

Female Illiteracy and Political Participation: Pakhtun women at crossroad of culture, religion, and democracy

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Abstract

Men and women have similar rights as humans and as citizens. However, significant differences have been observed in the socio-political systems of societies by adjusting both the genders. This research article focused to see the impact of education on women's political participation. A sample of 320 women local body councilors was selected for data collection through proportional allocation method in seven districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Questionnaire was used for data collection and data analyses were done through SPSS 20 for univariate and bivariate analyses through Chi-square (χ^2) Test at 0.05 confidence level. The findings of this study revealed that mass illiteracy limits women to domestic chores and lessens their interest in public spheres, decreases economic opportunities and also increases their dependency. Similarly, illiteracy leads to lack of awareness regarding their constitutional and Islamic rights, and create difficulty to access mass media. Similarly, the socio-cultural and religious obligations prevailed in Pakhtun society limit women access to participate in civic activities and to run a public office. To improve women's status in society, education is important on the primary and higher level. This study recommends the role of mass media, religious scholars to pinpoint the role of women in society in a better way. The government shall promulgate suitable policies to efficiently equip women to participate in the political process of Islamic Democratic System.

Key Words: Women's political participation, female illiteracy, education, women empowerment, culture, religion and democracy

Introduction

Illiteracy does not necessarily meant to be ignorance nor shall literacy be understood as the sole power of wisdom and development. However, this era of science, technology, online communication, information age and democratic governance increases its importance several fold. Under the international ideals men and women are imparted with equal rights and thus shall have equal opportunities. It is thus a natural way for both genders to participate in all aspects of society. Conversely, in most societies it is quite difficult for women to seek their genuine rights and avail similar opportunities¹.

The main reasons of women less participation in public life is their illiteracy. Saleem (2010) advocated that women literacy is the prime factor responsible for underdevelopment of their capacities, status and skills. Education is a value in itself which widens the mental horizon and improves

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women's ability in countering social experiences. It helps in awareness regarding quality and standard life². Literacy bring lifelong benefits for the individual, the family and the coming generations, as well. An educate women is more aware regarding the daily routines and can better handle personal and family matters³.

The literacy ratio in Pakistan, according to Census (2017), is 58% where the male/ female literacy ratio is 70% and 48% respectively. This meager literacy ratio resonates in all aspects of their lives to avail the resources and opportunities necessary for their development⁴. Women literacy is considered important as it helps to understand, perceive, interpret, predict and improve decision making skills⁵. Education is considered one of the key factors toward women's empowerment because it raises women's understanding regarding socio-political, economic, and legal aspects that guarantee their personal and public existence⁶. Bunchmann, DiPerete, and McDanial (2008) believed that education is a prerequisite for mental independence and physical development. It makes easy to learn skills and abilities and take right decision. This is why it is more important for women to be empowered and less dependent. Likewise, it is believed that education advances the capacities and knowledge of women in such a way as to utilize the available resources in a better way⁷. The importance of education increases in the modern democracies which demand the understanding of the whole system. Women inclusion in education will thus increase her economic empowerment and thus will make a way for them in other aspect of life through policy and practice.

O'Connor (2008) identified that like many other attributes, gender too is deeply affecting the policy priorities⁸. It is therefore evident that women politicians see the things from womanish standpoints and thus can better response women problems. The involvement of educated women in politics is directly related to the development such rules which are efficiently solving their problems and also give them opportunity to develop. Markham, (2013) believes that the real manifestation of women's empowerment is their political participation⁹. This is because it increases their public role and increases their say in decision-making processes.

