# EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE MEDIA EXPOSURE AND PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF WOMEN POLITICIANS IN PAKISTAN

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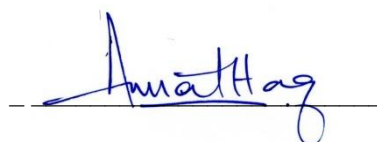**INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY ISLAMABAD PAKISTAN**

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It is certified that we have read this thesis submitted by Shahnaz Kazmi. It is our judgment that this is a sufficient standard to warrant acceptance by International Islamic University, Islamabad for MS in Media and Communication Studies.
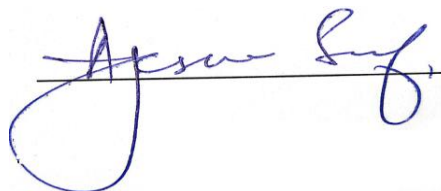
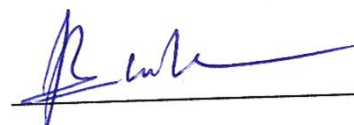**Viva Voice Committee**

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# Declaration

The thesis has been submitted as partial fulfillment of MS in Media and Communication Studies to the Department of Media and Communication studies. I solemnly declare that this is my original work and no material has been plagiarized and my material quoted from a secondary source has been provided with proper citations and references.

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## Acknowledgement

All praise and gratitude are due to Allah Almighty for bestowing upon me the strength to successfully complete my work. I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to all my teachers who have played a very important role in shaping my educational path.

## Dedication

My heartfelt devotion is dedicated to my parents, who were always been there for me.

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**Abstract**

The relationship between media exposure and the public's view of Pakistani women politicians is examined in this thesis. This study intends to comprehend how various media, such as television and social media, influence the public's perceptions of female political leaders in Pakistan, since gender equality remains a crucial problem in politics globally. The study looks at how public perceptions—both good and negative—are influenced by media representations, and how these views impact women's acceptance and political engagement in a patriarchal society. The study examines how political media is consumed, how female politicians are portrayed in the media, and how the public reacts to these representations using both quantitative surveys and qualitative analysis. Results show that whereas traditional media,

For the majority of Pakistanis, television in particular continues to be the primary source of political information, but social media is rapidly influencing the opinions of younger populations. The media frequently perpetuates gendered stereotypes by emphasizing looks and personal life over political ability, even in the face of increased support for women's political participation. The study comes to the conclusion that the media has a significant impact on whether female politicians are strengthened or undermined, indicating the necessity of gender sensitive media practices to promote a more equal and inclusive political climate in Pakistan. It also emphasizes how the media may be used to break down cultural barriers and promote gender equality in politics.

**Keywords:** Survey Research, Women Politicians, Public Perception, Gender Bias, Media Framework, Media Discourse, Media Influence

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background of the Study

The portrayal of women in politics has long been a subject of scholarly debate, reflecting the evolving dynamics of gender roles and societal expectations. Despite progress toward gender equality in political representation, media portrayals continue to play a significant role in shaping public perceptions. This research specifically focuses on how female politicians are represented in the media, paying attention to the use of language, imagery, and framing.

The drive for meaningful participation by women in Pakistani politics is deeply tied to the country's historical and socio-cultural context. Even after Pakistan's independence in 1947, the political landscape has remained largely male-dominated, creating significant barriers for women aspiring to play a prominent role in governance. While constitutional provisions guarantee equal rights, these have often been hindered by deeply rooted social norms and patriarchal power structures. The influence of conservative interpretations of culture and religion has perpetuated gender inequality, limiting opportunities for women to participate in political arenas.

Over time, women in Pakistan have demonstrated resilience, becoming active in various social and economic sectors. However, the political arena continues to present formidable challenges, with women facing institutionalized sexism, limited access to resources, and patriarchal attitudes. The historical backdrop of military rule and fluctuating democratic governance has further complicated the political environment, creating a web of obstacles that women must navigate to participate meaningfully in politics.

According to Ahmad et al. (2019), the landscape of Pakistani politics is shaped by a combination of cultural, social, and institutional factors, and nowhere is this more visible than in the field of women's participation. Even with recent progress, women in Pakistan still face major barriers to entering the political sphere. While the country has seen advancements in various sectors, the political scene remains often unwelcoming to gender-inclusive policies. Despite constitutional guarantees and international commitments to gender equality, the reality on the ground shows continued obstacles to women's involvement in political decision-making.

According to Gondal & Shabir (2020), the struggle for meaningful political involvement involves a range of issues such as societal expectations, patriarchal systems, institutionalized sexism, and the challenge of balancing family and political obligations. Furthermore, the historical context of military control and entrenched power structures has added layers of difficulty for women trying to navigate the political landscape. Despite the

existence of numerous NGOs, civil society movements, and advocacy efforts to promote women's rights, women's underrepresentation in political decision-making remains a persistent issue. Understanding the complex dynamics of these struggles is essential for developing strategies to remove barriers to women's progress in Pakistani politics.

The aim of this research is to explore the historical, cultural, and institutional factors that shape Pakistani women's political experiences, identify the challenges they face, and examine potential avenues for achieving meaningful participation and gender-inclusive governance.

## 1.2 Problem Statement

The portrayal of women in the media is a complex and multifaceted issue. Two major concerns are the media's tendency to sensationalize and its lack of sensitivity when covering these topics. This study aims to investigate the various issues that prevent Pakistani women from fully participating in politics, highlighting the barriers that hinder their ability to be involved in decision-making. Additionally, the study will analyze public perception on what role women should play in politics and how they are perceived in the context of the country's development. The research will also explore the specific political challenges women face.

## 1.3 Significance of the Study

This research is crucial for understanding the multiple obstacles Pakistani women face in politics and the broader consequences of their underrepresentation. By analyzing the stories of Pakistani women in politics, it becomes clear that their fight for meaningful participation is not just about personal empowerment, but about transforming the very fabric of Pakistani democracy. This struggle has significant implications for government and societal development.

Firstly, by delving into the barriers preventing women from entering and advancing in politics, the study enhances our understanding of the structural and cultural challenges that persist, despite constitutional promises of gender equality. Recognizing the complexity of institutionalized sexism, patriarchal norms, and historical legacies can help policymakers, activists, and researchers devise targeted solutions to address the root causes of gender gaps in political representation.

Secondly, the study reveals how several issues that women politicians face are interconnected, influenced by factors such as class, ethnicity, gender, and religion. Lastly, the underrepresentation of women in politics has far-reaching implications for Pakistan's democratic framework. As the media plays an essential role in shaping perceptions, examining

how women are represented—or misrepresented—becomes more important than ever. This research contributes to the ongoing conversation about how media shapes perceptions of female politicians and how these perceptions can affect election outcomes, policy discussions, and the broader trajectory of women's involvement in governance.

**1.4 Research Objective:**

    1. To analyze public perceptions of women's involvement in politics.

**1.5 Research Questions**

RQ.1: How does the general public view the role of women in politics?

RQ.2: To what extent does time spent on social media influence perceptions of women in politics in Pakistan?

RQ.3: How does the type of media used impact perceptions of women in politics in Pakistan?

**1.6 Delimitations of the Study**

This study examined public perceptions of women's involvement in politics in Pakistan, focusing specifically on how media portrayals influenced these views. Through a quantitative approach using survey research, the study explored the barriers that hindered women's meaningful participation in political decision-making. It highlighted the impact of societal attitudes, media framing, and cultural norms on public perception. The research provided insights into how the public's views on women in politics shaped their representation and the challenges they faced. The findings underscore the role of media in influencing perceptions and the broader implications for achieving gender-inclusive governance in Pakistan.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Literature Study

A literature is an inevitable aspect of the process of conducting a research. review, which contributes to making the academic endeavor stronger and better in quality. Besides giving a detailed account of previous studies, theories and findings on the topic that was selected, it is essential so as to place the research within the context of the existing body of knowledge. Through a thorough review of the existing literature, researchers can find out about gaps in the existing researches, narrow down their research questions, and advance a research hypothesis. Moreover, a detailed literature research enables a researcher to avoid duplicating efforts and, as such, it makes certain that his study has a significant input in the body of knowledge. This theoretical framework is the basis of the idea and design of the inquiry and it forms the inquiry as well. A literature review allows not only to have a deeper understanding of the topic, but also helps researchers to find their place in a broader academic discourse by providing a deeper understanding of the topic through the process of critical evaluation and synthesis of different sources (Tariq, et al. 2022). Finally, the literature review serves as an intellectual map angle that determines the direction that the study will follow to extend the validity of the research as well as giving rise to a scientific endeavor that is sound and informed.

Countries cannot be developed to a great extent with women having no status that is equal to what men have. males. The role of female politicians is very important in any sector in order to practice rightful governance. In 1920 United States women received suffrage in terms of the Constitutional amendment. During the 2010 congressional election, the women in America won 92 congress seats equivalent to 17 % of all the congress seats. They also got 17 seats in the senate which makes 17 percent of the total seats. Considering the reason behind the lack of female representation in the politics of the US, one can cite several factors. They are well represented by the lower participation level among females in terms of politics, insufficiency in the allocation of funds to enable women to take office, and the struggle to win over stronger candidates to victory, like the race between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump on the presidential scene (Riaz, & Ali, 2021). The representations of females in the political front are not quite high but it is a fact that women are very important, influential players in politics in the international arena. The world is pitted with a myriad of strong female politicians who engage in the political arena actively. Hilary Clinton is a well-known political woman in America. She served as one of the advisors of her husband Bill Clinton when he was the presidential candidate and as the first lady between 1993 and 2001. She was considerably influential in the government of her husband (Ans, et al. 2022). She was made the head of the

task team on national health care by Bill Clinton. She was the third woman ever in the history of the United States of America to be a US Secretary of State in the year 2009. Indira Gandhi was the third Indian prime minister who was the first female to occupy this position. She was a daughter of Indian Prime Minister late Jawaharlal Nehru and after his death, she became the head of the party and later became prime minister by getting elected. Her first tenure was of prime minister between 1966 and 1977 and later on between 1980 and 1984. It is through assassination in which she was killed by her own body guards. The study of Shehzad, et al. (2021) was conducted in order to explore the reasons why it is presumed that women become freer due to modernization. Due to modernization, the positions which women can occupy in the place of employment in Africa are reduced. The same can be said about the agricultural sphere and the professional labour market. Despite this, modernization has enabled women to create an opening in the industry sector into the field of professional employment by the creation of new opportunities. The concept of gender parity is one of the things that has to be adopted by a contemporary democratic society (Hussain, 2022). Although women have never been very active in politics since the independence of the country, the trends that have been recorded in boosting the range of women comprising the membership of political parties has created optimism as far as a better future is concerned. In the history of Pakistan, one may distinguish two major periods when women had been involved in politics.

