Research Article   **Qlantic Journal of Social Sciences (QJSS)**
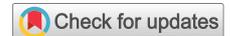
Women and Politics: Empowering Women Leadership for Political Representation in Sindh: A Multi-Dimensional Analysis

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Abstract: *Research investigates Sindh women's political leadership representation in Pakistan by studying the multiple challenges they encounter at institutional cultural and socio-economic levels. The authors implement mixed-methods research design that unites quantitative survey findings with in-depth qualitative interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) of female leaders, activists and community members. Rising numbers of women under political quota systems yet patriarchal cultural values together with institutional inequalities along with financial disparities limit their political influence. Citizens belonging to the lower socio-economic status and residing in rural areas of Sindh encounter resistance from their families and communities and limited resource access along with exclusion from party decision-making. The research demonstrates that female political leadership and office can be promoted through mentoring systems and interlinking networks and relationship-building alliances. The study proves the necessity of both systemic reform combined with extensive social cultural changes to push past tokenistic reforms that will deliver actual political impact for women in Sindh.*

Key Words: Women's Leadership, Political Representation, Sindh, Multi-Dimensional Analysis, Empowerment, Gender Equality

Introduction

The pursuit of gender equivalence in political participation remains a decisive issue globally, with so substantial disparities persisting despite international frameworks like the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), which advocate for women's comprehension in political processes. The worldwide norm of women in parliaments was around 24.9 percent in 2020 (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2020), which has risen to approximately 25.8percent by 2023(Inter-Parliamentary Union 2023). The increase in the global pct of women in parliamentary positions between 2020 and 2023 is marginal, showing continued slack progress in gender parity at the political layer (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2023. There remains a substantial gap, especially in countries with planted patriarchal structures, such as Pakistan. Women's political representation has been shown to have a verbatim prescribed impact on gender-sensitive policies, societal justice, and sustainable development (Ballington, 2008), yet the progress remains slack in many parts of the humanity, specially countries like India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Yemen, and Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Belarus and Uzbekistan, where so deeply rooted patriarchal systems and socio-cultural barriers continue to hinder women's political participation.

In Pakistan, women hood made significant strides in government through iconic leaders like Fatima Jinnah and Benazir Bhutto. Fatima Jinnah contested elections in 1965; spell Benazir Bhutto became the firstly female Prime Minister of Pakistan in 1988 - a Muslim-majority country. This underscores that the

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women's political involvement remains largely symbolic, but they face cultural, structural, and economic barriers to meaningful participation (Zia & Bari 1999). Although an increased women's mathematical representation was observed after the reserved seats for them were introduced in national and provincial assemblies through constitutional reforms in 2002, their influential decision-making remains marginal, particularly in Sindh province (Cheema et al., 2013).

Sindh, the second-largest province in Pakistan by universe with about 55-60 billion residents as of 2023, reflects the subject trend where women's participation in government is hindered by socio-cultural norms, economic constraints, and educational disparities. The patriarchal structure and enduring socio-cultural norms in Pakistani society control women's mobility and approach to employ opportunities (Ateeq-Ur-Rehman et al. 2023). Despite the allocation of reserved seats, women's representation in Pakistan's legislative bodies remains special, with women holding only a fraction of essential decision-making force. Research highlights that women on reserved seats often face exclusion from key political and policy-making processes, reflecting broader societal and structural barriers entrenched in patriarchal norms and gendered political systems (Ahmed et al., 2021).

While the quota scheme has succeeded in increasing women's representation, it often fails to provide the necessary structures and support for women to take on   possible leaders roles, leading to under-participation in government. This raises vital questions near why women are not only underrepresented in influential positions but also why many opt not to operate in   political processes. Research on barriers to women's   political involvement in Pakistan has primarily focused on the national layer, with foundational studies such as identifying structural challenges like patriarchal norms and   economic dependency by Mazhar et al. (2017) explored   historical roots of women's exclusion from government. While these studies provide important insights, they are relatively dated and do not reflect the current socio-political landscape.

Furthermore, existing lit tends to overlook the intersectionality between education, economic empowerment, and political involvement. For instance, Jabeen and Awan (2017) highlight how gender quotas, spell instrumental in increasing women's legislative representation, often die to call deeper socio-economic and educational disparities that impede women's substantive empowerment.

Given the modified focusing on Sindh and the need for updated analyses, this work aims to fill the existing explore gap by conducting a comprehensive exam of women's political participation in the region. It testament focus on socio-economic factors, ethnic norms, and the effectiveness of gender quotas, integrating both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. By doing so, this research seeks to cater a nuanced savvy of the challenges and opportunities for women in political leading, ultimately contributing to strategies aimed at enhancing gender para in Sindh's political landscape.

Given the limited scope of existing studies at the provincial layer, particularly in rural Sindh, this search provides decisive insights into up gender parity in political leading. Additionally, the consider contributes to the insurance deliberate by offering recommendations aimed at creating a more inclusive political environment in Sindh.

