



RESEARCH PAPER

Gender Quota and Women's Political Participation in Pakistan: A Case of General Elections 2002

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PAPER INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: January 10, 2019	The paper aims to critically evaluate the impact of gender quota on women's participation in the 2002 general elections. For this purpose, the study has analyzed overall participation of women as candidates and subsequent success as legislator. Women legislators' level of education, profession, age, and previous political and parliamentary experience have also been calculated. Data have been collected from official websites of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) and National Assembly (NA). Several studies and reports have also been consulted. The findings of the study have supported this arguments and revealed that increased number of seats have benefitted women of upper strata as traditional culture is not accustomed to deliver opportunity to all segments of society. However, exceptional cases are always there.
Accepted: June 24, 2019	
Online: June 30, 2019	
Keywords: Gender Quota, Female Legislators, Politically Influential Families	
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Introduction

Gender quota is considered as an important mechanism for women empowerment. It is not only useful for addressing women's grievances, but also increase women's share in political institutions. In 2014, women had only 21.2 percent representation in the world while it was only 11.67 percent in 1995 (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2014). During the twenty years from 1975-1995, female representation increased only 0.7 percent, whereas, in the upper houses of the parliaments, a decline was observed (Balington and Karam, 2005). It has been observed that more than 100 countries have introduced gender quotas for national parliaments (Krook, 2009). This development has fostered a new academic debate about the usefulness of gender quotas.

Women's political participation is a critical element for the development of democratic institutions in the country. Successive governments have taken special initiatives for the development and empowerment of women, however, authoritarian rule has stunted the growth of strong political institutions and the development of democratic culture in which there is a more active political participation of the people (Zia and Bari, 1999, p. 49). The British government introduced the gender quotas in the sub-continent through the Government of India Act 1935, and this colonial legacy was followed by Pakistan after independence. Pakistan opted to adopt reserved seat type, gender quotas. The provisions of reserved seats for women have been incorporated in the three constitutions of Pakistan of 1956, 1962, and 1973. In 1985, twenty seats were reserved for women in the Majlis-e-Shoora chosen by President General Zia-ul-Haq.

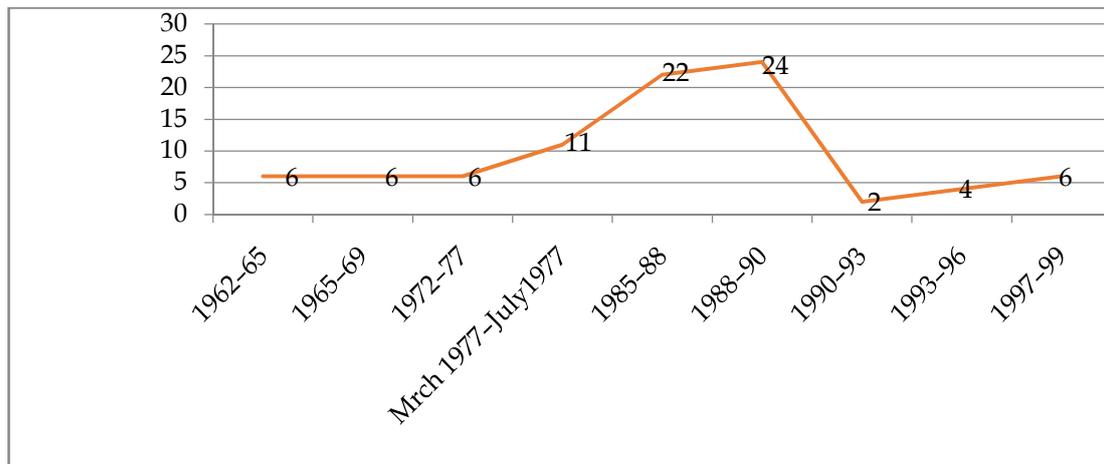


Figure 1: Women's Political Representation in National Assembly of Pakistan (1947-1999) Source: UNDP, 2005

This provision of the reserved seats lapsed in 1988. It is evident from Figure 1 that women's representation remained very low after the expiration of this provision (UNDP, 2005). It indicates that in the absence of gender quota in Pakistan, women's representation remained nominal in the parliament. It is interesting to note that only 113 women have been members of the Pakistani parliament for fifty years since 1947-97 (Mumtaz, 1998).

