

## THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN BALOCHISTAN'S POLITICAL PROCESS: BREAKING BARRIERS AND EXPANDING PARTICIPATION

**Tariq Hussain Bugti\***

Politician / Social Worker, Dera Bugti, Balochistan, Pakistan  
[786tariqhussain123@gmail.com](mailto:786tariqhussain123@gmail.com)

**Waqar Ali**

M.Phil Scholar, Riphah International University, Islamabad, Pakistan  
[khanwaqarps@gmail.com](mailto:khanwaqarps@gmail.com)

### ABSTRACT

*Women are experiencing a revolutionary phase of engagement in politics in Balochistan, a strategically important yet gender unequal territory. Patriarchal norms, limited educational opportunities, and economic constraints are just a few of the obstacles that this study explores as they pertain to women's political participation in Balochistan. The emergence of powerful women who question established conventions and fight for gender-inclusive legislation is proof that, despite these obstacles, a movement for women's political empowerment is gathering steam. By delving deeply into cultural, educational, and economic factors, this study brings attention to the efforts of women's rights organizations and progressive legislative proposals that seek to increase the political representation of women. Our research shows that women in Balochistan can be more politically involved if they have access to education, economic independence, and legislative reforms. This paper adds to the broader conversation about gender and politics in Pakistan by shedding light on the tenacity of women in the face of patriarchal systems and their fight for equality and rights. It suggests ways forward for a more inclusive political climate and sheds light on the continuous fight for equality.*

**Keyword:** Women in Politics, Women Participation, Women politicians in Balochistan, Women and Elections. Inclusive Elections.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Balochistan, the expansive and abundant province of Pakistan, exhibits a multifaceted scenario in terms of political involvement. Despite being strategically significant and having a substantial population, Balochistan faces numerous obstacles, with one of the most crucial being the ongoing exclusion of women from the formal political arena. Despite comprising around 50% of Balochistan's population (Government of Pakistan, 2020), women have always been excluded from significant decision-making procedures. This exclusion arises from a complex interplay of elements, such as deeply ingrained cultural values, a robust patriarchal tribal system, and restricted availability of education and economic prospects (Shaheed, F., 2010; Ahmed, 2020).

Gaining insight into the historical circumstances surrounding the political exclusion of women in Balochistan is of utmost importance. The Baloch society is distinguished by an intricate tribal framework, which has a deep-rooted legacy of male hegemony in the public sphere. Women are generally limited to home responsibilities due to cultural constraints (Farzana Syed et al., 2014). The patriarchal system is additionally strengthened by religious interpretations that restrict women's involvement in public endeavors (Jafar A. 2011). The outcome is a well-established social and cultural milieu that dissuades women from pursuing political careers.

Adding to the cultural obstacles are the restricted educational and economic prospects accessible to women in Balochistan. The province experiences a substantial disparity in literacy rates between genders, with female literacy persistently lagging below male literacy. The absence of education hinders women's ability to acquire the knowledge and skills required to effectively engage in political engagement. Moreover, the scarcity of economic prospects restricts women to the domestic realm, so impeding their capacity to participate in public affairs.

Nevertheless, in the face of these difficulties, a fledgling movement for the political empowerment of women is emerging in Balochistan. This phenomenon is distinguished by a significant

---

\* Corresponding Author

increase in the activity carried out by women's rights organizations and individual female campaigners. The Balochistan Women's Peace Coalition is actively engaged in promoting gender equality and fighting for reforms to remove obstacles that prevent women from participating in politics. Their endeavors are gathering momentum, as a growing number of women are organizing and asserting their legitimate position in the political sphere.

This burgeoning movement is also experiencing the rise of a novel cohort of female political leaders. These women are challenging conventional standards and actively engaging in political processes. Their bravery and resolve are motivating others to question the existing state of affairs and facilitate increased female involvement in the political sphere of Balochistan.

Moreover, there is an increasing acknowledgment among the political elite on the necessity for enhanced women's participation. This is seen in recent demands for legislative changes that would ensure the allocation of specific seats for women in local and provincial assemblies (Sadullah et al., 2019). Although these efforts are commendable, there are still substantial obstacles that need to be overcome. To successfully implement and enforce these reforms, a comprehensive strategy is needed that tackles not just the legislative framework, but also the deep-rooted cultural and societal obstacles.

This study explores the changing role of women in the political process of Balochistan. This essay explores the historical backdrop of women's marginalization, the intricate interaction of cultural conventions, restricted availability of education and economic prospects, and the continuous endeavors to dismantle these obstacles. The study will additionally examine the increase in women's activism, the development of female political leaders, and the changing political environment in Balochistan. The main objective of this research is to add to the existing knowledge on gender and political engagement in Pakistan, with a particular emphasis on the distinct obstacles and advantages experienced by women in Balochistan.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

This research utilizes a methodical examination of scholarly papers, reports from reputable organizations, and official documents to investigate the obstacles and possibilities for women's involvement in politics in Balochistan.

