

MS Thesis

**ROLE OF WOMEN IN POLITICS: ANALYZING CULTURAL
BARRIERS IN THE TRIBAL DISTRICT BAJAUR, KHYBER
PAKHTUNKHWA**



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FINAL APPROVAL

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DECLARATION

I dedicate this Research Work to my beloved parents and family. Their kindness, inspiration and endless support enabled to complete this work. I thank ‘Allah Almighty’ who enabled me to achieve this goal.

ABSTRACT

The numerous obstacles to women's political empowerment in the Bajaur tribal territory are the subject of this study. Humans are social and political creatures by nature, and as such, they must abide by certain laws. Finding the different social, economic, political, religious, and cultural elements and obstacles that prevent women from taking part in political activities in the tribal region of Bajaur is the primary goal of the study project. Two tehsils (Khar and Salarzai) in the district of Bajaur, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, were the sites of the study. The data was collected through using an interview guide. The data will be analyzed using a thematic data analysis technique, and sampling will be done using a simple random sample technique. In this sense, this study aims to identify the factors under which for men and women, these regulations have been altered in different ways. This study looks into a number of obstacles that Bajaur women face in their quest for political empowerment. According to the research, there are a number of obstacles that prevent women from participating in politics and achieving political empowerment, including patriarchy, orthodox views held by the public, a lack of education, incorrect Pashtunwali customs, and seclusion.

Keywords: politics, Bajuar, women's empowerment, tribal areas, and traditional violence.

CHAPTER ONE

1. Introduction:

The percentage of women in Pakistan was 48.54 percent in 2020. According to government statistics, Pakistan's female literacy rate is approximately 47%. The Ministry for Planning and Development reports that although Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has a higher percentage of women than men—roughly 51%—their political involvement is not particularly noteworthy when compared to other provinces. Yet, women's engagement is steadily increasing due to recent trends for equal opportunity rights (Alupo, 2018). In Pakistan, women have held positions as opposition leaders, National Assembly speaker, prime minister, and federal ministers, among others.

As regards the ratio of females in erstwhile FATA, the ratio of women approximates 48.9%. Their participation in each sphere of life is negligible. It is due to various reasons including their local customs and traditions considering women are confined only to domestic affairs. Other factors are the lower literacy rate found in women and their inability to speak against and break these traditions (Orakzai, 2023).

This study specifically addresses the role of women in the politics of Bajaur and the cultural barriers for them. Bajaur, with a population of 1,093,684 according to the 2017 census, is home to approximately 536,520 women. The smallest, Bajaur, was established in 1973 and covers 1290 square kilometers. With a tribal makeup derived from the Tarkani and Uthmankhel tribes, it is home to 595,227 people. Bajaur is bordered to the northwest by the Kunar province of Afghanistan, to the northeast by the Dir district, and to the west by the Mohmand agency. Rural traits predominate in the Agency, and residents there favor mixed family structures. An essential component of Bajaur's social life has been Hujra. People used to spend their free time and express their opinions while sitting at Hujra. However, urbanization has reduced its significance, and Hujra's historic meaning has now mostly faded (Bakhtiar Khan, 2023).

The Behtak system, which resembles a drawing parlor, has now supplanted the Hujra custom. Tarkalanri Pashtuns make up the majority of the population of Bajaur. The Salarzai branch of the Tarkalanri tribe, which is subdivided into several clans, is the predominant tribe in Bajaur. The Utmankhel, Tarkalanri, Mamund (Kakazai, Wur, and Salarzai), and a tiny Safi community are among the Bajaur sub-tribes. Although the Bajaur people lack formal education, they are proficient in a variety of occupations, including industry, horticulture, technical work, and agriculture (khan, 2018).

Although Bajaur contains minerals, it lacks a business zone and an industrial sector. These minerals include; marble production is 9719 tons, Chromite 3080 tons and Manganese 150 tons exported to various countries. Of all the fruits, plums are produced in large quantities in Bajaur. There are very few colleges and schools in Bajaur. Furthermore, Bajaur does not even have a single university. The district is consequently falling much behind in terms of education. The literacy rate in Bajaur is poor overall, but it is especially low for women, indicating that they do not have access to school. Many women are confined to their homes and unable to work or pursue education because of the purdah requirement. Although Bajaur is mostly an agricultural zone, it appears that only men are permitted to work on the farms. Women are further constrained by this since it grants them no financial independence. According to a study, women from these regions are more likely than males to experience mental and physical problems; 6.6 percent of women are impacted, compared to just 2.2 percent of men. According to the survey, women are more likely to experience anxiety and sadness as a result of their situations. Their persecution is made worse by the absence of amenities and medical assistance. Women face far more problems, but the community as a whole suffers due to political instability. Specifically, women's concerns go unresolved. In summary, women in Bajaur face oppression, have limited rights, and are unable to work or pursue education because of the veil's (purdah) restrictions, which keep many of them confined to their homes.

The region suffered greatly as a result of the terrorist attacks; numerous hospitals, colleges, and schools were damaged, and women and children were denied access to essential services. As villagers were displaced as a result of the military action

in Bajaur, the situation for women got worse. Women and children were particularly at risk for abuse, exploitation, violence, and prejudice under these circumstances (Khan, 2012).

With Pakistan seeing considerable economic growth and structural transformation in recent decades, the discussion over women's political participation has remained intense. This study examines the role of women of District Bajaur in politics and the cultural barriers that prevent them from participating and advancing in Pakistan's mainstream politics while keeping the aforementioned facts in mind.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

In Pakistan, the gender disparity permeates every aspect of daily life. In every aspect of life, including healthcare, education, and finance, women fall well short of men. Pakistan's patriarchal culture is the foundation of its political culture. Because men control the system, women are given less opportunity to participate in politics and have no say in local and national decision-making. Their minimal role in politics results in marginalization in all affairs of life. Women in tribal districts of Pakistan including Bajaur are not politically empowered as their engagement in political activities is marred by cultural barriers and this situation also leaves them far behind men in economic and social sectors as well.

1.2 Research Objectives

- To find opportunities for women of Bajaur district in politics.
- To analyze the role of women (of the addressed region) in the decision-making process in local and national politics.
- To explore the cultural barriers for women of Bajaur in politics.

1.3 Research Questions

1. What are the opportunities for women of Bajaur district in politics?
2. How are the women of Bajaur district availing opportunities and playing roles in

politics at the local and national levels?

3. How can the cultural barriers be removed to empower women of the district Bajaur?

1.4 Significance of the Research:

The study has great significance because its conclusions give directions to academicians in examining the problems and creating more accurate and genuine research. Women's involvement in politics influences the kinds of solutions that are put forth as well as the variety of policy concerns that are taken into consideration, thereby promoting gender equality. This study has significance for policymakers as more women in politics and elected to public office can help shape policies that improve people's quality of life and represent the interests of women, families, and racial and ethnic minorities. Moreover, understanding cultural barriers can be useful to devise strategies to enhance women's political engagement and representation

1.5 Delimitation of Study:

The cultural obstacles to women's political engagement in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's tribal district of Bajaur are examined in this study. The study does not address other tribal districts of the province where women face same and other problems to take part in activities related to mainstream politics of Pakistan.

1.6 Research Gap

There is very minimal research available in the existing literature that focuses on the women participation in politics of Bajaur and mainstream politics. There is also dearth of literature concerning cultural barriers to women's political empowerment in District Bajaur. This research is mainly focused on women's role in politics in Bajaur and cultural barriers that prevent them to play any notable role in politics of Bajaur and it will be an addition to the existing literature

1.7 Research Methodology

A mix research method has been adopted in which several methods are

employed to develop a better understanding of people's perceptions of social realities and their consequences & the way people react in social setting. However, in this method, there are several ways to collect the data including interviews, direct observations, official documents, cultural records, and personal experiences. Besides, the most effective way to conduct the research and collect qualitative data is unstructured interviews that allow the respondent to answer the open-ended questions with his deep understanding. This study has utilized both primary and secondary sources to gather the data. The primary sources included the reports of think tanks, press release, policy statements, and white papers whereas the secondary sources include the books, journal articles, website articles, and columns. However, it is ensured that the data gathered is unbiased and up to date. The researcher has also used interview guide through a paper questionnaire that makes a list of questions to collect data by getting answers to the questions from the respondents concerned.

This research is based on the descriptive nature of the study. It involved finding barriers to women's political contribution in the tribal district Bajaur of Khyber Pukhtunkhwa. The method involves is the interview guide which is easy to collect sound information by directly involving the affected (respondent). The tool used for data collection were the sample random sampling technique. Different article, books, newspaper, internet, and other related sources were used as a sources for the collection of relevant literature. The analysis developed was based on the interviews of the respondents concerned directly with the problem.

The researcher structured questionnaires to collect quantitative data on demographics, political participation, and perceptions of cultural barriers. Additionally, the researcher conducted semi- structured interviews with key stakeholders, including female politicians, community leaders, and ordinary citizens, to gather in-depth qualitative insights into their experiences, challenges, and perceptions. Furthermore, relevant documents were analyzed such as government reports, policies, and media articles to contextualize findings.

Thematic Analysis was identified and the researcher analyzed common themes from qualitative data.

1.7.1 Population

A research population is like a target group for a study. It helps to make the research more focused and clearer. When the population is too large, the research can be more complicated and take more time (Shukla, 2020). The researcher selected only those respondents for interview who were concerned directly with the problem.

Interviews: Conducted semi-structured interviews with women leaders, local activists, and community elders. Semi-structured interviews and focused group discussions with elected officials, political leaders, female councilors, and village elders were employed to gather data for the study. Field Observations: the researcher attended local political meetings and gatherings to observe dynamics and interactions.

1.7.2 Definition of concepts

Patriotism: In this research, the term use to show the feelings of loyalty of women towards the state. They use different slogans and means to show their patriotism.

Polygamy: The practice or custom of having more than one wife at the same time. In this research, the term is used to justify the put into practice of having more than one wife at a time.