General Pervez Musharraf LFO and Women Reserved Seats

In October 1999, through a military coup, the government of Nawaz Sharif was dismissed by General Pervez Musharraf and became the self-proclaimed Chief Executive of the country, and later as President of Pakistan. He claimed that the political empowerment of women would enable them to fight for their rights themselves. Pakistan has commitments in international treaties and conventions to take concrete steps for women empowerment (Reyes, 2002). In the National Assembly, Sixty Seats were reserved for women and in the Senate, 17 seats were

also reserved for women. Women reserved seats in the upper house of the Parliament had been the demand of the civil society and women's rights organizations. However, women's rights groups in Pakistan had been demanding 33 percent women representation.

However, it is a common perception that only gender quotas alone could not eliminate "undemocratic internal party structures and centralistic, patriarchal hierarchies" (Fleshenberg, 2006). It was pointed out that only bringing 60 women on reserved seats should not consider a 'landmark' when these women do not have a power base in any constituency. Such type of 'of medicated politics' indicates that a Pakistani woman is still not seen suitable to contest elections to general seats (Khan, 2007). Various analysts showed strong optimism that these women would work on those matters that had been neglected in the previous parliaments (Jabeen and Muhammad, 2013) but few others have a different point of view. It is argued that these 'controlled political opportunities' are only created to demonstrate the world that the government of Pakistan is adopting a liberal and progressive agenda (Khan, 2007, p. 146). Military dictator inserted a few other clauses to block the entry of Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto and few other senior politicians in the parliament (Talbot, 2003). The introduction of the new provision of graduation for the members of the National Assembly became highly controversial. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (2002) criticized LFO because, through this Ordinance, Musharraf had bypassed the parliament, having the intentions to strengthen the power of the president, formalize the role of the army in governance, and weaken the authority of elected representatives.

It is clear from the data given in Figure 1 that women's representation remained low during the period (1990-99), having no quota but when the quota was reintroduced, it increases the woman's number substantively. This new development requires an empirical research study to evaluate whether the new policy of reserved seats for women has in fact been motivated women to participate in elections and whether political parties allowed middle class women to be part of main stream politics. Indeed, it requires a holistic approach to explore the broader effect of gender quota policy in Pakistan. This study has, therefore, analyzed the impact of gender quota on women's participation in 2002 general elections.

Table 1
Distribution of Seats in the National Assembly: Comparison of 1997 and 2002

Province/Area	General Seats		Reserved Seats (Women)		Non-Muslims		Total	
	1997	2002	1997	2002	1997	2002	1997	2002
Islamabad	1	2	-----	----			1	2
Punjab	115	148	-----	35			115	183
Sindh	46	61	-----	14			46	75
NWFP	26	35	-----	8	10	10	26	43
Balochistan	11	14	-----	3			11	17
FATA	8	12	-----	0			8	12

Total	207	272	-----	60	10	10	217	342
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Source: ECP, 2002

The seats of the National Assembly were increased from 217 to 342 members. It was also first time in the history of Pakistan that 60 seats were reserved for women in the National Assembly. Seats the National Assembly are distributed among the provinces, according to proportionate to their population. The constituency seats are filled through direct elections from single-member constituencies. Reserved seats are distributed among the political parties in proportion to general seats won by them in elections.

Women Participation in General Elections of 2002

General Elections were held in October 2002 in Pakistan. More women ran for political office than ever before. A total of 60 women contested elections on general seats in the 50 constituencies of the National Assembly. On the other hand, male candidates contested elections in 272 constituencies of the National Assembly (ECP, 2002). No women contested election on general seats from the Federal Capital and FATA. Some observers pointed out that despite elections of the highest number of women on general seats, thousands of women were unable to cast their votes (Ahmed, 2002). Another important development in the 2002 elections was that 16 women candidates, including nine candidates for the National Assembly last elections as runner-up, including some experienced politicians with a strong political background. Some of them were independent and some were on party tickets. There was one constituency in which both winners and runners-up were women (UNDP, 2005).

