

WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN PAKISTAN: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative research signifies the importance of women's political participation in all democratic societies in the world is highlighted. To know how and why the participation of women in politics is mandatory, Down's Theory of Rational Choice is used, and for the recognition of women's identity in political parties Michigan Model of Party Identification is used as a theoretical framework within the framework of the political party system in Pakistan. Secondary sources are used for data collection. Interpretive qualitative methodology is used to understand the theoretical perspective of this issue. Unlike earlier research, this study discusses the importance of women's participation in Pakistan's politics, in a theoretical framework. The technique of triangulation is used for the validity of data.

Keywords: Women's political participation, theoretical perspective, elections, and party, Downs's theory of rational choice, Michigan model, party identification,

INTRODUCTION

Though women embrace more than 50% of Pakistan's population, they are not allowed to take part in politics and the decision-making process of the country, because they are hardly given any chance in the power structure of Pakistan. Their participation in social, political, and economic spheres is very necessary because they are playing dual roles in productive and reproductive spheres of life. But the equal involvement of women in politics is still ignored in the decision-making and political structure of Pakistan.

Down's theory of "Rational choice" is used in this research as its theoretical framework which helped to clarify the concept and rationale of women's participation in politics and electoral campaigns as political workers, candidates, and political parties who preferred their self-interests and participated in the election only to maximize and fulfill their interests. With Rational choice theory, this study used the Michigan model of party identification and preferences. This model of party identification ascribes how preferences in selections are made and how party identification is important in politics and elections for candidates and voters in Pakistan.

Background of the Research

Women's segregation from politics and the electoral process in Pakistan is inherited from world history. Even at the beginning of the democratic world of Athens in the 15th women were excluded from politics and decision-making of the state. Women of Athens were deprived of their right to vote and join politics and took part in the election because women were not treated as equal citizens of the state. In Athens only, males could take part in the legislative and law-making bodies (Bentley, 1995& Ahmad, 2013). In many European countries, women neither can participate in politics nor take part in the decision-making of the state before the 20th century. At the beginning of the 19th century, the British government introduced an undemocratic electoral system in which women were not included in politics, and that deprived them of equal political rights and participation. All electoral rights like voting or contesting elections were not allowed to women. This resulted in the women's suffrage

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movement: A campaign by women to get their right to vote (Bentley et al., 1995). But after the 1st World War, the British then realized that the participation of women in politics could not be ignored as it was essential for the national development of the state (Bentley et al., 1995).

In 1946, when the UN came into being there was increasing awareness among the international community about women's segregation from the power structure of the state. The UN took initiative in this regard and made a commitment to eliminate all gender imbalances in the politics and power structure. For this purpose, the UN adopted many laws and strategies to raise the ratio of political participation of women in the decision-making of the country.

Most important was UDHR (Universal Declaration of Human Rights), article no. 21 admitted the equal rights of both men and women's participation in politics and legislation of government by contesting election or by indirect method. For the implementation of these laws, the UN adopted the Convention on Political and social rights, which indebted the government of all states to eliminate gender discrimination and ensure equality for both males and females in politics and legislation in the state. Similarly, the United Nations also approved the (CEDAW) Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination. This defined and explained the political rights of women and demanded specific steps to encourage fairness and equality between women and men in the political structure of the country.

Though these steps showed positive results in some areas of the world, still women have little space in the legislative and politics of Pakistan. The committee of United Nations, Human Rights Committee has found that in many countries in Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America, women are given equal political rights (High Commissioner Office of UN for Human Rights and International Bar Association, 2003, p.508 & Ahmad, 2013).

Zamurd (2012) stated that women's participation in the Pakistani movement was different in nature and in impact due to the demand of that time. In Subcontinent the first step for the institutionalization of female participation in politics was taken by the British and resistance at local and national was doomed to crumble it. The first women Association in the Subcontinent was started by Begum of Bohawal in 1915 to the solution of societal problems concerning women (Hafiz, 1981, p.25). Similarly, the Women's Indian Association was founded by Margaret Cousins which enriched this movement (Rouse, 2006, p.85). Margaret Cousins demanded a 10% quota in all law-making bodies through the podium of the Women's Indian Association. In response to the hard struggle of the Indian Women Association, the Montague Chelmsford reforms of 1919 approved a small number of franchises for women. The colonial government also lifted the ban on women candidates in 1924, similarly the Government of Indian Act 1935 for 1st time in India granted reserved seats for women in the Council of States, the Indian legislative assembly, and in the provincial legislators (Zamurd, 2012). Shahnaz and Nelson are of the view that even before the partition of the subcontinent women were anxious to express and represent themselves at the national level (Shanaz & Nelson, 2000, p.98). Bano (2009) said that after the independence equal involvement and participation were encouraged by Quaid Azam. He realized the importance of women in all spheres of life including politics, so Quaid-i-Azam selected Fatima Jinnah as the head of the central committee of the Muslim League to increase the participation of women in the power structure of the country (Bano, 2009, p.19-35). Fatima Jinnah was the 1st Muslim woman candidate who contested the election for the presidency against a powerful dictator Ayub Khan (Shami, 2009).