Ramification: A consequence of an action or event, especially when unwelcome. In this research work it is used to discuss the impacts of decision made without participation of women.

Dowry: Money or property brought by a women to her husband at marriage. In this research work it is used to describe the property of women giving them some sort of rights.

Tilak: The legal dissolution of a marriage by a court or other competent body. In this research it is used to uncover such activities undertaken for other purposes.

Dynastic: Relating to a line of kings. In this research the word used to describe the dynasties ruled to a large extent by males only.

1.7.3 Ethical Consideration

Ethical considerations like honesty, integrity, confidentiality, informed consent, anonymity and courtesy were followed to reach the targeted research objective.

As a concerned citizen and advocate for inclusive governance, I firmly believe that empowering women politically is not only a matter of justice but also essential for sustainable development in Bajaur.

8. Theoretical Framework

This study uses Walby's theory of Patriarchy presented by Sylvia Walby. Her definition emphasizes that patriarchy is a system and a structure. It is not merely a random condition that happens in society, but it has a structural construction that preserves its existence. She writes: "patriarchy is a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress, and exploit women" (Walby, 1990: 20). Walby (1989: 227) mentions that patriarchal culture is a structure that is composed of a relatively diverse set of patriarchal practices. They are important in shaping gendered subjectivity, in the distinction of the genders at an experiential level. She also argues that the discourses on femininity and masculinity are not limited only in terms of religions, media, and education, but those are institutionalized in all sites of political and social life.

Walby divides patriarchy into two forms, namely public and private patriarchy. Private patriarchy is based upon the relative exclusion of women from areas of social life apart from the household, with a patriarch appropriating women's services individually and directly in the private sphere of the home. On the other hand, public patriarchy does not exclude women from certain sites but rather subordinates women in all of them (Walby, 1989: 228). This study examines the subordination of women as one form of the patriarchal culture explained by Walby in his above theory that hinders women of Bajaur to participate in political activities, as part of public patriarchy.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of Literature:

This section has reviewed the literature regarding role of women in political affairs and barriers to women's input in political activities. A comprehensive study of scholarly sources on barriers to women political empowerment shows that the available literature is primarily descriptive in nature. The relevant literature reflects the differences found in societies that deprive women of their equal opportunity rights. This chapter is consisting of five parts. (a) Barriers to women political participation in developed countries (b) Barriers to women political participation in developing world, further this part review barriers to women political participation in Pakistan, Khyber Pukhtunkhwa and tribal district Bajaur of Khyber Pukhtunkhwa.

The conclusion that the size of the gender inequalities in political interest is not significantly influenced by the degree of gender equality in different nations further dampens optimism about an improvement in women's empowerment. This implies that obstacles to women's political empowerment persist in certain spheres of political participation, even in nations with higher levels of gender equality. At least when considering a standard measure of political interest, it seems that men's continued dominance is strongly inherited in the field of political interest. According to earlier studies, women are more likely than males to be interested in local politics and local political concerns like health and education, but they are less likely to be engaged in politics generally. We are interested in the impact of cultural heritages on gender disparities in addition to the degree of gender equality in each nation. According to research, a group of nations known as the Reformed West have the longest cultural traditions that support gender equality. There are gender differences in voting, political interest, party membership, collective and private activity, support for women's political roles, and trust in the women's movement among the subsample of three Reformed West nations (Germany, the Netherlands, and Sweden) (Evans, 2017).

Women in Western Europe have not had enough access to twentieth-century diplomacy for a very long time. In order to demonstrate the significant informal effect of women on diplomatic connections or the fact that elite women used to sporadically hold formal diplomatic positions before the nineteenth century, a large portion of scholarship uses the lack of women in formal diplomacy as its starting point. Scholars demonstrate that women's diplomatic involvement is not a recent phenomenon by examining the historical roots of women in diplomacy. In fact, in the framework of diplomatic relations in the middle of the twentieth century, women's involvement in diplomatic operations predates their auxiliary positions as diplomat spouses by many centuries (Gallego, 2007).

Numerous historical studies make it abundantly evident that women have traditionally played significant roles in diplomacy. As early as the fifth century, women were both active participants in Roman barbarian diplomacy and objects or dolls. In actuality, women were occasionally appointed ambassadors and functioned as diplomatic representatives prior to the official bans on women holding state office that proliferated throughout Europe and beyond in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In fact, in the framework of diplomatic relations in the middle of the twentieth century, women's involvement in diplomatic operations predates their auxiliary positions as diplomat spouses by many centuries. Focuses on Renée de Bec-Crespin, Countess of Guébriant, who was appointed as one of the first female ambassadors in official office in 1645 and served in Poland. Women's diplomatic participation in Western countries from the 1500s to the present is drafted in a new edited volume. It both contrasts with and is compelled by the legal and cultural restrictions that were prevalent at the time (Waltz, 2021). Women only make up 7.1 percent of the Japanese parliament and 17 percent of the US parliament, respectively. In contrast, the percentages in Sweden and Rwanda are 46% and 49%, respectively. In all fields, women's position is likewise lower in developed nations. Women around the world are excluded from opportunities and subjected to social, economic, cultural, and political oppression, with the exception of Scandinavia and certain European, American, and Asian nations. Women experience violence on a daily basis all throughout the world. Women are vulnerable to violence in all spheres of life, from the battlefield to the bedroom (mahmood, 2004).

The conditions that women encounter when it comes to their political participation

will be discussed in this section. Because of the shadow cast by society, violence against women continues. There are types of violence against women in almost every emerging society, and since they are accepted or normalized, they are frequently undetectable.

Gender perception, or the denial of women's equality with males in all spheres of life, is the root cause of violence against women. The status of women in families, community, and governmental systems is primarily associated with South Asian nations. It is still usual for women to be restricted to the four walls of their homes due to the traditional moral code of the community. In several South Asian nations, women are not even allowed to vote. Because of the son-preference customs of the culture that are dominated by cultural practices and beliefs, women in the South Asian region are privileged. From birth to the funeral service, daughters face discrimination (monkmen, 2013).

The situation of women in developing nations, particularly in South Asia, has been brought to light by Kumri (1996). Domestic violence, improper customs, and cultural transgressions also cause anxiety for women. Sex-selective abortion, wife abuse, child marriage, polygamy, rape, sexual assault, forced prostitution and women trafficking, sexual harassment, dowry, Tilak system, suicide, murders, and domestic violence are just a few terrible instances of violence that continue to occur. In the name of enchantment, they are still held accountable. All of these are solely the result of South Asian society's patriarchal institutions and mentality. Development activities are bringing about changes for women in South Asian countries. In developing nations, women are viewed as the poorest of the poor and endure similar living conditions as males, but they also face additional social and policy discrimination.

Women are acknowledged as one of the most underprivileged groups, despite the fact that this issue impacts practically every segment of the population. Even in this evolved century, women's political participation in the mechanisms and structure of the state remains a pipe dream. Despite the fact that every country's constitution guarantees equal status for all citizens without discrimination based on gender at every level of government, women's political engagement is extremely low in South Asian nations. The bulk of men with patriarchal psyches continue to hold and control positions at the decision and policy level.

Several well-known South Asian politicians, including Indira, Benazir, Khalida, Hasina, Chandrika, and Sonia, embody the triumph of women's political history worldwide and have led their nations during the past three decades. Sirimavo Bandaranaike, the world's first female prime minister in the 1960s, is even from South Asia. South Asia appears to be a fertile ground for female political leadership. However, reality is completely uncertain! There is a particular contradiction in South Asia. The majority of the region's nations have had female leaders at some point, which is unheard of in other parts of the world. For the past 25 years, Bangladesh has had two female leaders, which is a remarkable distinction. The small percentage of women elected to national legislatures and parliaments stands in sharp contrast to this. Compared to other regions of the world, South Asia has the lowest rate of female representation in national parliaments (delmar, 2018).

Before 2008, South Asia's average was just about nine, whereas the global average for the representation of women in national parliaments was 18.4. This particular paradox can be explained by a novel phenomenon that Diane Kincaid has named "over-the-dead-body syndrome." She noted that American women lawmakers took on political roles following the deaths of their husbands between 1920 and 1970. The same is true for South Asian women leaders. Being a close relative of a deceased leader, such as a wife or daughter, gives a woman leader legitimacy.

One aspect of South Asia's shared patriarchal heritage is the tendency to elevate women from "dynastic" households to positions of leadership while providing others with few choices for running for office (anyango, 2018). The Bangladeshi Constitution of 1972 allots 15 seats to women in the legislature. The quota was raised by 100% (30 seats) in 1976. In 1987, this clause expires. It was raised to 45 in 2003 after being amended in 1990. Thirty-six women ran for and won seats in the national parliament in the 1991 election. There are now only 2% of women in parliament. During the 1991 and 1996 elections, there were 35 and 37 women overall and in the 30 reserved seats in the National Parliament of Bangladesh, respectively (5+30 and 11.30 percent). The number of women in the 2001 elections fell from 37 to 6 (only 2% of all MPs) after the reserve seat was removed on April 12, 2001. Nineteen

women were elected directly to general seats in the most recent parliamentary election in 2008 (Habib, 2012).

Women's high levels of literacy and education in Sri Lanka have had minimal impact on their representation in governing bodies. At the municipality and local government level, the contribution was 1.7 percent in 2004 and less than 5.8 percent in 2005, despite the fact that most women utilize their political rights as voters or campaigners during election seasons. From the 1930s till now, the proportion of women in parliament has never exceeded 6% (Darini, 2004)).

Nonetheless, there are established systems that encourage active public involvement in the decision process at the district and village levels. In Bhutan, women and men are treated equally in the political and economic spheres. Women in Bhutan are free to take part in the formulation and execution of policies and initiatives. At the national level, women make up 14 of the 150 members of the National Assembly (soanm, 2017). The Maldives' political structure differs significantly from that of the other South Asian nations. The parliament does not have a unique fraction system. Women's attitudes are the primary barrier preventing them from achieving top management positions, even in the absence of constitutional restrictions. Because of the highly ingrained culture of female demotion, women typically think they are less competent than their male coworkers. Currently, 12% of women are represented in the parliament (poiter, 2014).