Rejection of Nomination Papers of Women Candidates

In 2002 general, a nomination paper of many prominent female politicians was rejected on different grounds. Many women could not fulfill the required educational qualifications, as it was compulsory for every candidate to have a graduation degree. Benazir Bhutto, a two-time elected Prime Minister of Pakistan, had her nomination papers rejected on the allegation of corruption. Wife of former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif nomination papers were also rejected. Begum NasimWali, nomination papers were rejected because she was not a graduate. Chairperson of Peoples Party (Shaheed Bhutto) could not participate in the elections because she obtained her education in Lebanon and her qualification was not considered to be equal to the Bachelor's degree (BA) and resultantly, she was debarred from contesting elections. Musarrat Shaheen, a famous actress of Pushtoo films and chairperson of the Masawat Party was another victim of the BA requirement. Begum SyedaAbida Hussain even though she passed her BA, she was not able to win a seat (UNDP, 2005).

Women Contesting on Party Tickets and Independent Candidates

The 2002 elections were a significant juncture for women of Pakistan because it brought a significant number of women in the legislatures of Pakistan. The victory of a woman on general seats as an independent candidate from Balochistan has been a remarkable achievement because no women had ever won elections on general seats by that time. In the elections of 2002, political parties gave tickets to 38 women for the National Assembly elections. It is interesting to note that Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), an alliance of religious parties did not give a party ticket to a woman on constituency seats but nominated a large number of women on reserve seats. This indicates an inherent contradiction in the political ideologies of religious parties. In the presidential elections of 1965, Jamat-I-Islami supported Fatima Jinnah as a presidential candidate, but later, strongly opposed the nomination of Banazir Bhutto as Prime Minister of Pakistan. It shows the opportunistic approach of these parties.

Zubaida Jalal, won the elections on general seats as independent candidates from Baluchistan but later she joined the Pakistan Muslim League- Quaid (PML_Q) but another woman MNA Saima Akhtar Bharwana did not join any party and maintained her independent status (UNDP, 2005). Only one woman was able to win a seat in the 1997 elections (Zia and Bari, 1999). The 2002 elections saw the unprecedented participation of women contesting on general seats, but the majority of the woman's nomination was done by the leadership of the parties without consultation with women's wings or female leaders of those parties.

Table 2

Women Contested 2002 Elections on Party Tickets

Name of Party	Women Candidates
Pakistan Muslim League - Q	8
Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarians	10
Pakistan Muslim League - N	4
Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf	2
Pakistan Awami Tehreek (PAT)	2
Muttahida Qaumi Movement	4
Pakistan Muslim League - Z	1
Pakistan Muslim League - J	1
Tameer-e-Pakistan Party	1
National Alliance	1
National People's Party Working Group	1
Awami National Party	1
Pakistan Watan Party	1
Tehrek-e-Istaqlal	1
Total	38

Source: UNDP, 2005, p.29

The analyses of the family background of the elected MNAs on general seats support the statement quoted above as most of the tickets in the general seats were awarded to women candidates with the feudal background. Only a handful of activists were given the ticket. Political parties did not show any kind of enthusiasm in the election campaign these candidates. It is argued that the success of women on general seats is due to the stronghold of their families in the area and had accommodated themselves with the ruler of the day (Saiyid, 2001). In the election of 2002, more women were given tickets on general seats by the major political parties, but it never means that the party leadership had totally changed its attitude. The percentage of tickets given to female candidates remained below 10 percent. It is argued that an increase in the total number of seats of the National Assembly, but most importantly the requirements of graduation persuaded political parties to bring more women on their candidate list (Bari, 2009).

