



**RESEARCH PAPER**

**Role of Women Legislators in Decision Making Process: An  
Assessment of Punjab Assembly (2008-2013)**

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**ABSTRACT**

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With the commencement of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, substantial initiatives have been taken by Member States of the United Nations regarding women's rights and concerns. United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) directed all states to formulate and implement strategies to develop gender equality and women empowerment by ensuring women's existence in decision-making structures. Pakistan also took various initiatives regarding women's rights and increased their ratio of representation in both Central and Provincial Bodies. It is a fact that interests of a community can be better represented and protected by their own community representatives. In this perspective, this paper intends to highlight the relationship between women empowerment and decision-making, with particular focus on the role of women legislators of Punjab Assembly, during the period of 2008-2013. To accomplish the mentioned task, the paper explores the ratio of women, appointed as decision-makers and analyzes their contribution in legislative process, while keeping focus on commencement of bills and resolutions regarding women's rights. The findings indicate that female members in Punjab Assembly are not getting fair representation on decision-making positions. Except for a few, most women legislators remained inactive and in-operative during the whole tenure. Collectively, they were unable to actively participate in the legislative process. They also remained inept in promoting the rights of their gender community.

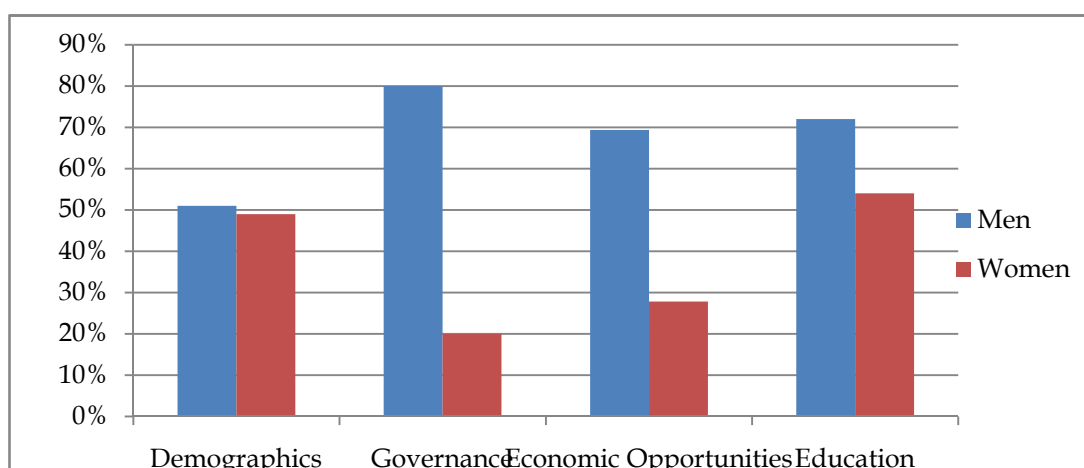
**Introduction**

The presence of women in decision-making is pivotal to increase their access to available opportunities and resources. It also empowers them to partake in formulation and implementation of women-specific policies and programs. Their

participation is imperative component for sustainable development of a state. To achieve this, United Nations Organization has signed Millennium Declaration in September 2000 and allocated 8 (Millennium Development Goals) to all member states, in order to combat poverty, illiteracy, diseases, hunger, environmental degradation and discrimination against women. Goal 3 accentuated all member states to take measures in all sectors to guarantee women empowerment and gender equality. Later, in 2015 these goals were replaced by 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In SDG, Goal 5 is specific to gender equality. According to Aasiya Riaz, Goal 5 prioritizes the need to constitute those policies that enable an increase in women's representation in governance, with particular emphasis on decision-making. This goal also bounds member states to proactively take measures towards women empowerment (Riaz, 2019, p.7)