Much of the studies stress how Pakistani women have been affected so much by the norms and expectations existing in society which have rendered it almost impossible to facilitate their participation in politics. As American researchers Ahmad, et al. (2019) state, their study was undertaken on the issue of the centuries-old cultural attitude which often makes the access and advancement of women in politics restricted and shrouded. Women do not have neutral experiences with politics because gender, class and ethnicity are interlinked. It is imperative to understand such contextual factors in order to create effective responses to these obstacles that women who want to enter the political scene are facing. The scale of female participation, as Javed, R., and Iftikhar, M., (2023) claim, is the following; Representation to legislative and governing applies in different political systems in representation in both. During this period (1947-1954), women held slightly 3 percent of the total number of seats in parliament. The second parliamentary assembly that occurred between 1955 to 1958 had no presence of any woman law makers. After a period of Zia ul Haq that dates back to 1978-1988, a significant change in the structure of the political system was observed that influenced the degree of women representation as well. The quotas of these three positions were increased by 10 percent in 1988 which led to women holding 22 seats in the national legislature and 5 per cent of seats in the provincial assembly. In 1990, the percentage of representation of women

stood at 0.9 percent, which rose to 1.8 percent in 1993 and again to 2.8 percent by the year 1997. In 2000, during the military rule, the political participation of the women quota in the local government was boosted to 33 percent for the first time and therefore the overall participation of ladies in the political process was increased. The number of women who were candidates in 2002 general elections was 188 with 39 emerging victorious to be given seats. During the 2013 elections, women candidates occupied 70 seats out of 342 in lower house and 17 in the upper chamber, or 100. 69 female politicians received votes in the 342 available positions during the general elections of 2018 (Iftikhar, et al. 2021). Article 25 of the Pakistani constitution highlights the notions of equality of the genders with particular focus on the fundamental rights of the women. And after the independence of Pakistan in 1948, these two popular women were coming out in the politics of Pakistan, Begum Shaista Ikram Ullah and Begum Jahan Ara Shah Nawaz. The two attained great levels of success in uplifting the status of women in Pakistan. They were committed to their work so that they could have done something on behalf of the women of Pakistan. They were able to carry out agitations that favored the implementation of the Muslim Personal Laws of Shariah that entitled women with the right to succeed in property, including cropping assets. Pakistan remains the first Muslim state that experienced a female prime minister who was the late Benazir Bhutto. Female politicians are fully involved in politics and occupy major positions and ministries, Law, Education, Foreign Affairs, Finance and Economics, Development, Science and Technology, and Culture. This research is aimed at examining how the newspaper information about female politicians is organized in the Pakistani intellectual perspective thus focusing onno particular issue or individual. The analysis enquired into Pakistani English and Urdu local newspaper, that is, Jang and Dawn (Ali& Fatima, 2016). Daily Jang is the best and most popular Urdu daily published in Pakistan, Lahore, Karachi, Rawalpindi, Quetta and London. Mir Khalil Ur Rehman started the initiative in 1939. This was the first newspaper in Pakistan to use computerized calligraphy in the Urdu. The company has been able to sustain its affluence and attain financial stability as a result of its widespread distribution, hence enable it to pay its employees accordingly. The introduction of the weekly magazines by Jang was to be used by its competitors first time on a daily newspaper and since then, all other newspapers have come up with their own weekly magazines which are used on Fridays. The oldest and very popular journal of Pakistan having a daily circulation of more than 8 million offering to all socioeconomic classes. Dawn is a top-notch English daily with a circulation rating of 109,000 in average. The thing is that it was established by Quaid e Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah in 1941 (Shah, et al. 2016). This was the declarative statement of All India Muslim league which was headed by Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. The Urdu and English newspapers that

are published in Pakistan target various groups of people in Pakistan. The English newspapers reach the upper classes who are also comfortable using the English language meanwhile Urdu newspapers reach the lower to the middle classes which prefer to read Urdu. The audience of the two newspapers is not the same and as such it may lead to differences in coverage of news. The way the newspapers in the two languages have represented female politicians in their newspapers is in such a concern.

Over the past few years, the media and its content have been reviewed by researchers and its effects established. The various studies have been useful in realizing various areas of the topic under consideration especially in as far as framing is concerned. The theory of framing as first proposed by Goffman as frame analysis, describes the frames as cognitive constructs through which we observe and create realities. Frame analysis was developed by Goffman and its basis was on content analysis which has been embraced by many scholars on communications. A sense of empowerment/intellectual is also emerging as a major concern in the literature, where researchers such as Minhas, & Haq, (2022) indicate the nexus between educational attainment of women and the growing political participation. Many of these were researches that have been conducted, and an intellectual empowerment comes out as an important topic. To abolish the old gender norms and equip women with devices that they can use in the political circles, the education level matters most. Nevertheless, because education can be seen as the catalyst, still, it is not a magic wand since it does not eliminate socio-cultural barriers. Literature lays out the need to have a multidimensional approach that links learning to overall change in the society in a bid to create a participatory political environment. This strategy is especially significant when it comes to teaching. This could be the representation of women in politics in the media which is a major part that contributes to the popular opinion. As Gondal & Shabir, (2020) explain, the current case follows the traditional gender standards, so it is not so easy to provide assistance to women by the population in general. In the case of politics, the confrontation of negative images and the dissemination of positive stories have been understood as needed parts in the process of forming the perception of the society towards women. Based on the research done, media outlets should be more aggressive in promoting an inclusive political discourse. Amin, et al. (2020) carried out research on the importance of women at the top level. and to test and measure the capability of such roles, they used the masculine attributes. The paper was carried out regarding the importance of women in leadership positions. The major goal of the research as performed by the researchers was to find women who are the heads of Pakistani universities. The data to be used in this inquiry was thus collected through in-depth interviews carried out to twelve women who are leaders in different universities in Islamabad. The report of the study revealed that women are finding

hard to cope with work and maintain their careers. It came out as another discovery of the research. In the process of this inquiry, various organizational elements i.e. male dominated affiliations, stereotypes and other characteristics in individuals, were observed to exist. Conversely, such empowered ladies who possess the highest positions acknowledged that all these are important decisive factors that enabled them to take these prestigious positions; including high statuses, enormous networking and the support of their families. The described factors, according to them, all contributed greatly to their success. To begin with the media pays too much attention to the body image, marital status, personal life and emotional behaviour of female candidates. Hussain (2022), carried out a content analysis of the frames employed in the news reports of the first female speaker of Federation of American Nancy Pelosi. They found out that newspapers are biased in the sense that they highlight trivial and self-centric issues to the exclusion of major issues and inadequacies. By gaining extra knowledge about media prejudice, Fourteen Consumers may have high chances of becoming well-informed and responsible voters especially concerning female political candidates. Moreover, when it comes to female politicians, they will also focus on soft topics as opposed to raising hard core topics. Major and Coleman found in their research that journalists focus on different subjects when dealing with female politicians as opposed when dealing with male politicians reporting on education and health care when it comes to female politicians and the military is of concern when it comes to reporting male politicians (Shahid, et al. 2021). The next studied frame and the most often one is the visibility frame that is the type of placement and positioning of news in newspapers. However, in her research on the gender representation in the Pakistani print media employment of English language studied a content analysis to explore a visibility, location, and space frame. In analyzing, it was found out that the prevailing of the news contents that referred to males was extremely high hence their dominance in newspaper coverage. It was observed in the study that women took more place in topics that involved entertainment and beauty as men took more place in topics that were more substantial in nature. Interestingly, the study also showed that women appeared more often in pictures as opposed to written texts and men appeared rather often in written pieces. A content analysis was played out to determine how the 2013 election in Pakistan depicted women (Shahid, et al. 2021). The study found out that newspaper coverage of females was limited but English dailies had relatively more coverage which was also more positive as opposed to Urdu dailies. Female politicians are barely covered in the print media with their stories being confined to the inner pages and their name seldom appearing on the headlines. This invisibility makes them almost invisible.

A great number of incidents occurred in Pakistan. Regardless of the fact that women are getting A little bit of the results and gains, women are getting A little bit of the results and gains and, as it might appear, it is quite a famous result and gain as far as the openness to the effect of the main and second result and gain is concerned. Higher influence, however, there exists issues with women being represented under additionally in politics and at any level in the decision- making process. This is an issue that applies irrespective of the social rank. These have been challenges still prevailing in the world. With the prism of males dominated culture that is based on gender, the aim of this paper was to examine the involvement of female in politics. During the process of this work, a story was recounted in order to examine such worries and a thematic approach was exercised in a bid to admire the intricacy of such concerns (Mumtaz & Salway, et al. 2009). Further, within the frame of this investigation, the issues and the barriers women have to deal with to take part in the political life were examined. This became particularly factual as far as decision making at organizational or party in political system were concerned. To complete this research, qualitative method where interviews were conducted was used, on influential women legislators in the PML N. There are so many problems that have been highlighted in Pakistani society and most of them are firmly established in the political and social fabric that we tend to overlook and normalize it (Gondal, et al. 2020). This is explainable by virtue of the high numbers of them in the landscape. Due to such resolute presence of the highlighted problems in the organizational framework of political and social life of the Pakistani society, most of the laymen prefer to ignore these problems and turn a blind eye to them (Ida, et al. 2020). This is owing to the fact that such matters are ingrained so much. Although the body of literature remains at its nascent stage, the number of materials out there keeps growing. the concerned interest area of the discussed issue that is the media view of the female politician in Pakistan views, is increasing. The many studies that were carried out simultaneously had proved that the media is a very important service that brings out their views concerning women in politics and the cost they must live with in a patriarch society. As shown in a research conducted by Soomro, et al. (2020) into the topic of media presentation of female politicians in Pakistan, the female politicians were mostly promoted in such stereotypical positions as wives, mothers, and daughters instead of being presented as political leaders in their own names. The study was carried out to enquire about the image of female politicians by Pakistan. Also, it was among the reasons that led to the dampening of females when they wanted to perform other duties, jobs that were not considered equal to the work that men could perform in their families. Khan (2020) carried out an investigation to examine the role that framing in the media has on the attitude of the people concerning female politicians in Pakistan. This theory was in line with the above conceptual

framework. Based on the results of study, the fact that the media does harm to female politicians and political representatives is an issue that just affirms the stereotype that women cannot lead and have feeble feelings. Along with this, the media does not give the full picture as far as women in politics are concerned whereby, the media coverage on women in politics is just confined to their physical appearance expounding on shallow attributes such as their beauty or whether they are married or not. The degree to which they harbour their policy initiatives and whether they are worthy of holding the top positions are not emphasized.

This has boosted our level of political involvement and policy proposals by the media. another important element of journalism that must be considered according to this issue is representation. This is one of the things that should be considered. Nazir, et al. (2022) examine the means through which the media in Pakistan may possibly aid in the involvement of women in the political processes within the context of their research. Specifically, they focus on how the media can make these channels more available. The research is subject to the possibility of learning a lot in the political field, which can provide them with a chance to dispel the existing barriers and sex stereotypes of their gender. Such knowledge can be gained by women who are addressed in a positive way in the media. Despite this, even negative representation of women in the media can act as an inhibiting component to that of women willing to take up a leadership role, hence meaning that this will have the effect of adding to the already existing barriers of political participation. Further, the research has relied on the similarities in the media-based descriptions. are placed within the framework of the prevalent phenomena when such factors as the social status, racial affiliative, and religious orientation, other than the gender, collide to shape the attitude of the masses towards the female politicians. The researchers arrived at the conclusion that the female gender of lower socioeconomic class became harder to accept and instead tend to be portrayed as the negative forms in media. This was what researchers, Siddiqui, (2020) concluded after carrying out the given study. The research paper explored the discrepancies in the manner of portraying the women politicians with different socio- economic backgrounds by the media. Research on how being in the media affects the image of the governmental women politicians in Pakistan underlines the necessity of the media to be more subtle and multi-angular. That is why this expression is also founded on the result of the research carried out. It is sure a great aid to make it easier to realize how the judgment of the population along with the attitude towards women in politics shaped by the media is constructed according to the ideas of the Cultivation Theory. One can break the stereotype and encourage the female to enter politics and make the representation of males and females more equal by simply making time and critically analyze TV shows and movies in order to increase the diversity in the story. Diversity in story could be reached through such narrative. Additional

studies also need to be conducted so that it may be clearly known that there is a very strong and sensitive connectivity between female media, general reaction and the beginning of female power waves of the present day in our country Pakistan. This research paper looked at the representation and perception of women in the media as far as bias, image and role is concerned. Women have suffered numerous pressures in their domestic as well as social life. Pakistan as a society continues with its reputation as a society of stern morals, traditions and culture even to date in the modern world. Even the traditional view that minimizes Pakistani women as the weaker sex has now a day involved them in the media and they are also playing a leading role towards the development of the media. Still, women are objectified in the media. This paper looked into how the women are represented in the Pakistani print, television and social press (Samma, et al. 2020). In the literature review that it has been trying to bring out, there are numerous impediments that women of Pakistan face in the political arena, which exist in many forms such as rule of law to cultural constraints. In order to examine the effectiveness of the existing programmers, explore new strategies of promoting gender equality in the Pakistani politics, further research is needed. The entry point of the media, gender, and politics is a very important field of study in modern society. The literature review is a synthesis of previous literature on how media influences the perceptions of people with regard to female politicians in Pakistan. It addresses various themes like dual role of the media, gender stereotyping. Sensationalism, and the power of social media, will provide an insight about the challenges and opportunities that women encounter in the political positions of leaders.