Currently, women's political participation across the globe as recorded by IPU, is 24.9 % (Inter Parliamentary Union, 2020), where Rwanda with 61.3% women parliamentarians is on top, followed by Cuba with 53.2% women parliamentarians. However, women participation is improved due to different social movements through the years since 1995, which was 11.3% by then. Pakistan is ranked 106th having 20.2% women in lower house while 19.2% women are in the upper house (IPU, 2020). Women's political participation has increased in the recent decades but still they need a lot to come to equality level. Filling this gap needs numerous measures in terms of

socio cultural and policy level steps. Karam (2002) opined that The reasons behind this unequal status are male dominancy in politics, no accessibility to political networks¹⁰, no party support, illiteracy, and least assistance from trade and labor unions. Similarly, there is no separate training for women for the electoral process which make problem for them. However, the main obstacle to women's political participation as identified by Karl (2001) is their extreme illiteracy, abject poverty, over dependency, and cultural barriers are on the top¹¹.

To resolve their problems women's participation in politics is a necessary tool for streamlining them. A strong association has been found by Devlin & Elgie (2008)¹², between representation of women issues and their increased presence in parliament. To further simplify this point, Carrol (1984) advocated that some of the social issues e.g. education, mental health, family planning, violence against women and also female genital mutilation (FGM) are few of the issue which are tackled more efficiently by men than women. Chattopadhyay & Duflo (2004) found that women led councils in the Panchayat/Local Council level politics in India had 62% clean drinking water projects in comparison to those of men councils¹³. Similarly, is the case in Norway where the presence of women councilors in municipalities have high coverage of health, the mother childcare, and sanitation in comparison to those of only male councils.

In addition to other, gender balance remained one of the intercontinentally established goals put forward by (UN) in its important meeting known as Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action or BDPA. Gender balance is important in decision-making and politics for the improvement of family and society which also increase their capabilities and potentials. Some of the core issues targeted by women are mother, gender based violence, child health care, parental leave, pensions, and gender equality¹⁴. It has been recognized by Cooper (1982) that women due to their low participation in public activities have a continuous stress while at home and work due to men's control over the resources¹⁵. The normative system patriarchal structure maintains strict honor codes for women. Thus the social pressure stress women to abide by strict socio-cultural rules and practices to save the honor not only of her but the family as well¹⁶.

It is a fact that participation of women in politics empowers them and can be considered essential tool for gender equality (UNICEF, 2006)¹⁷. Women are considered the primary care taker of family and domestic chores and are more effective in legislation regarding children, family, other daily necessities of life¹⁸. Women empowerment is an impact of an individual's choice of selection, what is considered valuable¹⁹. Participation of women in politics at all level is important for their growth, i.e. at national, provincial and local-bodies level. Women are facing several obstacles in the political arena

and governance despite all the significance associated with women intervention.

Gender is one of the major sources of social stratification in Pakhtun society which sometime due to the popular masculine culture lead to gender discrimination and women's subordination in some cases²⁰. Without women involvement in the civic life and politics is a clear contradiction from the core democratic ideals. Domination of a single gender over politics certainly could not balance the benefits for both genders. Nevertheless, women themselves have drastic differences based on status, class, culture, ethnicity, and qualification. This needs a further investigation to spot light the issues²¹. The UN in its Millennium Development Goal (MDG) had promised that by 2015 the UNO countries shall eliminate gender differences in education and economic opportunities. But this too remained a dream unfulfilled because of several structural and functional issues.

Study Rationale

Pakhtun social structure is patriarch in nature which leads to structural and functional favors to men. Participation of women in public life is therefore more challenging at individual as well as collective levels. However, to improve women in particular and society in general these conventional restrictions are required to be changed²². Women are given secondary status in foods, health, education, dress, marriage choice and also inheritance. Since their early age girls are treated as a temporary member of the household. This is why her skills development and education is not given primary importance as of the male siblings²³.

The literature available revealed that due to their illiterate status majority of women in Pakistan are economically dependent on men. This dependency stop them to do their choice make their way public activities²⁴, Ibrahim and Ahmad, 2012)²⁵. Whereas, Basu (2005)²⁶, illustrated that naturally patriarchic system of a society are hardly concerned about educating girls due to the short stay at parent's home and complete migration to in-laws after marriage. To increase their worry, in many societies the basic cultural ideals are not suitable for women education. For instance lack of physical infrastructure, abject poverty, social conduct, and social perceptions mostly do not favor women's education²⁷.

