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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Elected Women Parliamentarians, Performance Challenges, Appraisals Examination	This qualitative study delves into multifaceted issues and challenges faced by elected women parliamentarians as they carry out their parliamentary duties and perceptions and appraisals of their performance by their male colleagues, assembly officials, and representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Thus, 10 semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore these dimensions. Study reveals a range of challenges faced by elected women parliamentarians, including gender-based biases, unequal opportunities, and limited access to resources. Male colleagues often cited issues related to gender stereotypes and traditional gender roles as barriers to women's effectiveness in parliament. In contrast, assembly officials and NGO representatives generally held more positive views about services as provided by elected women parliamentarians, accepting their dedication and commitment to addressing critical social issues. The significance of this research lies in its potential to inform policy changes, foster gender equality and encourage the active participation of women in political leadership. Recommendations include the need for increased support and resources for elected women parliamentarians and the promotion of gender-sensitive policies within legislative bodies to enhance the efficacy of parliamentary services.
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INTRODUCTION

The women, around the globe, are confronted numerous issues and challenges in different spheres of life including in the roles of leadership (Enkhzul & Sekiguchi, 2023). Pakistan is a democratic state and strives for equal representation of women and men in decision making process. The free will and choice are considered significant instrument in democratic system. Women necessitate an operative ability not only to say but also to carry the weightage of their views; and government is expected to

address requirements of the public. The women representation, consequently, paves the way toward affecting the legislative procedures and priorities of government to facilitate the women in general and communities as well. The women often face systemic biases and discrimination within political institutions, including stereotypical attitudes about capabilities as balancing parliamentary duties with personal and family errands can be more challenging for the women due to traditional gender roles. Women politicians can stimulate formulation of pro-women policies for their wellbeing. The women political empowerment, representation, leadership is part of SDG to end the insight against women and to promote gender equality in all fields of life (Arif & Bannian, 2022.) SDG Goal 5 goes to “achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls” (Global Goals for Sustainable Development, 2015).

Thus, level of participation of women in government institutions, is important issue to be researched. It is established through literature review that multiple social, cultural, religious, educational and institutional factor contribute to hinder women political service delivery in political arenas (Artaç & Ogurlu, 2024). The less democratic cultures have grave concern working in relatively unstable democracies like ours, Pakistan. For women, who are perceived and treated as incapable to perform public tasks, are able to contribute toward their country political profile (Kenworthy & Malami, 1999). The women parliamentarians may have limited access to financial resources, networks, and mentorship compared to their male counterparts (Richard & Jennifer, 2014). Moreover, the political parties tend to be male-dominated and abandonment of the women related policies is a common practice within political parties. So, there is a dire need to dig out this less researched phenomenon to seek the existence of critical mass in all the parliamentary committees & to know the perception of potential stakeholder about their understanding towards challenges faced by women in effective parliamentary service delivery and establish the true factors that challenge delivery of effective parliamentary services by women parliamentarians in our own political context that is dominated by male colleagues, assembly officials and NGO representatives (attending assembly sessions) in the diverse circumstances.

Research Questions

1. What do the male colleagues, assembly and NGOs officials think the issues and challenges to elected women parliamentarians while performing services?
2. How do the male colleagues, assembly and NGOs officials appraise parliamentary services performed by elected women parliamentarians?

LITERATURE REVIEW

In Pakistan, women have historically been excluded from politics and system. As Bari (2005) states, this exclusion is result of various structures, functions and identities that differ from different social contexts. Ideology and politics combine with women's role in family, resulting in women not having time and space to engage in political work. Many women do not have the confidence, knowledge, desire and political skills to enter politics. These are some of important cultural, economic, political and emotional factors that contribute to huge gender gap in Pakistan political system. According to 2017 report held in Lahore, Pakistan, Punjab is the most populous province of Pakistan. Established in accordance with Article 106 of the Constitution of Pakistan, Parliament has a total of 371 seats, 66

of which are reserved for women and 8 of which are reserved for non-Muslims. Articles 130, 141 and 142, 143 specify roles and responsibilities of Council members. The main role of MPA is to participate in the state's legislative processes like education, health, agriculture, taxation, water conservation and sanitation. However, if a state of emergency has been declared in country, the state parliament cannot pass a law if the proposed law violates fundamental rights or does not comply with Islamic restrictions. State legislatures hold administration responsible for managing money. Constitution of Pakistan provides for control and withdrawal of money from public funds of the state by decision of the provincial assembly.