## 1. Women in politics - A Historical Context

Studies on women and their participation in political life in Pakistan highlight their effort to fight the patriarchal traditions and socio-cultural impediments. Researchers like Munmtaz (1998) stress on the significance of structural elements, such as reservation of seats in making access to politics by women. Nevertheless, women still have to fight against the resistance of society they encounter trying to get direct elective jobs (Khan, 2020) Some important millstones have also been mentioned (Jafar, 2005) like the case of Benazir Bhutto becoming the first woman prime minster of Muslim -majority country and which was a landmark to achievements of women. Yet, researchers have been wary of the realized results to such an extent that they might point towards some systemic injustices that majority of the women experience in politics. Pakistani women manage to continue their history-making acts in politics despite a couple of impediments; role models in Pakistani political advancement are Kulsoom Nawaz, Benazir Bhutto, Nusrat Bhutto, and Fatima Jinnah (Hussain, 2022). There are more women involved in politics in Pakistan, which was supported by the fact that Benazir

Bhutto was able to become the prime minister twice (19981990 and 19931996). In 2008, Fahmida Mirza became the first woman to be the speaker of the Muslim world and Pakistan National Assembly (Latif et al., 2015). Pakistan established this framework under which the current system that defines the structure of our government was developed. In 1973, the constitution of Pakistan was written by the National assembly. In the Constitution of 1973, Pakistan is defined as an ideology state in which Islamic protection is the ideology. It should treat all of its people equal despite their genders, ethnicity or religion. With respect to political rights, the Pakistan constitution Article 17.2 holds that, all individuals are at liberty to form or join a political party. Through pronouncement, equality of women is covered under Article 25 of the Constitution. It can be noted that the very premise according to which the current government structure in Pakistan is established is typified by the term that simply does not matter. Regarding politics with respect to political rights, the Pakistan constitution Article 17.2 holds that, all individuals are at liberty to form or join a political party. Through pronouncement, equality of women is covered under Article 25 of the Constitution. Before the statute no sex-based disparity existed, there would be given a chance on the basis of equality in sections 32 and 34. women will be practically involved in every sphere of life in the society and the equality in sections 51 and 59. The participation of females and non-Muslim in parliament.

**2. The dual role of media in influencing the perception of the people**

Media is an empowerment tool and it is also a medium of suggestion of any biases. Shahid (2016) explains that Twitter and Facebook, which are some of the social media platforms, have enabled women constituents and share their experiences and disrupt traditional power hierarchies. This positive effect is however offset by the negative role models on mainstream media. Iqbal and Khan (2018) also say: that more often than not, traditional media focus on women politicians. focus on their story of failure in personal lives instead of using their professional accomplishment, which weakens their credibility. In particular, a lot of focus on physical appearance, the choice of clothes, and the family roles only diminish any useful discussions regarding their politics and leadership potential.

**3. Media portrayal and Gender Stereotype**

The prevalence of gender stereotypes in the media depiction of female politicians is one of the themes that are repeated in the literature. Fatima and Ahmed (2019) have discovered that women have a tendency to be presented as either soft leaders or token actors and that their involvement in politics is reduced and revolves around the gender rather than their political input. This kind of framing leads to the perceptions that remain to exist in the society

demonstrating that women are not in a good position to manage more complex political roles relative to men. Moreover, there is sensationalist reporting which has the tendency to increase these biases. Malik (2020) draws attention to the fact that: women politicians' scandals are highly exaggerated in the media thus distorting the image of women in the eyes of the society with a tendency to support the credibility of the scandalous women on one hand and also to dishearten wider female participation in the political arena.

## 4. Social media:

Risks and Chances The social media has offered women in politics a direct contact to the nation without going through gatekeepers of the traditional media. According to Parveen (2020) and Yasir (2021), using such social media platforms as Twitter, women leaders can debunk the stereotypes, lobby gender equality, and gather the followers in their movements. Nonetheless, social media can also make women politicians the subject of targeted harassment which includes hate speech, threats, gendered insults. According to Yasir (2021), online abuse produces a hostile environment in which women are discouraged to participate in political discourse completely. Such online bullying usually crosses over into media discourses and makes women politicians yet again marginalized.

## 5. The Good Stories and Their Effects

Notwithstanding, positive media accounts have been seen to have a lot of impact on how the general populace views them. According to Ahmed and Raza (2021), the concentrated efforts of reinforcing the success women have had in politics were used to undermine the conventional gender stereotypes. As an example, reportage of women leadership in times of crisis, e.g. the diplomacy skills as exhibited by Hina Rabbani Khar have helped to change the perception of people relating to the ability of women leadership skills as being competent and able leaders. According to Tariq (2019), balanced media coverage that appreciates women deserves importance. the role played by politicians in the policy-making and government. These stories do not only improve their popularity but also give impetus to some other women to start their own political careers.

## 6. Minor Implication and General Conceptions

Literature indicates that the role of media representation plays an important role towards gaining a p positive perception by people towards women politicians. Women leaders depicted in positive coverage will be highly accepted by the society and those depicted in negative coverage will perpetuate biases in the society. As Qureshi (2018) discovered, such relentless frame of women as weak or incapable prohibits the political careers opportunities of the female

population and sustains the image of underrepresentation. Nevertheless, other analyses also emphasize the possibility of media being transformative when it comes to building progressive stories. The media can contribute to patriarchal norms breakdown with stories of successful and resilient women and girls and make the transition to gender equality in political life Fatima and Ahmed, (2019).

## 2.2 Theoretical Framework

### 2.2.1. Exploring Media Exposure and Public Perception of Female Politicians in Pakistan: A Cultivation Theory Perspective

Framework of Researching Media Exposure and Popular Perception of Female Politicians in Pakistan Although, it is indeed true that the colorful media screen and the legalized mass judgement of people in the streets is indeed true that the generation of claimed has been the cause and the effect of the whole fiasco. The nature of the female politicians of Pakistan was way too complex initially and then, it was evolving slowly with time passing by. This holds especially true in the case of homelessness wherein the most vulnerable groups of people are likely to get hit by such situations. In the same manner, in connection with the present years of the research, the media publications and individuals who are experienced enough in matters of politics and gender issues, have been giving more attentions to those things that are essential to the public opinion of female politicians, who originated such a place like Pakistan where the culture of the Pakistani people is extremely rigid. The same tendency can also be observed in Pakistan. A study that uses the cultivation theory that is carried out by viewing through the lens of the media identifies to what extent the mass media influences the perception of the public regarding their female heads in Pakistan. To this end, one can choose media and analyze related to connection of the relationships through the broadcasting theory of cultivation.

### 2.2.2 Cultivation Theory

Cultivation theory is a fragment of enunciated theory of communication which goes in search of the impact that lasts over time. the level of media impacts on perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs of an audience. This notion has rested around the general premise that perception and interpretation of the world by the people can be significantly affected by constant exposure to specific information and themes which are perpetuated through content that is released in the entertainment sector. Moreover, there exists the concept of mainstreaming in cultivation theory, this is what has been described by the role of the media as a unifying factor in attitude formation within an extensive social background diversity (Batool, & Liu, 2021). The greater

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the exposure of the audiences of various groups to information provided by the same media, the more the overlapping of their world's views to the one of the common mediated reality. This can lead to formation of cultural understandings and attitudes common in all these audiences. Moreover, the theory explores the idea of the concept of resonance; according to which people whose real-life experiences somewhat resemble the images heard about or seen in the media experience the cultivation effect in a magnified manner. The theory of Cultivation made by Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli (1986) explains that people develop their visions slowly as they keep digesting the contents of the various kinds of the media contents over time. By examining framing of media, one may come to the conclusion that the attitudes, sentiments and beliefs of people may be shaped capturing them after being exposed to content of media materials over a long period of time, especially on social issues and groups (Javed & Iftikhar, 2023). Particularly, the given concept underlines the idea that the direct prolonged exposure of the media is the feature that chiefly tends to contribute to the development of the society in the form it currently takes. This is to say the development of social reality is conditioned by anything as simplistic as watching a movie or having a television session.

### 2.2.3 The Perception of Pakistani Women in political life in the Media:

The media fulfils a very important role of shaping up the opinion of the people and the resultant effect is given in its influence on the people. the conduct of the Pakistani citizens, especially the opinions of girls who are voted to hold political office. This holds more so in Pakistan. Despite the fact that most of the images of women in the Pakistani media depict concepts that are deemed to be both traditional and bias that, in one way or the other, are likely to affect the manner in which individuals perceive the southern Pacific politician, results of such a study have revealed that there are also some positive images of women in the Pakistani media. This despite the fact that most of the images of women in Pakistani media depict concepts that qualify as conventional. People directly concerned with politics are thus mostly under the pressure of the press which puts more stress on the external image, personal circumstances and family life of their representatives than it puts on their qualification in their area of profession and their achievement (Aziz, et al. n.d). The reason behind this is that media accentuates more on the external looks of their representatives. Additionally, female Pakistani politicians cannot only cope with the level of unpleasantness in the relationship with the media being higher than it would be in a similar case with their men colleagues, but they also have to cope with it on the scale that would be greater than the one their male colleagues would have to endure. The thing is that it is an embodiment of this traditional patriarchal sort, which is also deeply rooted into the society.

**2.2.4 The impact of Perception on the Implications of Media Exposure:**

The distortion of female politicians brought at the Pakistani media might turn out to be of significant importance (in the long-term perspective) regarding the influencing of the mass opinion through the development of specific convictions and predispositions. The women are highly probable to become stereotyped on gender and think that it is not their genre, in case they are shown over and over again biased and so-called stereotyped images of women in politics. This is due to the fact that they would think that it is not their area. This will also lead to the lack of credibility and efficacy of female politicians where it will be another negative outcome (Toor, et al. 2023). Research has proven that how the media conveys their policies can influence how people who view this news program determine the effectiveness of policy making and hence, in turn, have an opinion on the contribution of women in politics. In addition to that, male and female leaders in the media are another part of the process that may result in the stereotyping of the depicted personages. In other words, the tendency of journalists to portray the image of female politicians as vulnerable emotionally, incompetent in management, and inexperienced in leading the team emerges (Nazneen, 2023). Such defamations may later make the women think twice whether to engage in politics or not or whether to attain a leadership position which ends up in perpetuating gender inequity in political arena. Nevertheless, there is no use neglecting the possibility that gender may be disobeyed by the media sometimes. standards and act as a venue to enhance good representation of female politicians in a profession that always needed a greater representation in the past by the women. That is something which cannot be ignored (Aksar, et al. 2024). Through the main focus on what women have achieved and the works and contributions that they have made within the political arena, the media institutions that are involved are hereby charged with the necessary responsibility of having to influence the stance of the population towards the idea of women becoming the political leaders that so many of them are as well as potential leaders. Perhaps, this high exposure and presence of women in the media also contribute to the entry of other women into politics, to wonder why some gender conventions were not in place, and to provide greater chances to women.

**2.2.5 Cases Research and Illustrations:**

There abound numerous case studies and examples that illustrate vividly the involved circumstances. relationship that the mass media creates between the attitude of the people towards the female politicians in our country. There are too many of such examples and case studies. It is against this backdrop that the case studies and examples that have been provided here come into vogue. In order to prove this argument, the analysis of such a person as Benazir

Bhutto, the first female Prime Minister of Pakistan, is proving the means by which such representation of certain vital people in media can influence the moods of the society when talking in wide population terms. The first woman Prime Minister of Pakistan was Bhutto (Farooq, & Alam, et al. n.d). Instead of focusing on the policies and agendas of the politicians the media chose to ridicule them by focusing on their personal life and looks. This was done to highlight this fact as well as expose the weaknesses of Bhutto. The fact that she had an incredible political record that proved that she was not who she said she was did not matter much at that time notwithstanding the fact that her political record was spectacular. The theory to be expounded regards the coverage of other women who are active in the political arena in Pakistan on the same note, suggests that women interested in participating women face the same kind of issues and biases that exist within an arena dominated by men. The reason is that the media spends their time on those active women in politics (Sarwar, et al. 2022). Due to their experiences, it becomes clear that a significant part of the influence that makes its rise out of the framing that takes place in the media is responsible in the creation of a general perception about female politicians that the populace at large has, and the diversification of the media is also an aspect that is very crucial and is gaining significance. Finally, one can assert that the interconnectedness between the media must be very hard to unlatch. and the perception of women politician in Pakistan by the audience because it may be influenced by dozens of aspects as well as cultural values, media construction, and gender inequality. Cultivation theory is one of the appropriate theoretical models in this respect; it would assist us to understand more about the influence of media on attitudinal and conceptual changes of the genders. One can eliminate the stereotype and realize the gender equality in the political activity and the general representation simply by examining the media presentation and promote the stories that are broader and more equal.