## **3. DISCUSSION**

Although women make up about 50% of the population in Balochistan, they nevertheless encounter substantial obstacles when it comes to engaging in political activities. This talk thoroughly examines the intricate network of obstacles that impede their inclusion and investigates the emerging movement dedicated to achieving higher levels of female representation in the political realm.

### **3.1 Rooted in Tradition: The Enduring Legacy of Patriarchy**

Cultural and Historical factors are significant in maintaining the marginalization of women. The patriarchal systems strongly rooted in Baloch society, as emphasized by Shaheed (2010) and Farzana Syed et al. (2014), limit women primarily to the home realm. Women's options for public engagement are often limited by cultural norms that define restricted positions for them. In his study, Jafar (2011) delves deeper into the ways in which specific interpretations of religion are employed to strengthen the existing patriarchal structure, so imposing more limitations on women's involvement in public endeavors. This presents a substantial cultural obstacle that women must surmount in order to enter the political sphere.

### **3.2 Education and Economics: The Bedrock of Political Empowerment**

Insufficient access to education is a significant obstacle that hinders women's involvement in politics in Balochistan. The significant disparity in literacy rates between genders, hinders women's ability to acquire the knowledge and abilities required to navigate the intricacies of political processes. Education empowers women by providing them with the self-assurance, analytical skills, and understanding of political structures that are essential for meaningful engagement.

Moreover, the lack of sufficient economic prospects restricts women to the domestic realm, impeding their ability to engage in public activities. Shah's (2014) research examines the impact of limited economic mobility on women, which leads to their dependence on men and further constrains their involvement in political activities. Attaining financial autonomy enables women to engage in political endeavors without depending on male relatives for economic assistance.

### 3.3 The Complexities of Tribal Structures

The distinctive tribal framework of Balochistan poses further difficulties. Rabab et al. (2020) emphasize that deeply ingrained patriarchal norms within tribal systems pose substantial obstacles to women's engagement in politics. Conventional customs frequently marginalize women from participating in decision-making procedures within tribes, thereby constraining their capacity to extend their influence from the tribe to the wider political domain. To attain greater political representation, women must overcome internal tribal systems and secure the support of male tribe elders.

### 3.4 A Glimmer of Hope: The Rise of Women's Activism and New Leaders

Given these difficulties, a fledgling movement advocating for the political empowerment of women is gaining traction in Balochistan. The Balochistan Women's Peace Coalition represents the notable increase in activism demonstrated by women's rights organizations. These organizations are diligently striving to increase awareness regarding gender equality and fighting for legislation that abolish the obstacles impeding women's political involvement. The topic under analysis is examined in studies conducted by Sadullah et al. (2019) and Khan et al. (2021), which emphasize the bravery and resolve of these women who are leading the path towards increased female involvement.

### 3.5 Legislative Efforts: A Step Forward, But Not the Finish Line

The increasing demand for legislative reforms indicates that the political establishment is becoming more aware of the necessity to include more women. Khan (2022) emphasizes the advocacy for allocating specific seats for women in local and provincial assemblies. Although these efforts are a welcome advancement towards increased representation, it is essential to successfully execute and enforce these reforms. The research conducted by Khan & Naqvi (2020) highlights the significance of employing efficient implementation techniques in conjunction with legislative revisions. They contend that merely implementing reserved seats will not be enough to make significant progress unless the root cultural and societal norms that restrict women's mobility and decision-making authority are addressed.

### 3.6 Moving Forward: Strategies for a More Inclusive Political Landscape

To enhance the progress of the women's movement and establish a more comprehensive political environment in Balochistan, various measures might be implemented.

