

## Women's Political Participation In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Local Governance 2015: Challenges And Opportunities

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### Abstract

Women's political participation is one of the fundamental human rights worldwide. According to feminist perspective in Pakistan political sphere is attached with masculinity while femininity is confined to private sphere. The present research study mainly focused to address the socio-cultural barriers to women political participation. The study was conducted in two tehsil namely Takhat Bahi and Katlang of District Mardan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. Researcher used quantitative research design and data was collected from 285 elected local leaders with simple random sampling technique. Among the total respondents 100 women elected members and 185 men elected members were selected. Researcher collected directly data from men elected members through interview schedule while women research assistant collected data from women elected members. Statistical data was analyzed with the help of SPSS and regression analysis test was applied to draw the results that which factors are greatly influence the women political participation. The statistical results indicated that patriarchal structure of society is significantly influence women low political participation at  $P$ -value (.002) and  $\beta$  value is positive (2.632). Similarly, the women subordinate role in social sphere is greatly influence the low political participation at  $P$ -value (.015)  $\beta$  value is positive (2.321). The study concluded that women are oppressed due to her gender and their political participation is discouraged due to her gender. It is suggested that government should increase the women quota and make strategic planning and interventions to enhance women political participation.

**Keywords:** Women, Political Participation, Local Governance, Challenges, Opportunities, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.

### تلخیص

خواتین کی سیاسی شراکت دنیا بھر میں بنیادی حقوق انسانی میں سے ایک ہے۔ پاکستان میں حقوق نسواں کے نقطہ نظر کے مطابق سیاسی دائرہ مردانگی سے منسلک ہے جبکہ نسائی حیثیت صرف نجی شعبے تک ہی محدود ہے۔ موجودہ تحقیقی مطالعہ بنیادی طور

پر خواتین کی سیاسی شرکت میں رکاوٹ سماجی و ثقافتی رکاوٹوں کو دور کرنے پر مرکوز ہے۔ یہ مطالعہ پاکستان کے صوبہ خیبر پختون خوا کے ضلع مردان کی دو تحصیل تخت بابی اور کا تلنگ میں کیا گیا۔ محققین نے مقداری تحقیقاتی ڈیزائن کا استعمال کیا اور ۲۸۵ منتخب مقامی رہنماؤں سے بے ترتیب نمونے لینے کی تکنیک کے ذریعہ ڈیٹا اکٹھا کیا گیا۔ کل جواب دہندگان میں ۱۰۰ خواتین منتخب ارکان اور ۱۸۵ مرد منتخب ممبروں کا انتخاب کیا گیا۔ محققین نے انٹرویو شیڈول کے ذریعے مردوں کے منتخب ارکان سے براہ راست ڈیٹا اکٹھا کیا جبکہ خواتین ریسرچ اسسٹنٹ نے خواتین منتخب ممبروں سے ڈیٹا اکٹھا کیا۔ ایس پی ایس ایس کی مدد سے شماریاتی اعداد و شمار کا تجزیہ کیا گیا اور رجعت تجزیہ ٹیسٹ لاگو کیا گیا۔ اعداد و شمار کے نتائج نے اشارہ کیا ہے کہ منتخب خواتین کی شرکت اور مقامی کونسل میں فیصلہ سازی مردوں کے منتخب ارکان کے ذریعے حوصلہ شکنی کی ہے۔ اس بات کا بھی اشارہ ہے کہ خواتین کو ماتحت مقام، گھریلو شعبے میں قید اور مالی انحصار سے صوبے میں خواتین کی سیاسی شرکت کی حوصلہ شکنی ہوتی ہے۔ اس تحقیق میں یہ نتیجہ اخذ کیا گیا ہے کہ اس کی صنف کی وجہ سے خواتین پر ظلم کیا جاتا ہے اور اس کی صنف کی وجہ سے ان کی سیاسی شرکت کی حوصلہ شکنی کی جاتی ہے۔ حکومت کو خواتین کے کوٹے میں اضافہ کرنے اور خواتین کی سیاسی شرکت کو بڑھانے کے لئے حکمت عملی سازی اور مداخلت کرنے کی تجویز دی گئی ہے۔