# 3. METHODOLOGY

**Chapter 3: Methodology**

This chapter describes the methodology to be used in conducting the research in getting the effect of media exposure on the perception of the people towards women politicians in Pakistan. The chapter contains an elaborate presentation of the theoretical framework, research design, sampling strategy, methods of data collection and the methods of analyzing data used in this research. The methods, especially when applied to social sciences, determine how data are collected and interpreted to address research questions and define the validity and reliability of the research (Creswell, 2014). Since the idea behind this study is to create a definite correlation between media publicity and popular opinion, the quantitative method of research is realized, as it best fits the requirement of generating quantitative data that are subject to statistical analysis and pattern and correlation assessment of variables (Bryman, 2012)

## 3.1 Research Design

The present study has a descriptive and cross-sectional survey design which is considered to be a well-established method. research in social science whose purpose is to quantify the traits as well as attitudes and perceptions of a people at one specified time (Creswell, 2014). The cross-sectional design would be suitable in this study since it is capable of deterring the media consumption habits of the respondents as well as their perception towards female politicians at one defined period. The key aim of the survey would be to examine the correlation amid media exposure (independent variable) and the perception of women politicians (dependent variable) of the Pakistani inhabitants. The survey design was based on the fact that it collects information of a large heterogeneous sample, subsequently providing a higher degree of generalizability of the research findings to the rest of the population (Fink, 2013). A survey instrument based on Likert-scale was used to gather the attitude of the respondents with regards to the female politicians and coverage by media as well as gauge the extent to which they engage in consuming political content in the different media types (Babbie, 2013). With an emphasis on both the traditional media and the social media, the paper at hand attempts to present an investigation on whether the social media can pose a stronger impact on the view of the public on women politicians than the traditional media sources, including TV or newspapers.

## 3.2 Sample and Population

The target population in the present study was the academic personnel of the Islamic International University Islamabad (IIUI), which is an already established educational

institution. The group was selected based on its demographical representation and intellectual interest, which implies that it would serve as a perfect sample to investigate the view of women in politics. IIUI academic personnel is diverse over gender, age and the level of education and therefore can be considered satisfactory enough to represent the wider urban educated population in Pakistan. Moreover, the academic personnel are frequently exposed to various kinds of media, which is why they represent a relevant sample when studying the media influence on the formation of the political perception (Mackey, 2014). The study was to have a sample proportion of 200 respondents whose sample proportion is determined to be not justifiable but also statistically significant as shown by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). Stratified random sampling was used so that representative sample of important demographic groups is obtained. In stratified sampling, the researcher can split the population into category-related subgroups/strata or subpopulation and then sample the population randomly based on the subgroups (Taherdoost, 2016). This will guarantee that there are varied respondents based on various categories of gender, age, education and occupational status that will boost the generalizability of the results (external validity) (Bryman, 2012).

| Population size (Distributed) | Discarded Questionnaires | Useable Response |
|---|---|---|
| 300 | 100 | 200 |

📌 **Reasoning for discarded questionnaires**:

- Some respondents left many questions unanswered.
- A few questionnaires had contradictory or unclear responses.
- Some were incomplete due to early withdrawal.

## 3.3 Methodology of the sampling

Stratified random sampling was undertaken to guarantee diversity and representativeness of the sample. used. This is the sampling technique that entails dividing the

population into definite groups or strata depending on certain demographic factors. The strata were in this study:

  • Gender: male and female subjects.

  • Age Group: 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64 years.

  • Academic background: Intermediate (A-level) to doctoral.

  • Employment Status: full time, part time, and contracted workers.

This stratification of the sample guaranteed the proportional representations of all the available subgroups, and this further contributes to making generalizations regarding the obtained results concerning the larger population (Cohen & Manion, 2013). The respondents were 200 in number and this category clearly reflected in the selected strata.

## 3.4 Operational Definitions

The important variables in this research were operationally defined to allow clarity and precision as follows:

1. **Media Exposure**: This will refer to the level and nature of media materials that are consumed by the respondents that is, political material on women politicians. Types of media exposure were classified to include two major types:

   • Traditional Media: TV, radio, newsprint as well as the online versions of newspapers. • Social Media: sites or areas found in social media, social media where we can post information about women politicians, and also, we see the same information shared and talked about by other people such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and many other digital spaces.

2. **Public Perception of Women Politicians**: Concept that is used to examine what respondents think about, and where they place on issues that determine how well such female politicians manage their respective positions in Pakistan. This concept used in the study is operationally defined in three dimensions:

   • Leadership Capacity: How far the respondents feel that female politicians can be able to have the same leadership qualities as their male counterparts.

   • Objectification: How much respondents think that media uses the women politicians mainly in regards to the physical looks rather than the political intelligence of the politicians.

   • Stereotyping and Misogyny: The degree to which respondents are of the view that female politicians are gendered in the media through stereotyping and misogyny.

3. **Social Media Influence**: This is the effect of the social media on the opinion of the respondents towards the female politicians. Of particular interest to the study is whether

the social media platforms show a better image or an accurate image of women politicians than traditional media (Lupia, 2015).

**3.5 Data collection instrument**

The data collection tool was a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was set to acquire demographic data as well as data concerning the media consumption habits of the respondents together with their perception of the women politicians. Developers sought the input of experts in the field of political communication to make sure of validity and relevance of instrument in question. The questionnaire contained a few sections:

• Demographic Information: Questions about the respondents age, sex, education and their employment status.

• Media Consumption: A series of questions to gather the extent to which respondents are exposed to media and the specific media they exposure themselves to; as well as the platform on which they preferably get political information of women politicians.

**Perception of Women Politicians:**

Likert-scale questions evaluating the attitude of the respondents towards political female politicians, their ability to solve problems, they're being a subject of the objectification by the media, and the stereotyping or a trashing of the respondents as a consequence of misogyny. The measuring tool in the survey was the Likert scale: the survey scale was based on the range of 1-strongly disagree to 5-strongly agree, and the scale obtained a measured value of the attitude on various scales. There were several multiple-choice questions that measure media consumption habits such as the duration people spend consuming the political information every day, their favorite media platforms, such as Facebook, television, and newspapers.

**3.6 Procedure of Data collection**

The survey questionnaires were issued to 200 academicians in the IIUI based on a random sampling of academic staff. The surveys were conducted electronically as well as on paper to suit various tastes, hence increasing the rate of response. The survey allowed the respondents a one-week deadline to be done. After this time, the filled questionnaires were retrieved and checked whether they are complete or otherwise. Prior to administration of the survey, participants were fully informed about the objectives of the study, their right as participants and on the voluntary aspect of participation. The study used transparent and ethical informed consent where each participant was informed (Dillman, 2014). The data collected were once, therefore, entered into SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) software to

be analyzed. Data pre-processing was done by cleaning, checking the consistency, completeness of the data and thereafter any statistical analysis was performed.

**3.7 Analysis of data**

The SPSS was used to perform analysis that would be used to conduct both descriptive and inferential statistics. statistical tests. All these steps of the process resulted in a better comprehension of the connection between media exposure and the popular image of a female politician.

1. **Descriptive Statistics**: Descriptive statistics summarized the demographic pattern of respondents, and their media consumption pattern. I.e., the research discovered that:

    • Age Distribution: 34.5 percent of respondents were aged between 25-34 years, and 46.0 percent belonged to 35-44 age group. Gender Distribution: There was a gender distribution that was almost even. Male-48.5 percent; female-51.5 percent.

    • Preferred Media Abled Platforms: 36.0 percent of the respondents were inclined to Facebook as a platform to deliver political contents and 30.0 percent of the respondents were inclined to the use of television.

2. **ANOVA (Analysis of Variance)**: ANOVA was applied by confirming that there exist evident disparities in perception of female politicians depending on media consumption. The findings showed that there is no significant difference between the groups (F+0.747, p = 0.589) implying that the kind of media used did not influence significantly advocacy of women politicians.

3. **Multiple Regression Analysis**: Multiple regression was conducted to determine the predictive role of different types of media exposure (social and traditional media) of the perceptions that the populace hold towards women politicians. The results showed that social media especially Facebook showed stronger predictive links among perceptions of women politicians positively in comparison to other traditional media like televisions and print newspapers.

**3.8 Ethics**

In the conduct and the design of the research optimal ethical standards were maintained. research. The next ethical rules were adhered to guarantee moral rightness:

1. **Informed Consent**: Participants were offered adequate information on the study and their rights as well as voluntary nature of the participation. Before taking part in the survey, an informed consent was signed by all the participants (Cohen & Manion, 2013).

2. **Confidentiality**: The identity of the participants was ensured to be confidential. All information was anonymized and kept in a secure place to guarantee privacy (Fink, 2013).

3. **Non-coercion**: The respondents were not offered any incentive and pressure to take part in the participation. It was open to the participants to end their study participation at any given moment without the repercussions.

4. **Respecting participants**: The survey was formulated with respect to the time of the participants and was formulated in such a way that all questions were in a manner that they were not going to feel uncomfortable.

# 4. RESULTS

## 4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the detailed methodology used as an approach towards research into determining how media exposure has affected the way the Pakistani people view women politicians. Quantitative method with strong support based on data collection and analysis variables guarantees validity and reliability of the results and adds meaning to research findings in regard to the dynamics of media affect relations in political developments or perceptions.

## 4.2 Analysis of data

SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) was used to analyze the data to come up with the descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation, and frequencies of responses. Furthermore, ANOVA was done to determine the significant difference among groups on the basis of media exposure and their attitudes about female politicians.
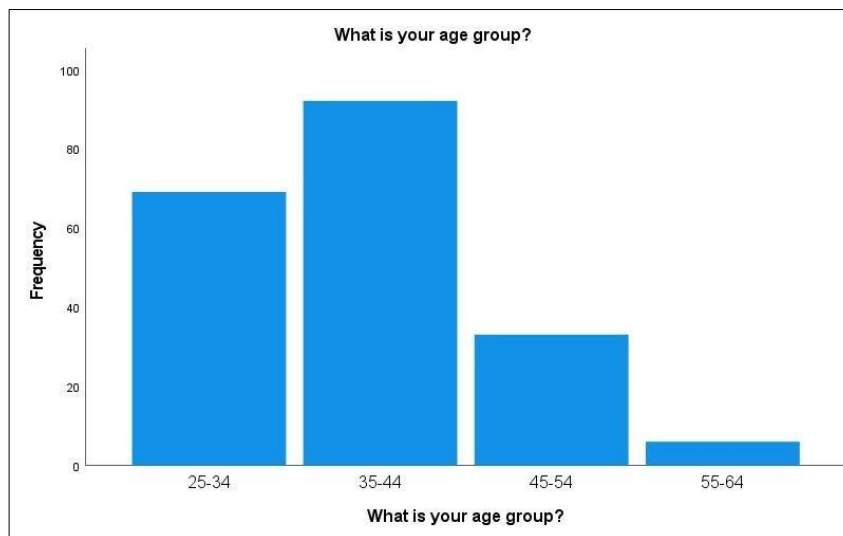
## 4.3 Results and Analysis:

## Age Distribution



Figure 1: Age Distribution

**Analysis**: The breakdown of age of respondents indicates that a good number of the respondents come under the age bracket of 25-44 years, forming a total of 80.5 of the sample. This age group is the 35-44 age group (46.0%), then there is the 25-34 age group (34.5%). This implies that the survey mainly regards the youth to middle aged group which is labelled often as the most political and active in the media intake line. A minor portion of the respondents lie in the age bracket of 45-54 years (16.5%) and 55-64 years (3.0%). The reduced representation of older cohorts indicates existing potential underrepresentation of political attitudes and media

use of older generations. This may also possibly influence the general view towards women in politics and the influence of the media since amongst the older age groups, there is the tendency to have the more conventional pattern of taking in the media which includes the television and print newspapers.
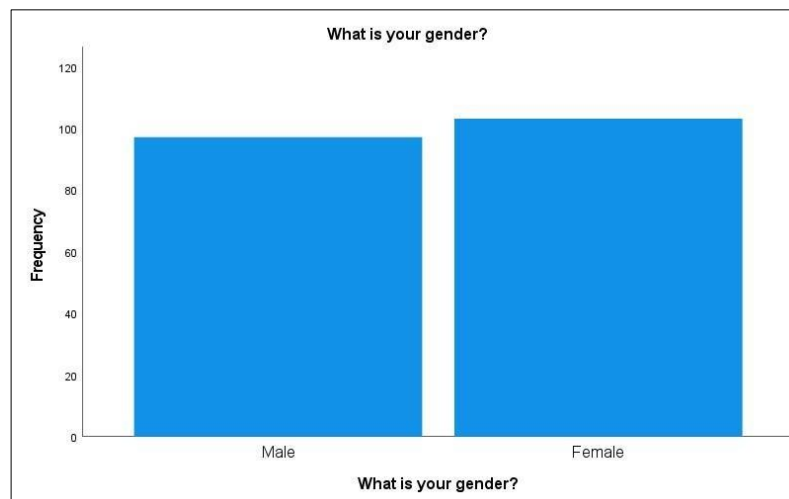
**Gender Distribution**