Similarly, it has commonly observed that women due to least awareness do not understand their due rights allotted by Islam. The case in Pakhtun society is quite severe due mass illiteracy among women. However, Islam has always contemplated that both male and female are similar in all aspects. They are given similar rewards and punishments and have been assigned with similar duties of performing the prayers, the fasting, Zakat (religious tax), Hajj (the pilgrimage) and all other rituals. According to injunctions of Quran supremacy in the Islamic society is not on piety and not

on other base like gender, ethnicity or social class. Similarly, the Islamic sharia never described to halt women's education, politics and or any other public activity²⁸.

For streamlining women in the public life some movement have taken place which includes, Women in Development (WID) that demands the current economic models on gender grounds. This means that finance is the basic need of all humans and affect the development of both genders in the similar way and so shall be the opportunities available for both of them²⁹. In view of Robert, (1987) ³⁰ WID is mostly come under the effect of liberal feminism movement which stresses the elimination of customary women roles and work for providing them the opportunity to avail the resources and get modern education³¹.

The patriarchic socialization and institutional dominancy of men further reinforce male dominancy in society³². Education is the key factor to enhance their skills in different fields. It was revealed by Kahn, (1994) ³³ that an educated woman has better working and earning opportunities than a non-educated. However, it was maintained that hardly 22% girls have the opportunity to complete primary education³⁴. With this miserable literacy rate women could hardly be expected to civil law, women rights and rights guaranteed by Islam.

The above given discussion stresses to conclude that education is deeply affecting women's status in a society more than any other dimension. Education improves awareness regarding the rights and duties and also advances their skills and potentials for contributing to society. Furthermore, literacy enlightens women to recognize the political system and henceforth their involvement in political structure is directly increased. This is evident from the research studies that presence of women in decision-making yield better results and bring the focus to the unaddressed areas. Education is the primary tool for rational thinking and thus women education is a tool toward their empowerment.

This study highlights the significance of education for women emancipation and their maximum participation in the public spheres for the holistic development of society, which is a novel idea of this article. The study is consisting upon an elaborate introduction which shed the light on the importance of education for women development. Introduction is followed by objective, methodology and results and discussions. The results and discussion segment include both univariate and bivariate analysis. The last part of the paper includes conclusion, recommendations and the references of the study.

Objective of the Study

This research article aims at finding out the impacts of illiteracy on women's empowerment and political participation.

Material and Methods

The current research was conducted in seven districts of Malakand division through a survey research conducted in positivistic mode of research through quantitative analysis. The universe of the study was Pakhtun populated seven districts of Malakad Division, KPK, and Pakistan. The study was carried out through interviewing a sample of 320 women local bodies’ councilors. The data was analyzed through (SPSS) 19 for Univariate analysis (frequencies and percentage) and bivariate analysis were conducted to find the possible association among the variables carried out through chi-square (χ^2) test at 0.05, significance level. Proportional representation technique was used to avoid sampling error and get valid representation across the districts as per the following Table-1:

Table 1: Proportional Allocation Method of Sample Distribution

S. No.	Districts.	Strata Population.	Sample Size
	Chitral.	217.0	38.0
	Dir Upper.	263.0	44.0
	Dir Lower.	421.0	73.0
	Swat.	328.0	56.0
	Shangla.	230.0	39.0
	Buner.	228.0	38.0
	Malakand.	184.0	32.0
Grand Total		1871.0	320.0

Sample Frame: 1871.

Sample size: 320.

Table-1 displayed that 1871 is the total number of local governments’ women councilors as representatives in Malakand Division. A sample of 320 councilors was selected as respondents for this study according to sampling table devised by Sekaran & Bougie³⁵.