**کلیدی الفاظ:** خواتین، سیاسی شرکت، مقامی حکومت، چیلنجز، مواقع، خیبر پختونخوا، پاکستان

## Introduction

Women's political participation is one of the human rights around the world. According to Dorothy E. Smith standpoint theory women effective and equal participation with men in political decision making is important to make sure gender equality, sustainable socio-economic development, and peace (Huq, 2016). Women's active political participation strengthens women voices and democracy in a country (Finkel, 2002). According to one of the Sustainable Development Goals, state parties are responsible to ensure women's full, effective and equal political participation at all levels in the political sphere (Esquivel, 2016). It is agreed worldwide that women equal participation in politics promote gender equality and women empowerment. There are various arguments which discuss and prompt the women equal participation in politics. The justice argument; the justice argument discussed that women are the half of the world population therefore their equal political participation with men is the human right. The experience argument; in the experience argument it is argued that women experiences in private and public sphere are different than men therefore their equal representation in policy making is necessary to address the issues they are experiences differently. It is argued that as women experience differently so they will do politics differently from men. The interest argument; it is agreed in the interest argument that women and men have different interest therefore it should be deal differently. It is stated that women representation in

politics is needed to articulate women interest. The symbolic argument; in the symbolic argument it is stated that every women in politics is a role model for other women therefore their political participation is necessary to attract other women in politics. The democratic argument; in the democratic argument it is argued that equal participation of men and women strengthen the democratization of governance in democracy therefore equal participation should be encouraged (Kassa, 2015). All these arguments highlighted the importance of women equal political participation in all tier of governance which is directly contribute to the socio-economic development of the country and women empowerment.

It is highlighted that half of the world's population is women but less than one forth (23%) seats are allocated globally for women in the political sphere from national parliament to senate and to local governance (Krook& Diana, 2010). Internationally various conventions, protocols and treaties are adopted for women mainstreaming in the political sphere but unfortunately women political participation is very minimal in national politics worldwide particularly in developing countries. Globally women representation in local governance is very low and their participation in decision making is discouraged in political, economic and social spheres (Nasreen et al., 2016). Many research studies revealed that women political participation is discouraged particularly in patriarchal social structure (Shami, 2009). In patriarchal social structure roles are defined for both sexes. The woman's primary role is defined as mother and housekeeper which restrict her public sphere engagement. In many countries women are considered subordinate and men are headed by the household to decide about her life and daily lives. Researches mentioned that women are culturally assumed less competent to hold political representation and become a political leader. In the patriarchal political sphere it is widely considered that leadership and political participation is a masculine trait and even women's choice of vote cast is controlled by a men-headed household. In developing countries women are encouraged to take care of household affairs and take part in public sphere activities with the permission of her male intimate partner (Zakar et al., 2013). According to feminist perspective in patriarchal structure all the activities are divided into public and private sphere.

According to feminist perspective there is low level of women's government and political participation (Khan & Fardaus, 2006). Patricia Hill Collins one of the prominent black feminist stated that women are oppressed and confined to domestic sphere with subordinate role of nursing and caring of family members (Dotson, 2015). One of the feminist theorists R. W. Connell argue that hegemonic masculinity and patriarchal dividend discourage women political and public sphere participation. It is argued that women political participation have been constrained due to their unpaid household work, overburden socially defined domestic responsibilities and social perception that politics is dirty game which is not for decent women to participate (Bose, 2007). It is shown in

research studies that women's political participation has increased in national and local government politics. Many countries worldwide have adopted a quota system to ensure qualitative representation of women in the political sphere (Krook, 2006). Around the world many countries are currently using quotas for increasing women's political participation. The main purpose of using quota for women representation is increasing the presence of women in the political sphere and government institutions as a stakeholder (Bano, 2009).

