Vol. 22(2), 2022, pp.47-68, ISSN: 2072-0394(Print), ISSN: 2663-8886(Online)

Women Empowerment and Political Decision-Making: An Appraisal of Appointment of Women Legislators as Decision-Makers in Punjab Assembly from 1947-2018

Hina Rashid
Higher Education Department, Punjab

Abstract

The research paper develops a conceptual relationship between women's empowerment and political decision-making. The goal of empowering women cannot be achieved, without effective participation and representation of women in political activities, the political decision-making process and structure. Women's access to resources and opportunities is quite limited compared to men all over the world. Likewise, in Pakistan socio-cultural environment is not much favorable for women. Punjab is its largest province in terms of population and is considered more progressive regarding gender-related matters; a vast disparity still exists in all sectors. To ensure empowerment, the appointment of women legislators as decision-makers is mandatory. The paper seeks to explore the appointment of women legislators on decision-making positions in Punjab assembly. The primary objective is to highlights the significance of women's leadership, particularly in legislature, which is key rule making organ. The paper adopts mix method research design to explore the selected research problem. Case study method is selected by researcher. The findings show a very low ratio of women's inclusion in legislative assembly of the Punjab and their appointment as decision-makers. The study offers rigorous recommendations that would be helpful to made situation, more conducive for women's inclusiveness on leadership positions.

Keywords: Empowerment, Women Legislators, Decision-Making, Punjab Assembly.

تلخیص

تحقیقی مقالہ خواتین کو بااختیار بنانے اور سیاسی فیصلہ سازی کے درمیان ایک تصوراتی رشتہ استوار کرتا ہے۔خواتین کو بااختیار بنانے کا مقصد سیاسی سرگرمیوں، سیاسی فیصلہ سازی کے عمل اور ڈھانچے میں خواتین کی مؤثر شرکت اور نمائندگی کے بغیر حاصل نہیں کیا جا سکتاوسائل اور مواقع تک خواتین کی رسائی پوری دنیا میں مردوں کے مقابلے میں کافی محدود ہے۔ اسی طرح پاکستان میں سماجی و ثقافتی ماحول خواتین کے لیے زیادہ سازگار نہیں ہے۔پنجاب آبادی کے لحاظ سے اس کا سب سے بڑا صوبہ ہے اور صنف سے متعلق معاملات میں اسے زیادہ ترقی پسند سمجھا جاتا ہے۔ ایک وسیع تفاوت اب بھی تمام شعبوں میں موجود ہے۔بااختیار بنانے کے لیے خواتین قانون سازوں کی بطور فیصلہ ساز تقرری لازمی ہے۔مقالے میں پنجاب اسمبلی میں فیصلہ سازی کے عہدوں پر خواتین قانون سازوں کی تقرری کا تجزیہ کیا گیا ہے۔بنیادی مقصد خواتین کی قیادت کی اہمیت کو اجاگر کرنا ہے، خاص طور پر قانون سازی میں۔ مقالہ منتخب تحقیقی مسئلہ کو

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دریافت کرنے کے لیے مکس میتھڈ ریسرچ ڈیزائن کو اپناتا ہے۔محققہ نے کیس اسٹڈی کا طریقہ اپنایا ہے۔ نتائج سے پتہ چلتا ہے کہ پنجاب کی قانون ساز اسمبلی میں خواتین کی شمولیت اور فیصلہ سازوں کے طور پر ان کی تقرری کا تناسب بہت کم ہے۔ مطالعہ ایسی سفارشات پیش کرتا ہے جو قیادت کے عہدوں پر خواتین کی شمولیت کے لیے حالات کو مزید سازگار بنائے گی۔

کلیدی الفاظ: بااختیار ، خواتین قانون ساز، فیصلہ سازی، پنجاب اسمبلی۔

Introduction

The paper intends to highlights the inter-dependence and inter-relationship between the theory of women empowerment and political decision-making. Punjab Assembly has been taken as a case study for this research. The key objective is to focus the significance of women's appointment on decision-making positions, particularly in legislative assemblies. No community can be empowered, unless its rights and interests are not guaranteed, protected and promoted through law. Absence of women from decision-making body will ultimately lead to their subjugation, suppression and powerlessness. Their appointment on decision-makers will lead to the greater empowerment of women.

The concept of Empowerment has taken hold, over the minds of the growing number of people within the last few decades. It urges about the enablement of various curbed communities of societies including women and suggested by many researchers as a sole solution to counter subjugation and injustice (Beteille, A., 1999. p.589). Women constitute about half of the world's total population. Most of them cannot even carry their burden and are highly dependent on the opposite gender, even for their basic needs. This trend is associated with various socio-cultural and political factors that obstruct women's inclusion in the development process. That is why, despite having enormous voting power, they are under-represented in political structures too. Women's lack of representation restricts their effective participation in the political decision-making process that ultimately confines the way to empowerment.

