct link between family background and political manifesto awareness with a β -value of .464 and power and authority and political manifesto with a standardized β -value of .239. the p-value of .000 also confirms this direct relationship.

Hypothesis 3: Political manifesto awareness has a direct and positive impact on rural women's political awareness in Punjab, Pakistan.

The model reveals the direct link between the political manifesto and political awareness among rural women in Punjab, Pakistan with a β -value of .320 and p-value of .000.

Indirect Effect of the Model

Hypothesis 4: Family income and wealth indirectly impact political awareness among rural women in the Punjab province through political campaign awareness.

Statistical analysis proves the hypothesis that family income and wealth status of rural women in Punjab, Pakistan, are indirectly related to their political awareness via political campaign awareness. The standardized β -value of 1.843 and p-value of .001 further confirm the results.

Hypothesis 5: Family background and power and authority indirectly affect political awareness via political manifesto awareness among rural women in the Punjab province of Pakistan.

An indirect link is recorded between family background and political awareness with a standardized β -value of .842 and power and authority and political awareness with a β -value of .391. Political manifesto awareness mediated indirect effect in both of the above indirect relationships. The p-value of .001 also confirms the hypothesis.

Covariance

Hypothesis 6: Family income and wealth positively correlate with family background and the power and authority of rural women in the Punjab province, Pakistan.

The model supports the hypothesis that family income and wealth and family background positively correlate with an unstandardized β -value of 20.364. Similarly, family income and wealth have covariance with power and authority among rural women with unstandardized statistical values i.e., β -value 29.158. the p-value of .000 for both variables confirms the covariance among these variables.

Hypothesis 7: The family background has positive covariance with power and authority among rural women in Punjab, Pakistan.

The model confirms the hypothesis that family background and power and authority of rural women correlate in Punjab, Pakistan. The unstandardized β -value of 40.904 and p-value of .000 statistically support the results.

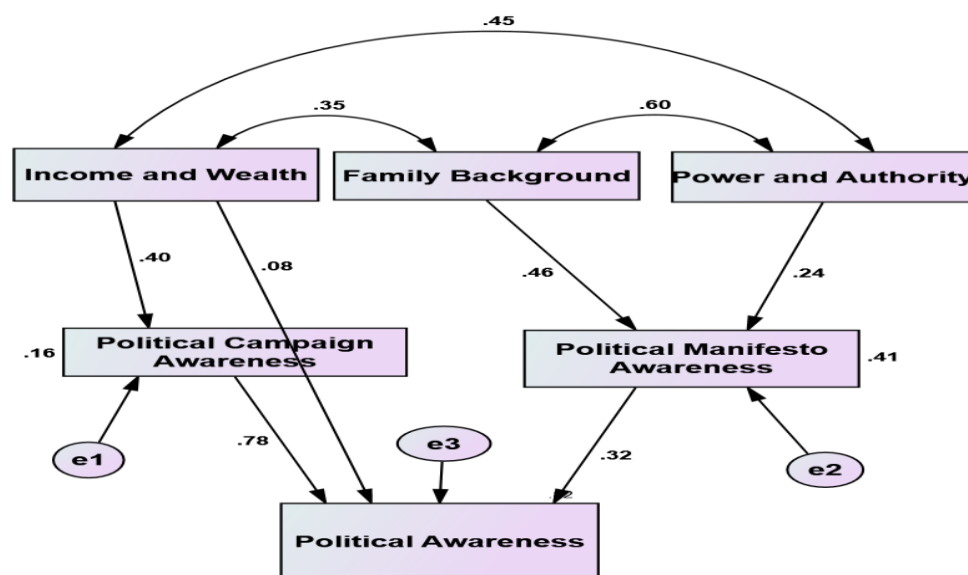


Figure 2: Model Fit Diagram

Table No. 3 Indirect Effect of the Model (n-1382)

Indirect Path				Unstandardized Estimate		Standardized Estimate		
				Effect	P-Value	Effect	P-value	
POAA	--->	POMA	--->	POAW	.391	.001	.076	.001
FABA	--->	POMA	--->	POAW	.842	.001	.148	.001
INAW	--->	POCA	--->	POAW	1.843	.001	.309	.001

The model explained the direct, indirect, and covariance among the independent, mediating, and dependent variables. Analysis revealed that the independent variable family income and wealth status directly contributes to the political awareness level among rural women in Punjab, Pakistan.