The autonomy and empowerment of women and development of their status in all arenas is a highly significant end in itself. Yolanda Sadie justified Women representation in political decision-making structures with three arguments. Primarily, women, representing half the population, must have a share in decision-making to promote democratic practices. Secondly, women's presence in such structures is essential for the protection and promotion of their community's interests. Lastly, women are being marginalized due to traditional patriarchal structures, both socially and politically. Society needs to utilize half of the existing talent that is wasting due to unjust social and political structures (Sadie, 2005, p.17). Although women constitute about fifty percent of the world's population, they are far behind men, with particular regard to their access to economic or additional resources. Similarly, women lack considerably in the political sphere, as they feel isolated and hence miss out in participation and representation in political affairs of the state. Francesehet & Piscopo support this argument by quoting that in 2011, nearly 81% of the world's parliamentarians were men (Francesehet & Piscopo, 2012, p. vii). The situation in Pakistan is not much different in this regard. It is observed that Pakistan has a highly vulnerable political system with low figures of women participation and representation in political affairs and decision-making processes.

In the same vein, terms like "gender imbalance" and "lack of women empowerment" have become synonymous to Pakistan's Social image in the International Community (Raza, 2007, p.99). Thus, the 2012 Report of United Nation Development Program has ranked Pakistan at 123 out of 148 countries in the Gender Inequality Index (Bhattacharya, 2014, p.180). At the provincial level, Punjab's social conditions are noted to be the most progressive. Yet a vast disparity is recorded in terms of gender equality. According to the Punjab Gender Parity Report, presented by the Punjab Commission on the Status of Women, a huge gap exists among men and women regarding access towards resources and prospects in significant sectors. Following table illustrates the existing disparities between both genders (PCSW, 2018).

**Table 01 Disparity between Men and Women in Significant Sectors**

Source: Punjab Gender Parity Report, 2018 by Punjab Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW)

In above table, besides other inequalities, a noticeable gap can be seen in governance sector.

The 1973 Constitution of Pakistan warrants all basic human rights for women. Article 25 of the Constitution sheds light on gender relations, wherein “all citizens are equal before law and are entitled to equal protection of law”. Article 25 also restricts any kind of discrimination on the basis of gender. In addition, it allows for any special provisions to safeguard women and children (Metraux & Akhtar, 2013, p.41). However, constitutional protection aside, women enjoy little presence in many sectors, especially in politics and governance. According to Nazir and Musarrat, political authorities remain unenthusiastic towards enhancement of political participation and empowerment of women. Members of legislative bodies pay nominal consideration to women’s apprehensions (Nazir & Musarrat, 2019, pp. 73 &74). Metraux & Akhtar opine that male legislators have strongly opposed any legislation brought forth to parliament for equal respect, justice and equality of men and women (Metraux & Akhtar, 2013, p.62). Women legislators have also not performed better, wherein their political party’s affiliation have taken priority over the interests of their gender community.

According to a report by the National Commission on Status of Women, despite of inclusion of women in political institutions of Pakistan, they are not playing active role in mainstream politics. This is attributed primarily to the traditional patriarchal nature of social structure. It is a prevailing need to bring transformation in the social and cultural fabric, in order to eliminate the existing gender inequality. It is worth noting, that according to the report, the main reason for low women participation in politics is gender stereo-typing. The fact of the matter, however, is that this one element cannot be solely considered the prime

cause for this deficiency. Women, sitting in political institutions are also responsible for this insufficiency, as they are not utilizing their power adequately for the sake of their community's interest. (NCSW, 2010). Moreover, State and Society are both responsible for not putting any solemn efforts, to change the state of women. Even in other developing countries, any policy presented by government to empower women remained practically ineffective (Lone & Zargar, 2017, p.68).

Women empowerment and decision-making are inter-linked. Women's inclusion in the processes of Legislation and decision-making are a proven instrument towards women empowerment. This avenue helps them become an active part of developmental programs in all significant sectors of the state. The most effective catalyst, in this regard is the energetic and operative contribution of Women legislators in the decision-making process. They can not only uplift the condition of their gender community by protecting and promoting their rights and interests but also enhance the degree of women empowerment at social and political level.