Like many other countries of the globe, in Pakistan conditions are not favorable to women's empowerment and their participation in political decision-making too. According to the World Economic Forum, Pakistan ranked 151 out of 153 countries in 2020 Global Gender Gap Index Rate (Chaudhury, D., R., 2020) and 153rd, out of 156 countries on the gender parity index. The gap has been widened by 0.7 % in 2021, compared to 2020 (Iqbal, N., The News, 12th April, 2021). It deteriorates the image of the country in international community. According to United Nations Human Development Report 2020, Pakistan has 0.538 value of Gender Index Inequality (GII) and ranked at 135 out of 162 countries in the index of 2019. Report indicates that women hold only 20 percent of seats in parliament and 27.6% of young women have access to

secondary education, while this ratio is 45.7% in male counterparts (2020, p. 05). Women's proportion in the overall political and governmental structures is low (Minhas, F., & Jahanzaib, M., 2019, p.22). Constitution of Pakistan ensures all basic human rights for women, and emphasis to adopt all such measures that can lead to active participation of women in all arenas (Khan, S., 2013, p. 730).

Punjab is the largest province of Pakistan in terms of population. Here, women are more in number then men and constitute 51.8% of province's total population. Despite being outnumbered, a notable disparity can be observed in economic, political, and social sectors between the both genders. According to the research, literacy rate of women in Punjab is 48 percent as compared to men's 67 percent. Female labor force participation ratio in Punjab is 25.4 % that is comparatively very low of male's 71.3%. Female political participation in Punjab assembly is 19.7% while men are enjoying 80.3% (Khan, T. M. 2010, p.6). Very few women are appointed on decision-making positions. According to the Punjab gender parity report 2018, out of 34 cabinet ministers only 4 were women and from 44 parliamentary secretaries only 5 were women. Women were chairperson of only 3 parliamentary standing committees, out of 36 and among 354 members, 87 were women (2018, pp.40-41). According to the Compendium on Gender statistics of Pakistan 2019, women members are considerably outnumbered by male members in both federal and provincial legislatures (2019, p.91). According to the available data of Punjab Assembly, out of total 368 members of provincial assembly, only 75 are women that make 20 %. Out of total 35 cabinet ministers, only 2 are women. Thus, women's representation in cabinet is only 5% (2021). Such a low ratio of representation in decision-making bodies indicates women's marginalization, discrimination and lack of empowerment.

Review of Literature

The term "Women Empowerment" began to be widely used within the development of feminism and the WID approach. The term refers to the elevation of women's status in the power structure of society. It recognizes women's power and capability to standardize their existence politically, economically and socially (Lone, H. & Amin, W. 2017, p. 68). Srilatha Batliwala defines empowerment as 'the process of challenging existing power relations, and of gaining greater control over the sources of power" (Cornwall, A, 2016, p. 343). Keller and Mbwewe, cited by Rowlands, Jo, describe it as "a process that helps women organizing themselves to eliminate their subjugation, by increasing self-reliance and controlling resources (1995, p. 104). Applied to gender studies, the term is much relatable to agency, actions and collective change and urges for the distribution of power amid both genders, to bring women into the political sphere (Tandon, T., 2016, p.6). The achievement of the goal of empowerment is highly dependent on effective participation and representation of women in political structures. Cavelieri, I.C. & Almeida, H.N. also considers participation as an essential way towards empowerment. The researcher

structured a conceptual model on the basis of three concepts; power, empowerment and social participation. The study concludes that participation leads to redistribution of power that ultimately causes to develop participatory trends and the conditions that are favorable for participation in decision-making (2018). In the words of Seckler-Hudson "decision-making in the government is a plural activity, in which many contribute to the process of reaching the decision" (Win, D. D. 2010, p.1).Xing, Y highlights that "Political decision-making is a dynamic political process that is related to the formation and implementation of major and general decisions of national, political and social interest groups. It is the process of comparing and selecting the implementing principles and approaches and methods to achieve the goals" (2015, p .42-43). According to Pam Rajput, Absence of women in political domain will reduce their efficacy and capability to challenge the prevalent power arrangements and male-controlled ideologies (Mandal, K. C. 2013, p.22). Women's inclusion in political decision-making structure and process is vital for democratic governance. Political arrangement and structure are considered fragile when the voice of half of the population is not included in it. Anne Philips stated that Feminists always seem to complain that women are kept excluded from political frameworks (Kumar, V. R. 2002, p.106). Social and political justice can never be ensured without equal and meaningful participation and influence of women in the decision-making structures. Primary concerns, expertise and necessities of women should be reflected in the decision-making that would be constructive for the whole of society. Neil T. O. & Domingo, P elaborate the advantages of women's participation in decision-making process and urge to international community for effectively playing its role for the betterment of women by investing on education and ensuring their access to economic resources (2014). Alexander, A.C., Bolezendahl, C. & Jalalzai, F. stress and develop an understanding of relationship between social patterns and gender that in due course stimuli the outcomes. The study intensely assesses the women's political empowerment to establish a framework that is helpful in developing an insight in concept both politically and globally (2018). Zaheer, A. & Jabeen, S. highlight the significance of women's participation in political process, government and decision-making for achieving political empowerment (2016). Legislature is primary decision-making body of a state. If women would be able to get substantial representation in legislative assemblies, they would be able to get access to available resources for their gender community. The most recent available figures provided by UN Women, on women's political representation and political participation shows that gender equality in political sphere is far-off due to under-representation of women in all levels of decision-making structures.