Results and Discussions

This research was conducted under quantitative paradigm through a survey collecting data from respondents through a questionnaire. The data collected was statistically analyzed and discussed applying univariate and bivariate analyses as given below:

Univariate Analysis of the study

The following table-2 shows us the analysis of this article which is comprised of frequency and percentage of the variables as under for further explanation.

Section: I Demographic Profile of the Study

Demographic profile is an important tool to measure the socio-economic and psychological status and thinking preferences of the

respondents. This section is composed upon age, the marital status, education, the family type and kind of occupation of the respondents. The given table-2 will guide us further explain the given headings in detail:

Table 2: Age, Marital Status, Education, Family, and Occupation of the Respondent

Indicators	Frequencies	Percentages
Age of respondent		
25-35.	118.00	36.9
36-45.	152.00	47.5
Above 46.	50.00	15.6
Total.	320.00	100.0
Marital status		
Married.	234.00	73.1
Single.	73.00	22.8
Separated.	13.00	4.1
Total.	320.00	100.0
Educational Status		
Illiterate.	119.00	37.2
Metric.	121.00	37.8
Bachelor.	55.00	17.2
Master.	25.00	7.8
Total.	320.00	100.0
Family type.		
Nuclear..	102.00	31.9
Joint.	201.00	62.8
Extended.	17.00	5.3
Total.	320.00	100.0
Occupation		
Housewife.	252.00	78.8
Own business.	44.00	13.8
Employed.	24.00	7.5
Total.	320.00	100.0

Table-2 presents the age wise distribution of ample respondents of the study. The data revealed that out of the total 320 being (100 %) respondents, 118 being (36.9 %) were from age group 25-35 years old, 152 being (47.5 %) respondents occupied the age group 36-45 years, while 50 or (15.6%) were 46 and above. The table disclosed that most of the respondents come in age group 36-45 with mature age and expert folks. The second age group 25-35 indicated that majority of the respondents are educated youth serving as representative in the local government. Thus their responses are the representative of the community in a real sense.

The table further revealed that among total 320 (100%); 234 (73.1 %) are married who makes a significant majority. in their study conducted in (2005) Lieb & Thistle found that the married women took more interest in taking part in public domains. In addition, a 73 being (22.8%) were single and a small number 13 being (4.1 %) are divorcees/widows³⁶.

The table illustrates further the education level and literacy ratio of the respondents. Out of the total 320 being (100 %), 119 being (37.2 %) of the respondents were illiterate, 121 being (37.8 %) were only matriculated, 55 (17.2 %) had their bachelor degrees and a small proportion of only 25 being (7.8%) were found graduated. The above statistics infers that literacy ratio of respondents is not satisfactorily qualifying women for understanding the democratic government system. It is imperative to explain here that these womenfolk’ councilors are politically cognizant families and are thus education conscious families. The situation of the rest of the society can be measured from the given meager number.

Table-2 added further the family type. A majority 201 being (62.8%) are belonging to joint family, 102 being (31.9%) come from nuclear family while 17 (5.3%) hails from extended family. The table verified that Pakhtun structure is basically favoring joint family system and this system is still intact in the rural areas of Pakistan. It is well known that women in joint family have more responsibilities at home in Pakhtun society never allow them to engage politics³⁷.

Furthermore, Table-2 guided us that a strong majority, 252 being (78.8%) is housewives; 44 being (13.8 %) had their personal/own business and 24 being (7.5 %) female were found employed. The results showed that due to mass illiteracy among women in the target area women lacks capacity to participate in politics.

Section: II Female Illiteracy and Women’s Political Participation

Girl is considered a liability throughout their life in the fathers as well as husband house and thus an investment in girls’ education is a rare case. Since her childhood girls are considered a member of others house and this disownment lead to little investment in her education and skills as it never benefit the fathers house (Rizvi, 1980). Similarly, Adams, (1997) revealed that these girls are married in a young age which negatively affect gender relation of the couple forever. These effects negatively and perpetuate the disadvantageous status forever. The following table will further illustrate the situation of women illiteracy.