Pakistani women population comprises 48.76% of the total population; however huge gender gaps exist in political, social, education and economic spheres (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics [PBS], 2018). Pakistan ranking is third-to-last (151<sup>st</sup>) on the 2020 Global Gender Gap Index, and there is only 56% of the gender gap closed. Similarly in Global Gender Parity Index sub ranking of political participation Pakistan is on the rank of 93 with a score 0.159 points (World Economic Forum[WEF], 2020). The same report statistically showed that in South Asian countries Pakistan is the lowest ranked country (7<sup>th</sup>) with 0.564 score points (Murshid & Filomena, 2020).

Many research studies revealed that Pakistani women's voices are strengthened and with the passage of time women quota was allocated in all tiers of political structure to mainstream women political engagement from national parliament to local governance (Khattak, 2010). One of the gross root level forums for women political engagement is local governance. In local governance they are not only provided opportunities to participate and raise their voice in decision making rather they are actively engaged in provision of services to the local community. Women political engagement in local governance paves way for women political participation in national and provincial assemblies (Jabeen & Muhammad, 2010).

To encourage women's political participation and engagement in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan the provincial government passed a new Khyber Pakhtunkhwa local government act in 2013. In the province local government election was held on May 30, 2015 under the new local government act, 2013 and local leaders were elected for a four years time period which was completed on August 28, 2019. In the new local government act 33% quota was assigned for women representation in district, tehsil and village/neighbourhood council. Women were encouraged to contest election on general seats as 33% quota was reserved for women in all three tiers. In the local governance elected women were provided opportunities to propose and vote for bylaws of the council, propose and approve taxes, short and long term planning. Women were also the members of various council committees including standing, finance, monitoring, dispute resolution and district account committee. In the local governance, women members were empowered to make recommendations for uplift of daily lives of women, children and persons with disability. In local governance women were provided

opportunities to perform their effective role as elected members however they faced some socio-cultural and institutional barriers to actively participate in local governance in the province.

### **Study Objectives**

The research study mainly focused on the following objectives;

- To investigate various socio-cultural barriers faced by women to participate in local governance in District Mardan Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
- To analyze the effective role of elected women members in local governance in District Mardan Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

### **Research Questions**

The following major questions were addressed in the research;

- Q1. What are the gender perceptions to women participation in the local governance?
- Q2. How the elected women members performed an effective role in the local governance?

### **Review of Literature**

History shows that until the beginning of the 20th century women were not involved in the decision making process and public affairs even in European countries. Women are confined to perform all the household works and public sphere activities are belonging to men only (Yodanis, 2004). In developing countries women advancement in politics at all levels of governance is discouraged and their participation in household affairs is encouraged. It is found in many research studies that gender perception toward women political participation is discouraging. In many countries women are considered subordinate to men and they are bound to follow the orders of men family members.

Among various hinders to women political participation one is religious interpretation of women's role in family and society. Around the world powerful religions make a strong argument that women should stay at home and take care of their family members. The dominant religions stress on women's role as a mother, wife and housekeeper (Nakamura, 2002). Many research studies mentioned that religion is one of the strong tools to exclude women from political representation and decision making in public sphere matters. The supporters of feminist ideology argue that two dominant religions in the world discourage women public sphere engagement. According to feminist critic Protestantism in Christianity accept women as religious leaders with non-hierarchical religious practises and Islamic law interpret women should stay in home to take care of household affairs (Zerai, 2011). The feminist theorist discussed that women exclusion from religious

institutions as a leader negatively affects women status in social functioning. Due to lack of religious leadership among women their political engagement is discouraged. Feminist perspective makes an argument that all dominant religions exclude and discourage women public sphere participation which on other side encourages men to hold and perform his role in public space.