The results confirm the conclusions of several studies that there is a direct link between family income and wealth, and the political socialization of women (Shaheed, 2010; Shahid, Hassan, & Sadaf, 2021; Shoaib, Ahmad, Ali, & Abdullah, 2021; Shoaib, Fatima, & Jamil, 2021; Shoaib, Rasool, & Anwar, 2021). Rida Zafar finds out that women with higher income are more independent in their personal and public decisions. They are more likely to adopt and express political orientations freely (Zafar, 2019). Ramcharan shared a similar conclusion that women of high caste scored higher on political awareness and one of the major reasons was their family wealth status (Ramsharan, 2014). Likewise, Sebastian Jungkunz and Jungkunz and Marx (2021) shared that parental income effect on children's political participation is paramount for children and starts appearing in the teenage years of rich and poor family children (Jungkunz & Marx, 2021).

Similarly, the power and authority of women are highly influential in their political awareness. Harshendra Pratap Singh (2017) got evidence that scheduled caste women who had more authority in family decisions, had moderate awareness of politics (Singh, 2017). In the same manner, the study of Qayyum and fellows found out that female students knew about the importance of vote but were restricted mainly by their families to exercise it freely which is a hindrance in acquiring broad political awareness (Qayyum et al., 2013).

Additionally, scholars have emphasized the impact of family background on women's political behavior development (Chhibber, 2014). Parents especially, a politically active mother has a long-term influence on their daughter's political socialization (Gidengil et al., 2010). Similarly, women's positions in their families, largely determine their political exposure and participation (Mitra, 2013; Mlambo & Kapingura, 2019; Anwar, Shoaib, & Javed, 2013; Shoaib, Saeed, & Cheema, 2012; Shoaib et al., 2012; Shoaib & Ullah, 2021a,b).

Relatedly, political campaigns and political manifesto awareness hint at political awareness among rural women (Mangi, Shah, & Ali Soomro, 2019; Mangi, Soomro, & Larik, 2021). John Zaller considered the campaign as a connector between the political class and the masses. He argued in favor of the campaign as an instrument without which political communication remains incomplete (Zaller, 1990). Similarly, scholars argued that political campaigns favorably affect electoral politics (Bari, 2010; Choi, 2019; Dajnowicz, 2021).

CONCLUSION

The study evaluated the role of socio-economic factors on political awareness among rural women in Punjab, Pakistan. Results reveal that the environment in rural society decisively controls the political exposure of women. An in-depth analysis pointed out that women from high-income and wealthy backgrounds tend to know more about politics. Their families were more likely to support marginalized individuals and participate in community decisions. Furthermore, women's worth and decision-making authority in families has the most significant relationship to their political awareness. The study found out that women who had a say in family affairs tended to be more expressive in their political lives. Similarly, exposure to media and door-to-door campaigns, rallies, party manifestos, political slogans, and debates enhance the political understanding of women in rural Punjab, Pakistan.

Overall findings of the study revealed that socio-economic factors such as family income and wealth, family background, power, and authority are major determinants of political awareness among women in rural Punjab, Pakistan. Similarly, understanding political party manifesto and know-how of political campaigns facilitate the effect of contextual factors.

In sum, it is argued that the socio-economic and political environment in rural Punjab, Pakistan, is mainly responsible for the political socialization of women. Degree of variation of related factors; family income and background, power and authority, and exposure to political activities would have a direct impact on political awareness among women in rural Punjab, Pakistan. Considerable literature supports the conclusion of the present study that family income and power and authority make women politically more expressive and independent (Zafar, 2019; Jungkunz & Marx, 2021; Pandhya & Choudhary, 1980) and motivate them to know more about domestic politics (Cornelio, 2003). Similarly, a field experiment by Gine and Mansuri (2018) revealed that political campaigns increase women's voter turnout and equip them to choose candidates wisely (Giné & Mansuri, 2018).

In light of the above discussion, the study suggests that uplifting social and economic status along with sufficient political information, would make women more politically knowledgeable and increase their participation in rural Punjab, Pakistan.

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