Table-3: Women’s Illiteracy and women’s Political Participation

Statements	Frequencies	Percentages
Women’s illiteracy as a main cause of least political participation		
Agree,	260.0	81.30

Disagree,	41.0	12.80
Neutral,	19.0	5.90
Total,	320.0	100.00
Women's illiteracy and their interest in public affairs		
Agree,	273.0	85.30
Disagree,	42.0	13.10
Neutral,	5.0	1.60
Total,	320.0	100.0
Women's illiteracy and their lease access to media		
Agree,	247.0	77.20
Disagree,	52.0	16.30
Neutral.,	21.0	6.60
Total,	320.0	100.0
Women's illiteracy and women unemployment		
Agree,	261.0	81.60
Disagree,	41.0	12.80
Neutral,	18.0	5.60
Total,	320.0	100.0
Women's illiteracy and awareness regarding civic rights		
Agree,	280.0	87.50
Disagree,	30.0	9.40
Neutral,	10.0	3.10
Total,	320.0	100.0
Women's illiteracy and confidence among women		
Agree,	263.0	82.20
Disagree,	42.0	13.10
Neutral,	15.0	4.70
Total,	320.0	100.0
Women's illiteracy and understanding the political culture		
Agree,	258.0	80.60
Disagree,	48.0	15.00
Neutral,	14.0	4.40
Total,	320.0	100.00
Women's illiteracy and ability to run public office		
Agree,	259.0	80.90
Disagree,	44.0	13.80

Neutral,	17.0	5.30
Total,	320.0	100.0

Afore mentioned table-3 demonstrated that a majority being 260 being (81.3 %) agreed to mass illiteracy is an important factor in their minimum participation in politics: 41 being (12.8%) disagreed and a minority of 19 being (5.9%) were neutral. Karl (2001) in his findings advocated that women’s participation in politics is low due four factors including illiteracy, limited financial opportunities, cultural limitations and religious misunderstanding. Women deprivation in the political sphere is also associated with their lack of interest in public activities.

Table-3 further demonstrated that 273 being (85.3 %) opined mass illiteracy a cause of their least interest in politics; 42 being (13.1 %) disagreed and 20 being (6.3 %) stayed neutral in this regard. The results are in line with Kazmi, research study conducted in (2005). He revealed that low literacy rate among women is a major causes of least women’s participation in public and productive activities³⁸. Lack of illiteracy ensures men dominancy due to women lack of competition in the employment opportunities.

Table -3 has further showed the role of media in socialization women’s mainstreaming in popular pool. Out of total 320 being (100 %), 247 being (77.2 %) agreed that illiteracy curtails women access to mass media and information; 52 being (16.3 %) disagreed and 21 being (6.6 %) stayed neutral. Supported by NCSW (2009) the data discovered that not understanding the national languages have negative effect on the learning process of community³⁹. Likewise, the mass media is broadly focusing on the appearance and personality of women candidates and never focus on their vision and policy.

Overhead table-3 tells that out of the total 320 being (100%), 261 being (81.6%) agreed that female illiteracy disqualify them for employment and increases dependency on men. About, 41 being (12.8 %) disagreed and 18 being (5.6 %) stood neutral. Bunchmann, DiPerete and McDanial (2008) opined that education due acquisition of knowledge and information brings freedom of thinking and action which lead to learning skills and getting jobs. Table-3 further elucidated that out of the total 320 being (100 %), 280 being (87.50 %) were of the view that illiteracy is a prime reason not understanding the political issues of the area, 30 being (9.4 %) disagreed and 10 being (5.6 %) were neutral. The results are supported by a study conducted by Kazmi (2005) who opined that illiteracy diminishes interest in politics, national and international events and thus political participation as well.