According to feminist theorist women are defined as subordinate in family. According to their argument family is male dominant and family is the main engine of explaining gender inequality in patriarchal societies. In most of the developing countries families play a vital role in socialising women as weak and incapable to make decisions and participate in the political sphere in society. Due to male dominance in the private and public sphere women are defined as inferior. It is hard for women to pursue their political rights in society (Naz, 2011).

### **The Local Governance Structure in Pakistan**

Pakistani society like other developing countries is also patriarchal and male dominant where women are underrepresented in the political sphere. The local governance was introduced first in 1958. With martial law in the country introduced by Ayub Khan the local bodies were introduced in 1958. The Basic Democratic Ordinance (BDO) in 1959 and the Municipal Administration Ordinance (MAO) in 1960 was the first local bodies government in the country (Cheema et al., 2006). There were four tiers in new local governance (Keefer, Ambar, & Tara 2003). Very few functions were delegated to the lowest tier of the system (union council). The second local bodies system was introduced by Zia Ul-Haq (1979-85). He centralised the politics in federal and provincial level with local level electoral representation (Husain, 2009). Zia Ul-Haq passed a system called the Local Government Ordinance (LGO's) and election was held for local bodies in (1979-80). In January 2000 a new plan was introduced by Pervaiz Musharraf called the devolution plan (Alam & Wajidi, 2013). In the new devolution plan various reforms were taken place in local governance including the devolution of administration and financial powers to local government. In the plan the district administrator is defined as the district *Nazim* (Chairman) and the Commissioner of the district becomes Coordination Officer (Talbot, 2002). The district Coordination Officer under the plan was responsible to report to district *nazim* (chairman). This was a new engendering electoral accountability plan introduced by General Musharraf (Abbasi & Razia, 2015). It is important to mention here that public services were handed over to local governments which were previously under the administrative and financial control of provincial and district administration (Shah, 2012). As per plan the lowest tier member and *nazim*(chairman) was directly elected by general voters. The 17th amendment provided a very minimal protection to the gross root level political system (local

government). The provinces were allowed to make changes in the local government legislation with president agreement. In the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa the new local government act 2013 was passed by the government and in 2015 local governance election was held (Ali et al., 2016).

### **Women Representation in Local Governance**

In Pakistan the gender disparity is documented by various researches in the area of political, education, health, economic and social spheres. Recently a significant progress is seen in women engagement in the political sphere particularly in the last 16 years in legislative bodies. There are various contributing factors to women's political participation including the Pakistan adaptation of various international documents and ratification of international and regional instruments including: Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Convention on Elimination of All Kind of Discrimination against Women and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. In the constitution of the country women are encouraged to actively participate in politics. For the first time in 2000 in the local bodies' system women political representation was raised up-to 33 %. In all three tiers of the local bodies women representation was recorded. The women's political participation and representation was increased in both the assemblies before the 2002 general election up-to 17 %. It is statistically shown that a large number of women contested election in 2002 (188 women) among them 39 contested women own their seats. Women political participation in the general election 2013 was 20.5 % in the national assembly while 17% women were elected of the total upper house seats (Ali et al., 2016).

### **Gender Discrimination in Pakistani Politics**

Many research studies have highlighted that women's political representation is encouraged in the 21st century around the world; however, the political arena is still dominated by men worldwide (Hughes, 2011). Feminist theorist stated that women constitute fifty percent of the world population but they are underrepresented in decision making process in all tiers of governance. Historically women faced discrimination in political, economic and social spheres from their male counterpart (Cornwall & Anne, 2005).

It is found that intimate partners and elder male family members restricted their women to participate in local governance (Bilal et al., 2018). Their mobility is restricted and women meeting with other community members are discouraged. In community the women contesting candidates and their families are resisted to participate and conduct meetings in the community. In the study area *Purdha* is one of the obstacles to women's

political participation and interaction with men in the public sphere. It is found that most of the willing women are illiterate to contest elections and they belong to poor families. The gender perception toward women's political participation is highly negative and most of the men perceive that the political sphere is the sphere of men while women should stay in home to deal with household affairs. Women are treated subordinate in Pakhtun society.