Women's representation in parliament is extremely low in India, the largest democracy in the world and home to one billion people. The lower house of parliament, known as Lok Sabha, has 545 members from all around the nation and has a significant role in making decisions that affect the political and socioeconomic well-being of Indian citizens. Although Articles 15 (1) and 15 (3) of the Indian Constitution promise women equal political rights, the proportion of female members in Lok Sabha has fluctuated throughout 1950, ranging from a low of 3.4 percent in 1979–1980 to 8.3 percent at the present day (Nayak, 2009).

Women participated actively in all of the recent major political revolutions in Nepal. However, women's representation in national legislative seats was just 5.8% prior to the most recent election, which took place in April 2008. Nepal's recent Constituent Assembly elections were revolutionary in a number of ways. It not only signaled the end of the oppressive monarchy and the arrival of a republic and democracy, but it also paved the way for women to have a larger part in politics. The current Constituent Assembly has 191 female members out of 601 members due to the implementation of 33% quotas for general seats. Thirty women won seats through the first-past-the-post poll, despite pre-election worries that the number of female members may fall short of the thirty-three percent ratio required by the interim constitution. Women were given 161 seats on the comparable representation ballot, for a total of 191 seats—32 percent of the 575 elected legislators (Pradhan, 2019).

Power dynamics, which influence the political, economic, social, and cultural environments, are shown to prevent women from fully participating in various spheres globally. One area where gender disparity has drawn international notice is politics. Both locally and internationally, women have had limited visibility and involvement. They are not underrepresented among voters or elected officials, and this is not because they lack the necessary skills; rather, even in democracies, their entitlement to equal participation was denied by the dominant political climate and cultural barriers. The Beijing Declaration and Podium for Action, two crucial agreements for gender balance and empowerment, were introduced during the UN Fourth World Conference on Women in September 1995 in response to this disparity. These statements acknowledged the importance of women's participation in decision-making since it would boost their self-esteem and lessen gender inequality that exists in a number of other domains. It is undeniable that political institutions cannot be reinforced for democracy and good governance without gender equality and parity of opportunity (jabeen, 2019).

The political representation of women is central in all measures of development and inequality. In the territory of politics, significant developments in terms of women's

participation have taken place in Pakistan. Most significantly, the political participation of women has increased in legislative bodies. Numerous factors, including Pakistan's legal guarantees to the international community—the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination (CEDAW)—can be attributed to this shift in political participation. At the same time, societal and cultural issues limit women's political participation. According to data on female labor force participation rates and women's low literacy levels, particularly when compared to males, this is mirrored in the general state of women's low visibility in the public sphere. This research paper makes a valuable contribution to the text on women's empowerment by identifying the barriers and the enable factors to women's political participation in general and in Pakistan (Fareeha Zafar, 2021).

"A woman is transformed when she assumes a leadership role. Politics and policy are altered when there are more female leaders. The "feudal" mentality, which holds that women are incapable of managing leadership roles, is the cause of these unsatisfactory numbers, especially in the least developed nations. This way of thinking restricts women to their reproductive roles because it views them as unfit for other productive roles. It is thought that having compassion won't help you in demanding public responsibilities like politics. The belief that women's responsibilities should be limited to household chores hinders women's political participation in certain civilizations, aside from the reproductive function. Seats in the national parliament are awarded to those who are fortunate enough to escape. Therefore, rather than being supported by the institutional framework, the nominal participation of women in politics is primarily supported by socioeconomic circumstances and customs. States that have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) are legally obligated to eradicate all forms of discrimination against women and men in order to solve that issue. All states are encouraged by Article 5 of the agreement to do away with discrimination and practices that are based on the inferiority and superiority of either sex (Tahir, 2019).

Knowledge of the challenges and retaliation faced by the women of Khyber Pukhtunkhwa's recently united districts as well as how they acquire and use their power. The article argues that women's power should be viewed as a crucial arena for struggle rather than as a goal unto itself. The author highlights the resilience of gender norms that support patriarchy and the roles that states and patriarchal forces play in creating or obstructing paths to power. They also stress the importance of concentrating research on women's empowerment on significant political disputes, as these are crucial moments in the advancement of women's empowerment (Nazneen, 2019).

Even though the nation as a whole has undergone political restructuring over the past 20 years, the glass ceiling still seems to be in place for the vast majority of women in politics. While some elites of women have attained higher positions in government, most women have been excluded from mainstream political participation. Numerous barriers including the political status of women in many Asian nations still keep women from achieving public office. Women's access to political chances in the recently united districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is restricted by a number of issues, including religious and cultural ones. According to this study, women's political standing in Pakistan varies widely, and their prospects vary widely across Pakistan. Misogyny and patriarchy are universal ideas that are ingrained in the framework of the majority of nations worldwide. According to Lerner (1986), patriarchy is the manifestation and institutionalization of men's dominance over women and children within the family, as well as the extension of this dominance over women in society. One nation where patriarchy still exists is Pakistan. The patriarchal views that pervade Pakistani society determine how women are viewed and treated. Patriarchy maintains control over women through fundamentally oppressive rules of behavior, gender discrimination, and the assumption that women's dignity and family honor are related. Pakistan was placed 135th in the world by the Gender Inequality Index (GII) 2021, indicating a significant gender difference.

However, Pakistan's global ranking has dropped significantly to 142 out of 146 states, according to the current Global Gender disparity Report (2023), which looks at the gender disparity in a number of areas, including economic opportunity and

engagement, getting education, political autonomy, and health. In particular, FATA is recognized as the center of oppressive and patriarchal activities. Due to rigid cultural customs that have pervaded society since the turn of the century, women in FATA are denied their basic human rights, making gender disparity there more pronounced. Cultural norms, frequently with religious overtones, justify and legitimize the destructive and dishonest practices that aim to preserve women's submissive status. In FATA, rigid gender norms also limit women's opportunities for personal development as well as career and academic advancement. Women are indoctrinated to be subordinate to men from an early age. Tribal societies' social structures compel women to adhere to patriarchal standards. Thus, tribal traditions and practices also serve as a significant barrier for female candidates who want to run for office and run their campaigns (Afridi, 2023).

The Quaid had brought forth a social revolution, which was unprecedented. It was considered unimaginable at the time for women to leave their homes for political reasons, and the cultural traditions of Muslims in the Indian subcontinent prohibited them from doing so. The Quaid's sister Fatima Jinnah was never absent; rather, it was a message from this visionary leader that women should not be limited to the conventional home-bound roles of mother and wife, but rather be equal partners in politics. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that the orthodox religious groups were always attacking him. According to legend, he once refused to have Fatima Jinnah sitting on the dais by his side when he was set to speak at a massive public gathering (Sayidi, 2001).

To make the above scenario more compounding, several quotas and policies are introduced to encourage female representation in government. Consequence upon this is the emergence of Muslim feminists advocating for Muslim women active participation in politics. The feminists argued that Islam promotes equity and justice; hence denial of political leadership to female Muslims is antithetical to the spirit of Islam. The feminists, as proponents of women participation in politics, do not see any sharp distinction between the opposite genders in terms of role designation in the political sphere. To them, women can ascend as far as men to the highest positions in the state politics or highest offices in

government. They aver that there is no single verse of the Qur'an categorically or implicitly bars women from managing the affairs of the state. On the contrary, an ancient queen of Sheba who ruled over her people is mentioned in the Qur'an. According to the Qur'anic narration "Indeed, I found [there] a woman ruling them, and she has been given of all things, and she has a great throne. (Surah an-Naml: 23).

The barriers if remain such the women will no longer wait to see from outside but they will raise their voices and it could be molded for personal gains that may cause serious threats to one national or political or any other interests that is related with one supreme national interest.

The research explores the role of women in politics in tribal district Bajaur of Khyber Pukhtunkhwa. Many research works have been undertaken for women's rights but they are either related to their literacy issues or other discriminatory practices. But no attempt has been made yet to discuss the role of women in this region's politics that can lead them to empowerment. This research work is an attempt in this regard to uncover another project that is, cultural barriers towards women's politics in tribal district Bajaur of erstwhile FATA that is of crucial importance to this region in particular and the country in general. Women can have a deep impact on decision- making processes if they are involved in political activities because they form more than half of the total population. This research is an attempt to find these barriers and suggest remedies for them in the form of research findings and recommending other research gaps as well. The study also pinpoints the different cultural elements and obstacles that prevent women from engaging in political activities.

CHAPTER THREE

Opportunities for Women to Play Roles in Politics of Bajaur

This chapter addresses the opportunities for women of Pakistan and Bajaur to play roles in politics. The chapter discusses opportunities for women within the framework of the constitution of Pakistan and also highlights the space provided to females within the political parties of Pakistan. This section also depicts the role of women of Bajaur in politics of the state. Moreover, role of some prominent women in politics of Bajaur is also highlighted in the chapter.

3.1 Reserved Seats in Local Government, Provincial Assembly and Parliament of Pakistan

For equitable human resource development, poverty reduction, and good governance, women's involvement in governance is crucial. By granting women 33% representation in local governance by the local government law, 2000, Pakistan has made a determined and cooperative effort in this area. However, women's professional participation in politics are incompatible with the traditional cultural values and societal conventions that assign them domestic tasks and decrease their standing in comparison to men. These cultural norms limit their ability to participate in governance and are mirrored in corporate, personal, and systemic activities (Jadoon, 2009).

According to the KPK Assembly Rules, 20% of the seats in the Assembly are set aside for women. Since its implementation in 2002, this quota has contributed to the growth of women's participation in the Assembly. In order to encourage women's involvement in all areas of life, including decision-making, the KPK government has enacted a Women's Empowerment Policy. Numerous initiatives are included in the policy to promote women's empowerment, including giving them access to education and training and establishing jobs for them (Rehman, 2023).