Figure 2: Gender Distribution

**Analysis**: The sample is balanced and gendered wherein 51.5 percent of the sample being female, and 48.5 percent of the sample being male which makes the sample balanced. this survey has represented both genders well. This balance plays an important role when engaging in studies, which dwell on gender perception in politics, especially when examining the efforts of women in politics and how use of media may vary across genders. The close skew provides the opportunity to examine finely the perception of female politicians by the male and female population and sex stereotypes and the political involvement of women. With everrising participation of women in various political processes, learning particularities of the difference in how men and women see things is important in terms of defining the role of presentation of media and influence of political opinions on development of gender specific views.
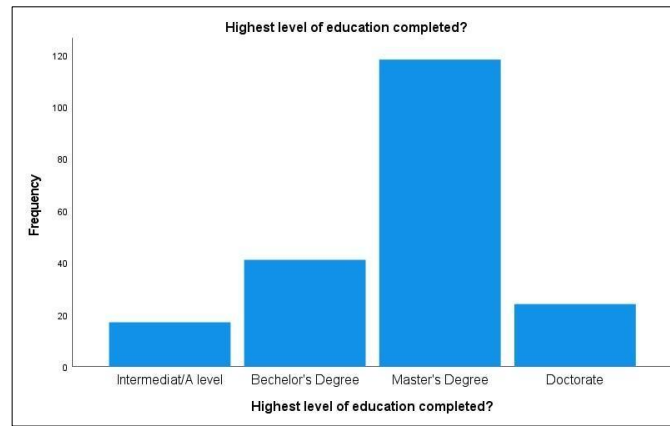
**Education Level**



Figure 3: Education Level

**Analysis**: Most of the respondents have a Master's degree (59.0%), 20.5 of them with a bachelor degree, 12.0 with Doctorate while 8.5 have an Intermediate/A level education. The sample is highly educated in majority, which might affect the media consumption practice and acceptation of the political problems, such as gender equality in politics. Higher educated respondents tend to access diverse political media, such as news reports, policy debates, and opinion writing and, as such, such respondents may end up making more informed choices about political issues. There is also a correlation of higher education with increased political participation, and thus the Master and Doctorate groups will tend to have a critical and informed take on their perceptions of political leadership by women. There is a possibility of the smaller groups attaining Intermediate and Bachelor degrees to join in. their own political media intake, although probably in a more general way, and turn to general sources of the news, or reading the social media entries, rather than making the policy research into them. The evidence shows that the level of education might largely define how the respondents can critically approach political content and how they can analyze the role of gender in the political world.
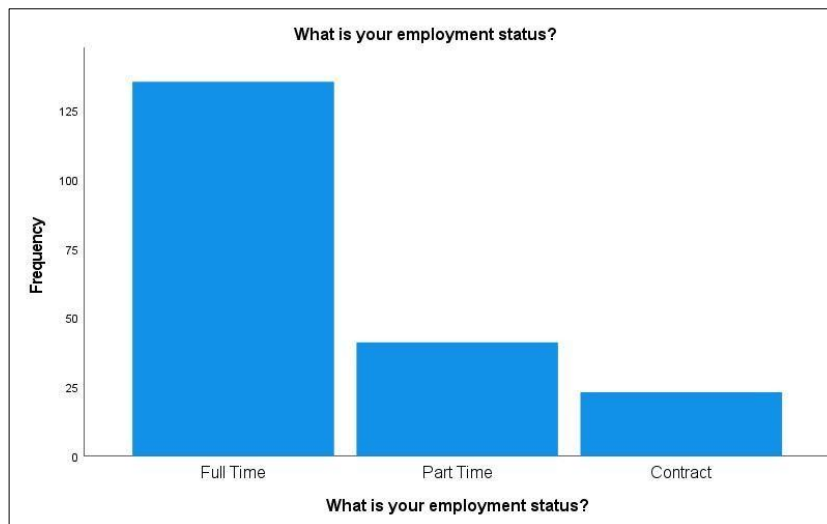
**Employment Status Distribution**



Figure 4: Employment Status Distribution

**Analysis**: Study participants are mostly full-time workers (66.0%) which means that high professional activity is a quite characteristic feature of the sample population. This group is most likely to use political media during break times or even after work during spare time and the most popular type of media used by individuals having full-time jobs is television and online news sites. The sample constitutes a smaller group, the part time employed group (15.0%), and self-employed group (12.0%). These groups are likely to be able to adjust their work patterns to be more lenient in taking in media, though, at perhaps more erratic frequencies than their fulltime employed peers. The percent of the unemployed of the respondents is low (7.0%) and could possibly influence the media. consumption patterns because of the availability of time and this might increase their presence in social media and about politics since people who have rather much time to spare will become even more active online.
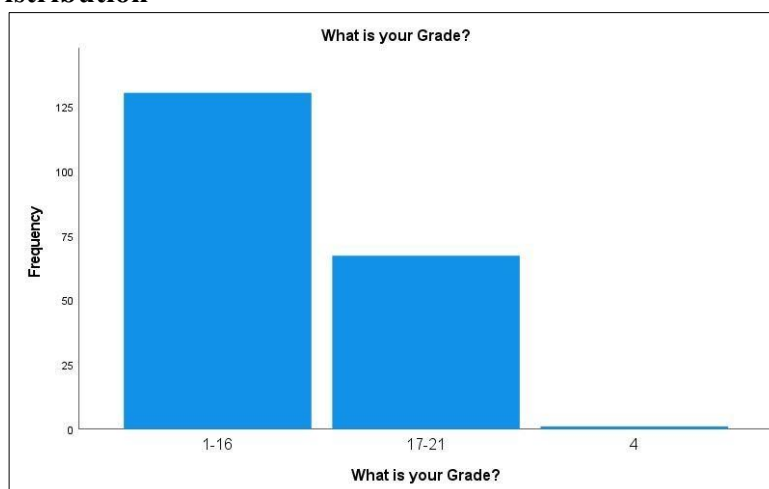
**Grade Level Distribution**

Figure 5: Grade Level Distribution

**Analysis**: Most of the respondents were Seniors (68.0%), Juniors (21.0%), Sophomores (6.0%) and Freshmen (5.0%). This implies that a good percentage of the respondents are still at the tail end of their studies, are most likely to be politically conscious and interested in what is going on in the society. The seniors are usually supposed to be more involved with the issues of society because they will be at a higher stage of academic and professional progress. Being highly linked to political involvement, this group will tend to be more critical and informed about what they access to media, such as the perception of female politicians and gender equality. The smaller groups of Freshmen and Sophomores (considering 11.0 percent in total) might be less politically engaged or be at the beginning of their political opinion formation, which might affect the ways they can perceive the media representations and political involvement.

## 1. Time Spent Consuming Political Content
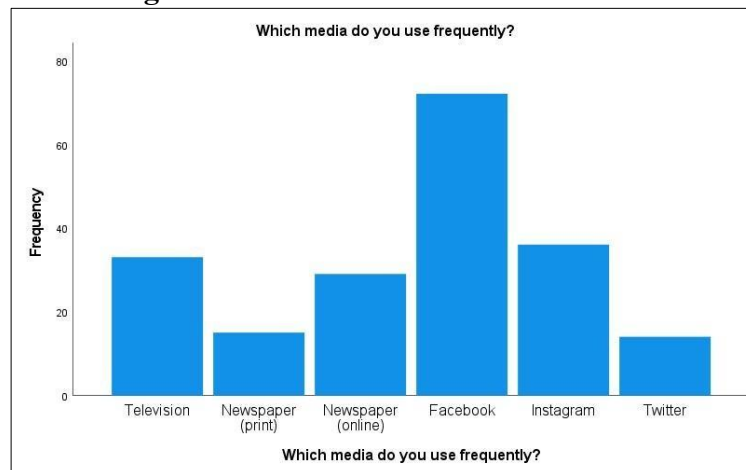


Figure 6: Time Spent on Consuming Political Content

**Analysis**: The survey results on the daily time spent on the consumption of political content evidence the trend of popularity of short-term political media engagement. Most respondents (46.0%) stated that they spend anywhere between 0-30 minutes a day on political content. This indicates that the Pakistani context may be characterized by media usage of political material that is sporadic and fragmented, which may be a result of over saturation of political material to the general audience resulting in selectivity of exposure on the basis of personal interest and time limits. The rather modest percentages of those who spend more time (15.0% for 61-80 minutes, 10.0% over 80 minutes) indicate that not many people are politically involved, and the majority of citizens do not devote their time to the political concerns too much. This observation can be an indication of a wider trend in society in which political participation is a secondary consideration after other such considerations like employment,

education, or family. In this way it might be concluded that deeper involvement in politics is limited by such factors as such as time availability, media saturation and even lack of interest in politics.

## 2. Perception about Challenges Faced by Female Politicians in Pakistan
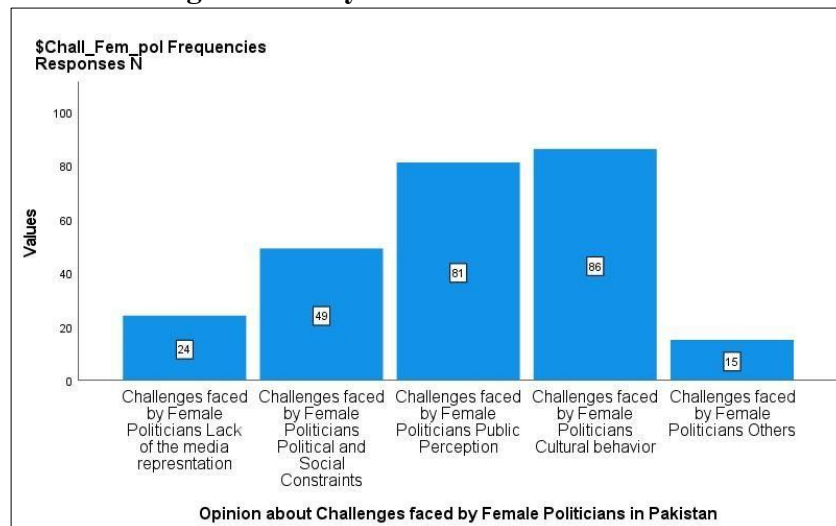


Figure 7: Perception about Challenges Faced by Female Politicians in Pakistan

**Analysis**: The findings to this question indicate The most significant challenge identified was cultural behavior (86 responses), indicating that societal norms and traditional gender roles significantly hinder women's involvement in politics. This is followed by public perception (81 responses), which suggests that stereotypes and biases about women in leadership positions play a critical role in limiting their political participation.

Political and social constraints (49 responses) were also noted as substantial barriers, pointing to institutional and structural challenges that restrict women's access to resources, networks, and political support. A smaller number of respondents (24) highlighted the lack of media representation as a challenge, reflecting the role of media in either reinforcing or breaking down gender stereotypes in politics. Lastly, 15 respondents mentioned other challenges, which may include additional, less frequently discussed factors affecting women in the political sphere.3. Preferred Platform for Political Content

**What type of content about do you most frequently consume?**
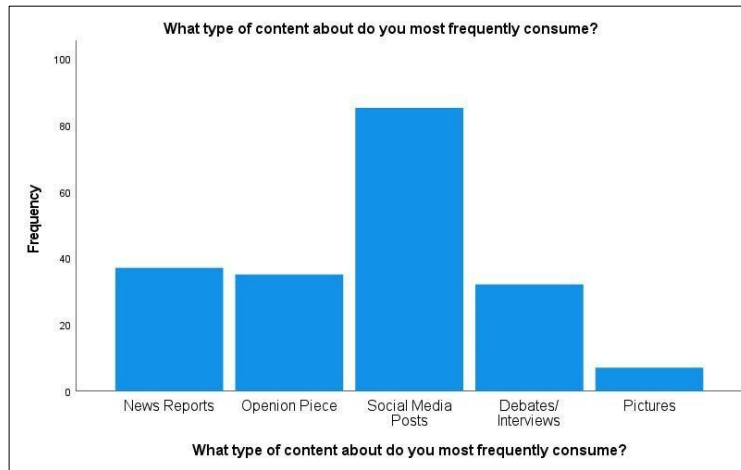
Figure 8: Preferred Platform for Political Content

**Analysis**: The review of the platforms of choice among the respondents shows that television is still the most popular. leading platform of political content consumption, where 30.09. participants chose it as a platform of their favorite political content consumption, and 30.0 percent of the respondents chose it as a favorite platform. It is also in line with the long-term influence of traditional media, particularly in the parts of the world where television is still the most widely available source of information to the vast majority of the population. But online newspapers (18.0%) and Facebook (17.5%) are examples of digital where online avenues are being used. also demonstrate considerable interest, which indicates a slow transition to the consumption of digital political content. It can be implied that the more people turn to social media to discuss politics, the more they are in the period of transition as they are continuing to use traditional media, but are introducing new ways of digital political participation. Such a shift signifies the mixed media environment where traditional and digital media have come to coexist and the TV is still holding a greater position in the overall media consumption of the masses.