The prevailing unwritten customary laws discourage women from participating in the political sphere and strengthen the women's voice (Naz, 2011). Women are confined to the domestic sphere and their public sphere engagement especially in politics is strongly discouraged. The patriarchal structure of society portrays the woman's image as she is unable and incapable to actively participate in the political sphere (Naz & Chudhry, 2012). It is also found in various research studies that some families encourage their women to participate in politics but due to her illiteracy they are unable to perform an active and effective role in local governance. The women quota is increased up-to maximum level (33 %) but they are still dependent on their male family member's decision to participate in politics. In the patriarchal society the concept of public and private sphere is clearly defined that public place is for men and women are the matter of private sphere. Illiteracy is considered one of the basic factors which restrict women from political participation even after their representation in the council (Latif, 2009). In the study area women are engaged in domestic chore with her socialisation from very childhood that women should perform in the four walls for nursing and caring of children (Jejeebhoy & Zeba, 2004).

Women mobility is discouraged by men family members due to which women are unable to develop networking with other political women activists (Choudhary, 2018). One of the social issues women face is facing the financial dependency on men's family members. Due to their financial dependency they have no opportunity to participate in the political sphere. The political participation and activities in the country are highly costly. Public attitude toward a woman and her family is negative when she becomes involved in politics and takes part in political activities (Naz & Waqar, 2012). Beside the cultural and social constraints once a women become an elected member of a council she is facing the gender discrimination in the council affairs. Her involvement in the budget formulation process is ignored at the maximum level. Sometimes they are not informed about the meetings planned in the council. Women elected members are discouraged to visit and monitor the functionaries of the government in the council area. Women are discouraged to become a member of a dispute resolution committee in the council. All the disputes even related to women are addressed by men elected members of the council. The government line departments are also ignoring women elected members in calling for meetings and their monitoring reports and complaints



(Jabeen & Muhammad, 2009). The literature clearly stated that women are provided opportunities in the local governance according to the constitution however the social and institutional constraints restrict their capability to exercise these powers and actively participate in all the activities and perform the functions of the council.

### **Opportunities to Women in Local Governance**

In 2015 women political participation in comparison with all other local governance systems in the country was increased (Ali et al.,2016). Women were provided 33% of the political participation in all local councils including village/neighbourhood, thesil and district council in Khyber Pakhtunhwa. Two seats were reserved for women in all the village/neighbourhood councils in the province. The women elected members were provided the opportunity to perform the functions and exercise the powers assigned in the local government act 2013. They were provided the opportunity to monitor the functionaries of the government in the council area, propose developmental projects as per need and demand of the local people, propose and formulate budgets in the council, and regularly attend the meetings of the council. They were assigned the task to refer child birth registration to the council and make women networking and organisation in the council area. The local governance system encouraged women to report the prevailing worse situation of the council area to upper tiers in consultation with council chairman.

### **Research Methodology**

In Khyber Pakhtunhwa province local government election was held in May 2015 and local governance was formed for four years. The period of local governance ended in August 2019. In the present research study researchers used quantitative research design. Before collecting quantitative data researchers conducted pre-consultative meetings with Assistant Director local government and attended monthly meetings of the respective village and neighbourhood councils. Researchers collected basic information and addresses of the elected members to approach them for data collection. Researchers used simple random sampling techniques and data was collected from 285 elected members. Among the total respondents 100 women elected members and 185 men elected members were interviewed. The present research study was conducted in two tehsil namely *Katlang* and *TakhatBahi* of District *Mardan Khyber Pakhtunhwa*. The researcher used the *Sekaran* table for sample selection (Sekaran&Bougie, 2016). Researchers used an interview schedule for data collection. The elected men members were interviewed during their monthly meetings while mostly the women elected members were interviewed in their families as they are not invited to attend council meetings. Researchers hired the services of a female research assistant to collect data from women elected members as male interaction is not permissible in Pukhtun society. Verbal

consent was taken from the respondents before collecting the data. Researchers used SPSS for data analysis. Researchers used descriptive and regression statistical tests to analyse the data.