Pakistan ranks 153 out of 156 nations on four sub-indices of gender parity, including 152 in economic participation and opportunity, 153 in health and survival, 144 in educational attainment, and 98 in political empowerment, according to the Global Gender Gap Report (2021). However, when it comes to political representation, women's superior status explains why there are reserved seats for them in parliament (Election Act, 2002), making up 17.5% of the National Assembly's female lawmakers and 16% of the Senate's female members (Senate of Pakistan, 2020).

3.2 Participation of Women of Bajaur in Elections 2024.

According to election results based on Form 47, about 28 per cent voters exercised their rights to vote in both the National Assembly constituency NA-8 and provincial assembly constituency PK-22 during by-polls. The overall turnout in the Feb 8 general elections in the district in various constituencies was 29 to 40%.

The total figure of registered voters in NA-8 was 667,983 including 365,516 men and 302,476 women. Of them, 135,195 men and 52,106 women took part in the election process. Likewise, the number of registered voters in provincial assembly constituency PK-22 was 175,837 including 96,978 men and 78,859 women. Only 49,660 of them including 39,059 men and 10,601 women exercised their right to vote in PK-22. the voting behavior of women is primarily religio-political but here in this election it was somewhat changed to sympathy when a young political leader Rehan Zeb khan was shoot dead in a political campaign near Bajaur sports stadium (Dawn, 2024).

3.3 Women Voices for their Rights and as Agent of Social Change

The fight for equal social, political, economic, and legal rights for women and men is known as feminism. Many women in Pakistan are active in advocating for women's rights. In the past, women took part in the freedom movement and later helped the newly formed country with the building of the legal framework for women's rights. The state granted women the ability to vote in 1947. In 1948, active women's organizations put pressure on the government, created the Muslim personal law of Sharia, and made it legal for women to inherit. In 1952, the government implemented a Muslim family law ordinance to protect women's marital rights. Pakistan's 1973 constitution

guarantees women equality in all spheres of life, and Mr. Bhutto's rule was a pivotal period in the emancipation of women. Additionally, Pakistan attended the inaugural women's conference, where Nusrat Bhutto represented Pakistani women's concerns and challenges internationally. Following that, Pakistan's government and civil society women reported progress on women's empowerment in Pakistan and the country's efforts to adopt global concerns for women's development at three more women's conferences. During the Benazir era, the government actively engaged in Beijing and continued to adhere to CEDAW. (Sumera Batool, 2018).

Numerous Pakistani organizations, including as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) like UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP, and others, provide distinct programs for women in the area, such as food, shelter, education, and training for female councilors. suffering from not giving workers in general and women in particular enough vocational training. Since vocational training boosts productivity and professionalism, which can empower women, some NGOs have incorporated vocational training into their training and development initiatives.

3.4 Analyzing Women's Membership Position in Political Parties in Pakistan

Due to enduring gender stereotypes that cast doubt on women's abilities, political parties in Pakistan frequently favor women with significant political history. Even if things appear to be getting better, female candidates are still complaining about being assigned to less competitive districts, raising concerns about whether party preferences or voter bias are to blame. According to female politicians, political parties need to reconsider how they treat women in order to increase the prominence of women in parliament. A positive change may be seen in the recent attempts by political parties to include women in their rallies, protests, and campaigns. The PPP tends to give preference to wealthy, landlord-class women for tickets, even after enacting laws that are more welcoming to women. The PTI has done a great job of enlisting more women from the upper middle class and encouraging them to participate in street politics. They voice strong beliefs and actively participate in party rallies. On the other hand, even after three terms in office, the PMLN still has trouble getting women involved in street politics.

Although the JI has a vibrant women's wing, it prioritizes its female voter base with low levels of electoral engagement (Awan, 2023).

Many women in Pakistan obtained popularity and seats on expedient positions when talking about the techniques to secure a secure position in parties and politics. The main issue is that a large number of female legislators are from affluent backgrounds and have significant political connections and clout. All political parties have failed to provide women with equal representation and equal chances on the ground, which raises serious concerns about their legitimacy as proponents of true democracy. One of Pakistan's most powerful political parties, the PML-N, nominated 27 women for reserved seats in the National Assembly (NA) from Punjab. Nearly every woman has close familial ties to the party's senior leaders. For example, Senator Jaffar Iqbal's wife, Ishrat Ashraf, and his daughter, Zaib Jaffar, are both committed party members. Mariam Aurangzeb and her mother Tahira Aurangzeb were the daughters of a former PML-N information minister. In a similar vein, prominent PML-N leader Pervez Malik has elevated both his son and wife, Shaista Pervez. On the other hand, Shaza Fatima, Khawja Asif's niece, and his wife Musarrat were nominated under the reserved quota method. Rida Khan, the daughter of Senator Mushahidullah, was also nominated on a reserved quota in the assembly. Members of the Punjab assembly, including Maryam Nawaz's private staff, were placed on a reserved quota. The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) then split seats according to significant economic deals, political connections, and political links. For example, Dr. Azra and Faryal Talpur benefited from being Asif Ali Zardari's sisters, the co-chairman. The two sisters were selected based on their booked seats. Additionally, Parveen Qaim Khani and her daughter Rubina, as well as Nisar Khurro's daughter Nida, were nominated on the reserved quota. In addition, Zardari's two sisters have been running for general seats. In the unlikely event that they lose indirect elections, their names have been included for reserved seats. (Imran Muhammad, 2020).

3.5 Notable female politicians having representation in concerned tribal forum

Women in Bajaur, a tribal region in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, have played significant roles in local and national politics, though their participation has

historically been limited due to social and cultural barriers. However, in recent years, several women have made notable contributions to politics in the region. Badam Zari from Bajaur Agency became the first tribal woman to run for a National Assembly seat. She wanted to represent native women. She said earlier in 2013 that she had made the decision to run in the elections after speaking with a number of women and even male elders in the area, who promised to fully back her and provide financial assistance. She emphasized that although women make up half of the population in the tribal territory, they have consistently been denied their basic rights. Zari, a typical housewife in her forties, used to walk a considerable distance to bring water and gather firewood. The fact that women in the community had to perform this difficult work every day upset her. Therefore, she said in an interview with Dawn that if elected, she wants to try to provide women with access to clean drinking water and medical facilities. Protecting women's rights and giving indigenous women access to basic civic amenities were Zari's top priorities. She wanted to give them coverage and wanted her action to have a beneficial impact on tribal women, even though she knew that the effort she had taken for their benefit was extremely dangerous. She went on to say that she wants to try to get women to vote by first going outside of their houses. In a similar vein, she wanted to present a favorable picture of tribal regions because militancy and terrorist attacks, primarily by the Bajaur Agency, have damaged their reputation.

Zari started her election campaign from her hometown of Arang Utmankhel after the Election Commission of Pakistan approved her candidacy papers. Her people had pledged to support her fully in the elections, despite the fact that tribal areas are notoriously conservative and highly opposed to women's involvement in public life. Unlike other tribal males, her husband, Mohammad Sultan, was pleased with her decision to enter politics and was proud of her for making such a significant move. In spite of the setback, he added, Zari will have his backing. Her father and sister were among the many family members who joined her during her election campaign. She also received support from numerous ladies in her community and other places. The residents of her locality believed that Zari's choice was a tribute to the local populace. Lal Khan, a 60-year-old local man, expressed his hope that she would win the election and that the people in her

area were prepared to make sacrifices for her success. Tribal people's support for women's political engagement is therefore encouraging for women's empowerment in tribal regions (Afridi M., 2023).

Some other notable female whose contributions in politics of Bajaur included Shagufta Malik: She is one of the most well-known female political leaders from Bajaur. Shagufta Malik has been active in political circles and worked to empower women in her region. She was elected as a member of the Provincial Assembly of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in 2013, representing the Bajaur Agency (now part of the merged Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province post-2018 merger). She has focused on improving education, healthcare, and social services for women in her area.

Khalida Shah: A prominent figure from Bajaur, Khalida Shah has been involved in local politics and activism, particularly in promoting women's rights. She has worked to create awareness about women's political participation and has been active in local community organizations that advocate for women's empowerment.

Bushra Gohar: While originally from the adjacent district of Charsadda, Bushra Gohar has significant influence in Bajaur. A former member of Pakistan's National Assembly from the Awami National Party (ANP), she has been a strong advocate for women's rights and has spoken out on issues affecting women in the tribal areas, including Bajaur. Though not directly from Bajaur, her political activism has had an impact on the region.

Sobia Khan: She is a female politician who has represented Bajaur in the local government in the past. Sobia Khan has also been a part of initiatives focused on improving women's conditions and encouraging their participation in politics.

Although political participation for women in Bajaur has been challenging due to conservative tribal traditions, these women have made strides in their efforts to promote education, healthcare, and women's rights in a conservative context. More women from

Bajaur and other tribal regions are beginning to step into political roles, supported by national movements and local initiatives for female empowerment. The next chapter addresses the cultural barriers that are actually known as hurdles for females of Bajaur to play a vibrant role in politics.

CHAPTER FOUR

Cultural Barriers for Women in Bajaur

The cultural barriers that prevent women from participating in politics are covered in this chapter. Some suggestions are also given to remove these barriers for women. In scholarly and semi-scholarly circles, there is a debate that three separate but related factors—socioeconomic, societal structure, and religious argumentation—hinder women's political empowerment in Pakistani society (Shaheed et al, 2009:26). Additionally, none of these allow women to gain political knowledge and expertise. The physical strain of having and raising children prevents women from entering the political sphere. Their inability to pay detrimentally impacts their ability to make decisions in the family and the community (Aderinwale, 1997).

4.1 Culture and Women's Political Empowerment

Culture is the key influential element that hinders women in their political path. These are the long-established behaviors toward certain kinds of activities and are accepted generally. In this culture, the activities of women regarding politics are strictly forbidden. Women's involvement in politics is deemed a violation of the principles of the culture. Women are confined to domestic issues. Although opinions on women's roles and positions differ throughout the region, it is generally agreed that they have limited access to political empowerment and services.