According to the data, provided by UNO, women are designates as Head of states in only ten states while as head of government in 13 states. In 119 countries, there have never been woman leaders. According to the ratio, until 130 years, UNO's goal of gender equality cannot be accomplished. In all member states, only 21% ministries are occupied by women. In only 14 countries, almost 50% of cabinet is consisted on women. Women

constitute 25% of all national parliaments that depicts an increase of almost 13 percent, as it was 11.6% in 1995. Only 4 countries' national legislatures have 50% women members. These countries include Rwanda, Cuba, Bolivia and United Arab Emirates. In 19 countries, number of women legislators have exceeded up to or above 40%. In 27 countries, women made only 10% of share of national legislatures (UN Women, 2020). United Nation suggested that to ensure women-specific effective legislation and influential role in politics, 30% of national elites must be women. If a proposed legislation is related to women's well-being or promotion of opportunities, to ensure its approval and effectiveness, presence of women representatives is indispensible (Kunovich, S., Paxton, P., 2003, p. 104). Conditions are not much favorable for women in Pakistan too. According to the report of National Commission on Status of Women, besides ensuring the inclusion of women in political institutions of Pakistan, they are not playing an active role in mainstream politics due to traditional patriarchal nature of social structure. The primary reason behind lack of women participation in politics is gender stereo typing (2010). Kellerman & Rhode identified gender-stereotyping as main barrier for women headship (Choudhary, D.R., 2018, p.344). Awan, M, A describes that socio-cultural trend, financial dependency and less nomination of women from political parties are key challenges to the empowerment of women in Pakistan (2018). Bhattacharya, S narrates that women are trained, from the early childhood to adopt the submissive attitude in Pakistan. Customs, traditions and religious boundaries restrain them to enjoy the freedom of choice (2014). Hanif, R.A. & Ali. M, Y. proclaims women's participation in policy making and political process, unsatisfactory in Punjab. The study finds out that illiteracy, uneven distribution of domestic responsibilities, financial dependency, and lack of openness in political party's decision-making are primary hurdles in development of women's participatory trends (2019).

Women's Inclusion in Decision-Making Structure: An Overview of Punjab Assembly

According to the Punjab Gender Parity Report, 2018, the existence of women in leadership or senior political management has been revealed to advantage the decision-making process in constructive and meaningful means, both theoretically and practically (2018, p.30). A study conducted by Commonwealth also justified the mentioned argument. It claims that women are proved to be best leaders and their participation in decision-making leads to bring positive outcomes that include alteration in political environment, better consultation, development and effective allocation of budget (Commonwealth, T., 2013, pp.87-88). Women can prove to be best decision-makers if given a chance, but it still takes time to put it into practice, in the case of Pakistan.

Historically, in Pakistan women's participation and representation in National and Provincial Assemblies have remained insufficient. Following table illustrates a complete detail of women representation in provincial assemblies of the Punjab from 1947 till 2007.

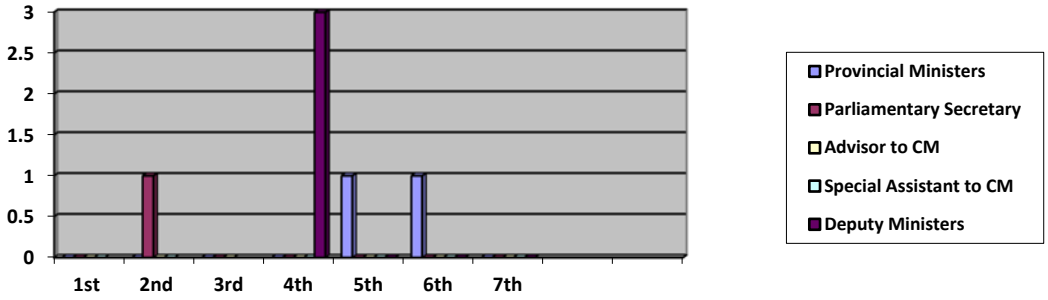
Table: 1
Women on Decision-Making Positions in the Punjab Assembly: 1947-2007
Percentage of women members in Punjab assembly: 1947-2007

Legislative Assembly	Total Members	Women Members	Percentage
First Legislative Assembly	103	3	2.9%
Second Legislative Assembly	174	6	3.4%
Third Legislative Assembly	Interim Assembly	-------	-------
Fourth Legislative Assembly	300	7	2.3%
Fifth Legislative Assembly	155	4	2.5%
Sixth Legislative Assembly	155	6	3.8%
Seventh Legislative Assembly	186	6	6.97%
Eighth Legislative Assembly	240	12	5%
Ninth Legislative Assembly	260	16	6.1%
Tenth Legislative Assembly	260	15	5 .7%
Eleventh Legislative Assembly	248	4	1.61%
Twelfth Legislative Assembly	248	2	0.80%
Thirteen Legislative Assembly	248	1	0.40%
Fourteenth Legislative Assembly	371	73	19.67%

Source: Compiled by the Researcher, collected data from www.pap.gov.pk

Owed to the lack of women's representation in Punjab Assembly, very few women were appointed on decision-making positions. Following table exhibits the figure of women legislators appointed on significant positions in first seven legislative assemblies of the Punjab.