Another important role of MPAs is to oversee policies, practices and operations of local governments and municipal departments. According to the constitution, the state legislature is merged with the state legislature. As public representatives, MPAs are responsible for debating the matters of public interest in Parliament. In exercising their right to participate, men and women should have equal opportunities to participate in politics in various ways, including through participation in elections as legislators, politicians or state leaders. In other words, women and men, in exercising their right to participate, have right to influence decision-making through public debate, negotiation with their elected representatives or over their capacities or cooperation at various levels available to citizens, public rights. Women and men have the right to participate in governance of their country, directly or through freely chosen representatives. In order to implement these fundamental rights, United Nations revised the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which states that states parties have the responsibility to ensure the participation of women in politics and citizenship, and that, therefore, they should not be discriminated against based on the gender. The United Nations also adopted the Special Convention upon the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which sets out the steps to be taken to promote the women rights and equality between women and men in this area.

Situation of Women Political Representation Around the Globe

Although women make up half of the world's population, they are still underrepresented among political leaders around the world. According to World Economic Forum's 2015 Global Gender Gap Index, while the gender gap between men and women in world population in health and education narrowed, political gaps narrowed to only 21%. While progress was being made, it was slow. In 1955, women constituted only 3% of members of international community; In 2016, share of women almost doubled compared to 1995, reaching approximately 21.8 percent. The approach to women leadership is similar. In 1999, women held less than 9% of leading positions; today, women hold 17.2% of world leaders. For example, some argue that bills sponsored by women are subject to opposition & debate than bills sponsored by men. Thus, women have difficulty voicing their opinions. Freedom means equality for all men and women. Contrary to basic understanding of democracy, it is often seen that women are excluded from all areas of life, especially politics. The United Nations says women make up the "largest group in the world." In order to attain true spirit of democracy, political cooperation must be developed.

If the reasons for women's lack of the political participation are i.e. "They are not educated enough! They are not self-confident enough! They are not experienced enough! This is blaming the victim"

(Longwe, 2000); The perspective of women blaming must be replicated with the confidence in this largest group of the world. The women might encounter challenges in climbing the ranks within political parties, where decision-making roles are often male-dominated. The legislative Processes: Navigating legislative process and securing support for gender-focused policies can be difficult. It is the responsibility of the State to ensure the effective participation of women and men in politics and decision-making processes on equal terms. In this linking, women's political representation has come a long way since the turn of the century. As of January 2019, women hold 24.3% of assembly seats worldwide; this rate was 13.4% in 2000. There are also 27 countries with a share below 10% (including three assemblies with no women). Meanwhile, the proportion of the female government officials and representative has increased slightly over the past nineteen years, from 4.7% to 5.2% (Hessami & Lopes, 2020).

Situation in South Asia

The South Asia is home to many cultures, languages and religions. Here we can see many changes in traditions, affordability and lifestyle. But what all the cultures and regions in South Asia have in common is discrimination against women. Usually, women have been considered subordinated to men, and this is still an important part of both rural and urban areas. The situation is slightly better in the city due to women's education and economic independence. In this case, difference between educated & uneducated is almost negligible. Situation has improved due to political empowerment, especially in South Asia, where 33% of seats are allocated to local governments, but most of the change is unsatisfactory. True empowerment is only successful if accompanied by the health and financial empowerment. For this, the whole society needs to be transformed. It is not possible for this change to occur immediately with legislation. But in a society where all changes start from the top, the fact remains that these measures, together with strong political forces, can stimulate change and gradually improve the situation later. Therefore, political empowerment of women is not an end in itself, but supports the entire process and social development by contributing to leadership and social empowerment.

Women's participation in decision-making processes will, on the one hand, allow them to change gender rights and laws, and on the other hand, will enable the development of new rights and rules based on equality. When it comes to laws, the laws of almost all South Asian countries grant equal rights to all citizens and do not recognize discrimination based on gender. However, discrimination still exists in laws and regulations. This is hard debate in political science where no one represents other except for vested interests. There must be representatives of different classes and minorities. Therefore, there is a real belief that only women can represent their interests and their involvement in decision-making is inevitable not necessarily guarantee influence or leadership positions for the women. The political empowerment of women is considered one of the most significant dimensions of women empowerment. Gender disparity in political empowerment sub index is also stark across the region. Only 28.1% of this gender gap has been bridged to date. Bangladesh is at 7 in world's ranking for women empowerment with 54.6 % of its gender gap closed in this domain. Rest of the region is far behind Bangladesh. Similarly, Bhutan and Maldives are two which never had a woman head of the state.