One of the respondents argued that, Due to the pressure of their cultural norms, they are strictly forbidden to political participation. Culture is the only singular barrier to their political participation (Miss Ishal).

Due to social, cultural, and legal barriers, women in the area have always been viewed as second-class citizens. Even though women make up about half of Pakistan's population, their political empowerment is unimpressive. It is a reality that without women's representation and empowerment, all programs or activities aimed at improving society

would be ineffective. The failure of the state and government would be the denial of women's socio-legal rights.

According to local customs and customs, women were not allowed to vote, and in certain instances, the local government developed into a formal anti-women's movement (Miss Gulalai Jabeen).

Pakistan's cultural traditions encourage the segregation and isolation of women, which is frequently excused by religious grounds. For instance, religiously motivated viewpoints that support female seclusion and gender segregation (Purdah) restrict women's access to resources generally and prevent them from simply voting or running for office (Shaheed et al, 2009:26-29).

Moreover, despite its hospitality and peaceful qualities, Pashtunwali has been criticized for a variety of reasons, which hinders the representation of women in tribal forums. First and foremost, women are either underrepresented or not represented at all in the decision-making process due to the patriarchal and male-dominated dynamics of Pakistan's Pashtun tribal society. This indicates that men in society have more rights than women, some of which are inalienable. Jirga rulings are frequently imposed on women against their will or permission. In this sense, in some places, women are handed over to the party who feels wronged as property to resolve conflicts, which leads to forced marriages, following the Pashtun tradition of Swara. Even minor girls have occasionally been offered under Swara to resolve protracted conflicts between tribes and families. Honor killings are another example of how Pashtun culture violates gender rights, as Jirgas punish women and are rarely allowed to defend themselves. Furthermore, tribal women are denied access to official Jirgas led by state-appointed political agents, which discriminated against them under the Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR), a colonial collection of rules that ruled the former FATA region until recently. Furthermore, the state of Pakistan utterly disregarded the role and rights of women in the erstwhile FATA region, even when it politically engaged militants and negotiated peace agreements through tribal Jirgas. Therefore, through Pashtunwali in the tribal areas, the state has also participated in the violation of fundamental rights, particularly those of women (Yousaf, 2019).

Compared to other rural areas, the socioeconomic conditions faced by women are more unfavorable. Women's movement is limited by social standards (Shah et al, 2015).

From just casting a ballot to running for office, women's limited visibility and decreased mobility harm their political participation at every level. Rural women's security and Purdah worries have a detrimental effect on their political empowerment as well (Kalam, 2014). Bajaur's cultural milieu is primarily dominated by men. This limits women's political and educational opportunities (Naz, 2011).

It is difficult for women to change their positions because of the strong conservative influences of tradition and religion (Paterson, 2008). The strict social norms are typically blamed for the substandard status of women in Bajaur. The state's discrimination against women on many grounds has made this worse. Women are denied their rights in all areas of life due to a lack of knowledge about those rights and a lack of resources. Women in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are denied the same level of freedom as women in metropolitan Pakistan due to the strict norms and traditions of the local population (Aamir, 2015).

Major barriers to women's political empowerment in Bajaur are also cultural norms and views as in some other parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Some of the respondents have also depicted a similar situation in Bajaur. It cannot be denied that men have always deliberately dominated each sphere of affairs. In this field of political participation men make hurdles to women's political participation, using different means to keep women aloof from politics. This is a plain fact made by men to enjoy alone in this kind of political activities. Hence women are ignored by using different tools to convince them that this field is only for men or there should be a minimum number of women as well. But they are not allowed in total as like men. One of my respondents stated that Barriers to women's political empowerment are a plain fact, these barriers are made by men deliberately to keep women aloof from political activities and enjoy more rights at the expense of women (Miss Miraj).

Another respondent stated that these are not facts but these are women who are not interested in political activities therefore according to the past practices in human societies rights are obtained through persistent struggles so women too have to adopt this perspective (Miss Kalsoom).

Some of the respondents stated that these are the self-evolved customs and traditions neither made by men nor accepted by women but evolved along the development of societies. Thus, women were in previous societies as it is (Miss Shazya, Nimra, and Miss Hidayat).

From the above discussion, we conclude that barriers to women's political empowerment are a fact because in the recent highly integrated societies men and women contributed equally irrespective of their gender and both had a deep impact on the course of development. Socio-economic development and women's empowerment are particularly hampered by practices like early, forced, and/or arranged marriages. Such actions restrict women's educational opportunities, which could lead to greater opportunities for women to participate in politics. Long-standing, archaic beliefs and communal prejudices have long held that politics is a man's realm and women are solely fit for household duties (Thomas, 1994).

Male opposition to women in leadership roles, a lack of laws and policies guaranteeing equal participation for women, discriminatory hiring and promotion practices, and a lack of opportunities for gender mainstreaming are some structural factors that have a detrimental effect on women (Smulders, 1998). Stereotypical beliefs regarding women's skills within the cultural environment are linked to cultural influences. The patriarchal ideology, which provides the framework for women to play and accept a subordinate role, is also related to cultural influences. (2020, Alizai).

Another respondent added that culture is linked with religion by which women are stayed at home and are not allowed to go against their culture and consider it respect for their culture (Miss Kawsar).

More respondents stated that religion and culture are intertwined; women are expected to stay at home and are not permitted to defy their traditions, which they view as a sign of respect (Miss Kawsar).

4.2 Is Religion a Hurdle for Women to Play Roles in Politics?

It is strongly believed by a notable section of Bajaur that religion bars women from taking part in political activities. They present an image of Islam that motivates to confine women at home in the name of purdah. Being a member of society, no one can deny fulfilling social responsibilities. One approach to fulfill one's social responsibility is to get involved in politics. Participation in the political system can take several forms, such as voting in elections, serving as a legislator or judge, or holding the office of head of state. Islamic history offers female role models for each of these roles. Women were granted the right to vote for their leaders with the arrival of Islam. Bai'ah, a symbolic agreement or bond between the leader and the people in which the leader pledges to uphold and observe Islamic law and the people pledge their loyalty to him, is the process by which the people confirm the leader of an Islamic State. Since the alleged leader lacks legitimacy and is unable to function as the head of state without it, Bai'ah might be seen as the election of the leader and women were allowed to express their opinion through Bai'ah. According to one of my respondents, our Pashtun culture is unable to grant them the right to participate in politics, but our faith does. This is a result of people either not adequately understanding the realities of Islam or disobeying its teachings in favor of their traditions and practices (Miss Nousheen).

More respondents stated that Islam is a religion for the whole of humanity. Islam grants women the right to political empowerment. The people gave the bai'ah to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Muhammad (PBUH) is instructed by Allah to accept the women's promise when they offer the Prophet Muhammad bai'ah in the Qur'an: "O Prophet! Whenever believing women come unto thee to pledge their allegiance to thee...then accept their pledge of allegiance." Surah al Mumtahana, Qur'an: 12. no clause in Islam prohibits women from holding public office or engaging in politics. (Aftab, Miss Nilofar)

Majority of our respondents believed the opinions that Islam allows for women's political empowerment. They held the opinion that Islam is a comprehensive code of conduct. It encompasses nearly every facet of human existence. The Quran contains no verses that prohibit women from occupying leadership roles (Miss Roqia).

4.3 Impacts of Religion on Women Political Participation

Unlike early Muslim women in all spheres of life, Islamic laws do not require women to limit themselves to domestic responsibilities. Hazrat Khadija, the Prophet's first wife and the mother of all his living children, is a prime example. She was a businesswoman who employed him and then proposed marriage to him through a third party. The task of managing state affairs was delegated to women. The Prophet nominated Shifabint 'abd Allah as the director of the Madinah market, and Khalifah Umar (RA), who is not typically renowned for having a tolerant view of women, reappointed her to oversee the market. She used to give advice to Hazrat Umar (RA). Hazrat Umm Hakim Baiza, a knowledgeable woman and the Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) paternal aunt, was likewise assigned to the position of Khilafat by Hazrat Umar (RA).

According to one respondent, our faith is portrayed unfavorably, especially in relation to women's roles in politics. And this has been overlooked, followed by a lack of thorough investigation (Miss Maria).

According to Imams Malik, Tibri, and Abu Hanifa, women are capable of holding the position of head of state. According to the Hadith literature, the Prophet frequently heard, respected, and typically endorsed the opinions of women. The Prophet's pilgrimage to Makah was halted during the Treaty of Hdaybia by the Makkans, who agreed with him that he and the Muslims might return the next year. When the people refused to follow his instructions to shave their heads and make their offerings where they were, he turned to his wife, Umme Salmah, for advice. She suggested that he lead them by performing the sacrifice himself. It worked when he followed her advice.

According to Miss Azra, Kubra, and other responders, religion has little bearing on women's political empowerment. The first female Islamic leader, Hazrat Ayesha (RA), taught both men and women. Her students, both male and female, in turn, taught others how to form Muslim communities, rule, and manage Muslim families and social lives. Ayesha was the source of knowledge for the great hadith scholars. Hazrat Ayesha's intelligence, consideration, and sensible outlook on life were attested to by the Noble Prophet. She did not think twice about assuming command of the Islamic army and leading it into combat during a crisis. She provided religious decisions during times of peace and assisted the Prophet's most erudite Companion in distinguishing between right and wrong. Hazrat Ayesha is connected to all of the Islamic laws and fiqh. Muslims should begin commemorating Hazrat Ayesha long ago. So, Islam encourages women to participate in socio-political activities for the larger interests of the society.