This research paper intends to investigate the inclusion and effectiveness of women legislators of the Punjab Assembly from 2008 to 2013, in the decision-making process with regards to women's political empowerment. This period has been selected due to two reasons. Firstly, it represents the first democratic regime of Pakistan that completed its tenure successfully followed by a peaceful transfer of power. Secondly, ratio of women representation was considerably increased under Devolution of Power Plan 2000 during Pervez Musharraf's rule in order to meet the MDGs proposed by the United Nations.

### **Women in Parliament: Historical Recurrence**

For implementation of true democratization, equal representation of men and women especially in Legislature and Executive, is considered to be an essential element. Many Research scholars have identified a correlation between the role of gender and the developmental process. It concludes that there is a dire need to enhance women's inclusion at the national and sub-national decision-making process.

Historically, in Pakistan, women's participation and representation in National and Provincial Assemblies have remained insufficient. After independence, from 10<sup>th</sup> August 1947 to 24<sup>th</sup> Oct, 1954, total number of seats in the first Legislative Assembly was 30, among which only 2 (3%) were occupied by women. In the second Legislative Assembly (2<sup>nd</sup> May 1955 - 7<sup>th</sup> Oct, 1958) no seat was occupied by women, thus representation of women in decision-making body was 0% (Awan, 2018, p. 2). However, the landmark law that was accepted in the constitution of 1956 was the approval of the principle of women suffrage for their reserved seats. These reserved seats were allocated on the basis of special territorial constituencies. This legislation could be considered as a milestone towards political empowerment of women as it allowed two-fold voting rights to women - one for general seats and the other for reserved seats. These efforts, however, proved to be futile, as this rule was

eliminated in the constitution of 1962 and was replaced by the system of indirect elections. The same concept was retained in the 1973 Constitution. (Shami, 2009, pp.143-144). During the era of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, a wave of self-defining feminism was getting attention all over the world. The main objective of this campaign was to highlight the issues and concerns of women. In 1975, the First Lady, Ms Nusrat Bhutto attended the World Conference on Women. This was internationally perceived as a positive gesture by the world community, that the State of Pakistan was conscious about its women's rights and issues. In the same year a commission on the status of women was also established. Unfortunately no further significant development followed due to implementation of "indirect elections" on women's reserved seats. The said legislation ultimately restricted women's political rights and participation (Khan, 2013, pp.729-730).

A prominent turning point is then observed after Zia's era. In 1988, the government assigned quota for women and increased it to 10% rather than 3%. Thus allowing women to bag 22 seats in National Assembly (upon which 21 were elected on reserved seats and 1 was directly elected) and 5% seats in Provincial Assemblies. Again in 1990, women occupied 0.9% seats (only 2 women were directly elected from 217 seats). In 1993, it was only 1.8% (4 women out of 217) and in 1997, 2.8% (6 women, out of total 217 members) (Awan, 2018, p.2).

At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, nearly 95% countries of the world granted two basic rights to women. These included the liberty to contest elections and also to cast their vote. To increase the participation of women in political and electoral process, efforts have been made all over the world by introducing constitutional and legal measures (Sharif & Hina, 2018, p. 69). The percentage of women representation in National Parliament has increased from 19% in 2010 to around 23% in 2018 (Riaz, 2019, p.8). In Pakistan, the current century earmarks a visible increase in ratio of women's representation in both the National and Local decision-making bodies.

On August 21, 2002, General Pervez Musharraf imposed a Legal Framework Order (LFO) that initiated certain procedures to reinstate women's quota, specifically in politics. It was raised to 33% in all legislative and decision-making bodies of the state. It increased the number of general seats for women to 20% in the 12th National Assembly that was only 1.4% in the 11th National Assembly (1997-1999). According to the allocated quota, women got 60 out of 342 seats in the National Assembly and 17 out of 100 in the Upper House (Senate) (Sharif & Hina, 2018, pp. 75-76). According to PILDAT, the same quota rule was applied in the Provincial Assemblies so women got 17.8% representation in Punjab Assembly and got 66 out of 371 seats, 29 out of 168 (17.3 %) in Sindh Assembly, 22 out of 124 (17.7%) in NWFP and 11 out of 65 (16.9%) in Balochistan Assembly (PILDAT, 2004, p.18). In 2008, during the General Elections of 13<sup>th</sup> National Assembly, 75 women contested from 62 constituencies, out of which 16 got representations by contesting directly. On reserve seats, 60 women got representation in National Assembly