Table 1 Political Empowerment Sub- Index 2021

Country	Rank (Out of 156 countries)	Score
Bangladesh	7	0.546
Nepal	61	0.241
Sri Lanka	90	0.167
Maldives	117	0.121
Bhutan	137	0.082
India	51	0.276
Pakistan	98	0.154

Source: Global Gender Gap Report (2021)

South Asian women remained underrepresented in political sphere with share of women in the parliament above 33%. No doubt, some improvement has been made in the empowerment of women in every corner of society influence how women parliamentarians are alleged and treated. Women are almost looked over in economic, social, legal, and political fields compare to men. The main challenge not only for Pakistan but for all less-developed states about women empowerment is weak policy making and then no authentic procedures for monitoring and evaluation and impact analysis afterwards.

Women Political Participation in Pakistan

Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, great leader of history and the founder of Islamic Republic of Pakistan, said:

"I have always maintained that no nation can ever be worthy of its existence that cannot take its women along with men. No struggle can ever succeed without women partaking side by side with men. There are two powers in world, one is sword & other is pen. But there is 3rd power stronger than both, that of women."

The above inspirational statement by the founder of our country is enlightening enough to establish endeavor for Pakistani women, to take part in every field of life. Thus, as stated by [Qadri and Umar \(2015\)](#), women's participation in local government politics increased to 33% in 2000. The quota is applicable at three levels of local government-union council, tehsil and district level. Also, before 2002 elections, women's representation in both national and provincial assemblies had increased to 17 percent. The number of women running and winning elections was highest in history of Pakistan. A total of 188 women competed for general seats in 2002 elections, 101-188 women were nominated by different political parties and 39 of them won the seat. Compared to the 1997 elections, the ratio was one-third of that i.e., only 56 women ran for election, 39 were get party nomination and only seven won. Still, when we have look at the 2008 and 2013 elections, we see some instability in trends. In the 2013 elections, women won 70 of 342 seats in lower house of country's legislature, accounting for almost 20.5% of all seats. In Senate, women elected to 17 out of 100 seats, accounting for 17% of all seats. According to [Iwanaga \(2008\)](#) in 2008 election, 34 women were chosen by political parties to run for election.

In the 2013 election, 36 women acquired nominations by political parties. In 2018 elections, the ratio was almost the same as 68 got seats in parliament ([Zardari, 2018](#)). Moreover, the female candidates

contested for the general seats in Provincial Assembly in the General Election of 2013 were 2.73 % only. According to [Shami \(2008\)](#), the quota system would be the most effective way of enhancing the political empowerment of women, as envisaged by President Musharraf in his inaugural address to the National Conference on the Women's Political Participation in January 2003, where he had stated that, "The women members of the Assemblies must rise beyond party affiliations... influence decision-making (and) become effective in the legislation to ensure that no law detrimental to their rights and interests is passed." The evaluation of their public speaking, negotiation, and diplomacy skills. Resultantly, 108 women were contesting 272 National Assembly seats in 2013. This number is again higher than the 2008 election, when 76 women in total ran for office. Since the 2013 elections, some political parties such as Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) and Mutahida Qaumi Movement have increased the participation of women among party candidates as compared to 2008 general elections in country.

Therefore, quotas for women in politics played an important role in placing women in decision-making positions at the local, state, and national levels. In 2012, Naz et al found in their study that cultural practices in Pakistani society promote discrimination against women, often legitimized by religion. Likewise, Council of Islamic Ideology might responsible for some of the most undesirable restrictions on women rights & leadership, which creates serious problems in political participation. For example, religious views advocating gender segregation. The seclusion or segregation of women limit women's access to most resources and prohibit them from the voting or running the elections. In January (2016), Democracy Reporting International (DRI) presented a report according to which, there is a huge gap in representation of women not only as voters but also as candidates for running elections & administrators that validates gender gaps with regards to Pakistan's political equality commitments under CEDAW (Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women). In this linking, based upon above facts, the assessment is required that how effectively the women parliamentarians engage with their constituents, address their concerns, and advocate for their needs. Since 2013, while there is an increase in female voters' registration, the gender gap has been thus increased.