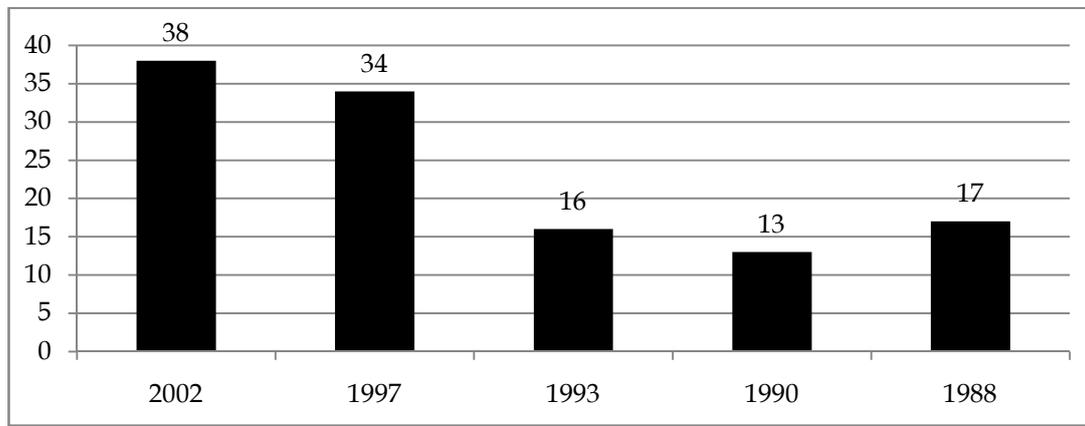


Figure 2: Women Candidates on General Seats: Comparative Analysis (1988–2002)
Source: UNDP, 2005, p. 28

In the 2002 elections, 38 women contested elections on party tickets while 22 contested elections as independent candidates. There were only, 22 independent women candidates in the 1997 elections and none was able to win, but this number rising substantially in the 2002 elections. This may be the result of more awareness of politics through the continuous efforts of civil society organizations.

Women Elected on General Seats

In the National Assembly, 13 women, belonging to different political parties were successful on general seats in 2002 elections (UNDP, 2005). The success of a significant number of women has been highly appreciated and labeled as a historical moment for the women of Pakistan.

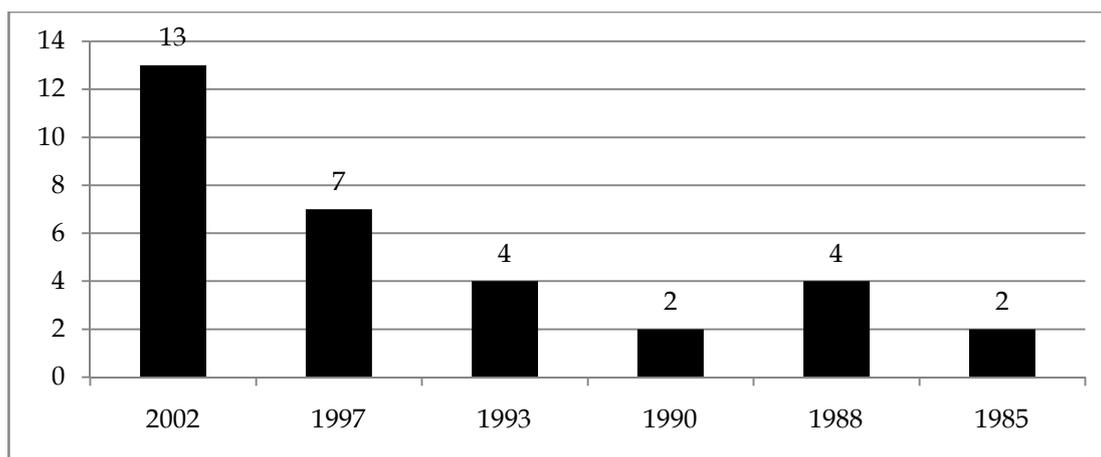


Figure 3: Women Elected on General Seats (1985-2002), Source: UNDP, 2005, P. 28

Various dynamics played a crucial part in the success of these female candidates on constituency seats. The requirement of graduation for the member of the parliament created a space for educated women of the families to participate in politics. One study (DUTOYA, 2013) has found two explanations for the success of these female legislators.