(Ahmed & Khan, 2018, pp.6-7). According to given figures, women occupied 76 out of 342 both general and reserved seats in National Assembly that made 22.23% representation. In Provincial Assemblies, 139 women were elected, among which 128 were elected on reserved seats (Punjab 66, Sindh 29, NWFP 22, and Balochistan 11) and 11 were directly elected.

### **Women Legislators in Punjab Assembly: 2008-2013**

On 18<sup>th</sup> February 2008, provincial elections for Punjab Assembly were held along with National general elections. There were 281 general seats, 62 reserved for women and 7 for non-Muslims. According to the turnout, Pakistan Muslim League (N) was leading party in Punjab Assembly by occupying 171 out of 350 total seats. There were total 279 male and 71 women representatives. Thus representation of women was 20%. Though the figure is quite low as compared to demographic percentage of women in the province of Punjab, but it was a positive improvement over the previous representation ratio in Legislative Assemblies.

### **Women Legislators and Decision Making Positions:**

During the era of 2008-2013, fewer number of women appointed on decision making positions in Punjab Assembly, besides constituting 20% chunk of it. Following table is demonstrating an overview of the number of female, working on decision making positions as Provincial Ministers, Parliamentary Secretaries and Special Assistant to Chief Minister during the selected span of time.

**Table 2**  
**Women on Decision Making Positions in Punjab Assembly**

| <b>Punjab Assembly: 2008-2013</b>   | <b>Total Number</b> | <b>Women</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------|--------------|-------------------|
| 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: [https://www.pap.gov.pk/about\\_assembly/cabinet/en/19?filter=true](https://www.pap.gov.pk/about_assembly/cabinet/en/19?filter=true)

### **Provincial Ministers**

There There were total seven ministers in the cabinet of Chief Minister during the tenure of 2008-2013, amongst none was woman. Though two of ministers were dealing with more than one department at a time, as Malik Ahmed Ali Aulakh was minister of five departments and Mian Mujtaba Shuja-Ur-Rehman was administering six departments, but no women legislator was given representation in the cabinet of Chief Minister.

### Parliamentary Secretary

Out of total 40 Parliamentary Secretaries, only 3 were women. Thus the ratio of women representation as Parliamentary Secretaries was 7.5% only. The name and departments of these female Parliamentary Secretaries were as under:

| Parliamentary Secretary | Portfolio                                 |
|-------------------------|---|
| Iffat Liaqat Ali Khan   | Women Development                         |
| Nazia Rasheed           | Special Education                         |
| Shazia Ashfaq Mattu     | Management Professional Development Dept. |

### Parliamentary Standing Committees for Government Departments

Out of total 38 Standing Committees, women legislators got representation in 30 committees. The committees in which women legislators didn't get representation included Agriculture, Communication & Works, Cooperatives, Management and Professional Development, Services & General Administration, Livestock & Dairy Development, Religious Affairs & Auqaf, Wildlife.

### Members

Total number of members of Parliamentary Standing Committees for Government Departments was 371, among which women members were 80 that makes the percentage of 21.