Literature Review

The planetary landscape of women's political involvement has witnessed substantial advancements over the past few decades. According to UN Women, the inclusion of women in political processes is indispensable for strengthening popular systems and ensuring that governance reflects various perspectives. Despite advance, women ease hold only 26.7percent of parliamentary seats globally as of 2023, highlighting the demand for continued efforts to reach gender equivalence in political representation (UN Women, 2023).

Studies make highlighted persistent structural and socio-cultural barriers that impede women's political leadership. For instance, countries like Rwanda and Sweden hold made important strides due to the implementation of gender quotas, which have proven effective in increasing women's parliamentary representation under certain conditions. However, the success of such measures often depends on the specific setting and the political testament for genuine implementation (Dahlerup 2005).

Women's Political Participation in Pakistan

Pakistan's political chronicle includes prominent female figures, such as Fatima Jinnah and Benazir Bhutto, who feature so left indelible marks on the country's political landscape. Weiss (1990) Benazir Bhutto's leading symbolized a turn spot for women's profile in Pakistan's politics and raised hopes for their future political empowerment. Despite these notable examples, women's political participation in Pakistan remains forced, especially in rural areas. The Election Commission of Pakistan ensures reserved seats for women in both the National Assembly and provincial assemblies, which has facilitated some increase in female representation.

However, women occupy simply 17percent of the seats in national and provincial legislative bodies, far beneath the goal of gender parity (Election Commission of Pakistan 2020).

Studies show that although gender quotas, such as those allocated to women in Pakistan's National Assembly, have facilitated an growth in female representation, they often shine little of translating this descriptive representation into substantial political power. While these measures offer women a foothold in legislative bodies, their work within decision-making processes remains limited, highlighting the challenges in achieving genuine political empowerment. Research by Zia (2019); Iqbal and Asim (2024) emphasize that piece legislative measures have increased female representation in Pakistan, women elected to reserved seats often face symbolic roles without tangible liberty, remaining marginalized within their parties and often linked to male politicians, which limits their leadership and influence.

Women's Political Participation in Sindh

In Sindh, women's so political involvement is shaped by the product of ethnic norms, economic conditions, and educational disparities. Traditional patriarchal values command the societal fabric, particularly in rural areas where women are expected to confine themselves to domestic roles. The consider by Bukhari et al. (2023) highlights that rural women in Sindh remain unempowered socially, psychologically, economically, and politically due to a weak socio-economic background. It emphasizes the need for warm policymaking and the launching of gender-supportive schemes by both provincial and fed governments, along with stringent measures to ensure policy implementation for up women's empowerment.. Women in rural Sindh face severe opposition from their families and communities when attempting to engage in political activities (Panhwar et al., 2021). This opposition is compounded by economic constraints and educational disparities, as women often lack the financial resources and social networks requisite to enter government.

Women's political involvement in Pakistan is molded by socio-economic divides, with urban women more potential to be politically active than their rural counterparts. Women from wealthier, urban backgrounds experience greater approach to instruction, economic opportunities, and social networks, which ease their involvement in politics. Despite the constitutional guarantees of political rights for women in Pakistan, substantial gender disparities persist. The data from Akhtar and Ishaq (2024) indicate that high income, political mesh, and opposite to military find are decisive factors defining keep for women's political rights, with regional differences underscoring the want for targeted insurance measures. women from rural, low-income backgrounds are hindered by special approach to instruction and economical dependency on male members, which restricts their political representation .

Women in Pakistan have been actively involved in political activities since the country's independence, organizing campaigns, raising funds, and mobilizing support to consolidate democratic rule. However, for practically of Pakistan's political history, women have had special opportunities to competition elections, with reserved seats offering minimum representation. By 1988, there were only 10 reserved seats in the subject gathering and 5 in each provincial assembly. This list declined to 3-4 seats between 1988 and 2000. Starting in 2001, significant legal changes allowed for greater female participation, such as the 33percent quota for local elections and the 17percent reserve in national and provincial assemblies implemented in 2002. This led to a record 40,000 women councilors holding local governance positions. However, verbatim elections to general seats remained low, with only 10 women elected in 2008 and 12 in 2013. Socio-cultural and economic constraints experience limited women's political engagement, perpetuating gender disparities. Ghafoor and Haider (2018) emphasize that while sound advancements were important, they were insufficient for substantial empowerment due to lasting societal barriers. This research aims to

explore the underlying causes of the slack progress in women's political empowerment in Pakistan and suggest strategies for fostering inclusive governance Socio-cultural and economical constraints feature limited women's political booking, perpetuating gender disparities. Ghafoor and Haider (2018) underline that patch legal advancements were significant; they were insufficient for substantive empowerment due to persistent societal barriers. This explore aims to explore the underlying causes of the slow progress in women's political empowerment in Pakistan and intimate strategies for fostering inclusive governance. Research has shown that while gender quotas in Pakistan feature improved women's political representation, many women elected to reserved seats are sidelined within their parties and excluded from decision-making, limiting their impact (Cheema et al. 2022). This is exacerbated by the role of male household members as "gatekeepers" who work women's political involvement, highlighting the want for strategies that engage men to funding women's participating involvement. Almas et al. (2021) highlight that planted socio-cultural barriers, reflected in traditional beliefs and a patriarchal scheme, continue to impede women's empowerment and involvement in popular processes. Economic dependence on men, further exacerbated by the denial of ground and property ownership rights, limits women's power to operate meaningfully in politics, leaving most in positions where dynamic involvement is not feasible