First, many former (male) MPs were prevented to be candidates in 2002 and 2008 due to the fact they were either facing charges of corruption (in 2002) or were not university (or madrasa) graduates which were compulsory in 2002 and 2008. Thus, their wives or daughters were elected in their place. Second, the issue of women's political rights and the importance of women's representation have been widely discussed in Pakistan after the 2000s, thus creating an incentive to parties to field more women. While both explanations probably hold some truth, the first one seems more important (p.67).

Women elected on general seats in Pakistan normally belonged to established political families. Well-known women members of the parliament such as Banazir Bhutto, Nusrat Bhutto, Syda Abida Hussain, Begum Nasim Wali Khan, and Tehmina Dultana all belong to powerful and influential political families. In the 2002 elections, all women elected on general seats were from influential political families (UNDP, 2005). Zubaida Jalal from Balochistan did not belong to the elite political family, but she had the support of local administration due to the choice of president Musharraf. It indicates that these women operated outside the feminist paradigm. There is another notable aspect of these elections. Nine women candidates lost the elections as runner up. In one constituency of the national assembly, both winner and runner up were women.

Women Candidates on Reserve Seats

Women rights organizations have showed concern on the procedure of elections to the women reserved seats because they had been advocating for direct

elections. The feminist lobby articulated that the present procedure of elections for reserving seats would convert women into second-class members of parliament, where they would be dependent on the male leadership of the party, and thus dilute their capacity to pursue policy reforms favorable to women (Reyes, 2002; Tinker, 2004). It specified that political parties would have to win at least 5 percent of the seats in the national and provincial assemblies to nominate representatives on reserve seats.

Political parties found it a suitable opportunity to increase their number in the parliament. For the sixty reserved seats, 279 women were nominated by political parties (UNDP, 2005). According to the party list provided to the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), Pakistan Muslim League (Q) nominated the maximum number of 46 women and the Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarian (PPPP) nominated 40 women. This notable development even forced MMA, a religious parties' alliance to also nominate 57 women candidates for reserved seats in the NA, however, they did not award tickets to any women on general seats.

Table 3
Party-wise Nomination of Women on Reserved Seats

Name of Party	Number of Women Candidates
Pakistan Muslim League - Q	46
Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal	57
Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarians	40
Pakistan Muslim League - N	19
National Alliance	21
Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf	18
Muttahida Qaumi Movement	12
Total	213

* Only party with ten or women candidates are listed Source: UNDP, 2005, p. 36

The majority of the reserved seats (22) went to PML-Q, whereas PPP-P got fifteen seats. Independent candidates increased the number of the majority party. It is a general trend that independent candidates prefer to join the ruling party. Most of the independent joined PML-Q after their success as per ECP instructions. MMA was allocated twelve reserved seats for women. PPP-P would have more seats if the National Alliance and PML-F had not qualified for reserved seats. This mode of elections gave political parties sole authority over the selection of women on reserve seats. In 2002, mostly relatives of male party leaders were elected on reserved seats (UNDP, 2005). PML-Q, PML-N, PPPP, National Alliance, and even MMA nominated relative of their party chiefs on women reserved seats. Women intellectuals and professionals from civil society were nominated on reserved seats, but at the same, there were party workers and activists (Waseem, 2006).

Table 4
Party-Wise Women Seats in the 12th National Assembly

Name of Political Parties	Women on General Seats	Women on Reserved Seats	Total
Pakistan Muslim League-Q	06	22	28
Pakistan People's Party-Parliamentarians	05	15	20
Mutahida Majlis -e-Amal		12	13*
Mutahida Quami Movement		3	3
Pakistan Muslim League-N		3	3
National Alliance		3	3
Pakistan Muslim League-F		1	1
Pakistan Muslim League-J		1	1
Independent	1		1
Total	12	60	73

*One woman elected on seats reserved for minorities, Source: UNDP, 2005, p. 48

Women have significant representation in the 12th National Assembly. There were 73 (21.3 percent) women in the National Assembly. Of 13 women elected on general seats in 2002 elections, five belonged to PPPP, four to PML-Q, one each to PML-Jinnah and NA, and two were independents. After the elections, Zubaida Jalal, an independent MNA joined the PMLQ. After the merger of two political parties with PM (Q), Rubina Shaheen Wattoo (PML-Jinnah) and Sumera Malik (National Alliance) also came into the PML-Q folds. Another MNA, Eman Wasim (PML-Q) vacated her seat for Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz's bye-election. Later on, there were 12 elected women on general seats sitting in the NA.