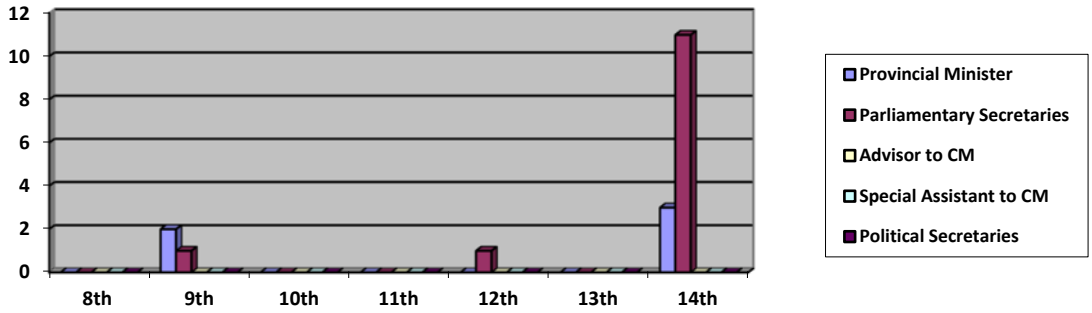
Women on Decision-Making Positions from 1947-1977



Source: Developed by the Researcher, by assembling data from http://papmis.pitb.gov.pk/en/members/past-members/punjab-legislative-assembly-1947-to-1955/punjab-legislative-assembly-post-2&https://www.pap.gov.pk/en/members/past-members/provincial-assembly-of-west-pakistan-1956-19699

According to the data of Punjab Assembly, In the First legislative Assembly, among provincial ministers and parliamentary secretaries, none was woman. In the second Assembly, Out of total 13 provincial ministers, not a single was women. Out of total 13 Parliamentary Secretaries, One parliamentary secretary for Education was woman named Begum Khudeja. Out of total 5 private Parliamentary Secretaries none was women. Third assembly was an interim assembly. In the Fourth Assembly, No provincial minister was women, whereas only three women were appointed as deputy ministers. In the Fifth Assembly out of 8 provincial ministers, one was women named Begum Mehmooda Saleem khan, who was appointed as an education minister. Not a single woman was appointed as Parliamentary Secretary from total 15. In Sixth Assembly Out of total 15 ministers, one was woman minister for health and social welfare named Begum Zahida Khaliq uz Zaman. Out of total 9 Parliamentary Secretaries none was women. In seventh provincial assembly of the Punjab, among 15 provincial ministers, none was women. Following table exhibits the figure of women legislators appointed on significant positions in next seven legislative assemblies of the Punjab.

Women on Decision-Making Positions from 1977-2007



Source: Compiled by the Researcher, collected data from https://www.pap.gov.pk/en/ members/past-members/provincial-assembly-of-the-punjab-1972-to-date

Eighth provincial assembly worked for only four months and dissolved in July 1977. Ninth provincial assembly contained total twenty ministers, only two were women named Miss Shaheen Attiq Ur Rehman, (Social welfare and Women's Division) and Syeda Sajjda Nayyar Abidi (Livestock & Dairy Development). There were total 9 advisors to Chief Minister and none was women. Moreover, out of total 18 Parliamentary Secretaries, one was women named Mrs Najma Hameed. In the tenth provincial assembly of the Punjab, Out of twenty two ministers, ten advisors to Chief Minister, seven Special Assistant to Chief Minister and twenty two Parliamentary Secretaries, none was women. Likewise, in the Eleventh Provincial Assembly there was no representation of women to decision making positions as out of 20 ministers, 11 Advisor to Chief Minister and 21 Parliamentary Secretaries, none was woman.

In the Twelfth Provincial Assembly, there was not a single woman among 31 ministers, 25 advisors to Chief Minister and 1 Special Assistant to Chief Minister. While only 1 woman was appointed as parliamentary secretary out of total 25.

In the Thirteen Provincial Assembly, not a single woman was appointed on decision-making position. Even though the list of males is elongated who were appointed on various designations. There were total 18 ministers, 2 advisors to Chief Minister, 4 Special Assistant to Chief Minister, 3 Political Secretaries to Chief Minister and 23 Parliamentary Secretaries.

In the Fourteen Provincial Assembly of the Punjab, out of total 39 ministers of cabinet of Chief Minister, 3 were women. Among 2 advisors to Chief Minister, none was woman. Representation of women as parliamentary secretaries was quite better. Out of total 45, 11women were appointed as parliamentary secretaries.

The above statistics show that women's representation and inclusion in the Punjab Assembly has been very low compared to their proportion in population that somehow verifies that circumstances are not much favorable for women's development and empowerment in the province of Punjab. Hashmi, R, S & Rashid, H postulate that under-representation of women in the legislative assemblies hinder the ways for initiating and approving any women-favorable legislation. So women legislators remain ineffective to address the gender-specific concerns in the house of power (2019, p.710).