- **Strategic Educational Plans:** It is essential to allocate resources towards females' education and literacy programs. Zafar's (2019) research provides valuable insights on the influence of literacy programs on women's empowerment, which might guide the creation of focused efforts in Balochistan.
- **Financial Empowerment Initiatives:** These projects aim to increase women's economic independence by providing them with skills training and opportunities to obtain microfinance. This empowerment enables women to actively engage in political activities.
- **Efforts to raise awareness:** It is crucial to have campaigns that are culturally appropriate and aim to challenge conventional gender norms. These efforts play a vital role in promoting the significance of women's political involvement and are necessary for changing society attitudes.
- **Political parties should proactively engage in the recruitment and support of female candidates.** In addition, it is important to conduct a thorough examination of the internal structures of political parties in order to identify and eliminate any obstacles that impede women's involvement inside the parties. This issue has been investigated by Barrech and Din (2022).
- **Empowering Women Leadership:** Offering mentorship and training chances to aspiring female leaders can furnish them with the aptitude and self-assurance required to adeptly navigate the political sphere. In addition, cultivating networks of support among female politicians helps develop a sense of solidarity and a common objective.
- **The Essential Function of Media:** Media outlets have a pivotal role in advancing women's political engagement. By actively depicting female politicians as competent leaders and offering them opportunities to express their concerns, the media can confront prevailing preconceptions and motivate other women to participate in politics.
- **Addressing Security worries:** Security worries, especially in isolated regions, can greatly discourage women from participating in politics. Implementing measures to guarantee the security of female candidates and voters during campaigns and elections is essential for promoting a more comprehensive political atmosphere.
- **Maximizing the Use of Quotas:** Although implementing quotas can be an effective strategy for enhancing female representation, it is important to recognize that this measure alone is

insufficient. Shaheed's (2010) research indicates that it is essential to have qualified women who actively engage in political processes in order to bring about significant and impactful transformation.

### **3.7 The Long Road to Gender Parity**

Attaining gender parity in Balochistan's political domain will need a lengthy and challenging path. Significant hurdles arise from deeply ingrained cultural values, restricted educational and economic prospects, and the intricate nature of tribal structures. Nevertheless, the increasing drive towards women's empowerment, together with recent legislative initiatives, provides a ray of optimism. To achieve a more inclusive and representative democracy, Balochistan can adopt a comprehensive strategy that tackles social and cultural obstacles, invests in girls' education and women's economic empowerment, and promotes a more favorable political atmosphere.

### **3.8 Future Research Directions:**

Additional research has the potential to enhance our comprehension of women's political involvement in Balochistan. Research examining the encounters of women from various backgrounds, including those from nomadic communities or rural locations, can offer significant perspectives. Moreover, doing research on the efficacy of current endeavors focused on enhancing women's political and economic empowerment might provide valuable insights for the formulation of more precise plans in the coming years. Moreover, examining the impact of prominent individuals in Baloch culture, like as religious and tribal leaders, on the advancement or obstruction of women's political involvement might provide significant knowledge for future advocacy initiatives.

## **4. CONCLUSION**

The subject of women's political involvement in Balochistan is intricate and has significant historical origins. Notwithstanding considerable obstacles, a movement advocating for transformation is gathering force. By admitting the obstacles, acknowledging the advancements achieved, and adopting a comprehensive plan to encourage women's political empowerment, Balochistan can evolve towards a political environment that is more inclusive and representational. Not only will this have a positive impact on women, but it will also enhance democracy and foster sustainable development in the province.

## **REFERENCES**

- Ayesha Khan & Sana Naqvi (2020). Dilemmas Of Representation: Women In Pakistan's Assemblies. *Asian Affairs*, 51(2), 286-306. DOI: [10.1080/03068374.2020.1748414](https://doi.org/10.1080/03068374.2020.1748414)
- Government of Pakistan. (2017). *Population Census 2017: Provisional Results*. Pakistan Bureau of Statistics.
- Gul, S., & Farooq, M. (2020). Women's Political Empowerment: A Historical Overview in Pakistan. *Journal of Languages, Culture and Civilization*, 2(1), 59-71.
- Jafar, A. (2011). *Better Government, Better Lives: The Campaign to Increase Women's Political Participation*. In: *Women's NGOs in Pakistan*. Palgrave Macmillan, New York. [https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230339316\\_4](https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230339316_4)
- Rubab, M., Mustafa, D. G., & Nawaz, A. (2020). Conundrum of women political participation in Pakistan: Impediments and Opportunities. *Pakistan Social Sciences Review*, 4(2), 135-149.
- Sadullah, S., & Tobawal, M. U. (2019). Female Youth Political Knowledge and Their Practices: A Case Study of Balochistan Province. *Pakistan Study Centre*, 10(2), 93-102.
- Shaheed, F. (2010). The women's movement in Pakistan: challenges and achievements. *Women's Movements in the Global Era*, Boulder, 1-26.
- Syed, F., Humaira, M., & Dar. (2017). Women Political Participation in Pakistan: Steps towards Reshaping the Political Environment. *Orient Research Journal of Social Sciences*, 2(2), 153-167. <https://gcwus.edu.pk/wp-content/uploads/2.-Women-Political-Participation-in-Pakistan.pdf>
- Zafar, H. (2019). NGOs and Women's empowerment: Challenges and Strategies. *Balochistan Review*, 11 (1), 314-327.