While some women hold been able to participate government through reserved seats, their roles often focus on so-called "women's issues," leaving broader governance matters to their male counterparts. Begum et al. (2021) highlighting that despite the patriarchal nature of Sindh's society; women have historically played a significant role in Pakistan's government, particularly during key movements, the Pakistan Movement and opposition against military rulers. However, their involvement continues to be limited by societal constraints, with urban-focused NGO and civic society efforts weakness to offer substantial support to rural women, who remain on the fringe of so political leadership and decision-making.

Women in Pakistan, especially in Sindh, face important challenges in achieving political empowerment due to deeply rooted cultural and social conservatism. While some exceptions survive, women in rural Sindh struggle to drill their constitutional rights and participate meaningfully in political activities. Memon and Idris (2018) fence that women remain one of the most disadvantaged segments of society and require targeted interventions from governing bodies to enable them to play their due role in the political and overall evolution of the country.

Education and economical empowerment play polar roles in determining women's political participation. Jessar and Kazmi (2023) emphasize that socio-cultural barriers and limited approach to pro evolution significantly hinder women's power to assume leadership roles. Sindh, in particular, faces a pronounced education gender gap, with so low female literacy rates in rural areas exacerbating the exclusion of women from political processes. Without adequate training and leadership preparation, women often remain unprepared or unaware of how to engage effectively in politics.

Similarly, Wassan and Channa (2020) emphasize the importance of integrating gender-sensitive approaches into development discourse and public policy to call these systemic barriers. Prioritizing education, professional evolution, and women's empowerment frameworks is indispensable for fostering their comprehension in political and societal leadership.

In Sindh, most women remain economically hooked on so male relatives, which limit their political booking. Programs aimed at increasing women's economical independence, such as microfinance initiatives, get shown some success in empowering women politically, but these programs are yet to hit a significant list of women, especially in rural areas. Mazhar et al. (2017) emphasize those women's contributions to agriculture, often unrecognized and undervalued, process as hidden economical guts in rural Sindh. They argue that targeted initiatives to raise women's economical independence in agriculture could not only encouragement their financial standing but also play a pathway to greater political involvement and decision-making.

Research Gap

While existing lit has so good explored the global and subject dimensions of women's political involvement, limited research specifically addresses the unique socio-cultural and economical challenges

women face in Sindh. Furthermore, although studies have assessed the impact of gender quotas on women's political representation , there is a demand for in-depth analysis of the effectiveness of these quotas in fostering substantive leadership among women, particularly in Sindh's rural areas. This study aims to fill this gap by examining how socio-economic empowerment and ethnic perceptions impact women's leaders within Sindh's political scheme, offering targeted insurance recommendations to enhance women's political roles at both local and provincial levels.

Theoretical Framework

In this research, Liberal Feminist Theory serves as the primary framework for analyzing women's political representation in Sindh. This theory advocates for gender equality through sound reforms, such as the debut of political quotas, to ensure women's inclusion in political institutions. While these quotas hold increased the list of women in legislative assemblies, they experience not necessarily translated into substantive so political work or leading for women in Sindh. By applying progressive feminism, this study explores the gap between mathematical representation and literal empowerment, examining the limitations of these sound measures in challenging entrenched patriarchal norms. The search further evaluates whether such institutional mechanisms are sufficient to address the socio-cultural and economic barriers that restrict women's total participation in political leading. The findings provide vital insights into how legal reforms can be enhanced to make meaningful opportunities for women, moving beyond symbolic representation to reach true gender parity in so political decision-making.

Materials and Methods

The mixed-methods approaching allows for a deeper savvy by combine numerical data with insights drawn from lived experiences, offering a more nuanced perspective on the barriers and opportunities for women in political leading. The methods we used to cod the information for this work include interviews, direction grouping discussions, and surveys. By combining these methods, the search offers a robust, multi-dimensional analysis of the factors influencing women's leadership and political representation in Sindh. The qualitative findings, drawn from personal experiences and community discussions, complement the quantitative survey information, providing a holistic view of both individual and societal barriers to women's political empowerment.