**Table: 1**  
**Study population (Local governance-2015)**

Tehsil Katlang	Village Councils =26					Neighborhood Council=08				
	Category Wise Distribution of Council members					Category Wise Distribution of Council members				
	G.M	WM	YM	PM	MM	G.M	WM	YM	PM	MM
	199	52	26	26	26	66	16	08	08	08
<b>Total A</b>	<b>329</b>					<b>106</b>				
Tehsil Takhatai	Village Councils (49)					Neighbourhood Council (06)				
	Category Wise Distribution of Council members					Category Wise Distribution of Council members				
	G. M	WM	YM	PM	MM	G.M	WM	YM	PM	MM
	392	98	49	49	49	53	12	01	01	01
<b>Total B</b>	<b>637</b>					<b>68</b>				
<b>Grand Total (A+B)</b>	<b>329+637+106+68=1140</b>									
	Total Sample Population: $285/1140*100=25\%$ of the total study population									
	Women Sample Population: $100/285*100=35\%$ of the total sample population									

*Source:* Local Government, Elections and Rural Development Department, Government of Khyber Pkhtunkhwa, 2015

Denotation "G.M=General Member, WM=Women Member, YM= Youth Member, PM= Peasant Member, MM= Minority Member"

## Results

### Descriptive Analysis

The table 02 shows the socio-demographic characteristics of the elected members in local governance. Among the total (n=285) respondents more than one third 36.0 percent are categorized in the age of 18 to 27 years, more than one fourth 29.0 percent are categorized in 28-37 years of age, one fourth 24.0 percent are in the age category of 38-47 years and a minimum 11.0 percent respondents are above than 48 years of age. Among the total respondents majority 93.0 percent are married and the remaining 07.0 percent are unmarried respondents. The statistics shows 37.0 percent of the respondents having primary or below level of education, one fourth 24.0 percent elected members hold middle level of education, 22.0 percent having high and the remaining 17.0 percent hold higher secondary education among the sample elected members. In the study area

the majority 82.0 percent of the elected members belong to rural areas and only 18.0 percent are residents of urban areas.

**Table: 2**  
**Socio-demographic characteristics of the elected members in local governance-2015 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (n=285)**

Characteristics	<i>f</i>	(%)
<b>Age</b>		
18-27 years	102	36
28-37 years	82	29
38-47 years	69	24
48-57 years and above	32	11
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Married	265	93
Unmarried/Widow/Separated	20	7
<b>Education</b>		
Primary or Below	107	37
Middle	68	24
High	62	22
Higher Secondary and above education	48	17
<b>Area of Residence</b>		
Urban	52	18
Rural	233	82

### Regression Analysis

The table 03 shows the regression results. Women participation in local governance is the outcome variable and the independent variables are women role in dispute resolution, identification of local needs, formulation process of budget in the local council, monitoring of the functionaries of government departments in local council area, registration of death and birth, formation and mobilization of women organizations and sharing progress report in the council meetings.

The regression result shows the identification of local community developmental needs in the council is significant at P-value (.003) and  $\beta$  value is positive (2.572) which indicate that when the women members performing their active role in need identification of the local community is positively in relationship with women political participation. The regression result indicated the women elected members involvement in budget formulation in the council which is significant at P-value (.004) and  $\beta$  value is

negative (-2.682) which indicate when women elected members are not involved in budget formulation process it is negatively influence the active women political participation in local governance. The regression result shows women elected members' role in birth registration is significant at P-value (.016) and  $\beta$  value is positive (2.221) which statistically shows the positive relationship between birth registration and women political participation in the council. The regression results indicated the women elected members involvement in community networking and formulation of women organization is significant at P-value (.005) and  $\beta$  value is positive (2.482) which state that women role in community organization and networking is positively in relationship with women political participation in the council.