Overall Women's Representation (2002-07)

The general elections of 2002 was a historical juncture in the political history of Pakistan because it a significant number of women were elected as member of National Assembly. Women had a nominal representation (3 percent) in 1997 but in 13th National Assembly women have 21 percent representation. The presence of a large number of women significantly improved the GEM (Gender Empowerment Measure) ranking of Pakistan. This development brought Pakistan to the 58th on the list of 102 countries, while it was on 100th in 1999 on the GEM index. In South Asia, Pakistan has the higher percentage of women's representation than India (IPU, 2011).

Table 5
Overall Women's Representation in Pakistan (2002-07)

Legislature	Female Members	Male Members	Total	Female (Percent)
Overall	232	938	1170	19.8
Senate	18	82	100	18
National	73	269	342	21.3

Assembly				
Punjab	73	298	371	19.7
Sindh	33	135	168	19.6
NWFP	23	101	124	18.5
Balochistan	12	53	65	18.5

Source: UNDP, 2005; PILDAT, 2004

It is evident from the Table 5 that gender quota has significantly increased women's representation in the National Assembly as well as in the provincial assemblies. In the 11th National Assembly (1997-1999), there were only 7 women members out of 217 (3.2 percent).

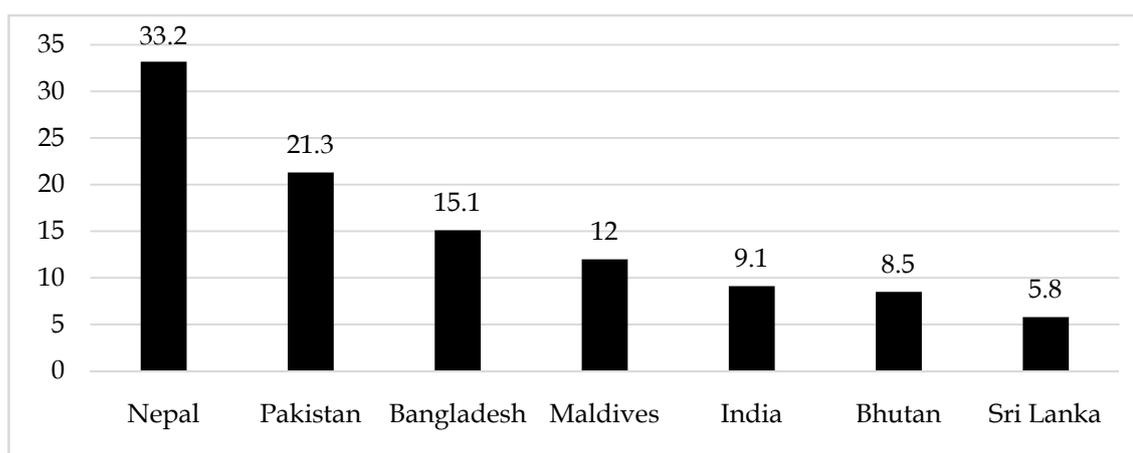


Figure 4: Women Representation in South Asia (2008), Source: IPU, 2008

It is clear from Figure 5 that it is due to reserved seats for women that Pakistan had been in the second position in South Asia. The adoption of gender quotas has even brought a few African countries on the top ranking. Presently Rwanda is on top of the ranking.