We conducted 15semi-structured interviews with female political leaders, activists, and local representatives. We selected the participants using purposive sampling to ensure they represented so various regions of Sindh (both urban and rural) and had significant experience in navigating the political landscape. We incorporated open-ended questions in the question that encouraged participants to share detailed personal experiences. Each interview lasted roughly 45-60 minutes, covering topics such as political challenges, gender roles, home dynamics, and their journey into leading roles. Moreover, we designed in-depth interviews to explore the personal narratives of women leaders, focusing on their strategies, struggles, and perspectives on the political scheme. The interviews were recorded with participants' consent and transcribed for thematic analysis. Following this, we executed three focusing group discussions were organised, each comprising 8-10 participants. FGDs were conducted in Karachi and Hyderabad cities, and a rural territory in Sindh. Each session lasted about 90 minutes and was facilitated by a trained moderator who guided discussions around key issues, such as cultural norms, institutional barriers, and the effectiveness of gender quotas. The discussions were audio-recorded and later transcribed for analysis. For this, our participants were grassroots leaders, community members, and political activists, selected based on their involvement in local governance or advocacy for women's rights. FGDs provided collective insights, allowing participants to wage in dialogue, interchange experiences, and reflect on communal barriers. This method highlighted both converging and diverging opinions within the group, offering a broader understanding of societal perceptions. Lastly, we ran a structured study questionnaire with closed-ended questions.

The survey was intentional to gathering quantitative information on public perceptions of women's political participation, the barriers they face, and the perceived effectiveness of political quotas. A elaborate questionnaire consisting of 25 questions was developed, cover demographics, political participation, barriers to involvement, and leaders initiatives. The questionnaire was pre-tested with a little group to

ensure clarity and relevance. It was then administered both in person and online to maximize gain, with a total of 100 respondents. Out of these, all 100 surveys were completed, ensuring a 100percent response rate. The data collected were analyzed using by descriptive statistics to identify patterns and general trends. Key variables such as breeding layer, socio-economic position, and political involvement were cross-tabulated to assess their work on political representation.

Data Analysis

We entered the information into SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) for statistical analysis. Then, we calculated descriptive statistics such as representation , percentages, and frequencies to provide an overview of the demographic characteristics of respondents and their political involvement levels.

Afterwards, we employed thematic analysis in the in-depth interviews and direction group discussions. After transcription, we coded the information manually and grouped into themes such as cultural constraints, institutional barriers, and leadership strategies. This operation allowed for the identification of recurring patterns and deeper insights into the challenges faced by women in political leadership.

Results Quantitative Analysis
Survey Results
Table 1
Demographic Profile

Category	Sub-Category	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Geographical Location	Karachi	80	40%
	Hyderabad	70	35%
	Rural Sindh	50	25%
Age Group	18-25	50	25%
	26-35	60	30%
	36-45	50	25%
	46 and above	40	20%
Educational Background	Primary	30	15%
	Secondary	60	30%
	Higher Secondary	40	20%
	Bachelor's	50	25%
	Master's and above	20	10%

This table outlines the key demographic characteristics of the respondents, including their geographical location, age grouping, and educational desktop. The study included 200 respondents from iii geographical regions of Sindh—Karachi, Hyderabad, and rural areas of the province. Respondents were almost evenly distributed across the age groups, with the largest portion existence between 26-35 years old (30%), followed by those aged 18-25 and 36-45, both representing 25 percent of the add. In terms of teaching, the respondents reflected a wide range of academic backgrounds, with the bulk having secondary teaching (30%) and a considerable portion holding Bachelor's degrees (25%). This demographic diversity allows for a broader understanding of the political involvement landscape in Sindh across various communities and educational levels.

Table 2
Political Participation

Participation	Percentage
Voted in Elections	65%
Participated in Campaigns	25%
Support for Women in Politics	70% strongly concord, 20% agree

This Table summarizes the layer of political involvement among respondents. A important portion of the respondents (65%) reported having voted in elections, demonstrating a warm layer of involvement in the

democratic process. However, only 25percent of respondents have participated in political campaigns, indicating a gap between electoral engagement and broader political activism. In terms of supporting women in politics, the vast bulk of respondents either strongly agreed (70%) or agreed (20%) with the notion of increased women's representation , showing a positive attitude toward gender equality in political

Table 3
Barriers to Participation

Barriers	Percentage
Cultural Restrictions	40%
Lack of Education	25%
Lack of Family Support	20%
Economic Constraints	30%
Political Party Systems	15%
Gender Discrimination	25%

This table identifies the main barriers that women in Sindh face in participating in politics. Cultural restrictions were noted as the most important obstacle, with 40percent of respondents indicating that societal norms and traditional gender roles inhibit women's participation. Economic constraints (30%) and deficiency of education (25%) were also substantive barriers, with gender discrimination and lack of family support further contributing to the difficulties. These findings emphasize the multifaceted nature of the challenges that keep women from engaging in political activities.

Table 4
Leadership Initiatives

Awareness and Participation	Percentage
Awareness of Programs	40%
Participation in Programs	15%
Effectiveness of Programs	60% somewhat effective

This section explores the respondents' awareness of and involvement in leadership initiatives aimed at promoting women's political empowerment. While 40percent of respondents were so aware of such programs, only 15percent had actively participated in them. Regarding the effectiveness of these initiatives, 60percent of respondents found them "somewhat effective." This suggests that piece consciousness is present, greater efforts are required to ensure that women not only live about these opportunities but also actively engage with them and that these programs deliver measurable outcomes.