### Chairpersons

Out of total 38, women were the chairpersons of two Parliamentary Standing Committees. These included Special Education and Commerce & Investment. Both committees were chaired by Samina Waseem butt and Zil-e-Huma respectively. Remaining 36 committees were chaired by male legislators.

|  | Total Numbers | Women Representation | percentage |
|--|---------------|----------------------|------------|
| <b>Total number of PSC's for government department</b> | <b>38</b>     | <b>30</b>            | <b>78%</b> |
| <b>Members</b>   | <b>371</b>    | <b>80</b>            | <b>21%</b> |
| <b>Chairperson</b>                                     | <b>38</b>     | <b>02</b>            | <b>5%</b>  |

Source: <https://www.pap.gov.pk/committees/type/en/19/1/9?filter=true>

### Role of Women Legislators in Decision Making Process in Punjab Assembly

Decision making is primarily a reserve domain in Punjab Assembly. According to the report of Free and Fair Election Network, only a few of cabinet ministers look after the legislative business in the house. Nearly all the government legislations are moved by male members of the cabinet (FAFEN, 2017, P.5). During the selected tenure, most of the Government legislations were initiated by Rana

Sanaullah Khan (Minister of Law, Parliamentary Affairs and Public Prosecution). Moreover, only a handful of women legislators contributed in legislative process. Most among them were private members. The detail of women legislators' contribution in legislations and resolutions is as below:

### **Legislation**

According to the data of Punjab Assembly, the house has dealt with total 66 bills from 6<sup>th</sup> June 2008 to 7<sup>th</sup> June 2012, among which 48 bills were presented by government members while 18 were from private members. After procedure, only 39 bills were refer to different committees among which 35 were government bills and only 4 were private member bills. 18 bills got approval while 12 were rejected. All of approved bill were belong to government and none of private member bill got the status of passed. Moreover, till 7<sup>th</sup> June 2012, 36 bills were under consideration until the government completed its tenure.

As far as contribution of women legislators is concerns, out of 66 bills, women legislators contributed as movers of 14 that make the percentage of 21%. All of these bills were initiated by female legislators within the coalition of male legislators except two. These all were private members bills. Besides one, none of these bills were belong to specific women's concern, which was bill number 12 of 2010, moved by Seemal Kamran on 6<sup>th</sup> July 2010. The title of the bill was "The In-House Working Women Protection Bill 2010." The bill was forwarded to Labor and Human Resource Committee for further consideration. The bill didn't get the status of passed or not passed and remained under consideration, until tenure was over. The detail of the bills sponsored by women legislators is given below:

#### **The Provincial Motor Vehicle (Amendment) Bill 2008 (Bill no.1 of 2008)**

The bill was initiated by Tayyaba Zameer on 12<sup>th</sup> August 2008, during 8<sup>th</sup> session. The objective of the bill was to amend the Provincial Motor Vehicle Ordinance 1965. It was Disposed of in session 22, sitting 31<sup>st</sup> December 2010.

#### **The Forest (Amendment) Bill 2008 (Bill no.2 of 2008 )**

The bill was introduced by nine movers among which two were women, included Saba Sadiq and Samia Amjad, on 12<sup>th</sup> August 2008, in session 8. The bill was presented to make further amendment in Forest Act, 1927 (ACT XVI of 1927). It was not passed by the House.

#### **The University Of Gujrat (Amendment) Bill 2008 (Bill no.8 of 2008)**

This bill was initiated on 12<sup>th</sup> August 2008, in session 8 by six movers among which four were women, named Samia Amjad, Amna Ulfat, Samina Khawar Hayat and Syeda Bushra. The objective of the bill was further amendment of University of Gujrat Act, 2004 (IX of 2004). It was not passed by the House.



**The University Of Sargodha (Amendment) Bill 2008 (Bill no.9 of 2008)**

This bill was sponsored by nine members among whom six were women, including Samia Amjad, Amna Ulfat, Samina Khawar Hayat, Syeda Bushra, Amna Jahangir and Syeda Majida, on 12<sup>th</sup> August 2008 during 8<sup>th</sup> session. It was presented to make further amendment in University of Sargodha Ordinance 2002. This bill was not passed by the House.

**The Government College University Faisalabad (Amendment) Bill 2008 (Bill no.10 of 2008)**

The bill was initiated by nine movers among whom five were women, named Samia Amjad, Amna Ulfat, Samina Khawar Hayat, Amna Jahangir and Syeda Bushra on 12<sup>th</sup> August 2008 in session number 8. The objective was to amend the Government College University Faisalabad Ordinance 2002(IXX of 2002). The bill was not passed by the House.