## 4. Rating the Role of Women in Politics



**How much time do you spend daily, as average, consuming political content?**
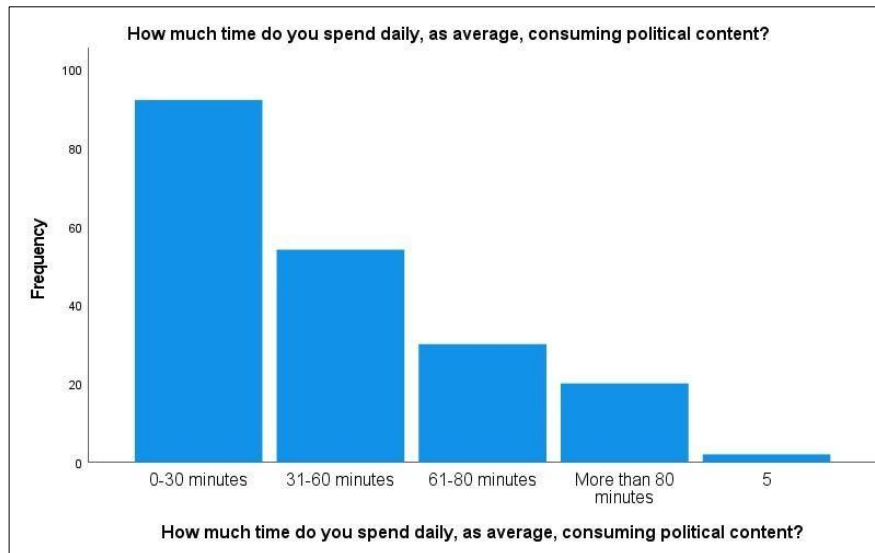
Figure 9: Rating the Role of Women in Politics

**Analysis**: The answer to the question on the role of women in the Pakistani politics shows a general positive attitude to female political roles. The results forming 46.0 percent and 21.0 percent of the respondents gave positive and very positive rating to the role of women respectively, it would indicate that there is increasing acceptance of the female leadership in the political arena. The trend is consistent with the rest of the world where gender-inclusive politics is picking up in other parts of the world including South Asia. There are however neutral responses (25.0%) that show that although appreciation exists there is still ambivalence on the complete acceptance of women in political office. This ambivalence can be explained by existing gender biases or lack of women in the top political ranks.

## Reliance on Social Media for Political Perception



**In your Opinion to what extent do you rely on Social media for forming your opinion about politics?**

Figure 10: Reliance on Social Media for Political Perception

**Analysis**: The graph also has a clear outlook of the reliance of respondents on social media in their formation of political opinion. The greatest percentage of the respondents (44.0) said that they are depending on social media to some degree. This indicates that social media to most people acts as a middle gro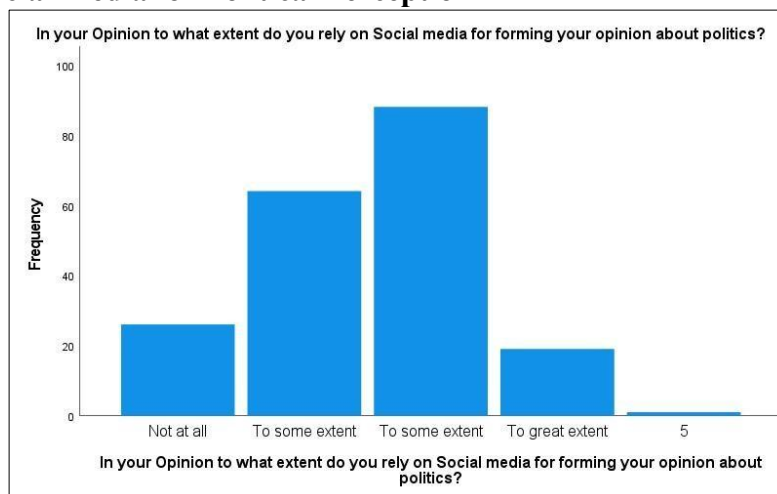und in shaping political opinions. These people will have a tendency to use digital resources, like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, to get political information but can also use a more balanced approach, focusing on traditional channels, like TV or newspapers. The role of social media, in this case, is complementary, which means that it offers the sample one more source to access political content, though it does not seem to take over the political discourse in the majority of the sample. The second largest group (32.0%) also indicated the dependency on the social media to some degree. This once again proves the notion that social media is a secondary source of information to most people in as far as developing a perception on politics is concerned. This type of people is characterized by the fact that they can be exposed to political information in social media, but they are not dependent on this source. To these respondents, social media is not the main source, but an extra source. Nevertheless, a significant minority (13.0%) of the respondents reported not to rely upon use social media to make their political judgment at all. Members of this group may be more comfortable with more conventional media, whether television, print newspapers or personal conversations, which they may find more credible or credible. This observation implies that although social media is on the rise in people, a section of the population does not have trust in it to deliver credible political information, noting that the conventional media is not obsolete in the eyes of some people. The relatively lesser number, 9.5 percent, said they are using social media extensively. This segment seems to use the social media sites as the most important way to be informed of politics, and they may listen to news, commentary and political discourse nearly solely by the use of this digital media. This means an increased degree of internet involvement and implies that social media networks represent the primary source of political communication to certain people. Finally, the proportion of people that selected the answer 5 (extreme social media dependence) was only 0.5 percent. This implies that social media does have an effect but it is not overpowering to all the sample. The fact that the percentage can be considered close to zero in this category confirms the notion that social media is significant but does not take over the opinion-making process in politics among the majority of people. Based on the information on the graph, it can be seen that although social media plays a major role in influencing the way people think, the graph indicates that it plays a small role in influencing the way people think. when individuals develop political views, it is not the only or even the most common in the case of majority of the sample. Rather, the respondents are inclined to use

social media along with other conventional media outlets in order to get a more convincing view of political issues.
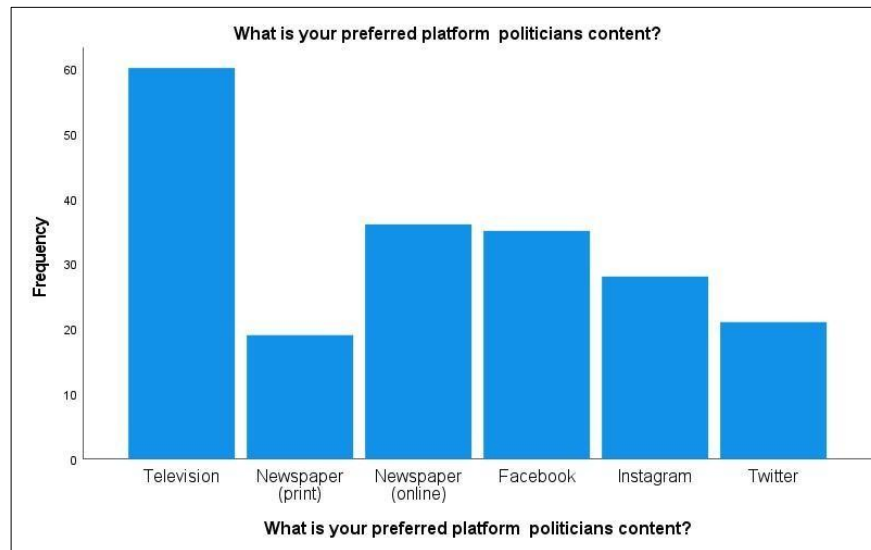
**Preferred Platform for Political Content**



Figure 11: Preferred Platform for Political Content

**Analysis**: The respondents who were asked to list the preferred platforms of political content show different trends. in media consumption with focus on the traditional and on the digital media preferences. Television became the most favored medium, to which 60 respondents (30.0%) chose. it. This follows the findings of other studies that show television still remains the main source of news and political information. Television is very influential perhaps because of its capability to give details, live broadcasts and even political debates, and therefore a major source of information to the people who desire to be informed about the political problems. Even with the emergence of social media, authoritative role of television is enough to guarantee that it remains the preferred source of political news by many of the respondents. Print newspapers came second, as 19 respondents (9.5%) chose it as a political medium. content. This percentage is lower than the one of television, but it demonstrates that traditional media, especially print newspapers, remains a very important part. This implies that some of the sample has a value on credibility and well-organized structure of print media as a source of political information. Print media has been seen as having detailed and well researched articles hence those that are more analytical and factual prefer to use this media. The 36 respondents (18.0%) preferred newspapers (online). This is indicative of a major transition into digital consumption where people have abandoned the print editions and turned to the internet to get news and political information. The online newspapers offer equivalent amount of deeper reporting service as the print media, but with the benefit of timely availability and convenience of the internet. Such a tendency towards online newspapers is consistent with

other trends of the digital media consumption around the world, especially by younger and more tech-savvy people. The fourth most favored platform is Facebook with 35 respondents (17.5 percent). This indicates that social media platforms and more so Facebook are gaining prominence as useful sources of political information. Interactive Facebook enables users to discuss politics, share news and be part of a social network of politically active people. This aspect of interaction would probably be the reason why Facebook is still a very strong platform in political contents. Twenty-eight respondents (14.0%), who selected Instagram, indicate that the visual aspect of social media has some influence on the formation of political activity. Instagram is a visual-based media that has complemented the use of political content as a platform of consumption especially amongst the younger population who are more prone to visual media. The preference towards Instagram, however, is a little bit less than the one towards Facebook, which means that, although visual platforms are becoming increasingly significant, they remain secondary to textual platforms such as Facebook as the source of political content. Twitter, where the least number of respondents, 21 (10.5 percent), prefer political content, is the least favorite platform. Although it is used in real-time information and even trending political discussions, it is not the dominant one in this sample. This can be perhaps because the Twitter character format leaves much to be desired when it comes to political content.

**Rating the Role of Women in Pakistani Politics**



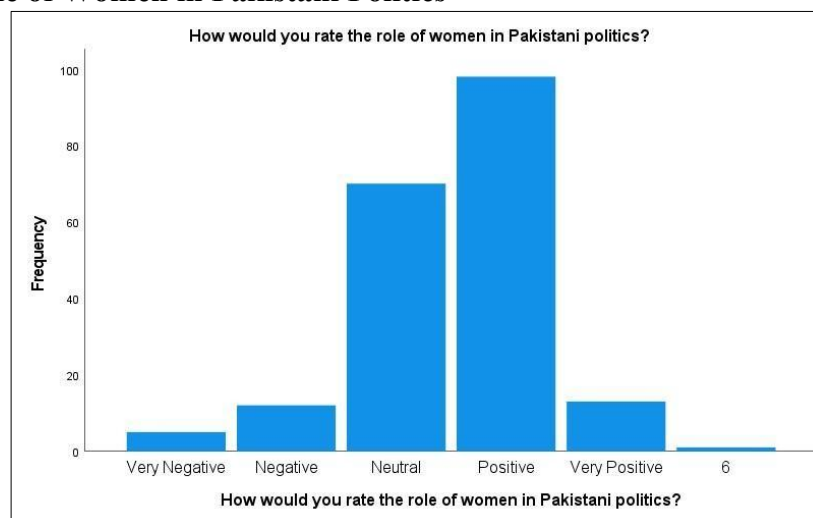Figure 12: Rating the Role of Women in Pakistani Politics

**Analysis**: The survey aimed at determining how the respondents perceived the role of women in Pakistan. politics and the answers give a wide range of views on this matter. The results indicate a varied perception that is both very positive to very negative. Positive Perceptions: The most common perception was that women have positive role in Pakistani

politics and 49.0 percent of respondents (about 98 people) agreed. This implies that almost half of the respondents appreciate highly the role of women in political leadership, which is perhaps a sign of increasing acceptance and realization of women in political roles in Pakistan. This is in line with the growth in the involvement of women in politics, including the emergence of high-profile female politicians, which is probably a contributing factor to these more favorable impressions. Neutral Opinions: 35.0 percent of the respondents (around 70 persons) experienced the role of females in politics as impartially neutral. Such people might not have any strong feelings about the issue and might consider the issue of the political activity of women neither good nor bad. This may be an indication of a section of the population that gender in politics seems to be non-issue, or rather there is a group of people who are confused about the real effects of women in the political arena. Negative Perceptions: This minority had 6.0 percent (about 12) of the respondents. those (individuals), who evaluated the role of women in politics with negative marks. This shows some form of opposition or disapproval of the political participation of women in Pakistan. These perceptions may be caused by such factors as patriarchal norms or misogynistic perceptions towards the leadership of women, and some people might perhaps think that women are not supposed to be in high positions in politics.