Inferential Statistics
Chi-Square Test: Gender vs. Political Participation
This try assesses the relationship between gender and political involvement (voting in elections, involvement in campaigns, etc.).

Table 5

Variable	Chi-Square Value	Degrees of Freedom (df)	p-value
Gender vs. Voting in Elections	8.55	1	0.003
Gender vs. Participated in Campaigns	7.34	1	0.007
Gender vs. Support for Women in Politics	15.60	1	0.001

Interpretation: The p-values for all variables are less than 0.05, indicating a significant relationship between gender and political involvement. Women are significantly more likely to living women in politics, patch men tend to participate more in elections and campaigns.

Logistic Regression: Predicting Political Participation (Voting in Elections)

Logistic regression can facilitate place the likelihood of an single voting in elections based on their educational desktop, gender, and socio-economic status.

Table 6

Independent Variable	B (Coefficient)	Standard Error (SE)	Wald Chi-Square	Odds Ratio (Exp(B))	p-value
Education Level (Bachelor's)	1.28	0.39	6.21	3.60	0.010
Gender (Female)	-0.70	0.32	4.85	0.50	0.025
Socio-Economic Status (Middle Class)	0.90	0.42	5.12	2.46	0.020

Interpretation: Education level significantly increases the odds of voting in elections (odds ratio of 3.60 for those with a bachelor's degree). Females are less likely to ballot than males, and those in the middle class are more potential to vote than those from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

ANOVA (Analysis of Variance): Education Level and Political Awareness
This analysis helps determine if there is a significant difference in political consciousness across different levels of education.

Table 7

Variable	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F-value	p-value
Between Groups (Education)	66.4	4	16.6	9.02	0.002
Within Groups	120.8	95	1.27		

Interpretation: The p-value (0.002) indicates that training layer has a statistically substantial impact on political awareness. As education increases, so does political awareness.

Correlation Analysis: Economic Constraints and Political Participation
A correlation examine between economic constraints and political involvement can assess the relationship between these two variables.

Table 8

Variable	Correlation Coefficient (r)	p-value
Economic Constraints vs. Voting	-0.45	0.001
Economic Constraints vs. Campaign Participation	-0.52	0.003

Interpretation: There is a moderate negative correlation between economical constraints and both voting in elections and cause involvement. This indicates that as economic constraints growth, political involvement decreases.

Factor Analysis: Barriers to Political Participation
Factor analysis groups related variables to identify key underlying factors that represent barriers to political participation.
Factor Loading for Barrier Variables   Percentage of Variance Explained

Table 9

Barriers		Percentage
Cultural/Social Barriers	Cultural Restrictions (0.78), Gender Discrimination (0.75)	40%
Economic Barriers	Economic Constraints (0.82), Lack of Family Support (0.72)	35%
Educational Barriers	Lack of Education (0.81)	25%

Interpretation: Three main factors—cultural/social barriers, economical barriers, and educational barriers—emerged from the analysis. Cultural and gender-based barriers account for the largest pct of variance (40%), indicating these are the most important barriers to political participation.

Cross-Tabulation: Educational Background vs. Awareness of Leadership Programs

Table 10

Education Level	Awareness of Programs (%)	Participation in Programs (%)	Perceived Effectiveness (%)
Primary	20%	5%	50%
Secondary	35%	10%	55%
Higher Secondary	40%	15%	60%
Bachelor's	55%	25%	70%
Master's and above	60%	30%	75%

Interpretation: Awareness and involvement in leadership programs increase with education layer. Those with a bachelor's level or higher are more potential to be aware of and participate in such programs, and they also perceive these programs to be more effective.

Regression Analysis: Predicting Support for Women in Politics
A regression analysis can help call the reinforcement for women in government based on gender, socio-economic position, and education.

Table 11

Independent Variable	B (Coefficient)	Standard Error (SE)	t-value	p-value
Gender (Female)	1.10	0.31	3.55	0.001
Education Level (Bachelor's)	1.15	0.35	3.29	0.002
Socio-Economic Status (Middle Class)	0.85	0.29	2.93	0.005

Interpretation: Gender (female) and breeding level (bachelor's or higher) significantly promise living for women in government. Women and individuals with higher education are more potential to living women's political representation.

Chi-Square Test: Socio-Economic Status vs. Awareness of Political Rights

Table 12

Variable	Chi-Square Value	Degrees of Freedom (df)	p-value
Socio-Economic Status vs. Awareness of Rights	14.56	3	0.002

Interpretation: The chi-square value is significant (p = 0.002), indicating a strong connection between socio-economic position and consciousness of political rights. Those in higher socio-economic classes are more aware of their so political rights.