Women Legislators on Decision-Making Positions in Punjab Assembly: (2008-2013)

The era of 2008-2013 has seen a clear increase in the representation of women in national and provincial legislatures as compared to previous eras besides 2002; still, the figures do not justify their proportion, in compare to their share in population. Another noticeable practice is that a very small number of women legislators of Punjab Assembly appear to be appointed on the decision-making positions. According to the data of Provincial Assembly of Punjab, following are the detailed statistics of women legislators, appointed on high-ranking positions during the selected era.

Table: 2
Women on Decision Making Positions in Punjab Assembly (2008-2013)

Punjab Assembly: 2008-2013	Total Number	Women	Percentage
Member of Provincial Assembly (MPA)	350	71	20%
Provincial Ministers	07	Nil	0%
Special Assistant of Chief Minister	02	Nil	0%
Parliamentary Secretary	40	03	7.5%

Source: Provincial Assembly of the Punjab, (2008-2013). https://www.pap.gov.pk/about_assembly/cabinet/en/19?filter=true

Cabinet and Functionaries

No Women was ever appointed as leaders of house in the Punjab Assembly or as leader of opposition. During the era of 2008-13, both titles were occupied by men. Leader of the House was Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and leader of the opposition was Raja Riaz Ahmed from PPPP (PAP: Cabinet & Functionaries, 2008-2013).

Provincial Ministers

Seven Provincial Ministers were appointed in the cabinet of Chief Minister Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif during the selected era. All of these were men. Thus women's representation as provincial ministers was nil. Name of Provincial Ministers were Malik Nadeem Kamran, Ch. Abdul Ghafoor, Haji Ehsan-ud-din Qureshi, Malik Ahmed Ali Aulakh,Malik Muhammad Iqbal Channer, Rana Sanaullah Khan and Mian Mujtaba Shuja-ur-Rehman. Malik Ahmed Ali Aulakh was supervising five departments at a time that included Agriculture, Cooperatives, Livestok & Dairy Development, Forestery, Fisheries & Wildlife and Tourism and Resort Development. Another PM named Mian Mujtaba Shuja-Ur-Rehman was administering six departments including Excise & Taxation, Higher Education & Youth Affairs, School Education, Literacy & Non-formal Basic Education, Transport and Finance. Though one provincial minister was administering many departments at a time but none of the women legislators was considered eligible to be the part of CM's cabinet.

Special Assistant to Chief Minister

Two of members from PML (N) were appointed as Special Assistant to Chief Minister named Khawja Salman Rafique and Syed Zaeem Hussain Qadri. No women legislator was appointed as SA to CM.

Parliamentary Secretaries

There were total 40 Parliamentary Secretaries, of which only 3 were women. All three vested their affiliation with ruling political party. The percentage of women's representation in decision-making process as Parliamentary Secretaries was only 7.5%. Following is the details of name and department of women Parliamentary Secretaries during this era.

Table: 3
Name and Departments of Women Parliamentary Secretaries

Name & Affiliated Political Party	Department
Iffat Liaqat Ali Khan (PML-N)	Parliamentary secretary Women Development
Nazia Raheel (PML-N)	PS Special Education
Shazia Ashfaq Mattu (PML-N)	PS Management Professional Development Department (MPDD)

Source: Developed by the Researcher.

Women Members of Parliamentary Standing Committees for Government Departments

There were total 38 Standing Committees constituted to accomplish the several goals related to various departments. Women legislators got inclusion in 30 committees. Rest of eight committees has not a single of women member. These standing committees include Agriculture, Communication & Works, Cooperatives, Management and Professional Development, Services & General Administration, Livestock & Dairy Development, Religious Affairs & Auqaf, Wildlife. Following table illustrates the comparative figures and percentage of men and women legislators as members and chairpersons of these Standing Committees.

Table: 4
Comparison of Women and Men's Percentage in Parliamentary Standing Committees

	Total Numbers	Women	Men
Presence of men and women in PSC's for government department	38	30 Committees (78%)	38 Committees (100%)
Members	371	80 (21%)	291 (78%)
Chairperson	38	02 (5%)	36 (94%)

Source: Developed by the Researcher by assembling data from Provincial Assembly of the Punjab, (2008-2013). https://www.pap.gov.pk/committees/type/en/19/1/9?filter=true

Women Legislators as Chairpersons of Parliamentary Standing Committees

Out of 38 PSC's chairpersons, only two were women. The name of committees that were chaired by women legislators were committee for Special Education and committee for Commerce & Investment. PSC to Special Educations was chaired by Samina Waseem butt and PSC to Commerce and investment was headed by Zil-e-Huma respectively. Remaining 36 committees headed by male legislators. The number depicts 5% representation of women legislators as chairpersons. That is comparatively a very low figure compare to male's representation (PAP: Committees, 2008-2013).

Women Legislators on Decision-Making Positions in the Punjab Assembly (2013-2018)

An evaluation of the rate of appointment of women members to high ranking positions in the Punjab assembly reveals that very few women were given an opportunity to hold these positions. The detailed statistics of the appointment of women versus men on decision-making positions are mentioned below.

Leader of the House and Opposition

No female has been appointed as leader of the house or leader of opposition in the provincial assembly of the Punjab since 1947. In the era of 2013-2018, again men were designated on said two posts. The name of the leader of the house was Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and the leader of opposition was Mian Mehmood-ur-Rasheed (PAP, About Assembly, 2013-2018).