Table-3 further elaborated that 263 being (82.2%) were of the view that illiteracy in female decreases self-reliance and hence they avoid processions and political gatherings, 42 being (13.1 %) disagreed and 15 (4.7 %) were

neutral. To support the results, Maslak and Singhal (2008), orated that education improves knowledge and skills which make the women more confident and wiser than the illiterate.

Table-3 then showed that out of the total 320 being (100%), 258 being (80.6 %) viewed tht illiteracy among affect their understanding of the political process, 48 being (15.0 %) disagreed and 14 being (4.4 %) stood neutral in this context. The data are in consonance with the findings of Dahlerup (2013) who disclosed that political empowerment is quite instrumental in socio-economic development which lead to women empowerment.

Table-3 further revealed that 259 being (80.9 %) supported the statement that female illiteracy reduces the women’s capabilities to run a public office, 41 being (12.8 %) disagreed and 18 being (5.6 %) stayed neutral. Htun and Jones (2002) remarked through their study that education is compulsory for efficient decision making, understanding the national language, interpretations from and to different languages and predictions for future events. Due to their illiterate nature women cannot be appointed as an office holder. This interpretation leads us to determine that education is not only necessary for understanding politics but also indispensable for practical involvement.

Section III. Women’s Political Participation (Dependent Variable)

Women, who always consists of almost half of the world populace but are thought to be traditionally discriminated in many aspects of life as well as politics (Aslam, 2002) ⁴⁰. Due to numerous women’s rights movements and widespread awareness, the developed countries are however doing better in addressing gender issues (Ibrahim, 2005) ⁴¹. On the contrary, vast gender gaps can be found in the developing world that indicates poor development indicators (Omvedt, 2005) ⁴². The given table-4 highlights frequencies and percentages of dependent variable, i.e. ‘women’s political participation’ as following:

Table - 4: Women’s Political Participation (Dependent Variable)

Statements	Frequencies	Percentages
Pakhtun culture is not supporting women in politics		
<u>Agree.</u>	270.0	84.4
<u>Disagree.</u>	28.0	8.8
<u>Neutral.</u>	22.0	6.9
<u>Total.</u>	320.0	100.0
Economically dependent women and their participation politics		
<u>Agree.</u>	265.0	82.8
<u>Disagree.</u>	31.0	9.7
<u>Neutral.</u>	24.0	7.5
<u>Total.</u>	320.0	100.0
Illiteracy among women and their involvement in political activities		

<u>Agree.</u>	277.0	86.6
<u>Disagree.</u>	25.0	7.8
<u>Neutral.</u>	18.0	5.6
<u>Total.</u>	320.0	100.0
Weak and delayed policies/loose implementation and women’s political rights		
<u>Agree.</u>	264.0	82.5
<u>Disagree.</u>	27.0	8.4
<u>Neutral.</u>	29.0	9.1
<u>Total.</u>	320.0	100.0
Masculine interpretation of Islamic sharia and women deprivations		
<u>Agree.</u>	272.0	85.0
<u>Disagree.</u>	26.0	8.1
<u>Neutral.</u>	22.0	6.9
<u>Total.</u>	320.0	100.0
least representation of Women in the political parties		
<u>Agree.</u>	276.0	86.3
<u>Disagree.</u>	27.0	8.4
<u>Neutral.</u>	17.0	5.3
<u>Total.</u>	320.0	100.0

The afore mentioned table -4 showed that a strong majority of 270 respondents being (84.4%) agreed that Pakhtun society is not supportive in women’s participation in politics, 28 being (8.8%) disagreed and 22 (6.9%) were found neutral. It is believed that the cultural norms and values and masculine popular knowledge considers women a gentle gender that are unable to shoulder political responsibilities (Khan, 2011) ⁴³.