ANOVA: Age Group and Support for Women in Politics

Table 13

Age Group	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F-value	p-value
Between Groups	53.2	4	13.3	7.62	0.004
Within Groups	105.4	95	1.11		

Interpretation: Age significantly impacts support for women in government (p = 0.004), with younger groups generally showing more support compared to older respondents.

Summary of Findings:

- Strong predictor of political engagement, awareness of leading programs, and supporting for women in politics.
- Women show more support for women's political representation but face more barriers to participation.
- Higher socio-economic classes experience more awareness of political rights and face fewer barriers.
- Urban areas, particularly Karachi, show higher political engagement.
- Cultural, economical, and educational barriers are the most significant obstacles to political participation.

Themes from In-Depth Interviews

Cultural Constraints and Gender Stereotypes

The in-depth interviews conducted with female political leaders in Sindh highlighted significant ethnic constraints and gender stereotypes touching their political participation.

- Interviewees reported facing opposition from families and communities due to patriarchal norms. Families often discourage or forbid women from pursuing government, perceiving it as inappropriate. This finding aligns with Shah and Ali (2022), who discuss how patriarchal norms in rural Sindh restrict women's public roles. However, the interviews offer this to urban areas same Karachi and Hyderabad, indicating that cultural constraints are more pervasive than previously noted.
- Women in government must always prove their competence, a scrutiny not faced by their male counterparts. This echoes Panhwar, Tahir, and Tunio (2021), who note the additional scrutiny women face. The interviews supply a nuanced perspective on this emerge, telling deeper societal skepticism and the constant pressure women endure to validate their political roles.

Institutional Barriers and Exclusion

Institutional barriers, including male-dominated political parties, modified mentorship, and qualified approach to resources, were prominent themes in the interviews.

- Women often occupy symbolic roles in political parties and are excluded from decision-making processes. This observation is supported by Bari (2005).The interviews reveal personal experiences of this exclusion, offering detailed examples of how women's voices are marginalized within political structures.
- The interviews highlighting the want of mentorship and reinforcement networks, hindering women's ability to navigate politics. This corroborates findings by Suyito (2024), who emphasizes the importance of empowering women and supporting their modulation from marginalized roles to so dynamic participation in governance. Suyito's research highlights how mentorship and systemic keep can play important roles in enhancing women's involvement in political and decision-making processes. The interviews provide specific examples of how the absence of mentorship impacts women's political careers.
- Women's access to political and financial resources is qualified, affecting their ability to vie with men. Zulfiqar (2022) highlights how inequality regimes and patriarchal structures limit women's rights, especially their ability to own earth and access financial resources. This disparity reinforces the challenges women face in achieving political and economic equality.. The interviews add depth by illustrating how women with reserved seats depend on male figures for resources, which can undermine their so political influence.

Political Quotas: An Opportunity or Constraint?

The interviews revealed nuanced perspectives on the effectiveness of political quotas.

- While quotas hold increased women's representation , they often want real political power and are seen as symbolic. This is consistent with critiques found in Ali et al. (2023), who see the challenges and barriers to women's so political involvement in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Their findings array with broader discussions on the limitations of quotas and the need for comprehensive strategies to authorize women politically Additionally, Dahlerup (2013) emphasizes that spell gender quotas can growth women's representation , they often light short of fostering essential political influence without accompanying structural and societal changes.

- Women with reserved seats often depend on male party leaders, which can undermine their political representation. This watching aligns with findings from Zia (2019), who discusses the dependency of women in reserved seats and how it limits their power to maintain themselves in government. The interviews bid elaborate insights into how this dependency affects women's political representation and capacity for meaningful participation.
- Women elected on reserved seats may lack direct constituency backing, weakening their political influence. This finding is supported by Lodhi (2024), who examines the challenges faced by women parliamentarians and highlights how the absence of verbatim constituency supporting impacts their power to exercise political force. The interviews ply specific examples of how this lack of constituency involvement affects women's political representation .

Empowerment and Leadership Strategies

The interviews revealed various strategies women use to master barriers and enhance their political participation.

- Women often build alliances and networks with other women, polite society organizations, and male allies. This supports the findings of Essien and Edem (2024), who emphasize the importance of networks for overcoming barriers to political participation and fostering women's empowerment. These alliances facilitate women navigate the political landscape and establish the reinforcement needed for efficient involvement which emphasize the importance of networks for political empowerment. The interviews ply concrete examples of how these alliances facilitate women navigate the political landscape.
- Some women use reserved seats as a stepping pit to more significant roles. This strategy is discussed by Aktar (2021), who explores how reserved seats can serve as an entry point for women to establish so political careers and modulation into more influential positions. And is evident in the interviews, where women draw leveraging their positions to build political credentials and public profiles.
- Female politicians actively dispute traditional gender norms, serving as role models for others. This aligns with the findings of Huddy and Capelos (2002), who discuss how women in politics challenge and reshape gender norms, breaking stereotypes through their political actions. The interviews provide elaborate accounts of how women challenge and transform societal perceptions through their leadership and activism.