United Nations goal of 30 percent representation by women in all electorates is yet far to achieve. The evaluation of the policies women parliamentarians advocates for and successfully implement, particularly those addressing gender equality, health, education, and social welfare. Many political and media analysts criticized the change in law, which eliminates direct elections for seats reserved for women, for affecting the female politicians by creating political capital and public support as examination of how their work contributes to inclusive and equitable policy-making. Similarly, the examination of the leadership positions women holds within parliament and their political parties. [DRI \(2016\)](#) notes that this limits their ability to reach the higher offices and weakens the positions of occupants due to their greater dependence on the party instead of their voters. Thus, by addressing these trials and leveraging their strengths, women can boost their contributions to policy-making. The women' representation in election administration is very low, with no female DOs surveyors and DROs, 25 female ADOs out of 225, and 20 female ROs out of 770 in total and some permanent staff of ECP. The recent situation of women representation in numbers & percentage of Punjab Assembly

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is given below that clarifies absence of critical mass from all classified positions of Punjab Assembly 2024-to date.

Table 2 Women Representation on Hierarchical Positions of Punjab Assembly

Category	Female		Male	
	F	%	F	%
Members in the Punjab Assembly	52	15.24	289	84.76
Members in General Seats	10	3.38	285	96.62
Members in Reserved seats for Minorities	1	20	4	80
Ministers in the Punjab Assembly (including CM)	3	16.67	15	83.33

Developed by Author; Source: <http://www.gmis.gop.pk>; Note: 30 Seats are vacant.

The gender inequality in Pakistan can take many forms, but the most important one is the political inequality, and correcting this inequality will help solve all other problems as well. Issues of gender inequality in politics include barriers to voting, barriers to entering elected office, barriers to entry into politics, and barriers to representation in decision-making and governance. In this connection, only 44% of Pakistan's voters are women out of 106 million total voters. This is at least 6 percent less than its share in the adult population as a whole. Women who are eligible to vote are not registered on the ballot, and more importantly, women are not registered as citizens at all. While male voter turnout in the 2018 elections was 9.1% more than women, as men cast 11 million more votes than the women (Javed, 2021).

There are also significant regional differences in this trend. There is good data on women's suffrage in West Punjab and parts of Baluchistan and KP. The structural explanations for this phenomenon include deep-rooted cultural norms that inhibit women's participation in public sphere. The idea is that these differences will diminish over time as these patterns are disrupted by changes in culture, demographics, or institutions. The recent research led by Sarah Khan, Shandana Mohmand, Shanze Rauf & Ali Cheema shows that largest cities in Pakistan's four provinces had significantly increased gender inequality in voter turnout in 2018 general election compared to other provincial polling stations. The gap is largest in Punjab, where the gender gap in participation in Lahore metropolitan area (12.5%) is twice the gender gap in all the other big cities of other provinces (6.3%). Thus, it was found that women's electoral participation in urban areas was 8% to 10% lower than in rural areas (Cheema et al, 2022).

Challenges & Issues to Women Parliamentarians in Pakistan

The public-private dichotomy defines politics as a male prerogative. The problem is so innate in the nature that it considers male dominated field as quite 'natural'; as NCSW in report (2010) describe that, despite constitutional right, women themselves do not consider politics as their appropriate sphere due to internalization of patriarchal ideologies. Politics is generally perceived by women as 'dirty'. Moreover, because of social perception of women's primary roles as mothers and wives in the reproductive domain, the family and state capitalize fewer resources in increasing women's human capital as compared to men (Awan, 2016). Women are not given equal access to opportunities and resources which result in their dependent social and economic status vis-à-vis men. Moreover, the

subordinate position of women in the family and society as a result of the public-private divide is key ideological barrier to women's political participation (Bano, 2009). Latif et al. (2015) discussed the issues of less educational qualifications and less independent financial means or social capital faced by women as plan to enter into politics. Another key barrier to women political participation is the male domination and masculine nature of politics. Therefore, above all, Political parties are doorkeepers to politics.

The male leadership of political parties does not treat women workers as their equals. The culture of political parties is highly undemocratic and authoritarian. Most of the parties are run by political dynasties. Besides, Rai (2002) stated that women are not given opportunities to work at decision-making positions within the party structures. At the time of election, they are not granted party tickets to contest elections. There are less or no opportunities within political parties for women to learn political expertise. Women are not given any financial support by the political parties to run their election campaigns. Women's priorities and concerns are not reflected in party manifestos. The attitudes of political leadership and culture of political parties simply mirror the private patriarchy at home. Moreover, increasing commercialization and criminalization of Pakistani politics is another structural barrier to women political participation over decision making in government. According to Adamu 2009 quoted by Ahmed (2013), the gender role ideology is used as an ideological tool by patriarchy to place the women within the private arena of home as mothers and wives and men in the public sphere.