Cabinet and Functionaries

Following table is illustrating the percentage of women representatives versus men, designated on various significant positions in cabinet of Chief Minister.

Table: 4
Percentage of women representatives on various designations

Post	Total Designated	Women designated	Percentage
Provincial Minister	34	4	11%
Advisor to CM	1	0	Nil
Special Assistant to CM	4	0	Nil
Parliamentary Secretary	42	5	11%

Source: Developed by the Researcher. (PAP, Cabinet and Functionaries, 2013-2018).

Provincial Ministers

From 2013-2018, 34 Provincial Ministers were designated by Chief Minister in his cabinet. Out of which four Provincial Ministers were women. The proportion of women representation in the said category was 11.7%. The name of women ministers, their affiliated political party and the ministries they hold is given below:

Table: 5
Women ministers and their departments

Name of Minister	Political Party	Department
Aisha Ghous Pasha	PML-N	Department of Finance
Zakia Shah Nawaz	PML-N	Department for Environmental Protection
Naghma Mushtaq	PML-N	Department of Zakat and Ushr
Hameeda Waheed-ud-Din	PML-N	Department of Women Development

Source: Compiled by the Researcher

Advisor to Chief Minister

During the selected era, only one male was appointed as advisor to chief minister. There was ratio of women representation in this category was nil. In the previous era, the figure was same in this category to.

Special Assistant to Chief Minister

Out of four individual, appointed as special assistant to chief minister, none was women. Thus the ratio of representation of women in this category remained same as above that was nil.

Parliamentary Secretaries

According to the data of Punjab assembly, total 42 members of provincial assembly of the Punjab were appointed as parliamentary secretaries, of which five were women. The turnout of women's representation in this category was 11.9%. The names and departments of these female parliamentary secretaries are mentioned below:

Table: 6
Women as Parliamentary Secretaries

Name	Department
Azma Zahid Bukhari	Information and Culture
Joyce Ruffin Julius	School Education
Mehwish Sultana	Higher Education
Nazia Raheel	Revenue
Shaheen Ashfaq	Women Development

Source: Compiled by the Researcher, https://www.pap.gov.pk/about_assembly/ cabinet/en/20?filter=true

Standing Committees for Government Department

According to the data of Punjab Assembly, during the era of 2013-2018, there were total 36 standing committees for government departments. Total number of members of these committees was 358, of which 271 were male members and 87 were female. The participation rate of women members of provincial assembly of the Punjab in this category was 24%. Below is the detailed statistics of women legislators, appointed as chairpersons and members of these committees.

Chairpersons

Out of total of 36 Parliamentary standing committees for government departments, women were the chairpersons of only two committees. It makes their proportion of percentage only 5.5%. The name of women chairpersons and the departments they chaired were as below:

List of Women Chairpersons of Parliamentary Standing Committees for Government Department

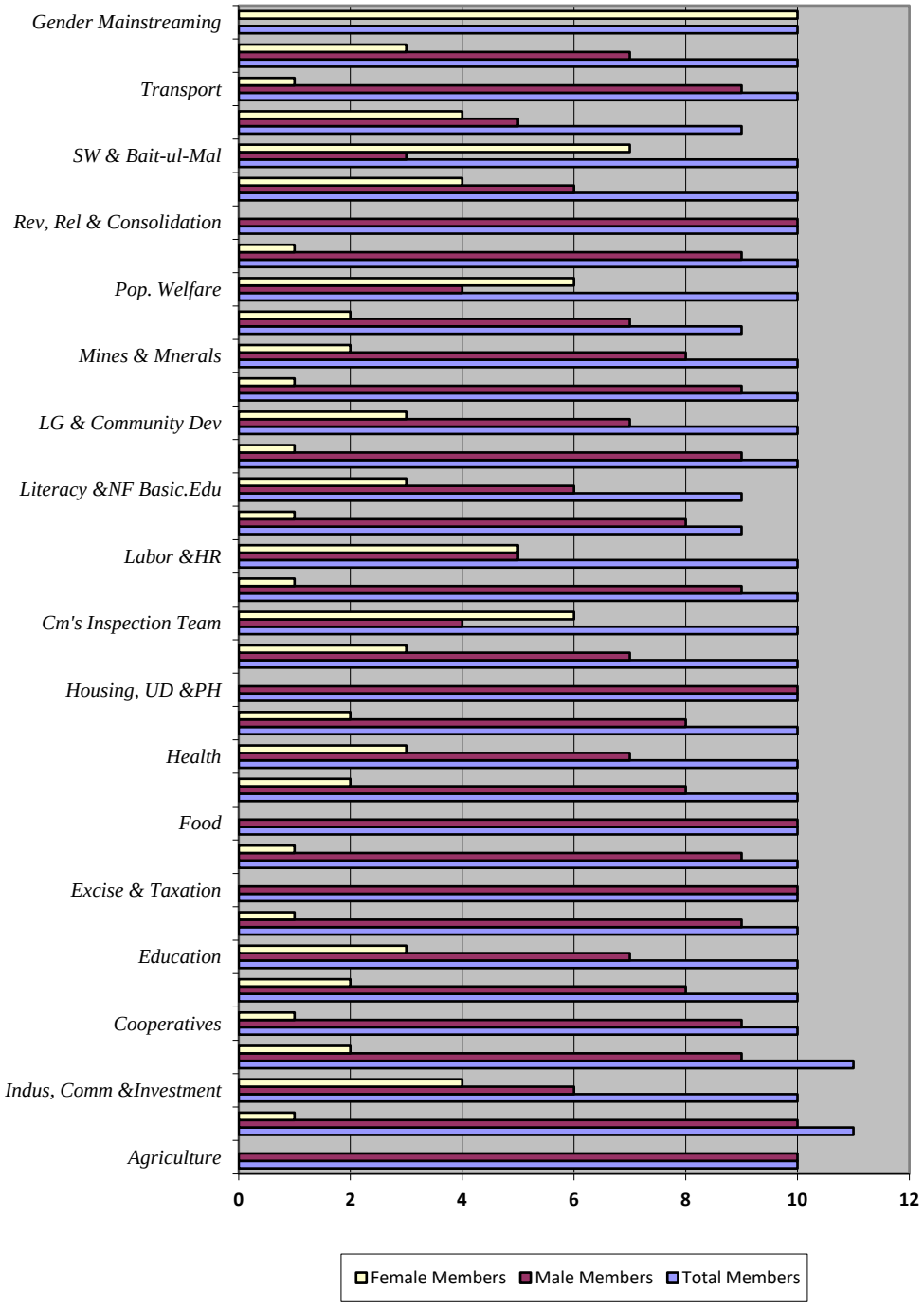
Name of Women Chairperson	Department
Sultana Shaheen	Department of Zakat and Ushr
Madiha Rana	Department of Information and Culture