**Which Female Politician Has the Most Effective Presence in Pakistan?**
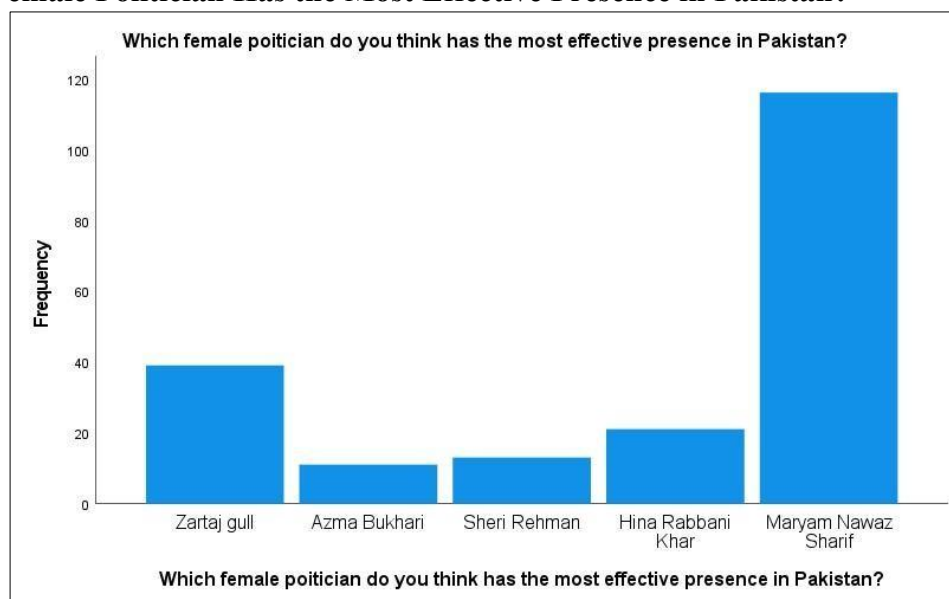


Figure 13: Which Female Politician Has the Most Effective Presence in Pakistan?

**Analysis**: The answer to the question about the most effective female politician in Pakistan shows the definite preferences, and Maryam Nawaz Sharif became the first choice of respondents (58.0%, i.e., approximately 116 people). The visibility of Maryam Nawaz Sharif and her political power especially as the Vice President of the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) and her participation in the political campaigns, probably causes her recognition and

power. The second most selected female politician was Zartaj Gull where 19.5 percent of the respondents (roughly 39) said he was the most effective one. Being a member of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party and a Minister of State in the climate change department, she has risen to prominence in the political world as a result of policy advocacy especially in the environmental field. The previous Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hina Rabbani Khar, was known to 10.5 percent of respondents (or about 21 people). Hina Rabbani Khar has been regarded as one of the most successful female politicians of Pakistan especially in terms of diplomacy and foreign affairs. Sheri Rehman got 6.5 percent of the votes (around 13 people). Sheri Rehman is a senior member of the Pakistan People Party (PPP) and a vocal champion of women rights and climate change, and is therefore well-known, but her name has not been recognized as much in this survey as those of other contestants. The least recognized of the options was Azma Bukhari with 5.5 per cent (about 11 persons) vote. She seems to be less recognized nationally than other female politicians in the survey despite her vital role in the Punjab politics and her leadership in the PPP.

## 5. DISCUSSION

### 5.1 Introduction

The findings that were gathered through the research are clearly analyzed as well as discussed in this chapter. information gathered in the course of the research. The primary focus of the study was to investigate the effect of media exposure to the perception of people towards women politicians in Pakistan. This chapter starts by providing a summary of the most important results of the analysis conducted on the data, that is, the media consumption habits and the perception of female politicians in Pakistan. The findings indicate that television is still the most popular channel of consumption. Political content whereas social sites, especially Facebook and Instagram are becoming popular among young generations. In addition, the research also found out that cultural behavior, societal imagery and media portrayal are key issues experienced by women in politics implying that although the constitution guarantees women gender equality, women in Pakistan continue to experience a lot of obstacles towards their full participation in the political decision making. This discussion is aimed at interpreting these findings in connection with the research. the questions, objectives and hypotheses spelled out in the study earlier. This chapter seeks insightful interpretation of the findings so as to get a better insight into the role of media in defining perceptions about women politicians, and the overall implication of gender equality and political participation of women in Pakistan.

**5.2 Summary of Major Results**

The most significant findings of the data analysis point to vital trends in media consumption behavior as well as attitude towards females in politics. A summary of the key findings is given below in detail:

1. **The prevalent use of television as a media platform of political content**: Most of the respondents (61%) indicated that television is their most favorite platform where they get political information. This observation highlights the importance of the traditional media in the construction of political views, at least in Pakistan which has been experiencing the dominance of television as the most popular medium. Television has been deemed as a valid source of political discussions, news stories, and political commentaries, which possibly explains the dominating position that it holds in the politics of the masses.

2. **The Rising Power of social media**: Although television is still the most desired platform, Facebook was the second most popular after 36 percent of the respondents mentioned it as their favorite source of political content. This is an indication of the increased role of social media in political opinion formation, especially in the younger, more digitalized population. Interactive space Social media also provides the possibility of interactive involvement with political issues, e.g., it is possible to discuss and exchange political opinions via Facebook. The most popular social network is Instagram, as 18 percent of the respondents chose it, indicating the growing interest in visual media in political activities, especially infographics and political videos.

3. **The way Women in Politics are perceived**: o The image of women in politics was mostly positive with 49 percent of the respondents admitting the important role that women can play in political decision making. Nevertheless, a rather higher percentage of the respondents (35%) were neutral, which means that they do not care or are unaware of the role of women in politics. This discovery points out the prevailing struggles women are experiencing to be embraced as political leaders.

4. **Issues of Female Politicians**:

   • The items that the respondents cited as the major problems women experience in politics were cultural behaviour (43%), the perceptions of the people (40%), and political limitations (24%). These obstacles are indicative of the underlying gender disparities that exist in Pakistani society with cultural values and gender biases to restrict women access to decision making positions.

   • Media representation was also cited as a major challenge with the respondents mentioning that women politicians are usually represented through a gendered lens

with their coverage focusing on their appearance or even personal lives and not their political abilities. This revelation highlights the issue of the media in propagating stereotypes and the decrease in the trustworthiness of female politicians.

**5.3 Key Findings Discussion**

Here, we will discuss all of the main findings in detail and refer them to the research questions and study objectives. The results will be put into perspective of the current literature on gender and media, and most importantly, the Pakistani political culture.

**Findings 1: Television as a Political Platform of choice**

- Implications: The emphasis on television as the most frequently used platform of receiving political information gives an indication that the traditional forms of media is still the most dominant in the determination of the political opinions of people in Pakistan. Since television is the most authoritative and detailed source of information about political events, there is no wonder that the respondents consider it as the most credible source of information.

- Comparison with the Literature: The past research indicated that television is still the most common method of conveying political content in developing nations (Ahmed, 2016). In Pakistan, where the popularity of television has become an established fact and people have gained the trust of television, it is not surprising why television remains the first source of political information.

- Surprising Outcome: It might be unexpected that the use of television will remain popular despite the emergence of digital media. But this can be attributed to the reason that television news tends to cover more people especially in rural communities where internet is less penetrated.

**Findings 2: Influence of Social Media Findings**

- Implications: Since the use of social media platforms, especially Facebook has been on the rise, it may imply a change in the consumption of political content by the younger generations. The social media provides a more interactive and personal result to the users so they can share their views and perception and participate in political discussions.

- Literature Comparison: The study by Boulianne (2015) confirms the suggestion that social media has been converted into an effective tool of political participation, particularly, in a democratic environment. This concurs with the results of this study,

where the social media is making advances, such as Facebook, as important sources of political content.

- Unexpected Result: Though Facebook turned out to be the second most favored one, the low preference of Instagram and Twitter could be an indication that these tools are yet to become mainstream political tools in Pakistan.

**Findings 3: The views of Women in Politics**

- Implications: The positive perceptions of women in politics, which was reported by 49 per cent of the respondents have implications that there is an emerging acceptance of female involvement in decision making. Nevertheless, the ambivalent and negative answers demonstrate the issues women still have to struggle with to become fully equal in the political sphere.

- Literature Comparison: Literature done in other parts has indicated that women in politics are usually exposed to gender bias and misrepresentation (Holmes, 2019). This research supports such global trends, implying that despite the fact that certain improvement has been achieved, the level of women representation in the political arena is not sufficiently high due to the patriarchal attitude to culture. Unforeseen Outcome: The high number of the neutral responses to the role of women in politics indicates that gender might not necessarily be a determinant of political judgment especially when women are perceived as politically apt.

**Findings 4: Problems Experienced by Female Politicians Implications:**

Findings on the importance of cultural behavior, public perception and political constraints as key factors that female politicians encounter in politics highlight the structural and cultural limitations that women encounter as they enter politics that should be addressed. These results indicate that gendered perceptions still define the way women are regarded in the political arena.

- Comparison with Literature: It has been identified through research studies that women in most societies are exposed to institutional constraints and gender discrimination that restricts their political chances (Jha & Kumar, 2017). These results are in line with the overall literature of gender inequality in politics. Surprising Findings: The fact that rating the media representation as a challenge is reasonably high indicates that media representation matter a lot when it comes to developing the perception towards female politicians. The political credibility continues to destroy women because the media emphasises more on their appearance and personal lives as opposed to politics.

**5.4 Comparison to Studies Conducted Previously**

The results compared to existing literatures basically support gender in this study. Political inequality and media influence of the impressions held by citizens of female politicians. The supremacy of television as the major source of consuming political contents is congruent with other studies which have noted that the powerful position and wide influence of television in influencing political views even among different population groups. According to Smith (2015) television is the most trusted source of political information in most of the developing world, among the reasons why it is the most trusted is because it gives a deep coverage of political issues and also it has credibility as well as the news it gives is perceived to be objective. Nevertheless, the fact that social media has been gaining interest as a factor in political participation is also well documented in literature. With continued increased popularity of social media channels, they have emerged to take center stage in terms of political engagement and export of information especially by the youthful generations. Boulianne (2015) investigated the effects of social media on political participation, revealing that such media technologies as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have substantially shaped the nature of consumption of political material and involvement in political discourse. In the same light, the results of this study reported that Facebook was the second best medium of choice in political content hence signifying that digital mediums are slowly gaining their force to influence the perceptions of politics, especially the younger and more digitally accessible respondents. The issues that were identified in the study, namely, the disadvantages that female politicians experience in the context of media representations and the perception of the general population are in line with the current research findings on gender biases and misogyny in the political media coverage. Holmes (2019) has suggested that women politicians are being covered in an explicit manner through the media that highlights their individual lives, looks, and emotions, instead of addressing their skills and competence regarding politics and leadership qualities. This coincides with the results of the current study where the respondents averred that media representation is a major challenge to women in politics. These media transformation as outlined by Holmes (2019) tend to lead to the undercutting and stigmatizing of women in the political field, and this makes it difficult to raise the trust of the people and win elections. Gendered cultural norms also prevail in the measures of the research. stereotypes that are usually mentioned as an obstacle to female hopefuls of being engaged in the political arena in much of the world. It is in this regard that findings of the current research provide evidence that cultural behavior and gendered expectations are some of the main obstacles to women political empowerment in Pakistan. Speaking about Pakistan as part of the South Asian continent, considerable problems arise associated with the position of women in South Asian

societies and their low status in the public sphere, preventing their participation in the process of political decision-making and becoming leaders (as Jha and Kumar, 2017, noticed). This paper also establishes the fact that, male-dominated social order in Pakistan still limits access to political prerogatives of women in this country and underlines the gender limitations as women have in politics.