This is one of the vital factors that shape the level of women's political participation. According to gender-related socio-political indicators, quoted by Fleschenberg (2008) such as Gender-related Development Index (GDI) and Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM), Pakistan is thus considered patriarchal and paternalistic in terms of both their gender ideology and political record. Thus, the overall performance of women political leaders at all levels is weak and ineffective representation result in mere face saving of country international commitments to empower women politically and promote gender equality in all spheres, including political arena. Thus, understanding performance of women parliamentarians requires a multifaceted approach that considers the unique challenges they face and impact they make in their roles. The current study would explore major challenges and issues to women parliamentarians of the Punjab Assembly in terms of effective service delivery after assessing their critical mass existence in all parliamentary functionaries. Therefore, the current study analyses factors that challenge women elected parliamentarians in effective parliamentary services. To narrow the scope, the study is only limited to the Women parliamentarians of Provincial Assembly Punjab.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Qualitative methodology was used for the purpose of this research. Thematic research technique was utilized to deal with data collected through IDIs. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect the data. The researcher prepared an interview guide, but allowed the conversation to flow naturally, meaning that the questions did not necessarily have to be asked in order. There was a prospect for researcher to go off-script and would ask extra questions to participants to gain greater detail in response.

Population of Study

All male members of provincial assembly and officials of Punjab Assembly were considered as the potential target population of the study. Moreover, the representatives of the different NGOs (who attended the sessions of the Punjab assembly) were also considered as the potential sample for this present study.

Sample Size & Sampling Criteria of the Study

The sample comprised of three major categories of respondents i.e., that are used for current research study:

1. Male parliamentarians
2. Officials of Punjab Assembly
3. Reporters of NGOs designated for attending the assembly sessions

Purposive sampling technique was used to acquire sample. As target population of each category except 3rd one, was large enough for qualitative study. Third category have two officials and both have become part of study sample. Inclusion criteria was set for above 2 categories for choosing the sample of study.

For category 1:

- The male parliamentarians who have at least 50% attendance in assembly sessions in 5-year tenure. (The rationale behind attendance criteria was that priority was given to those who at least did some assembly business during assembly sessions and could better respond to questions.) At least one male parliamentarian of each government & opposition alliance. (Criterion was set for not to get biased results of study on either side).

For category 2:

- The officials who designated by the speaker to attend assembly sessions and attended at least 50% assembly sessions in 5-year tenure. The officials who have direct interaction with the women parliamentarians.

So, sample comprised of total 10 interviews including 4 male parliamentarians, 4 assembly officials and 2 representatives of NGOs.

Data Collection Tool

Interview guide was designed with questions, informed by inclusive literature review on challenges faced by women members of assemblies. Interview guide was reviewed by three experts/subject specialists before going to field. The interview guide was pilot tested and was proved responsive to collect required data.

RESULTS OF STUDY

Interviews were audio-recorded with permission of respondents. Audio-recordings were recorded verbatim, with minor editing applied to facilitate reading. The transcripts were examined following [Braun and Clarke \(2006\)](#) method of thematic analysis (TA), to identify themes and patterns within the data. Briefly, TA involved becoming familiar with data by transcribing the interviews, and then reading the data multiple times. Initial codes were generated across data set, and then collated into potential themes. A thematic map was formed and ongoing analysis refined specifics of each theme,

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with clear definitions and names for themes generated. Extracts that best represent each theme was identified for inclusion in discussion & write up of themes. These extracts were read by experienced academic supervisor to achieve the consensus concerning the interpretation of the themes and their appropriate classifications.