4.4 Patriarchy and Women's Political Participation

The dominance of males in every aspect of life is now the core issue. Of course, family is patriarchally oriented, and this is because of the perceived mindset that women are incapable as compared to men in terms of decision-making. These are not only the thoughts regarding their political participation but they depict the behavior of societies to which all humans are concerned. Due to these kinds of impediments women are facing inequalities in every aspect of life since its birth on the surface of earth. One of the respondents argued that because of their family's traditional values, they make hurdles to women, they are not interested in the political activities of females (Miss Taiba).

These kinds of ideas are established by the societies, not by the nature itself. The mind has no gender; it means people who consider women naturally weak is a stereotype, not a fact. However, women who care about and administer the daily routines of their domestic affairs from birth till death are kept out of due participation in daily routine life. Another respondent added that

Their male dominated fashions have been in contradiction with female views, their males make the rules whatever they want and have no concerns for women (Miss

Nodia). Because of the traditional family values they oppress women and give them no opportunity in any competition of life. Due to their family's patriarchal mindset, they are married early, and their life is handed over to the commands of their husband.

Some of the respondents stated that

Their parents intend to contribute to politics and participate in decision-making processes and other platforms through which they can serve their views (Miss Aiman, Azra).

From the above discussions, it is concluded that, the peaceful environment is associated with the equal input of men and women in every aspect of life particularly involving them in political processes. Gender discrimination should be abolished from the present context of political life although the more developed section of societies also makes hurdles to their political participation and this is because of the patriarchal mindset of the leadership of political parties they have affiliation to. They hold a proper hegemony in the same political parties and always consider only a male profession and hence women are deliberately kept out of equal opportunity rights due to the patriarchal mindset of the political elites. These barriers are mainly caused primarily by our family's patriarchal mindset which led to the same situation in other professions for women.

4.5 The Role of Parents in Women's Political Participation

The foundation of society is the family. Anyone can be guided in their main stage of life based on their talent, which is a fundamental institution. Investing in women and girls has a cascading impact that helps not just the individual woman but also families, communities, and nations. Research indicates that expanding women's involvement in politics results in higher educational spending, and businesses with more women on their boards see faster GDP development.

One of the respondents argued that, their parents allow taking part in a particular political activity but their surrounding people do not allow taking part in any kind of political activities (Miss Kalsoom). They consider the activities of females outside the four walls of the home to be against moral obligations. Women are restricted only to domestic affairs and

choosing these kinds of rules for women is the best choice for them.

Another respondent added, their parents cannot contribute to their political activities either because of their old traditional attitude or from the perspective of their misinterpreted sermons of mullahs (Miss Rawasia).

The contribution of their parents to political activities is the basic way to be encouraged to pursue their interests and incorporate their views into a proper decision-making process but unfortunately, the religious-dominated region has always been misinterpreted by these mullahs for their proper control on the minds of parents no matter whatever the tool has to be brought out for this purpose to work properly and control minds of their parents.

Some of the respondents added that, their parents will contribute to taking part in any kind of political activity, and they will have their political rights as well as men have (Miss Fatima, Miss Noorin).

From the above discussions, we can conclude that, in every procedure that may eventually impact them, their families, and their communities, girls and women have the right to participate in civil society, cast ballots, be elected to public office, serve on boards, and have their opinions heard. Achieving global gender equality and democratic governance requires funding women's and girls' rights to political involvement. Unfortunately, women in the area are only seen as a means of producing children. Women are inherently peace-oriented; instead of using violence to settle disputes, they attempt to find a peaceful solution.

It can be inferred from the talks above that, because of centuries-old customs and other socially constructed realities (such as the sociocultural setup, the lack of economic emancipation for women, the male-dominated political and legal system, and the mass media), women in Pakistan, particularly in Pashtun society, face similar circumstances with regard to power politics. Women's political engagement, mobility, and empowerment were also impeded by the previously mentioned socially constructed realities. Achieving long-

term social, cultural, economic, and political security for all people requires the political empowerment of women. Whether one looks at party leadership, elected office, appointed officers, or the policy-making levels of the federal and state civil services, men wield the majority of the world's power and influence. This is true not just for the political chair. The result of men's control over economic and other power resources is the underrepresentation of women in politics.

Furthermore, male dominance and patriarchy among women are further reinforced by the institutional structure and the socialization process. The cultural norms and misunderstanding of traditional and folk wisdom that women are not capable of performing political obligations because they are a delicate sex make it impossible for them to shoulder the weight of political activities. The sociocultural, economic, and religious environments that are geared toward men are primarily responsible for the limitations on women's participation in political affairs, especially in third-world nations.

4.6 Role of Women in Politics of the Region

We have maintained that a nation's percentage of female candidates and the number of lawmakers they win are influenced by the presence of women in party elites. Our findings show that the impact of these party traits on female lawmakers and candidates varies depending on the electoral system under consideration. Each party has an incentive to completely back its nominee, male or female, after the contest for the position is ended. Additionally, female party leaders have the ability to give their female candidates more support in the shape of campaign funds or improved institutional resources for their campaigns.

According to one of the responders, a female politician can create possibilities for other women to participate in the region's political activities; this will help women in other areas of life as well (Miss Riasat).

In the US, groups like Emily's List help women candidates run for office by raising money, giving them extra training, and offering them institutional support. The prosperity of women in the area has likewise depended heavily on these kinds of organizations. After being nominated as a candidate,

female party leaders can use these outside resources to assist women in obtaining a legislative seat.

Another responder went on to say that women have no place in the region's politics since the aforementioned major obstacles prevent them from fulfilling their duty (Miss Kishwaara).

It is crucial to keep in mind that women are underrepresented in elite roles in general. Women's influence is likely to be minimal when they make up a tiny portion of the leadership. "The few who are determined to confront the male politicians within the party end up being called all sorts of names—insolent, would-be men, etc. they can play a better role for society in general and for female in particular," the statement reads, highlighting the vulnerability of women who make up a small portion of the party.

A few respondents also mentioned that, women play a significant part in politics because of their nonviolent nature, which helps to resolve conflicts without using force (Miss Nihayat Shagufta).

Some women have had significant political influence in the area. There are numerous examples of how women play a part in politics. For instance, a female prime minister of Pakistan has made significant contributions to the political arena and has led her country twice with a substantial majority.

The study mentioned above leads to the conclusion that, if a woman is permitted to accompany, she can perform a better role. Unfortunately, she frequently has to deal with an alienated atmosphere that has long been controlled by male authority.

Therefore, in some settings where men have comparatively less expertise, women's roles are extremely valuable. Therefore, the function of women depends on the political system's structure as well as the culture of the society they belong to.

4.7 The effect of decisions made without the participation of women

Every human being is entitled to take part in the decisions that shape their lives. The idea that men and women should participate equally in decision-making is based on this

right. According to this right, women should have the same opportunities as men to participate in decision-making at all levels, from the local to the global level, and from the private to the public domains of their life, since they are the ones who are most familiar with their circumstances. One of the respondents stated that by participating women, they can define themselves effectively by incorporating their views as another instead of women (Miss Sultan Hazrat).

The first and foremost effect would be the denial of the right to participate based on equal opportunity rights. How a decision will be by the issues that are well known to the women and are made by other than women. So, these are some of the core issues related to decisions made without participating women to it.

Another respondent added, there is no impact of decisions made without the participation of women but they should be part of (Miss Asma).

Long before they left school, a large number of the young women in our sample had stopped participating in certain activities. Even individuals who had had a good school experience were unlikely to continue participating in politics or any other activity unless they were personally interacting with other people who could support and shield them. For instance, it was seen permissible and safe for a young woman to take part in a program or activity provided a close friend or family member was also involved. If this weren't the case, young women who wished to participate would probably not get the encouragement and support they needed from people who typically approved of their actions. Some of the respondent added that, they must be given the right to participate because mind has no gender, that she should be treated from this perspective (Miss Umra, sheerin yousaf etc).

A woman can bitterly define herself by giving them a chance to participate in decision and it will have good consequences rather than made by not participating them. These kinds of discrimination led to a widespread imbalance in the society that will ultimately lead to the instability in the system structure.

From above discussions it can be concluded that, women are given participation in Islam especially in times of important decisions in which prophet Muhammad SAW used to take

a consensus from Hazrat Khadija.a. There are other lots of grounds for the participation of women as an essential issue. It means they should be present in the decision at least if her voice cannot approach as of men. Thus for an effective and responsible society a women must be given the chance to take part in the decision-making process.

The purpose is to ensure peace, stability, and equality in the region in particular and in the state in general. Women are God's creatures they have these rights since birth and are not delegated to them by any other nor are there any graciousness for someone by doing so.

4.8 Political Parties Make Barriers to Women's Political Participation

They only think of politics as a male occupation. The parties' patriarchal ideologies prevent women from ever achieving political power. We see the election process as giving women two "filter" points. Women must be chosen by parties to run for political office after clearing the first filter. Women must be chosen by the electorate to pass the second in order to hold political office. We simulate both filters, assuming that both the quantity of female candidates and the degree to which those female candidates become female lawmakers should be influenced by factors at the national and state levels.

One respondent went on to say that politically powerful families have an advantage over impoverished ones, dominate party activities, and only permit their relatives to enter the mainstream political arena. The percentage of women that political parties nominate as candidates and, consequently, the percentage of women they may send to parliament also differs significantly. Women made up 15% of candidates in the 460 political parties in 76 nations that were used in this analysis. Some parties (usually women's parties) had no female candidates, while others had exclusively female candidates (Miss Rafaqat). Another respondent went on to say that while some parties erect obstacles, most of them permit and encourage them to engage in political activities. The electoral process has resulted in a close bond between female candidates and female elected leaders. Political elites are recruited and chosen solely within political parties in the majority of nations. In fact, it is believed that choosing candidates is a crucial role of political parties (Miss Nizakat).

According to some responses, she must first identify herself with a political party; this is contingent upon the candidate's party allegiance. Therefore, a political party must choose and support a candidate before a man or woman can run for office. In this sense, party-specific choices on the fielding of candidates result in the nationwide representation of women as candidates, although this is regrettably never accomplished in practice. Strong political elites occupy these positions of authority within the party, making everyone in the party dependent on them (Miss Jawahara, Gulsom, etc.).