**The Provincial Motor Vehicle (Amendment) Bill 2008 (Bill no.14 of 2008)**

Among four movers of this bill, one was women, named Azma Zahid Bukhari. The bill was initiated on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2008 during 10<sup>th</sup> session. It was presented to amend the Provincial Motor Vehicle Ordinance 1965 (XIX of 1965). It was not passed by the House.

**The Provincial Assembly Of The Punjab Privileges (Amendment) Bill 2008 (Bill no.15 of 2008)**

This bill was initiated on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2008 during session 8. It was sponsored by six members, among whom three women initiators were Samia Amjad, Amna Ulfat and Khadija Umar. The objective of the bill was to make further amendment in the Provincial Assembly of the Punjab Privileges Act 1972 (II of 1972). It was sent to Special Committee and remained indecisive until the tenure was over.

**The Punjab Irrigation And Drainage Authority (Amendment) Bill 2008 (Bill no.16 of 2008)**

The bill was initiated by fourteen movers among whom six were women including Samia Amjad, Amna Ulfat, Amna Jahangir, Khadija Umar, Syeda Majida and Syeda Bushra on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2008 during 8<sup>th</sup> session. The purpose of the bill was to amend the Punjab Irrigation and Drainage Authority Act 1997 (Pb Act XI of 1997). It was sent to Special Committee.

**The Provincial Assembly Of The Punjab Privileges (Amendment) Bill 2008 (Bill no .17 of 2008)**

Among nine movers of the bill, three were Samia Amjad, Amna Ulfat and Amna Jahangir. It was initiated on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2008 during 8<sup>th</sup> session with the

objective to amend the Provincial Assembly of the Punjab Act 1972 (Act II of 1972). Bill was sent to Committee that laid its report in session 33's sitting, held on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2012.

#### **The Punjab Social Services Board (Amendment) Bill 2009 (Bill no.2 of 2009)**

Out of twenty six movers of this bill, ten members were women including Samia Amjad, Amna Ulfat, Khadija Umar, Amna Jahangir, Samina Khawar Hayat, Ayesha Javed, Syeda Majida, Syeda Bushra, Qamar Aamir and Joyce Ruffin. It was presented on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2009 in 11<sup>th</sup> session to amend the Punjab Social Services Board Ordinance 1970 (Punjab Ordinance II of 1970). The bill wasn't passed.

#### **The Provincial Assembly Of the Punjab Privileges(Amendment) Bill 2009 (Bill no.3 of 2009)**

This bill was also initiated by movers of above mentioned bill. It was presented to amend the Provincial Assembly of the Punjab Privileges Act 1972 in 11<sup>th</sup> session; sitting held on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2009 and was not passed by the House.

#### **The Punjab Public Service Commission (Amendment) Bill 2010 (Bill no.1 of 2010)**

Among twenty-four sponsors of this bill, half were women members named Samia Amjad, Amna Ulfat, Khadija Umar, Amna Jahangir, Samina Khawar Hayat, Ayesha Javed, Syeda Majida, Syeda Bushra, Qamar Aamir, Embasat Hamid, Faiza Asgher and Seemal Kamran. This bill was presented to amend the Punjab Public Service Commission Ordinance 1978 on 26<sup>th</sup> January 2010 during 16<sup>th</sup> session. It wasn't passed.

#### **The Punjab Office of the Ombudsman (Amendment) Bill 2010 (Bill no.2 of 2010)**

The bill was initiated on 26<sup>th</sup> January 2010 during 16<sup>th</sup> session by the same movers, in order to amend the Punjab Office of the Ombudsman Act 1997. The bill was not passed by the House.