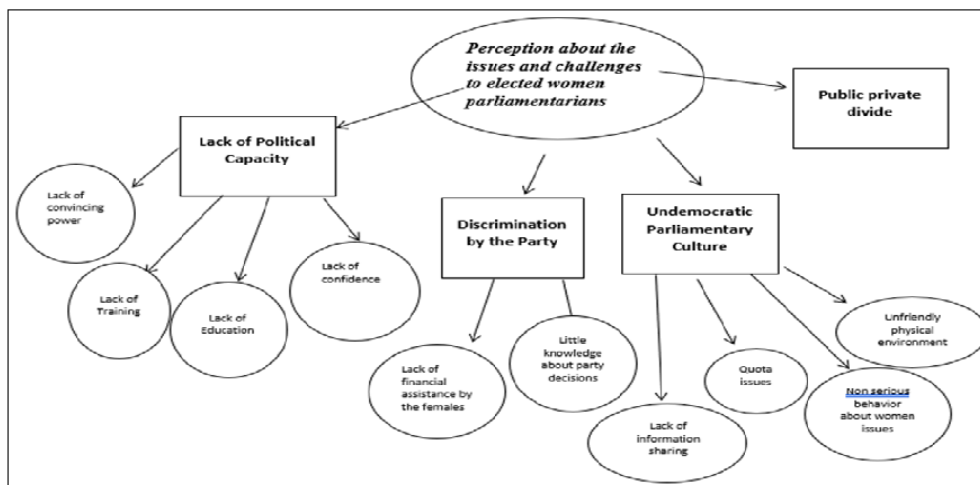
Demographics of Respondents

The average age of the male parliamentarians was 48 years and average years of parliamentary experience were 6 years. All the Punjab assembly officials were on grade 18 and were male. Thus, the average age of Punjab assembly officials was 52 years and average years of service experience were 16 years. Whereas, the third category of NGOs representatives were with average age of 37 and had three years' experience of the parliamentary observation each. In this connection, both the NGOs representatives were females. So, over all Data set had eight male respondents whereas 2 female respondents.

Perception about Issues & Challenges to Elected Women Parliamentarians

Four overarching themes were highlighted while answering the first research question of the study and defining perception of male politicians, officials of the parliaments and designated members of non-governmental organizations. In this linking, the thematic map is defining the relationship of the themes and subthemes. Consequently, the lack of political capacity, discrimination by the party & undemocratic culture of the parliament and public private divide are four main themes under first research question.

Thematic Map 1 Perception about Issues & Challenges to Elected Women Parliamentarians



Description of Themes

Lack of Political Capacity

Four main themes are related to perception of respondents about issues and challenges to women parliamentarians, described below in detail with their suitable extracts of the respondents used for current research study.

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Sub theme 1: Lack of convincing power. Most of the respondents think that “convincing power is the most important thing to have, to convey the message on floor instead of education, power of speech can be the second important element to become a good politician, some women have both” Sub theme 2: Lack of training. Training and political experience matters a lot, the ladies who came first time in the parliament cannot perform in start of their career at least one year, you can see verbatim of assembly sessions, this is on the record, Sub theme 3: Lack of education. Most of the respondents carried this question seriously especially by non-governmental members. Parliamentary functions are performed through some rules and ladies who knew these rules whether experienced or not can perform well in parliament.

Education plays an important part in the parliamentary functions; yes, less education can become a big challenge to women parliamentarians. Education should be in hand; experience can gain with practice of doing tasks time and again. The male parliamentarians were of the view that educated parliamentarians present the serious business in the assembly always. The other one said “I observed all the ladies who performed in sessions were qualified (at least B.A.) and conveyed their message well to the house”. But at the same time when saying that the women had lack of confidence made these statements less accredited. Sub theme 4: Lack of confidence. The NGO representatives were of the view that “generally women who were in parliament had no confidence at all”. Politics is all about the convincing other people to vote for you because you can better represent their interests within parliament, women are exempted from this duty by law because they have fixed quota to come to the parliament

Discrimination by Party

Party itself was considered responsible from many of the research responses both in data set one and data set two. In this linking, a new subtheme which was not emerged while talking with the female politicians was emerged now when talking with male parliamentarians, which I put as sub theme 1 in present study.

Sub theme 1: Due to lack of financial assistance. There are barriers for women in every field but in politics those are of somewhat different nature. In politics women are not considered as potential candidates by parties as they do not/cannot show their vote bank or “Bradri”. Moreover, “Women cannot promise the financial assistance on their own”. these things remain women far behind men to be in the politics, Sub theme 2: Little knowledge about party decisions. Thus, the women have less knowledge about party decisions as they did not attend party meetings. Sometimes they face some issues regarding public meetings where they are supposed to defend party decisions which mostly women denied to take part such meetings because of the little knowledge about party decisions & the rationale behind those decisions. Our parties are actually responsible for not grooming their women workers in such a way to build confidence in them, only educated ladies can perform well on floor of the house,

Undemocratic Parliamentary Culture

The parliamentary culture itself hinders lot due to its undemocratization. Parliamentarians in some way or the other are not be treated equally, they are given very less time to elaborate their point “baat clear hi nai krny di jati, point a gya, ka shor”. In this connection, when everywhere is the

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monopoly of males; women could not perform in that culture and resultantly get blamed for low performance?