According to the aforementioned study, the proportion of successful parties to all active parties may have an impact on the number of women involved in politics. The likelihood that all parties will be elected to a significant number of seats increases with the ratio. Parties that usually secure a sizable number of seats could be reluctant to challenge the status quo and take a different approach than they have in the past. Therefore, a system with a high ratio of effective parties is likely to have parties who are largely at ease and perhaps complacent. It might not be a top priority in such a scenario to assist women in elections and promote them as candidates. Conversely, a low ratio of effective parties to all operating parties suggests a greater presence of marginal parties, which might be more willing to take chances when it comes to supporting and fielding female candidates.

4.9 Discussion with a Female Councilor from Union Council Tabai LG & RDD Tribal District Bajaur-

Interviewer: Thank you for joining us today. As a female councilor in Bajaur, you have a unique perspective on the challenges and prospects that women face in the political landscape here. To start, could you share a bit about your experience as a woman in politics in Bajaur?

Councilor: Thank you for having me. My journey in politics has certainly been challenging, but also rewarding. Bajaur is a tribal district with deeply rooted cultural and traditional values, which often place women in secondary roles, especially in public life. As a woman involved in politics, I've faced resistance at multiple levels—both from within my family and the larger community. There's a prevailing notion that politics is a

male-dominated domain, and when a woman decides to enter this space, it's often met with skepticism or outright opposition. However, I've also been fortunate to have the support of some progressive male relatives and allies within my political party, which has helped me push forward despite these barriers.

Interviewer: That's a very insightful perspective. The cultural context in Bajaur, as you mentioned, is heavily influenced by Pashtunwali—the Pashtun code of conduct—which traditionally limits the roles of women. In your experience, how does Pashtunwali affect women's participation in politics, and how have you navigated these challenges?

Councilor: Yes, Pashtunwali has a strong hold on the social fabric of Bajaur. It defines strict gender roles, where women are anticipated to remain in the home, managing household duties and raising children, while men handle matters outside the home, including politics. For women, stepping outside this role—whether in education, employment, or politics—can be viewed as challenging these traditions. My own family, for example, initially discouraged me from pursuing a political career, as it was seen as a disruption to our family's honor.

However, Pashtunwali also emphasizes hospitality, respect, and justice, and I've tried to bring these values into my political work. I often remind people that the principles of respect and fairness extend to both men and women, and that women too should have a voice in decisions that impact their communities. It has been a slow process, but there is a growing recognition that women can contribute meaningfully to local governance.

Interviewer: It's admirable that you've been able to challenge such deeply ingrained customs. Another important aspect of political participation is education. As you know, the literacy rate for women in Bajaur is still relatively low, and many girls in rural areas are not able to attend school. How do you think access to education, or the lack of it, impacts women's ability to participate in politics in this region?

Councilor: Education is one of the most significant barriers that women in Bajaur face. Growing up, I was lucky to have access to education, but many girls here don't have

that privilege. The lack of education limits women's ability to understand their political rights, voice their opinions, or even run for office. Many women don't even know they can vote or that they have a right to contest elections.

Even if women are educated, they often don't have the kind of political training that is necessary to navigate the complexities of governance. Political campaigns, leadership training, and community organizing are often geared toward men, and when women do try to participate, they are often excluded or overlooked.

That said, we're seeing a shift, especially among younger women. There's a growing recognition that education is key to breaking through these barriers. Women's education is crucial not just for personal empowerment, but for the community as a whole. Educated women can advocate for their rights, run for office, and make informed decisions that benefit society.

Interviewer: It's heartening to hear that younger women are becoming more aware of their rights and potential roles in governance. But as you mentioned, there's still the matter of exclusion in political structures. Many times, even in districts like Bajaur, reserved seats for women in local councils or national assemblies are filled by male relatives or political elites, which limits women's real political agency. What has been your experience with this, and how do you think we can address it?

Councilor: You're right. The system of reserved seats, while intended to increase women's representation, has often been misused. Male family members or political leaders frequently fill these seats, not because the woman has any real political power, but because it's a way to maintain control over the political process. This is especially true in tribal areas like Bajaur, where the political landscape is dominated by male leaders who use their influence to ensure that women's participation is tokenistic at best.

In my case, I've tried to advocate for women's real political agency. We need to create mechanisms that don't just reserve seats, but ensure that the women who occupy

them are able to make decisions, propose legislation, and have a voice in policy-making. One way to do this is by providing women with the necessary political training and mentorship, so they are not just filling a seat, but actually participating in governance. We also need to empower women to challenge the status quo and demand accountability from political structures that perpetuate these practices.

Interviewer: That's an important point. It seems like real empowerment comes from not just filling a seat, but having the skills, knowledge, and independence to use that seat effectively. Let's talk a bit about the role of religious leaders in Bajaur. As you know, religion plays a significant role in shaping social norms and attitudes, especially regarding women's rights. How do religious interpretations in Bajaur influence women's political participation, and what steps can be taken to engage religious leaders in supporting women's political rights?

Councilor: Religion is undoubtedly a powerful force in Bajaur, and religious leaders hold a lot of sway in shaping public opinion. Unfortunately, conservative interpretations of Islam are often used to justify limiting women's rights, particularly in the public sphere. Some religious scholars argue that women should remain in the home and not engage in politics, which is often seen as a "male domain."

However, Islam, in its true spirit, supports justice, equity, and the dignity of women. There are examples of women participating in public life throughout Islamic history. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) himself encouraged women to be active in society, whether in business, social affairs, or even in political matters. Engaging religious leaders in a dialogue about these broader interpretations can be very helpful. Some progressive religious scholars in the region are already speaking out in favor of women's rights, and their voices need to be amplified.

I've personally had discussions with some of the more moderate religious leaders in the area, and many have expressed a willingness to support women's political participation, provided it is done within the bounds of cultural and religious norms. These

conversations are crucial, and I believe we need to build more bridges between religious leaders and women's advocacy groups to challenge the prevailing conservative narratives.

Interviewer: It's encouraging to hear that there are some religious leaders who are open to supporting women's participation in politics. Finally, what advice would you give to young women in Bajaur who are interested in pursuing a political career or getting involved in public service?

Councilor: My advice would be simple: don't let fear or tradition hold you back. Yes, the path is difficult, and yes, there will be many challenges, but it is worth it. The first step is education—get as much education as you can because that is the foundation for everything. Understand your rights, learn about governance, and start getting involved in public issues. Even small contributions, like participating in local meetings or volunteering for social causes, can build your confidence and make a difference.

Also, find mentors—women who have been through similar struggles and can guide you. And don't be afraid to challenge the norms that hold us back. You don't need to follow the same paths that were laid out for women before you. The world is changing, and your voice is important. If we want to see change in Bajaur and beyond, we need more women at the table.

Interviewer: Thank you so much for your time and insights. Your perspective is invaluable, and I'm sure it will inspire many women in Bajaur and across Pakistan who are looking to step into politics and leadership roles.

Councilor: Thank you for giving me the opportunity to share my thoughts. I hope we can continue working together to create a space where women in Bajaur and beyond can lead, contribute, and thrive in politics.

This dialogue provides a candid look at the complex cultural and social challenges women face in Bajaur, while also highlighting the efforts of women leaders like the councilor to break through those barriers. By acknowledging the importance of education, community support, and progressive religious dialogue, it becomes clear that change is

possible, though slow. The discussion also underlines the critical role of women's voices in shaping more inclusive and effective governance in the region.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusions and the Way Forward

The role of women in politics in Bajaur District, a part of Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province located on the border with Afghanistan, is profoundly shaped by a multifaceted relationship of cultural, social, and religious factors. These factors, deeply entrenched in the tribal traditions of the region, have created significant barriers to women's active and meaningful participation in the political process. While there has been some advancement in recent years, the path toward greater political inclusion for women remains fraught with challenges that are both structural and cultural.

Bajaur is predominantly an ethnically Pashtun and tribal region where conservative interpretations of Islam and traditional Pashtun customs, such as the **Pashtunwali** code, heavily influence social and political life. **Pashtunwali** emphasizes concepts like honor (**izzat**) and male authority, which often place strict limitations on the roles of women, particularly in public life. In this context, politics is seen as a male-dominated sphere, and the idea of women taking leadership roles or engaging publicly in political matters is often met with resistance.

One of the major cultural barriers is the deep-rooted perception that women's participation in politics compromises family honor or social standing. In Bajaur, women are often expected to remain in private, domestic spaces, and their involvement in public affairs is perceived as a violation of social norms. Public visibility, particularly for women, is limited by practices such as *purdah* (veiling) and restrictions on mobility. These practices not only hinder women's ability to actively participate in political campaigns or local elections but also limit their access to public information and civic engagement.

In many cases, the patriarchal structures within families and communities enforce the idea that politics is a domain reserved for men. This cultural conservatism reinforces gendered roles, where women are expected to prioritize domestic responsibilities over public

affairs. Consequently, women's political leadership is often seen as unnatural or inappropriate. These attitudes are also perpetuated by male-dominated political networks and political parties, which often fail to include women in meaningful political roles.

Another critical cultural barrier is the limited access to education and political training for women. While the literacy rate for women in Bajaur has improved in recent years, it still lags behind that of men. Education is the key to political empowerment, as it provide women with the awareness and skills needed to navigate the political landscape. In rural areas of Bajaur, many girls are still unable to attend school, particularly at the secondary or higher education levels. Without access to quality education, women are less likely to acquire the confidence or political awareness needed to engage in the political sphere, either as voters or candidates.

Moreover, even educated women often face challenges in gaining political skills, as political training programs are typically designed with men in mind and are often inaccessible to women due to logistical, social, or cultural barriers. In addition, the lack of role models—few women have held significant political office in Bajaur—means that aspiring women leaders have limited mentors or support networks to guide them.