## 5.5 Results Interpretation

The results of this study indicate that exposure to the media especially by the use of television, contributes a lot to the formation of the view of women politicians among the masses of Pakistan. This agrees with the current literature which has exhibited the long-term effects of traditional media in determining political attitudes. Formality and authoritativeness of television creates an opportunity to ensure in-depth political coverage in the form of debates, news programs, and political commentaries, which are picked up genuinely by a large number of people and lead to the development of public perception (Smith, 2015). Television is the most reliable source of political information in the case of Pakistan and salient results as are provided in this research, apportion to this very fact. The positive attitudes towards women in the political life, of which 49 percent of respondents reported, are the signs of the consideration of women in the political life. that it is becoming more acceptable to have female leadership in Pakistan which is evident with the rising popularity of women in political offices and positions in the leadership. The findings also reflect the global trends of political representation that are described by a rising rate of female political leaders altering the attitudes of the masses towards a more egalitarian idea of leadership. Today, there are rising number of women in politics who are increasingly getting support in the face of society as they are proven to be competent leaders and the positive findings in this study indicate that the public is appreciating the input that women have in politics. But the problems encountered by the female politicians in the shape of cultural behavior, Gender biases, as well as media presence continue to be major hindrances of their complete involvement with political decision-making. Such problems are especially urgent in patriarchal communities such as Pakistan in which the cultural factors tend to prescribe that the ambitions of women should be borne on the internal plane, and they only have diminished chances at taking part in leadership in the external environment. Because, as Jha and Kumar (2017) pointed out, the way society sees the position of women in society and in a family usually prevents their approaching their political desires and the results obtained in the research presented in this paper echo them. Besides, media portrayal does have an important appeal in female politician perception. Only the appearance or personal life of women in politics is usually referred to rather not the political actions or skills of leadership, therefore,

misogynistic attitudes are present and women cannot be seen as the leaders. In the study, it is confirmed that media portrayals play a significant role in dictating the opinions held by the people of female politicians and a negative media portrayal and illustration tend to attribute to the gendered stereotypes preventing women politicians to become credible politicians (Holmes, 2019). Therefore, though it can be observed that positive changes in the attitudes of the population towards women in politics are taking place, they are still made slow by established cultural prescriptions and gender media representation that still persist in hindering the complete entrance of women in the process of politics.

## 5.6. Theoretical Implications

This paper is of essay to gender and media theory because it offers an empirical finding on the ways the media representation of women in a political arena affects such perceptions in the views of the citizens. This paper emphasizes the role of media and framing gender and also on how the media has shaped the political participation particularly in a society characterized by patriarchal ideologies in political arena and social context. The results of the current study provide important clues about gender politics in Pakistan and the ability of media to be a strong tool in empowering the work of women politicians but at the same time, reinforcing gender forms of prejudice that restrict the democratic visibility of women and their credibility. The findings of this research project indicate the value of the critical media analysis that not only studies what the media portrays but it also takes into consideration its effects on the attitude of the audience and action in politics. Moreover, the research will add complements to the already established media consumption theories by making awareness of how social media is increasingly influencing political inclination, especially among the youth and more digital aware people. Towards this end, social media is important to foster a more interactive and a more democratic kind of political participation whereby, citizens can actually participate in political discourse as proposed by Boulianne (2015). This paper reaffirms the fact that the emergence of digital platforms like Facebook and Instagram has become very relevant in building political perceptions, and it dictates the importance of a balanced approach to media, which may once prove both credible and engaging to women in politics.

## 5.7. Practical Implications

The results of this work also have important practical implications both to policymakers, to media organizations and to the women advocacy groups. The prevalence of the television as the most reliable source of political information supports the hypothesis that the traditional media still play a significant role in conditioning the attitude towards female political leaders. This implies that media houses and more so television stations could be

instrumental in enhancing publicity and legitimacy of women in the political arena by making sure that there is non-gendered presentation of female political figures. With regard to media organizations, the results indicate that there is a necessity to create a gender-sensitive style in political coverage. The media stations need to understand that they have an impact in either strengthening biased attitudes towards gender as well as breaking such biases and to this end they should strive to not only improve the images of various women in the political media but also improve gender diversity. This is portraying the strengths and successes of women leadership instead of harkening their personal qualities such as appearance or family life which are most of the time contributing to the downfall of their political status. To women advocacy organizations, the research holds the significance that they need to advocate on the provision of more media literacy to the people especially in their perceptions on the female politicians as a result of media representations. The advocacy groups can also interact with the social media to assist in generating awareness regarding the political issues of women and to dispel the gendered image of the mainstream media. Moreover, these entities may campaign on matters such as reformation of institutions to give women adequate space in political platforms as well as allow them a chance to take part in making decisions without any form of gender discrimination.

## 5.8. Constriction of the Study

Although this research gives a good idea about the interdependence between media exposure and some phenomena and public perception of the women politicians in Pakistan, it does not come without limitations.

1. **Sample size/Demographics**: The sample used in the study was limited to respondents of a given academic institution; therefore, it does not provide a complete representation of the general population of Pakistan. The findings cannot hence be generalized because the study fails to use variations in political perceptions as perceived by the different socioeconomic groups or across regions or even age groups within Pakistan. The survey of future research can be extended to a larger sample size as well as to involve respondents of varied demographical backgrounds to gain a better insight on the media exposure on the political perceptions of a wider segment of the population.

2. **Self-Reported Data**: Data obtained in the present study is reported as self-reported data which can be subjected to response bias. The data may also not be accurate because the respondents might have answered questions depending on what social desirability requires, or even being influenced by the need to get in line with certain political standards. Further studies might take into account secondary data collection techniques,

such as interviews or focus groups, to triple the information and obtain a more detailed picture of the factors that shape the perception of the population.

3. **Emphasis on Media Consumption**: The research mainly emphasizes on media consumption patterns and perception in the society, but does not go deep enough to discuss the content and type of media consumed. The next step would be to understand the kind of political content (e.g. news broadcasts, political debates/interviews) that has the highest probability of influencing the masses and the tone and structure of such content pieces on how the female gender in politics would be viewed.

**5.9. Future Research Suggestions**

This paper leaves a number of opportunities when it comes to the subject of gender and media in politics. especially in Pakistan and other socio-political environments. Some of the future research areas are:

1. **Follow up Media Affect Research**: The other possible research in the future would concern the effects of media exposure on people about female politicians in the long term. A longitudinal analysis would be an ideal way to see the change in the perception as time works out, as new media such as digital media and social media channels emerge.

2. **Future Questions**: It is also possible that future researching takes into account the qualitative research, like the interviews of the female politicians themselves, to ascertain their experiences concerning the media representation and the way it impacts the political career of the female politician. Questioning of media experts would as well be a great way of finding information on the decision making that goes into presenting female politicians in the media.

3. **Comparative Studies**: It will be interesting to compare the mass representation of the female politicians in Pakistan with those of other South Asian countries (India or Bangladesh) similar socio-political relations may impact the representation of females in politics. This may allow determining the areas of challenges and proposing the crosscultural strategies of enhancing the representation and the role of women in politics.

4. **Effect of social media on Voter Behavior**: The future research enhancements are the possible study of how social media sites in particular affect the perceptions and electoral results on voter preferences in Pakistan. Due to the growing penetration of digital space, such knowledge will likely help determine the role of social media in nurturing voter

preferences in favor of female candidates; thus, providing a significant understanding of the electoral dynamics in the country.

**5.10. Conclusions**

This chapter was able to provide an in-depth examination of the findings and its implications as well as the detailed interpretation of findings showing the effects of the media exposure on how the people perceive the women politicians in Pakistan. Findings indicate that although television has continued to prevail in political content delivery, social media is in the escalation stage especially amongst the younger generations. Although there has been good change in the way people perceive the women in politics, there are still massive walls; these walls are in the form of behavioral culture, gender prejudices and media distortion. All these results are helpful in taking a closer look at the problems that women have to encounter in becoming an active part of the political life, particularly in terms of the patriarchal social systems within Pakistan. Both practical and theoretical implications of the study make it obvious that a gender sensitive approach to the media coverage and political representation is required. Further, the study shows how media literacy and change of policy are important to address the structural barriers, that are yet to stop the political empowerment of women. Theorists of policymaking, as well as media organizations, can influence an increasingly diverse and equal political system in Pakistan enabling women to equally participate in political decision-making and self-development of the country.

**Final Thoughts**

However, in conclusion we may acknowledge that in this thesis the complex relationship between the media exposure and the perception of the people towards women politicians in Pakistan has been explored. These results are highlighted because television and social media are increasingly becoming a central stage on which political conversations occur with the former remaining dominant in politics. It is also revealed in the study that women have considerable obstacles in the field of politics especially in media representations, cultural influences and gender-biases. The mentioned obstacles will need a concentrated effort on the part of policymakers, media entities, and advocacy organizations to create a more open and gender equitable political arena. By implementing an ongoing research and revising policies, women can be further empowered regarding their political involvement and representation in Pakistan, which can eventually become a more democratic, just world.

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# Survey Questionnaire

Women Politicians in Pakistan: Exploring the impact of media exposure on public perception

This survey activity included collecting data from diverse demographics to analyze public opinions on women politicians in Pakistan. Participants were asked about the role of media exposure in shaping their perception and attitudes towards these leaders.

1. **Demographic Characteristics**

**Demographic Characteristics**
What is your age group?

1. 25-34
2. 35-44
3. 45-54
4. 55-64

**Gender:**
What is your gender?
1. Male
2. Female

**Education:**
Highest level of education completed?
2. Matriculation/O level
3. Intermediate/A level
4. Bachelor's Degree
5. Master's Degree
6. Doctorate

**Employment status:** What is your employment status?
1. Full time
2. Part time
3. Contract

**What is your Grade**
1. 1-16
2. 17-21

| Sr. No | Items | Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Strongly Disagree | Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | I believe the contribution of women in Pakistani politicians is significant. | | | | | |
| 2. | I think female politicians are as capable of leadership as compared to their male counterparts. | | | | | |
| 3. | I believe that women are underrepresented in Pakistan politics. | | | | | |
| 4. | I believe female politicians in Pakistan face objectification on media | | | | | |
| 5. | I believe female politicians in Pakistan face stereotyping on media | | | | | |
| 6. | I believe female politicians in Pakistan face misogyny on media. | | | | | |
| 7. | I believe female politicians in Pakistan face discrimination on media. | | | | | |
| 8. | I believe the media shapes public perception of female politicians. | | | | | |
| 9. | I think social media portray female politicians more positive compared to male politicians. | | | | | |

| 10. | Which media do you use frequently? | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Television | Newspaper (print) | Newspaper(online) | Facebook | Instagram | Twitter |

| 11. | How much time do you spend daily, as average, consuming political content? | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0-30 minutes | 31-60 minutes | 61-80 minutes | More than 80 minutes | |

| 12. | What type of content about do you most frequently consume? | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| News Reports | Opinion Pieces | Social Media Posts | Debates/Interviews | Pictures |

| 13. | In your Opinion to what extent do you rely on Social media for forming your opinion about politics? | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| To great extent | To some extent | To little extent | Not at all | |

| 14. | What is your preferred platform politicians content? | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Television | Newspaper(print) | Newspaper(online) | Facebook | Instagram | Twitter |

| 15. | How would you rate the role of women in Pakistani politics? | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Very Positive | positive | Neutral | Negative | Very Negative |

| 16. | In your opinion to what extent does media shapes public perception of female politicians? | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| To great extent | To some extent | No opinion | To a little extent | Not at all |

| 17. | How often you follow political debates or discussion about female politicians on social media? | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Frequently | Sometimes | Not at all |

| 18. | Do you think social media portrays female politicians more positively compared traditional media? | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Yes | Sometimes | No |

| 19. | Do you think time spent on social media has influenced your perception of female politicians? | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Yes | Sometimes | No |

| 20. | Do you think female politicians have an effective online presence in Pakistan? | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Yes | Sometimes | No |

| 21. | Do you follow any female politicians account on social media? | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Yes | Sometimes | No |

| 22. | Do you comment on posts by female politicians? | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Yes | | Sometimes | No |

| 23. | Do you comment on post about female politicians? | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Yes | | Sometimes | No |
| | | | |

| 24. | Do you react on posts by female politicians? | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Yes | | Sometimes | No |

| 25. | Do you react on posts about female politicians? | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Yes | | Sometimes | No |

| 26. | Which female politician do you think has the most effective online presence in Pakistan? | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Maryam Nawaz Sharief | Hina Rabbani Khar | Sheri Rehman | Azma Bukhari | Zartaj Gull |

| 27. | In your opinion what are the primary challenges female politicians face in Pakistan? (select as way as apply) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Lack of the media representation | Political social constrains | Public Perception | Cultural behavior | Others |