Sub theme 1: Lack of information sharing. One of the respondents said, "I think women face issues regarding less information from other parliamentarians share with them. e.g., women who are the members of standing committees were not informed about committees' decisions and reports would be forwarded without their inputs incorporated". This was again the issue reported and highlighted by the male politician. Sub theme 2: Non serious behavior towards women' issues. This was really disturbing element that was highlighted by assembly officials and I maintained separate sub theme on it. They said: "Yes, they face some trouble while they want to raise some issue of women interest as domestic violence issue, they face much critique on it, and bad thing is that they were left alone to face backlash whenever situation like this comes. Women's agenda wouldn't be the priority to be discussed". Least priority would be given to females' suggestions in general discussions & pre-budget sessions I observed a lot of issues women parliamentarians are facing there; the biggest is that they have no voice there to be heard, unanswered question would be raised by women parliamentarians. Male parliamentarians were of the view that, "if hooting does happen, it is actually invited by the women themselves".

Moreover, that is not the thing which just happen to the females, male parliamentarians are also mocked by female as well as male colleagues. Sub theme 3: Unfriendly physical environment. This sub theme was derived from the interview extract of one of the NGO representatives. She said, "No separate sitting room would be given to women, around 2% of the officials of the Punjab assembly were females and I did not witness any area or the room designated for them even I saw a woman official breastfed her child in the library which is considered a place open for all, so parliamentary environment is not female friendly at all". Sub theme 4: Quota issue. Women are treated as minority in the parliament. Women get the reserved seats as we have the quota for minority. She said, "so if honestly we see, women politician has no respect either within the parliament or in public at large as long as they have quota seats". Quota has manifold effects. One effect was highlighted as: "Many barriers' women face like they cannot move any bill towards the passing stage until and unless they lobby some of their male colleagues with them as they are very less in numbers in the parliament, so, in this drive, the women related issues for which they raise their voice cannot be resolved through women candidate only".

Public-Private Divides

The division of public-private sphere leads towards women' responsibility of private sphere. One of the male respondents as said, "Obviously, our society does not spare any woman from the family responsibilities completely so they would also have some responsibilities as I can quote here woman parliamentarian who had the responsibility to take care of her bedridden mother-in-law (either with some assistance but has to do)". One of the respondents showed his attitude towards women' household responsibility as under: "The real issues would not be as much big as they portrayed their issues, so "issue choty hoty hein, rony ziada hoty hein". "I think they had some issues specially those who have small babies and had to come from outstation to attend the assembly sessions, those ladies were really in trouble during session days". In this drive, society does not response equal to males

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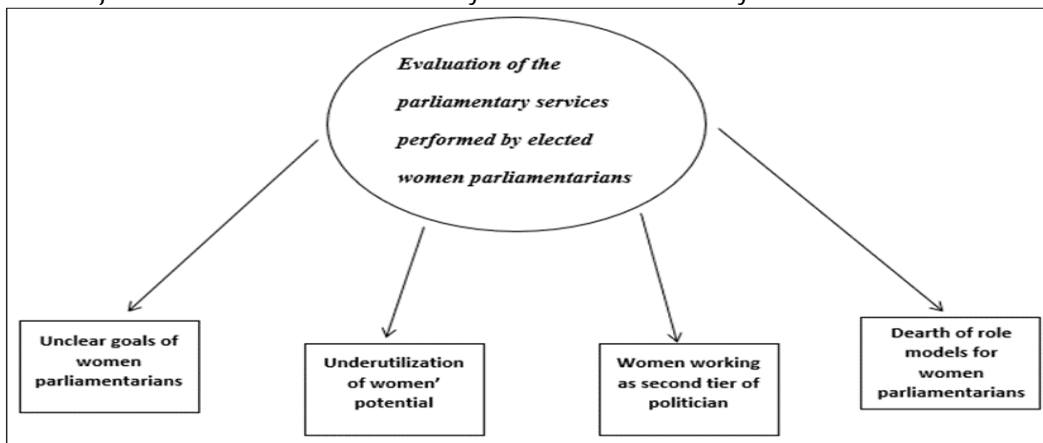
and females. This practice can impact the parliament as well. One of the male parliamentarians responded, "Actually difference in the males and females' roles is the natural, the issue comes where women deviate their responsibility of home and try to become a public figure, so society does not accept this deviation".