#### **The In-House Working Women Protection Bill 2010 (Bill no.12 of 2010)**

This bill was initiated by Seemal Kamran on 06<sup>th</sup> July 2010 in session 19. It was presented for the purpose of protecting the rights of women working at homes for hire or reward, others and providing for terms and conditions for such workers. The bill was forwarded to Labor and Human Resource Committee

The above all were private member bills. None of government bill was initiated by any woman legislator. Even none of bill was belonged to general welfare or rights of women. Four Government bills can relate to women's betterment which was presented for the establishment of Women's College and Universities included:

- The Women University Multan Bill, (4)2010

- The Government College Women University Sialkot Act,2012
- The Government College Women University Act Faisalabad, 2012
- The Government Sadiq College Women University Bahawalpur Act, 2012

Among above, only one bill number 4 of 2010 was passed on 21<sup>st</sup> July 2010. While remaining three bills were forwarded to Education Committee for further consideration and they remained indecisive until the tenure was over. Source: Provincial Assembly of the Punjab, (2008-2013).

### Resolutions

From 9<sup>th</sup> April 2008 till 21<sup>st</sup> January 2013, Punjab Assembly passed total 173 resolutions. Out of these, 42 resolutions were stimulated by women legislators which make the ratio of 24%. The noticeable point is that out of 42 resolutions, only 8 were relevant to women's rights or concerns while rest were related to miscellaneous affairs and incidents. Following are the resolutions that stimulated by women legislators regarding women's affairs or concerns.

| Serial Number | Session Number | Presenter                   | Text of Resolution   | Date of Approval |
|---------------|----------------|-----------------------------|--|------------------|
| 13            | 09             | Arifa Khalid Pervez (W-305) | This house condemns the brutal killing of five women in the province of Balochistan, who were buried alive in injured condition after shooting. This act is not only against Islam but also depicts the existing ignorance in the society. This house presents resolution on behalf of people of the province of Punjab, to condemn this brutal act and also prays that such incidents would never happen again.   | 05-09-2008       |
| 28            | 11             | Shamila Aslam (W-308)       | This house forwards request to central and provincial government to stop every kind of violence against women and seeks their protection through the implementation of fair laws. Women should also be provided by education, employment and health facilities on the basis of equality. They should be granted debts and land on lease through easy installments so they can contribute in the progress of the country.50% of population is based on women so if they will get employment, unemployment can be over. Women should get paid according to their | 12-02-2009       |

|    |    |   |   |            |
|----|----|---|---|------------|
|    |    |   | labor. This house also opined to stop the customs of forced marriages, early marriages, marriage with Al-Quran, honor killing and dowry. There is need to formulate and implement strict rules to curtail the rising incidents of terrorism and violence against women. Thus, women can lead a respectable life and indeed a justice based society is actually a progressive society.   |            |
| 54 | 14 | Faiza Ahmed Malik<br>Parliamentary Secretary<br>Irrigation Department | This house of the Provincial Assembly of the Punjab intends to protect the rights of around 8.52 million domestic workers of Pakistan; most of among them are women. It appreciates their role in Pakistan's economy. These domestic workers represent 70% of total number of women in the country. These workers are playing significant role in many of domestic industries including football manufacturing, carpet making, wood work, handicrafts, embroidery and many other activities. This house recognizes the need of effective legislation to protect worker's rights. It considers resolving such problem immediately like protection of rights, non-discrimination at workplaces, elimination of child and forced labor and setting of minimum wages. This house recommend to federal and provincial government to take immediate steps for the betterment of these workers to progress the economy of the country. As it would be helpful for the prosperity of Pakistan to incorporate domestic workers into labor laws and allocate funds for their well-being. It recommends initiating a campaign at union council level for their registration, in order to carry out their welfare in an organized manner. | 21-10-2009 |
| 57 | 15 | Nighat Nasir Sheikh<br>(W-325)  | This house opined that Emergencies of all Government hospitals of Punjab, especially of Lahore should be divided into two sections: male and female and appointment of  | 03-11-2009 |