Source: Compiled by the Researcher

Members

Out of total of 36 committees, women members didn't get membership of five committees named Agriculture, Revenue, Relief & Consolidation, Excise & Taxation, Housing, Urban Development & Public Health Engineering, and Food. There were also such four committees in which number of women members was more than male members named Gender Mainstreaming, Social Welfare & Bait-ul-Mal, Population Welfare, and Chief Minister's inspection team. In one committee the number of male and female members was equal named Labor & Human Resource (PAP, Committees, 2013-2018). The details of women membership in all 36 committees is demonstrated in the following chart:

Representation of Women legislators versus Male in Standing Committees



Source: Developed by the Researcher, assembled data from https://www.pap.gov.pk/committees/type/en/20/1/9?filter=true

Special Committees

According to the available data of Punjab assembly, there were total 8 special committees working in the house. Total number of members of these committees was 92, of which number of men and women members was 78 and 14 respectively (PAP, Special Committees, 2013-2018). The proportion of women's representation in these special committees was 15%. The detailed statistics of membership of men versus women is given below:

Table: 7
Women legislators in special committees

Committee No.	Total Members	Male	Female	Name of female Members
SC-1	10	09	01	Ayesha Javed
SC-2	12	11	01	Saba Sadiq
SC-3	05	05	Nil	----------
SC-5	17	16	01	Azma Zahid Bukhari
SC-6	12	08	04	Ayesha Javed, Azma Zahid, Raheela Khadim Hussain, Mary Gill
SC-7	13	10	03	Faiza Ahmed, Azma Zahid, Ayesha Javed
SC-8	11	09	02	Mehwish Sultana, Khadija Umar
SC-9	12	10	02	Mehwish Sulatan, Ayehsa Javed
Total Members	92	78	14	15%

Source: Compiled by the Researcher, assembled data from https://www.pap.gov.pk/committees/type/en/20/31/42?filter=truee

Other Committees

Few other committees were also working in the house to accomplish the several tasks. The following statistics illustrate ratio of women's representation versus men:

Table: 8
Proportions of women versus men versus in other committees

Name of Committee	Total Members	Male	Female	Percentage
Public Accounts Committee-I	13	11	02	15%
Public Accounts Committee-II	13	11	02	15%
Committee on Privileges	13	12	01	7%
Finance Committee of the Assembly	09	07	02	22%
Committee on Govt. Assurances	10	09	01	10%
Library Committee	09	08	01	11%
House Committee	10	08	02	20%
Total Members	77	66	11	14%