Religion also plays a significant role in shaping cultural attitudes toward women's participation in public life in Bajaur. Islam, as practiced in this region, is often interpreted in a way that emphasizes traditional gender roles. Conservative religious leaders in Bajaur may argue that women should not engage in political life, as it could be seen as incompatible with Islamic teachings on modesty and gender separation. This interpretation, however, is not universally accepted, and there are more progressive interpretations of Islamic texts that support women's rights to participate in political and public life. Yet, these voices are often drowned out by dominant conservative narratives.

Tribal leaders, or Malik's, wield considerable influence in Bajaur, and their stance on women's participation in politics is often aligned with traditional norms. While some tribal elders have supported the inclusion of women in community development programs,

the overall influence of tribal customs in governance creates a barrier to political empowerment for women. The system of local governance, traditionally male-dominated and centered around tribal councils, further isolates women from decision-making processes.

Despite these significant cultural barriers, there have been some important developments in recent years that suggest a slow but growing shift in attitudes toward women's political participation. The legal and constitutional frameworks in Pakistan, such as the 2002 Women's Representation Act, provide quotas for women's representation in local and national assemblies. These measures have had some success in increasing women's visibility in politics at the national level, although the effect at the local level in Bajaur remains limited.

At the same time, there are emerging grassroots movements and civil society organizations in Bajaur that are working to empower women through education, legal advocacy, and political training. Some local women have begun to break through barriers by contesting local elections or participating in community development projects, though these successes are still relatively rare and often occur in more urbanized or progressive parts of the district.

Additionally, there is a growing awareness among women about their rights and their potential role in decision-making processes. This has been supported by national and international organizations that are promoting women's political participation, not just as a legal right but as a necessity for effective and inclusive governance. Women's participation in local development initiatives and their growing involvement in political discourse, albeit limited, point to the possibility of more inclusive political systems in the future.

Some areas can be explored and initiatives can be taken on individual and state levels:

Education and Awareness

The ability of women to participate on an equal basis with men in all facets of political life and the decision-making process is known as women's political

participation. Both men's and women's political engagement should be closely linked to formal education. Indeed, education is an "especially powerful predictor of political participation," according to American sociologists Burns, Schlozman, and Verba, who base their claim on decades of study into the factors influencing men's and women's involvement in politics in the USA. They list some direct and indirect impacts of formal education on political engagement. Its direct consequences include direct instruction in political analysis through classes that focus on current events, as well as the learning of the knowledge and communication skills necessary for public discourse. The advantages of voluntary participation in school government, clubs, athletics, and school newspapers are just a few of its many indirect effects. These settings give young people a head start in politics by allowing them to take on leadership roles, practice cooperation and negotiation, and gain administrative and organizational skills that are helpful in political endeavors. Access to high-paying jobs that offer the means and contacts for political activity, as well as non-political associations like religious institutions or charitable organizations that can serve as a recruiting ground for political activity, are all made possible by education (Sahu,2018).

Role model and mentorship

The following tactics were found to be effective in fostering a more just political environment:

1. Education and Training:

Giving young girls and women a thorough political education to increase their political literacy and self-assurance in public speaking, leadership, and leadership

. 2. Mentoring and Support Networks: setting up networks of mentors and support systems to help women and young girls get involved in political groups and initiatives. This can also be accomplished with the encouragement of successful female politicians and role models.

3. Encouraging Gender Equality: pushing for procedures and laws that support gender equality in institutions and political parties.

4. Challenging Stereotypes: actively attempting to alter cultural norms and gender stereotypes that deter women from entering the political sphere.

5. Awareness Campaigns: Starting awareness campaigns to alter popular conceptions of women's political roles and to emphasize the value of women's political engagement. (Jalušić & Gaber, 2022).

Since education and mentorship are found to be important resources for enticing women into politics, our goal in using these tactics should be to foster a more welcoming and encouraging atmosphere for women in the political sphere. Jalušić & Gaber (2022) also offered suggestions on how to encourage women in politics, highlighting the importance of ongoing education for female politicians and presenting mentorship as a successful training technique. Women who get mentoring can benefit from networking opportunities, support, and direction in navigating the complexities of political life. Politicians with experience can impart their knowledge, offer guidance on tactical choices, facilitate networking, and offer consolation during trying times. Early in a political career, when new women politicians encounter many obstacles and self-doubt, mentoring is particularly crucial. Overcoming obstacles and developing a new generation of self-assured and competent female leaders can be greatly aided by programs designed specifically for women in politics (Bizjik, 2024).

Encouragement of women in organizations

Our findings provide insightful practical information on the abilities that women in male-dominated industries can find useful. Our results imply that, particularly in companies with a male preponderance, it might be crucial to assist women in developing their political acumen. By using their influence, politically astute women may be able to identify and dismantle the hurdles that are particularly prevalent in companies with male leadership. For instance, women may be able to relate to men who are more powerful and have more access to work, but they may also be more likely to deny women access to information, opportunities, and other resources. Women with political talent may be able to influence and network with others in a way that seems sincere, which could lessen suspicions of dishonesty. Moreover, women with excellent political skills are particularly

sensitive to their surroundings and may know when, how, and with whom to establish connections.

This study may highlight how important it is to understand an organization's political makeup as well as how to use political actions to further one's own and the organization's goals. Additionally, politically astute women could be skilled in impression management strategies, which entail deliberately modifying one's image. The lack-of-fit theory also supports our argument that women may have trouble securing positions of power in companies that are dominated by men. According to the lack of fit theory, women do not progress because the stereotypes of successful managers do not match the prejudices about their gender. According to our findings, women who possess political skills appear to be able to recognize, control, and so resolve beliefs that they might not succeed in leadership roles in organizations that are dominated by men. Accordingly, our research indicates that women with political skill are linked to an authority advantage in comparison to women with low levels of political ability, which is in line with the political skill literature (Watkins, 2012).

The role of Media

Another crucial point I want to emphasize to you is that without women working alongside males on development and construction projects, no country can truly advance. We have ingrained the incorrect traditions and conventions of limiting women to the confines of the home. This is a crime against humanity in addition to being cruel. No justification exists for women to be housed in the conditions they are. Since "the media not only plays an important role in shaping the values of society but also reflects those values," the Quaid's emphasis on establishing an acceptable space for women in society was closely related to the media. In Pakistan, electronic media is having a bigger influence on people's voting habits than print media, but women are at a disadvantage since their poor portrayal on electronic media prevents them from winning the "popular vote," which is how "political power emerges."

Stereotypical representations of female politicians in the media, such as their

election to reserved seats, their dresses and fashion-related personal belongings like handbags, and their status as members of the elite class, all contribute to the misrepresentation of female politicians. According to the study, the way the media portrays these female politicians' amounts to scandalizing and sensationalizing them, which is against media ethics. Furthermore, this kind of deception denies the audience the true tale of women's fight for democracy, human rights, and their actual abilities and expertise, so undermining their freedom to make educated judgments. This perilous tendency runs counter to the conditions necessary for democracy to flourish. The media serves as a "forum" for political parties and individuals to spread their beliefs, empowering the public to bring the corrupt to account based on the facts they are provided. As a result, the media's significance in a democratic system is greatly enhanced (Shafqat Munir*, 2014).

Community engagement

A significant portion of this research focuses on how women engage with their communities before entering politics. Understanding the body of research on women's civic and communal engagement is crucial, as the process of getting involved in politics is "strongly shaped by the experiences of everyday life." Due to the intrinsically hazy borders surrounding what might be deemed political, the literature currently in publication does a poor job of documenting these kinds of actions. The problem is exacerbated by additional definitional ambiguity; for example, "political participation" typically refers only to voting, contributing to campaigns, or volunteering on campaigns; "civic voluntarism" refers to volunteering in the political process and holding public offices as well (Marr, 2023).

The path forward for women in politics in Bajaur requires a multifaceted approach. Efforts must be made to challenge patriarchal cultural norms through education and awareness campaigns, focusing on both men and women. Religious leaders and tribal elders must be engaged in discussions about the role of women in public life, emphasizing interpretations of Islam that support women's rights and gender equality. Local communities need to see more examples of women in leadership roles to shift traditional perceptions and

create new opportunities for women to step into political spaces.

Moreover, policies aimed at increasing women's access to education and political training must be prioritized. This includes supporting women candidates in elections, providing platforms for political discourse, and building networks of women leaders who can mentor and support one another.

Lastly, the state and civil society must collaborate to ensure that political and legal frameworks are not just on paper but are implemented effectively at the grassroots level, enabling women in Bajaur to not only vote but to run for office and participate in governance. Only through a concerted effort to dismantle cultural and structural barriers will women in Bajaur be able to achieve their rightful place in the political sphere.

The role of women in politics in Bajaur remains constrained by deeply ingrained cultural, social, and religious norms that view women's public and political participation as transgressive. While some progress has been made, the region's conservative tribal customs, limited access to education, and patriarchal political structures continue to pose significant challenges. However, with concerted efforts from civil society, policymakers, and local communities, it is possible to overcome these barriers and create a more inclusive political environment where women in Bajaur can participate fully and equally in the political process.

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The Female interviewed for the purpose of the concerned topic.

S. No	Name	Designation	Date
1.	M Kalsoom	Lec Pakistan Study	13/05/2024
2.	M Rawasia	SS Pakistan Study	13/05/2024
3.	Miss Fatima	Politician	14/05/2024
4.	Miss Eshal	Female councilor	19/05/2024
5.	Miss Kausar	Female Councilor	19/05/2024
6.	Gulalai Jabeen	SS Pakistan Study	20/05/2024
7.	Kishwara	SST General	21/05/2024
8.	Shagufta	Politician	23/05/2024
9.	Sultan Hazrat	Politician	25/05/2024
10.	Asma	Female Councilor	26/05/2024
11.	Shereen Yousaf	Female Councilor	03/06/2024
12.	Rafaqat	Politician	04/06/2024
13.	Nazakat	Politician	06/06/2024
14.	Jauhara	Politician	08/06/2024