Intersectionality: The Influence of Class and Rural–Urban Divide

The interviews underscored the impact of category and the rural-urban divide on women's political participation.

- Urban women describe amend approach to resources and political networks compared to their rural counterparts, reflecting findings by Kelly and Lobao (2019). Their research highlights the social and cultural factors that contribute to disparities in political engagement between urban and rural areas, emphasizing how socio-economic status and ethnic beliefs shape access to resources and opportunities. The interviews cater a detailed comparing of the challenges faced by rural versus urban women, highlighting specific barriers encountered by those in rural areas.
- Women from privileged backgrounds have easier approach to political spaces due to resources and instruction, whereas those from lower socio-economic backgrounds face more barriers. This aligns with Thananithichot (2012), who discusses the rural–urban disparity in political engagement and highlights how socio-economic position impacts involvement. The interviews provide a nuanced view of how family privilege affects women's ability to engage in government. Overall, the in-depth interviews offer detailed, context-specific insights that complements and expand upon existing search, highlighting both similarities and differences in the experiences of women in politics in Sindh.

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) Analysis

- Three direction group discussions were conducted in Karachi, Hyderabad, and rural Sindh with a mix of women, men, and political experts. These discussions offered a broader community perspective on women's political participation.

- Participants widely acknowledged the importance of women's participation in politics. However, many male participants and some from rural communities expressed skepticism about women's ability to head effectively. A rural player stated, "Women are good for certain roles, but political leading requires toughness, which I don't think they possess."
- The discussions highlighted planted ethnic beliefs, lack of instruction, and so economic dependency as major barriers to women's political empowerment. Women in rural areas mat especially disadvantaged, with one participant commenting, "In our hamlet, so even attending political meetings is seen as incompatible for women."
- The discussions revealed that political parties do not do enough to supporting women leaders. While quotas are, women often face tokenism and are not structured into key decision-making processes. A company worker from Hyderabad mentioned, "Even with reserved seats, women's voices are often drowned out by male leaders."
- Focus groups suggested that creating women-centric networks and providing platforms for women to engage in government from an early age could aid bridge the gap. They also emphasized the need for media campaigns to change societal perceptions nearly women in leadership.

Discussion

This study explores the series of difficulties that affect female political advancement in Sindh through empirical research and established body of theory. Modern demographic data indicates the implementation of quotas has slightly enhanced women's political presence but structural barriers alongside social barriers still obstruct political development for women. Analyzing outcomes from primary research involving interviews and FGDs and surveys with scholarly studies allows better understanding of Sindh Province's situation regarding global trends along with local particularities. Cultural Constraints and Gender Stereotypes Deep interviews of female political leaders in Sindh demonstrated patriarchal norms represent the largest obstacle women face when becoming politically engaged. The research of Rahim (2024) shows that using spell gender quotas increases female representation and eliminating patriarchal structures is essential for genuine political empowerment. Rahim explains that women in Pakistan encounter obstacles in their political path which stem from patriarchal structures thus political participation will stay confined until these structures are dismantled. In Sindh, women are frequently discouraged from pursuing politics due to ethnic views that relate their political involvement with a breach of familial and societal "honor." One interviewee echoed the broader sentiment: "Families often discourage women from entering politics, as they trust it is incompatible for women to be in public positions." Women maintain control even though patriarchal structures enforce them to continue serving this system according to Kandiyoti's (1988) theory of patriarchal bargains. The research data aligns with this finding because cultural obstacles emerged as the primary obstacle to political involvement according to 40% of survey participants.

The research results parallel prior findings in South Asian regions as Begum (2023) discovered that patriarchal traditions persist to subdue women after legal changes occurred. Vasile (2020) demonstrates that strict gender norms require more than laws and gender quota policies to change public perception or break gender barriers in political positions. The implemented reforms increase female political representation but they do not lead directly to substantial changes in social attitudes or elimination of deep-rooted gender bias. The cultural norms of Sindh match other parts of the region by creating obstacles that prevent women from entering politics. Institutional Barriers and Exclusion The presence of male domination within political parties throughout Sindh created a major obstacle for women pursuing political involvement. Survey results show that while political organizations invite women into their structures these women commonly maintain symbolic positions because their opinions receive little thanks in important decision-making procedures. A interviewee reported that women participate at meetings yet get ignored when trying to speak. Decisions are made elsewhere, and we are expected to agree." the intent of this consider is to examine the complex interplay between Pakistan's patriarchal system and women's modified participation in politics. Rahim (2024) provides essential findings about culture and structures which block women from impacting government despite the introduction of positive reforms. The structure of parties ruled by men continues to block women from participating in decision-making despite having powerful female leadership. The increased number of women in political positions

through quota use has failed to produce greater involvement in legislative processes or decision-making powers. Lacking mentorship and support networks presented itself as an essential issue. Di Meco's (2017) study confirms the absence of solid mentorship relationships functions as a worldwide hindrance for female politicians according to findings from Sindh.