The gap in the study

Earlier research focuses to discuss the issue of women's participation in politics by using research methods, but this study discusses the issue of women's participation from a theoretical perspective by using philosophical theories. This study will fill the research gap by providing a detailed and logical foundation for the necessity and importance of the political participation of women in politics to the scholarly community.

The argument of the study

Every human being is a rational being and has his/her own interest and needs. So, they are equally required to participate in the decision-making of the country to full fill their interests.

Research Questions

- 1- What is the conceptual framework of women's political participation in Pakistan?
- 2- Does the Rational Choice theory favour equal participation of women in the politics of Pakistan?

- 3- Does Michigan's model of party identification encourage women to join political parties in Pakistan to demand their rights?

METHODOLOGY

Interpretive Qualitative Method

The method of Qualitative research supported this study because it, Qualitative research mainly conducted on the theoretical basis of an interpretive paradigm which asserts that there are several truths and manifold realities in the universe (MacNabb, 2008, p. 44). So, for a deeper understanding of the issue of less political participation and under-representation of women in politics and decision-making, the method of qualitative interpretive research is used, as this interpretive methodology highlights and give importance to the live and personal experiences of all participants (Cohen & Manion,1994: p.36; Nguyen & Tran,2 015, p.23). It is also relevant to this study because interpretive researchers explore the world through the experiences of people on the principle that reality is socially constructed (Tran & Nguyen, 2015, p.23).

The interpretive qualitative method also supported Down's Theory of Rational Choice which is used as a theoretical Framework in this study. The interpretive qualitative method and Down's Theory of Rational Choice are relevant to each other because the theory of Rational Choice asserted the preferred individual's personal interests and gave preference to the individual's point of view in a similarly interpretive method also aimed to investigate and explore any issue or phenomenon from the personal experience and perception of individuals who have the experience of that situation and problem.

Data Collection

For the purpose of data collection, secondary sources were used.

Secondary Sources. Different research and academic articles and newspaper articles are examined and used as secondary sources of data collection.

Triangulation. For this study, the use of triangulation was necessary for the validity of data and to avoid researcher bias. In this study, the technique of "Between method Triangulation" is used. In this technique validity of data is checked by using different methods of data collection.

Data Analysis. This study included academic and research articles to understand the research phenomena. The method of data analysis is used to analyze the collected data. For the authenticity of documents (printed, internet-transmitted material) the method of document analysis is used in the research. To interpret and understand the empirical meaning of the data collected, documented analysis is used in the study (Strauss&Corbin,2008; Rapely.2007).

Conceptual Framework

Participation of Women in Politics and Elections

To understand the philosophical and theoretical aspects of the political participation of women and the low representation of women in politics and the electoral process in Pakistan, two theories; Downs's theory of Rational Choice and Michigan's Model of Party Identification is used in this research.

This part of this study consists of three sections. In section one, as the theoretical framework Downs's theory of rational choice as the main theory is discussed. In this section, it is also discussed why this theory is used in the present research. In section two, the Michigan Model of Party Identification is discussed as a supporting theory. In this section, Michigan Model explains the relationship between political parties, candidates, and voters. In section three, the whole part is briefly concluded.

Anthony Downs's Theory of Rational Choice

The theory of Rational Choice is used in this research as the main theory. Downs explained this theory by saying that everyone has a rational side, through which he made reliable choices. So, this theory is used in the present study to emphasize that women's equal participation is very necessary for decision-making and legislation of the country because women have their own interests and problems, which must be addressed in proper and fair manners. Downs's theory is also relevant to this study because Downs discussed the voting behaviour and electoral process through this theory. Downs's theory of rational choice also supported this study by emphasizing that politicians never tried to contest elections only to carry out their particular rules and strategies; their main purpose is to receive personal benefits and fulfil their interests. Similarly, Parties make strategies and policies to

win elections, rather than win elections to plan and carry policies. His theory relied on the background of the voter who expressed his preferences for casting vote for male or female candidates and has reliable knowledge about the party's policies and his affiliation with a party (Downs, 1957: 4 & Bartles 2008).