Profile of Female Members

It is important to discuss women's legislators' education, age, parliamentary experiences, and social-political background. These elected women came from different areas and also belong to different political parties, but they have certain common characteristics. This appears clearly after the analysis of available statistics for the MNAs of the 12th National Assembly (2002-07) that women members were younger than their male legislators. The average age of female legislators was 42 years as compared to 46 years old for men. As for educational background is concerned, most of the women were highly qualified and holds professional and Post Graduate degrees. It is to note that 48 women have master's degrees or above. Even 18 were MBBS and Ph.D., whereas 30 were master degree holders, seven female legislators' had an LLB degree and only 18 female legislators' had B. A degree (UNDP, 2005). A strong reason for the entry of highly educated women in

politics was a requirement of graduation for the candidates of the National Assembly. As Talbot (2003), claims that Male graduates were not available in the family and they were unwilling to lose their constituencies but this requirement also disqualified some prominent women politicians.

The majority of the female legislators were newcomers in formal politics, but mostly they came from families with a strong role and influence in politics of Pakistan. A few women had been party activists and some had a background as women's rights activists. There is insufficient information about the social class of female legislators. It is clear from the study of available data (Bari 2009) that the majority of elected women MNAs came from the upper-middle class. It means that they were quite identical to male legislators (Zaidi, 2009). The majority of female legislators (26) belong to elite families. Several of them have been office bearer or active members of women's wings. Eleven out of 12 female legislators elected to constituency seats had a feudal background (UNDP, 2005).

It has been observed that the majority of women (85 percent) do not have any parliamentary experience. These female legislators contested elections for the first time while only 56 percent of male legislators do not have legislative experience. The majority of women members (63) of NA were newcomers into the legislatures. Only a small number (10) female legislators were elected before to NA or PAs (UNDP, 2005). According to another study, two-thirds of women MPs had never contested elections in the past (Bari, 2009, p. 19). It has been also observed that only a few female legislators have cabinet experience.

If one looks at the economic status of female legislators, it is clear that economically these women members represent elite class. It is obvious that ordinary women of Pakistan, having limited resources, cannot be part of such type of political culture. It also indicates that without having sufficient financial resources, an ordinary woman could not become a member of the parliament. It was argued,

On average, they are financially comfortable. Although some are more comfortable than others, none of them are financially destitute and so at first glance, one can raise the question in financial terms. Do these women represent the [common] Pakistani women? (Bilal, 2004, p. 32).

Conclusion

The distinctive feature of the 2002 elections was that the number of women who contested on general seats was nearly ten times higher than their number was in the previous elections of 1997. This incentive motivated more women to contest elections as independent candidates, however, the success ratio was very low and only three women were winners and four became runner up. Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) was the only province where not a single woman contested elections as an independent candidate. In 1997, only 22 women stood as an independent candidate with one victory. In this regard, the efforts of civil society organizations and media had played an important role. It is evident from the data

that major political parties gave more tickets to women in the 2002 elections by as compared to previous elections but in the province of Balochistan and NWFP did not award tickets to women. The religious parties' alliance MMA did not award a ticket to a single woman on the general seat in the National Assembly. Another significant progress was seen in Balochistan where a woman was elected as MNA first time.

It is clear from the analysis that personal influence, family background, and relationship with party leadership played a key role in woman's nomination general and reserved seats. The majority of these nominated women had not been a very active worker. The member of the women's wings of the different political parties' complained that the selection procedure was biased and non-transparent. Party leadership did not consult women's branches in the selection process. Another serious problem has been the absence of rural women in the Parliament as the majority of female legislators on reserved seats came from urban areas.

Reservation of seats created more space for women in politics, but still, there are various types of constraints that are keeping ordinary women away from mainstream politics. An average Pakistani woman did not have the financial resources for election expenditure. Political parties also did not take the risk of giving tickets to a woman who did not belong to influential political families. Almost all elected women MNAs came from prominent political families. Many of them had been married into families with strong political influence in the politics of Pakistan. It is argued that these women in general served as a proxy for their families, who were unable to contest the elections due to exile or imprisonment. To ensure a successful future for women of Pakistan, both men and women require equal and effective representation in Parliament. This needs structural and institutional reforms that go beyond the politics of presence. In addition to such changes, there is a need to have a vigorous and influential feminist group both inside and outside the legislature, having strong associations with women's rights groups. This will help to educate and unite women parliamentarians on women's issues and efficiently politicize them as part of a feminist claim.

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