According to Di Meco women need supportive structures to develop the leadership and overcoming barriers necessary for political influence and to transform their position in political life. The established patronage systems provide benefits to male politicians but women and particularly lower socio-economic background women encounter challenges when dealing with these political structures. Women face restrictions in setting efficient campaigns and operating the media as well as building constituencies because of their limited access to resources. Kivoi (2014) acknowledges such obstacles in Kenya which restrict women from participating in politics and attaining political representation. The economic shortcomings render women unable to take complete part in the political system across every nation worldwide. Political Quotas: An Opportunity or Constraint? Political quota policies served as fundamental drivers to boost women's parliamentary position in Sindh yet interview responses indicated their particular characteristics in use. Some participants expressed that while they are in office they experience limited real authority. One woman remarked, "We are in the way, but we are not part of the conversation." Political quotas proved successful for boosting political representation according to Murray (2014) but might develop into tokenistic practices that fail to deliver real empowerment to the women involved. According to Murray the structural barriers in politics prevent women's presence at the front from becoming actual meaningful work or decision-making authority. The necessity of male leadership at the helm stands as a primary obstacle within this publication.

Candidates on reserved seats develop a pattern of depending on their male party leaders for their political success thus surrendering their freedom to challenge traditional power dynamics. According to Kiamba (2009) women will face ongoing superficial involvement in government until institutional leadership and cultural barriers undergo essential modifications. Kiamba demonstrates social and ethnic barriers that block women from leadership positions while arguing that substantive political involvement goes beyond economic reforms and needs collective society attitude changes plus institutional practice transformations. Circumstances are made even more complicated because women on reserved seats lack sufficient support from their constituencies for political development. Bjarnegård and Zetterberg (2014) reveal that reserved seats alone do not result in real political power because women candidates lack direct constituency support. The study presents evidence that shows the obstacles which prevent women from using their reserved positions to gain sufficient political power. Empowerment and Leadership Strategies Women have found multiple empowerment strategies which enable them to pilot the political system despite existing barriers. The number of female politicians in Sindh is growing because they develop networks with women and civic society organizations and male political allies. Through their networks women receive feedback and financial support and unity between members which strengthens their ability to pursue gender-sensitive policies. "We receive different resources yet matter to each other deeply" an interviewee stated.

Women surveyed use reserved political positions as a means to gain greater political roles since these interim seats aid their access to political power as well as constituent interactions and public image development. Intersectionality: Class and the Rural-Urban Divide The study highlights how intersectionality influences political empowerment for savvy women throughout Sindh province. The life experiences of women produce unique effects according to social status and residential areas. Urban women in Karachi and Hyderabad displayed better access to education and political links than women who resided in rural areas. According to a rural player the situation involves more than resources because it fundamentally requires mindsets. Women in my village continue to face social expectations against public speech. Rural women encounter multiple barriers because they experience more rigid ethnic rules and access few resources together with restricted mobility according to the analysis proposed by Hart (1989). According to Hart (1989) women face distinct obstacles in joining political life and public spaces when factors of gender combine with socio-economic status while rural women experience these challenges uniquely. Women's capability to maneuver through political structures depends heavily on form favor. Members of higher economic classes have improved prospects to access political involvement because they

hold greater access to educational resources together with powerful networks and better information networks. Research by Richen (2016) supports the notion that racial and ethnic combinations with gender elements and social status create unequal access to political systems resulting in increased marginalization of minimum-represented populations.

Conclusion

The study delivers an extensive analysis regarding the challenges women experience and the potential opportunities and plans for political power leadership in Sindh. The research relies on both personal interview responses and survey results as well as focusing grouping discussions to demonstrate how patriarchy along with institutional discrimination and social and economic limitations continue to affect women. The implementation of political quotas to enhance female representation has not resulted in decreased marginalization of women within both formal and the informal political sphere. Sindh women encounter material racial barriers because entrenched patriarchal traditions restrict their entry into politics and all public domains. Leadership effectiveness experiences further limitations because men dominate political parties, women receive little mentorship, and they face different resource accessibility barriers. The quota scheme has increased women's political presence yet this success does not automatically produce real influence and decision-making power because women occupy mainly symbolic positions. The research demonstrates empowerment approaches have the capability to build strategies for enhanced political activism. Women who forge alliances with networking support and direct mentorship guidance together with their personal advocacy work aided some advocates in dealing with difficulties and pursuing gender-sensitive policies. Participating in quota-based politics has allowed select persons from upper-status backgrounds to create their political base through adequate training toward running for regular electoral positions. Women in Sindh require full political empowerment through the removal of operational barriers as shown by this research study. The path to women's successful leadership requires a simultaneous challenge of patriarchal cultural standards along with institutional party alterations while providing adequate resources and networking capabilities. Sindh's political landscape needs continuous gender equity support and structural reforms to transition women's symbolic activity to meaningful political contributions.

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