The regression result shows the reporting about various activities and progress to the council is significant at P-value (.003) and  $\beta$  value is positive (2.519) which indicates the positive relationship of women elected members reporting to council members and women political participation in the council.

Statistical regression results show no relation between women's political participation in the council and monitoring of government functionaries in the council area. Similarly women elected members' role in dispute resolution is not found significant.

**Table: 3**  
**Regression results of women effective participation in local governance-2015 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa**

Women Political Participation in VC/NC	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B		Beta		
(Constant)	1.421	.211		5.352	.291
Dispute resolution	.053	.026	.099	1.132	.238
Identification of development needs	.082	.032	.191	2.572	.003
Budget formulation	-.152	.063	-.212	-2.682	.004
Monitoring the functionaries of govt. departments	.062	.112	.034	.432	.667
Birth Registration	.189	.067	.101	2.221	.016
Community Networking/Women Organisation	.121	.041	.136	2.482	.005
Progress Reporting	.129	.035	.141	2.519	.003
Decision making in council meetings	-.151	.067	-.221	-2.631	.004

*Denotation:* VC= Village Council, NC= Neighbourhood Council

The table 04 shows the regression results. Women participation in local governance is the outcome variable and hinders women political participation is defined as an independent variable. The independent variable is further measured with barriers to women as patriarchal structure, women illiteracy, women financial dependency, women subordinate position in family, women mobility restriction, gendered role, and socialisation with gender identity.

The regression result shows in table 04 that patriarchal structure of society and men headed household hinder women political participation and its influence is significant at P-value (.002) and  $\beta$  value is positive (2.632). The regression results indicated that women political participation in local governance is influenced by women illiteracy. The relationship between women low political participation and illiteracy is significant at P-value (.002) and  $\beta$  value is positive (2.601). In *pakhtun* society mostly women are financially dependent on men headed household. In the table it is shown that financial dependency of women is significant at P-value (.004)  $\beta$  value is positive (2.679). It is statistically highlighted that women with financial dependency are facing barriers to local governance politics in the study area. In table 04 one identified barrier to women political participation is their subordinate position and role in the domestic sphere. They are dependent on men's decision making in all household affairs. It is shown in the table that due to women subordinate positions their participation in local governance is very minimal. The significant level of low political participation due to her subordinate role is P-value (.015)  $\beta$  value is positive (2.321). In *pukhtun* society women's mobility is restricted in the public sphere without the permission and accompanying of her family male members. In present research findings it is shown that women mobility restriction is significant at P-value (.005)  $\beta$  value is positive (2.503). Socially gendered roles are defined for both men and women.

Women are encouraged to perform the household affairs and men are responsible for performing public space activities. It is shown in results that women's political participation is discouraged as the political sphere is a public sphere activity which may be performed by men with a significant P-value (.004)  $\beta$  value is positive (2.521). It is shown in the result of the study that gendered socialisation of women in families from childhood discourages women political participation and from very first learning days families focus on women learning of household affairs. The findings indicated that a woman gendered role is one of the barriers to women political participation in local governance is significant at P-value (.004)  $\beta$  value is positive (2.595).