This statement showed the perception towards female which is quite pathetic. The society does not accept politics as females' task, should be performed by males, and the actual condition is just the same as society requires, if women are in parliament, they are there just for quorum. The patriarchal setup is basically in favor of the females, they should not do any work for coming in the parliament. Without election they come and give their input for legislation. Society's culture if we follow in the parliament that because we are from this society, and women are not admired as much for their role as politician by society because they do not prove themselves as better politician than men of the society. Patriarchal culture basically restricts women's participation at every public forum so is the case with parliament. "Women could not perform well in discussions; in pre-budget discussions etc., they were there just to be counted as voters for any bill, passed. They even do not know the issue for which voting is required and see hand of their monitor (All the time, male) for vote against the issue under discussion or not".

Evaluation of Parliamentary Services Performed by Women Parliamentarians

Four themes were highlighted while answering second research question of study and defining the evaluation of male politicians, officials of parliaments & designated members of non-governmental organizations about performance of women parliamentarians. Thematic map is defining relations of themes and subthemes.

Thematic Map 2 Evaluation of Parliamentary Services Performed by Women Parliamentarians



Description of Themes

Unclear Goals of Women Parliamentarians

All the respondents, in some way or the other, came up with the similar responses that the women parliamentarians did not have any agenda collectively to debate on or for legislation. One of the respondents said,

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“No high hopes are there attached with female politicians. Women are not seen as game changer in politics, and whenever I talked to female parliamentarians, they wouldn't have any clear goal to achieve over policy making which can change women's lives at large. So as politicians, I do not see them as good as men”.

Underutilization of Women's Potential

Many of the respondents were of the view, while evaluating the women's performance, that their skills and potential were underutilized. “I think they face barriers by the party authorities, not give them chance to speak publicly or not utilize their potential fully by not giving them hierarchical positions within the parties and/or in assembly and males have a sense of superiority being elected by public and respect the general seat holders only”. Another respondent said, “I believe females can be very good politicians, actually I think their potential is under-utilized and their capacities are unexplored”.

Women working as second tier of politicians

Some of respondents, women as well as men, evaluated the performance of women as they worked as second tier everywhere in the politics. One officer of the Punjab assembly gave example which was self-explanatory. “Under the international commitments, we amend our laws and fix a quota for women but still women wouldn't be considered as first option for public for law making (examples are there: Hilary's defeat being a woman...American civilized first world nation didn't vote for a woman, how can our society?)”. Some facts reported by the male politicians, were: “The women on reserved seats have not same respect either in front of their party colleagues or in front of all the parliamentarians”. And, “A latent behavior is accepted as well as practiced by all the concerned parliamentarians through which, female parliamentarians have internalized themselves as they are second class politicians”.

Dearth of role models for women parliamentarians

This theme was highlighted by NGO representatives that, “Many females are not familiar with the rules of the procedures of the assembly, go against rules and become the target of the speaker by shutting her up and they think it insult when other people laugh, but that is just ignorance nothing else, intentionally no one target other, they don't have model to follow” And another respondent said, “We do not have true politicians indeed who legislate truly according to demands of country & draw original priority lines between agendas. Male politicians have many role models to follow, whether female politicians are facing dearth of role models. This is reason that they are far behind males in this field.”

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

The overarching context of politics has created serious issues and challenges, which affect women's performance of their political roles. Patriarchal structure that excludes women from power has had an extremely important influence on Pakistan's political fabric. The Fundamental Rights laid down in the constitution pledge the equality of all citizens before law and prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex alone, while permitting state to take affirmative action measures for women. A provision for reserved seats for women in the legislatures raised their political participation in terms of

numbers but not in terms of substance. Pakistan also has a strong women's movement, which has played key role in defending and extending democratic processes. Unreliability and gender biased policies of political parties directed attention towards creating spaces for women at grass root level (Mushtaq, 2018).

The representatives of public were no more public representatives when they were in parliament. They were there meant for party preferences which were hardly derived through real public issues. Several times women parliamentarians were given a relief in acknowledgement of their previous work but that would actually prove avoidance of women members to be the part of those decisions which were of utmost importance, most of time of financial nature (Hadi, 2017). The dearth of role models for women politicians might because women do not have any career persistency in politics (Noreen et al, 2019). This study concludes that majority of challenges that women parliamentarians face will be minimized by creating gender responsive culture in parliament. Moreover, there is need for increased support and resources for elected women parliamentarians and promotion of gender-sensitive policies within legislative bodies to enhance efficacy of parliamentary services of elected women parliamentarians.

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