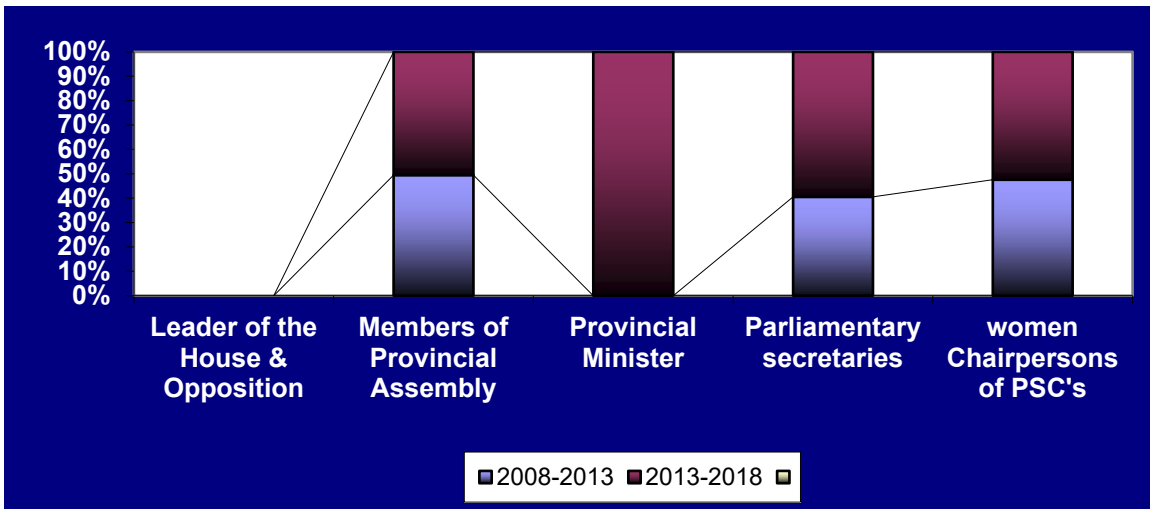
Source: Developed by the Researcher, compiled data from https://www.pap.gov.pk/committees/type/en/20/27/10?filter=true

The table shows that average rate of representation of women legislators in various committees was 14% that is less than their proportion in the Assembly's membership.

Women on Decision-Making Positions: Comparative Analysis of Both Eras

The following chart illustrates the comparative statistics of representation of female legislators in few significant decision-making positions of the Punjab Assembly;

Comparison of Percentage of Women on High-ranking Positions during both Selected Eras



Source: Developed by the Researcher

The chart above shows a trivial development in the representation of women on decision-making positions in the later era of 2013-2018.However, the difference of figures is not huge but it would be an exaggeration to ignore even the slightest improvement. The chart shows that during both eras, no woman was appointed as leader of the house or opposition. In term of the number of women members of Assembly, a minor increase can be seen. In addition, no woman was appointed as provincial minister during first eta but in later one, 4 women designated on these positions. There has also been a little improvement in the number of women appointed as parliamentary secretaries. The appointment of women as chairpersons of various parliamentary standing committees for government departments, has also improved by about one percent. Collectively, in both periods, there was no significant difference in the placement of women members in higher positions, but the minor developments seen in the latter period can be considered as anticipation towards positive change in the near future.

Conclusions

- The above figures and discussion shows that the representation of women legislators in decision-making positions was extremely low. The absence of women decision-makers from decision-making structures and processes prevented the political institutions from enacting legislation in favor of women. It is a settled fact that unless a community moves forward to defend and protect its rights, no one speaks up for it. With the beginning of the 21st century, Pakistan, like other countries of the world, increased the legislative representation of women. Unfortunately, this representation was limited to mere appearance due to reserved seats. In addition, the under-representation of women legislators in key decision-making positions further tilts the situation in favor of the opposite gender. The appointment of women representatives in decision-making positions, including cabinet and committees, should be ensured according to their ratio in the population. This is the most effective way through which women representatives can strive to empower their gender community. In the words of Rashid, H, “Empowerment entails change and collective change requires change at the individual level. Individual empowerment gradually leads toward community empowerment. Women are needed to get familiar with their worth. Agents of socialization should play significant role in empowering women at individual level” (Rashid, H. 2022, p.22).

Recommendations

The following recommendations would be helpful to deal the selected research problem:

- Inclusion of women in domestic decision-making and control over financial assets will lead toward women's financial independence. It leads to development of self-confidence and decrease the dependency. Economic empowerment of women can be ensured through granting her share in family's assets. Government needs to adopt strict legislative measure in order to ensure women's right to inheritance that is deliberately overlooked by the family due to male dominating patterns.
- In the legislative assemblies, women should be given seats in proportion to their population. For general seats, Quota for women should be fixed or the reserved seats can convert into general seats for women. Only women candidates can be contested in these seats. Constituencies should be demarcated in such a way that the number of women voters in women's reserved constituencies should be higher. Or else such an arrangement should be made that only female voters can vote for the female candidates. In this way, representation of women in the general seats can be ensured.
- Women legislators of both right and left wings, in the provincial assembly of Punjab must create an intra-party-bond who could speak out in the favor of policies specifically related to women's rights. All of them are needed to focus on commonalities rather than dissimilarities. Women caucus in the Assemblies can be used as platforms for the development of unity between women members of different political parties.
- Political parties should promote democratic culture in their structural arrangements. They should treat all members equally without any discrimination particularly based on gender. Selection based on merit must be ensured. They need to curb the politics of favoritism to implement democracy in its true essence. This will eventually lead to the implementation of democratic culture in the chambers of power. For this, they must equally divide the high-ranking party positions between both genders, to ensure the representation of everyone's interests.
- The appointment of women representatives in decision-making positions, including cabinet and committees, should be ensured according to their ratio in the population. This is the most effective way through which women representatives can strive to empower their gender community.

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Dr. Hina Rashid is an Assistant Professor in the Higher Education Department, Punjab.