**Table: 4**  
**Regression results of barriers to women political participation in local governance-2015 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa**

Barriers to women political participation	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B		Beta		
(Constant)	1.302	.221		5.341	.289
Patriarchal structure of society	.091	.042	.181	2.632	.002
Women illiteracy	.095	.052	.198	2.601	.002
Financial dependency on men	.141	.079	.221	2.679	.004
Subordinate position in family	.191	.059	.112	2.321	.015
<i>Purdha</i>	.078	.120	.041	.398	.527
Mobility restriction to public sphere	.111	.036	.141	2.503	.005
Gendered division of labour	.143	.076	.151	2.521	.004
Women's gender identity	.161	.059	.230	2.595	.004

## Discussion

It is discussed in many research studies that women are half of the world population but they are deprived from equal political participation both in developing and developing countries (Krook 2006). Research studies revealed that globally women representation in national politics is still below 30% which is considered a benchmark of women representation. Many researchers discussed that around the world 127 countries adopted a quota system to ensure women political participation in national politics (Paxton & Sheri, 2003). In Pakistani national politics women representation is 17% (Khattak & Akhter, 2013). For the first time 33% representation was given to women in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa local governance in 2015. According to political feminist standpoint women equal political participation play a key role to strengthen democracy, women are more responsive to highlight and address community needs, women become able to raise voice against gender discrimination and they can play a vital role in socio-economic development of a country (Borchorst & Birte, 2008).

The findings of the study revealed that elected women played their effective role in formulation of women networks and organization in local governance. On their participation they identified citizen needs in the council meetings and proposed projects for reducing gender discrimination and women empowerment. However their role was found insignificant in some areas like women elected members role in dispute resolution and budget formulation in their respective councils. In the findings of the research study it is mentioned that women elected members faced many social and economic obstacles to play their effective role as elected members in the council. It is discussed in many other research studies conducted in Pakistan that patriarchy is deep rooted in all

institutions including Pakistani political system (Abidi, 2013). In the country women are discouraged to take part in politics and the political sphere is attached with masculinity. Femininity is encouraged to play their role in the domestic private sphere as nurse and managing household affairs (Bhattacharya, 2014).

According to feminist perspective women are facing interlock system of oppression and they are confined to domestic private sphere (Carastathis, 2014). Many research studies discussed patriarchal structure of society: femininity is for the private sphere and masculinity for the public sphere. Due to defined gender role women are discouraged to participate in national politics in developing countries (Hood-Williams, 2001). The study findings showed women are considered subordinate in the domestic sphere and their outer mobility is restricted. Many other studies revealed that Pakistan possesses a patriarchal structure of society where men hold the primary authority and women are subordinate (Hadi, 2017). In the study findings it is mentioned that mostly the elected women are illiterate. Many other research studies discussed that in local governance mostly education is not a requirement therefore illiterate women are elected as council members. According to research studies illiteracy hinders women's confidence to actively participate in the council sessions and raise voice for women rights. It is discussed in many research studies that due to low skills, no knowledge of politics and male dominancy in the council women are kept subordinate (Jabeen& Muhammad, 2009). Their involvement in council decision making is discouraged and in most of the cases they are not invited to attend the meetings.

## **Conclusions**

It is concluded that women participation in local governance is directly hindered by various social and cultural factors in Pakistan. Despite women quota increase in local governance they are discouraged in patriarchal society to actively participate in the political sphere and their involvement in decision making are very minimal. Women are in subordinate positions and they are confined to the domestic sphere to perform the household activities. In fact without equal participation of women in the political sphere the true essence of women empowerment, democracy and democratisation cannot be achieved. Conclusively it is stated that with equal participation of women in the political sphere the democracy will be strengthened and it will greatly contribute to sustainable social and economic development as well as promote peace and prosperity in the country.

## **Recommendations**

Following are the major recommendations of the research study;

- Government concerned departments should facilitate the women in contesting election on general seats in local governance.

- Government and civil society organizations should build the capacity of women elected members on identification of developmental needs, budget formulation, monitoring, reporting and other tasks assigned in the council
- The Chairman should make sure the women elected members representation and active participation in the dispute resolution committee of the council
- The council should provide equal opportunity and encourage women decision making in the council affairs and meetings
- The council should empower the women elected members to monitor and report the government functionaries in the council area

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