The interpretive qualitative method also supported Downs's Theory of Rational Choice, which is used as a theoretical Framework in this study. The interpretive qualitative method and Down's Theory of Rational Choice are relevant to each other because the theory of Rational Choice gave preference to an individual's personal interests. Similarly, the interpretive method also aimed to investigate and explore any issue or phenomenon from the personal experience and perception of individuals who have their own experiences and interests about any issue.

The first logic to use this theory in the current research is that it explains why women's participation in politics is necessary. This theory provides its answer that everybody in this world is self-oriented and has his/her own personal interests, as women with low status have more problems and issues regarding their interests and rights, so they should participate equally in politics and legislation making to safeguard their interest to address their problems.

The second logic to use this theory is, why voters and political parties prefer male candidates over female candidates in elections. According to this theory, voters and political parties preferred male candidates only to increase their chances of success in elections. They think that women have to face many problems, and wanted to solve the problems of people due to restricted movement because women cannot go to police stations and public offices. Similarly, political parties preferred male candidates and gave party tickets to male candidates because male candidates have more not-able status and influence in their constituencies than female candidates. Furthermore, political parties thought that women could not make as solid decisions as males can, so they used women only in electoral campaigns to motivate people and for the purpose of door-to-door campaigns during elections.

Rational choice Theory helps to understand the difference between the parties and governments Downs said that "rational government" is formed by political parties, which are rational in their policies and contest elections only to win elections. With reference to political parties, Downs's theory of Rational Choice recommended that government and political parties would try to increase their vote with the aim of being re-elected (Downs, 1957).

The Michigan Model of Electoral Process

Electoral politics affects the political system of Pakistan through political parties and democratic elections. Through Elections, political parties try to uphold their power and interest. To understand this aspect of research with Rational Choice theory Michigan Model of "Party Identification" is used as a supporting theory in this research. This theory is used to make it clear to readers that how political parties are responsible for this dilemma of the political life of women because this research mainly focused on the policies and strategies of political parties concerning women's political participation in state affairs of Pakistan.

The supporting argument for using this theory is that party association and party identification are very necessary for the existence and success of candidates in politics because most people have long-term relations with political parties, so they vote only for the party and not the candidate. Therefore, women contest elections as independent candidates, when the parties did not award tickets to women and even voters do not consider them suitable candidates for the elections. The Michigan approach asserted that strong partisan sentiment and attachment are vital in shaping the behaviours of citizens toward political and electoral issues in Pakistan. Identification with a party is a psychological association that is most of the time unchanged, even if political circumstances changed. It also acted as a strain with the help of which people examine or understand new electoral and political strategies and policies. So, the Michigan Model of the Electoral Process is used in this research to discuss the electoral and political activities of candidates, voters, and political parties in elections in Pakistan. This model is also used to clarify the significance and importance of relations between candidates, political parties, and voters through presenting the Model of "Party Identification". This model suggests that political parties are the major sources to organize and provide a political bearing to the election in Pakistan. The Michigan Model of Party Identification is used in this research because it clarifies the importance of affiliation of voters and candidates with political parties by asserting that long-term and short-term factors are of vital importance in selecting

the party and candidate. In an election, political parties and voters select their candidates keeping in view their benefits and interest. Lack of party support women fails to participate actively in politics because party identification influences the voters and provides them a platform to express their problems and issues through their party. Party identification is necessary for women to win the election because the platform of the party is used to highlight policies and the agenda of the election. Michigan Model suggested that party identification plays a vital role to increase the representation of women in the legislative body of Pakistan. It would make it easier for female candidates to understand the difficult world of politics in Pakistan (Campbell et al. 1960, 65,170, 546).

It was also helpful in this research to understand the reason for women's low political participation because a party might support males because they have higher incomes and have great influence in society. Similarly, in Pakistan political parties avoid granting the main position to women in the party and government. This brings women's status and position to low esteem. So, it becomes a general perception of the society in Pakistan that even after winning the election women would not be able to help and support their rights due to lack of authority and power so, they hesitate to vote for a female candidate (Achen, 2002; Abramowitz, 1998, 645).

During the study it was found some time people changed their party, to explore the reason, the Michigan Model helps to clarify that party identification is a "permanent and strong relationship not distressed by changing political situation, it does not believe in to change party loyalties on the base of minor issues. However, conflicts between the party's laws and discriminatory attitudes may lead to a change in his/her party relation for some citizens. Contrary to this, people who have knowledge of the party's policies and strategies on the main political issues, do not consider these issues and differences more important and try to adjust their views with those issues by becoming close to their party identification in Pakistan.