|     |    |                              |  |            |
|-----|----|------------------------------|--|------------|
|     |    |                              | female doctors and staff should be ensured in female section.  |            |
| 84  | 16 | Talat Yaqoob (W-335)         | This house recommends the establishment of women Police Stations in all districts of Punjab province within the appointment of required officers and staff.  | 23-02-2010 |
| 87  | 19 | Samina Khawar Hayat (W-354)  | This house recommends to Central government to celebrate the birthday of Hazrat Fatima-tuz-Zahra (who was a pious daughter, an excellent wife and an ideal mother) as Women Day.   | 06-07-2010 |
| 109 | 22 | Humera Awais Shahid (W-361)  | This house considers that violence incidents against women were highly aggravated during previous years. The main reason behind this increase is negation of women rights granted by Islam. Our religion privileges a woman the right of divorce, inheritance, autonomy in financial matters and second marriage of widow without the permission of guardian and family. Central government needs to ensure the implementation of all rights granted by Islam to curtail the violent acts against women. | 18-01-2011 |
| 172 | 43 | Arifa Khaield Pervez (W-305) | "This house condemns disparaging remarks of Mr. Imran Khan, Chairman, Tehrik-e-Insaf, about the qualification and merit of Members of Assembly, elected on Reserved Seats. The comments were derogatory and insulted women who have been serving this nation by being active members of their respective assemblies."  | 03-01-2013 |

Source: [https://www.pap.gov.pk/assembly\\_business/resolutions/en/19?filter=true&limit](https://www.pap.gov.pk/assembly_business/resolutions/en/19?filter=true&limit)

The initiators The initiators of 131, out of 173 resolutions were male legislators of Punjab Assembly. Among these, only one resolution has a part related to women. The resolution number 111 that was impelled by Tanveer Asharf Kaira consisted on request for recommendations of Budget proposals 2011-2012. The motivator requested for initiating special programs for the welfare of women. The resolution was passed by Punjab Assembly on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2011.

In 2012, The Government of Punjab introduced a comprehensive empowerment policy, in order to meet the goal of gender equality. According to the

“Punjab Women Empowerment Package”, Government planned to focus on several sectors for the welfare of women including economic opportunities, employment, entrepreneurship, poverty reduction, social betterment and especially inclusion in decision-making structures (WDD, 2012). The package was announced on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2012 during the celebration of International Women’s Day. However, no other noticeable initiative has been taken by the government in this regard.

## **Conclusion**

Women constitute almost 50% of total population of the province of Punjab and occupied only 20% of seats in Provincial Legislative Assembly during the selected tenure. It indicates their proportionally under-representation in the house of power that made them unable to support any women-specific legislation or initiative. The situation ultimately decreased their effectiveness in decision-making process. On the other hand, performance of female representatives has been considered quite dissatisfactory. According to available data of Punjab Assembly, out of total 14 above mentioned bills, only two were exclusively initiated by female legislators. One of them underlined specific apprehensions of In-House working women. 11 bills were presented with the collaboration of female and male legislators. Among these, none was related to women’s concerns or interests. Even, not a single legislation has been introduced or passed by the Punjab Assembly for the general well-being of women during chosen duration. Same is the case of resolutions. Out of total 173 passed resolutions, 42 were initiated by women legislators that become 24%. These 42 resolutions were repeatedly presented by same 21 female legislators. The highest figure recorded was 5, stimulated by same member namely Ms Samina Khawar Hayat. The available data indicates that out of 71 women legislators, only 21-30 played an active role in the legislative process. Due to this, collectively women legislators remained futile in decision-making process and did not concentrate their gender-specific interests too.

In order to raise women’s voice in the house of power, it is mandatory that every woman legislator needs to play an effective and active role in legislative process and proceedings of the house. Particularly, Women representatives from the ruling party need to stay more vigilant regarding their gender’s interests. Women legislators need to look beyond Party objectives, in particular with regards to gender concerns. Male legislators need to stand in support of their female colleagues to focus the issue of women’s rights. Their support will give strength to the gender cause. Moreover, this practice would be helpful in promotion of better awareness of gender issues and ultimately lead to tolerance and cooperation, in State and Society.

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