The revisionist view about party identification favours this view that citizens might change their loyalties with the party because of their interests, which are more significant, mostly emotional, and regional issues are responsible for partisan change (Carsey, 2006; Campbell, 1960, 151). Downs and Key explain it clearly that party identification and party preferences mainly relied on the party's ideologies, policies, and strategies which are close to the preferences of the citizens. Finally, it could be concluded that these two theories would help readers to understand the issue and reasons for the less representation and participation of women in politics in depth. The reason for this is that vicissitude in the life of women is more vibrant in Pakistan as compared to the West (Downs, 1957& Key, 1966).

DISCUSSION

Political participation is a key aspect of politics and electoral activities in Pakistan. Electoral politics are the obvious and figurative type of political participation in the governance and decision-making of Pakistan. This study focused on women's participation in Pakistan's power structure and electoral process. For the conceptual clarity and theoretical framework of this research, two main theoretical approaches were applied to study the under-representation and less participation of women in politics and the electoral process of Pakistan. Firstly, Down's theory of rational choice in election and politics is used as the main theory, according to this theory, voters cast their votes to maximize their interests, similarly, political parties or candidates who obtain votes are also rational and consider their own benefits. In elections, citizens select a party or candidate about which they are assured that in the future it will help to maximize their benefits over other alternatives and associate with that party (Achen, 2002).

FINDINGS

From the above discussion, it is concluded that the self-interests of political parties, voters, and candidates are more dominant and important in the selection of candidates in elections and the government's main positions in Pakistan. Therefore, it can be said that rational choice theory is very appropriate to understand the logical and philosophical aspects of the under-discussion phenomena in the scenario of Pakistan's politics.

It is concluded from the above literature that these two theories are relevant to each other because people are always rational in choosing their party and candidate. The model of rational choice and Michigan's Model of Party Identification supported the findings and results of this study

as both models explained that the voters selected a party or candidate who can benefit them in the result of elections and fulfil their demands and needs. Collected data also supported the study which was collected from secondary sources and asserted that the political participation of women is necessary to guard their political and social interests and rights in Pakistan. Respondents also agreed that in political parties should encourage and support women to come into politics and take part in decision-making as rational beings to achieve their benefits and interests in Pakistan.

Similarly, the findings of the research also interlinked with the theory of the Michigan model of party identification. It is concluded from the above discussion that although party affiliation is very crucial for success in elections yet, social norms, and behaviours shape the opinion and policies of political parties, as patriarchal social structure always shows a negative attitude toward women's participation in politics. However, in Pakistan political parties do not encourage women in the party organization and do not grant the main position to women in the party, and prefer male candidates to females.

From the above discussion and analysis of the data, it is concluded that women's political participation can be increased with the support of political parties, which will encourage female party workers to join politics and take part in elections and play a significant role in the progress of the country. Now it has become mandatory for political parties to formulate their manifesto or plan to ensure equality and intelligibility in the selection criteria and organization of the party (Nazeer 2004, 38). In Pakistan, political parties did not persuade their women political workers to take part in elections as party leaders (Nazeer 2004, 30).

The worth of this study is that it clarifies that "Neither Man nor Women could exist and secure their interest without other". Finally, it can be said that the political participation of women in the decision-making of the country is very less compared to their population size in the power structure of Pakistan and only a small number of women took part in politics due to some societal, legal, and economic factors. The present study also found out from the data that political parties and every government in Pakistan tried their best to increase the representation of women in the decision-making and politics of Pakistan. But the government and political parties failed to implement its policies only due to patriarchal social pressure which does not accept women's importance as equal to men in the politics of Pakistan. From the above discussion, it is also concluded that there are a lot of factors, like social, religious, and economic which are responsible for less participation and representation of women in politics, so far as the patriarchal social norms are the root cause of this issue, which restricted them from all fields of life. Finally, it can be said that if women are legally, economically, and politically empowered, they can efficiently play their role in the progress and development of Pakistan.

CONCLUSION

As women's participation is the main issue and aspect of the current study, accordingly. George (2014:12&16) agreed that level of women's representation in legislature in any country is determined by many factors including; social system and structure, the electoral process, and the policies of political parties. Political parties may work as the gatekeepers of democracy and women's political participation.

Down's theory of "Rational choice theory", asserts that every individual wants to maximize his/her interests. So, women can make progress only by taking part in politics and decision-making concerning women.

It was also concluded that the "Michigan Model of Party identification" because parties express their strategies and policies through their party manifestos to attract votes and increase their vote bank. Because of these policies voters and candidates get affiliated and identified with political parties and most people vote for a political party not for a candidate due to his/her long-term affiliation with a political party.

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