The above Table-4 displays that 265 being (82.8%) respondents agreed that women’s complete economic dependency on men sideline them from position of power and authority. Whereas, 31 (9.7%) disagreed and 24 being (7.5%) respondents remained neutral. It is believed by Welle and Heilman, (2007) that the popular culture is masculine and thus traditions, customs, policy procedures and law provide little opportunities for women. This economic dependency, lead to dependency in all other respects of life including decision making and authority⁴⁴.

The given table-4 foretells us that out of the total 320 being (100%), 277 being (86.6%) agreed that mass illiteracy among female is a cause of least understanding of the politics, 25 being (7.8%) disagreed with and 18 being (5.6 %) were neutral. The findings of Karl (2001) supports the results of this study who recognizes the main impediments to women’s participation in public life is their illiterate status, little education, low socialization and difficulty in accessibility to information.

Table-4 further explicates that 264 being (82.5 %) agreed that legislation of suitable policies and its timely implementation to mainstream

women are scarce; a further 27 being (8.4 %) disagreed and 29 being (9.1 %) remained neutral. Researchers like Kingdon (1984) ⁴⁵, observed that lack of prudent and balanced policies are important for the advancement of gender parity in politics which is the best technique of women empowerment.

Table-4 further clarifies that, 272 being (85.0 %) opined that men had control over institutions of religion that would halt women way to political activities, 42 being (13.1 %) disagreed and 21 being (6.6 %) remained neutral. Shaheed, (2009) found that women’s less participation in politics is hindered by three dissimilar however interrelated variables i.e. structure/culture of society, the economic disadvantageousness and miss-interpretation of religious injunctions⁴⁶.

Further, table- 4 discovers 276 being (86.3 %) were of the view, that womenfolk are not given due place in affairs of political parties, 27 being (8.4 %) disagreed and 17 being (5.3 %) were neutral. Political parties are the basic institution responsible for political maturity. However, in case of women in Pakhtun society women have little representation in political parties because they too are shaped by patriarchic system in the given society (Roza, 2010) ⁴⁷. The above discussion clarify that there are several structural and functional obstacles to women participation politics. It includes socio-cultural restrictions, women’s economic dependency, and illiteracy among women, masculine culture, policy weakness and no association with political parties. This is why the necessary actions and legislation for safeguarding women rights and policies for their promotion and development are deficient.

Section IV: Bi-Variate Analysis

The bi-variate analysis has been conducted using (chi-square) (χ^2) test to finding out association between the two variables has been discussed below.

Women’s Illiteracy and Political Participation

Women in most cases remains deprived of many types of opportunities especially deficiency in education and socialization is common in most of societies. This low educational status of women not only affects their employment opportunities, but their income and development as well (Rizvi, 1980). Similarly education has its influences on the physical and psychological health of women and the family as well. Involvement in politics further necessitates education. The following table-5 will guide us regarding the results of Chi-square (χ^2) test as discussed in the succeeding paragraphs.

Table 5: Women’s Illiteracy and Women’s Political Participation (Chi-square Test, (χ^2))

S. N O.	Statement/s.	Respo nse/s.	Participation of Women in Politics			Statistics.
			Agree.	Disagree.	Neutral.	
	Illiteracy among	Agree	240	19	1 (25.0%)	$\chi^2 =13.19$

women is a leading factor affecting women involvement in politics.	d	(83.0%)	(70.40%)		2 $p = 0.010$
	Disagreed	35 (21.10%)	4 (14.80%)	2 (50.0%)	
	Neutral	14 (4.80%)	4 (14.80%)	1 (25.0%)	
Illiteracy decreases women's interest in affairs regarding public.	Agreed	250 (86.50%)	20 (74.10%)	3 (75.0%)	$\chi^2 = 18.187$ $p = 0.001$
	Disagreed	36 (12.50%)	6 (22.20%)	0 (0.0%)	
	Neutral	3 (1.0%)	1 (3.70%)	1 (25.0%)	
Illiteracy increases women difficulty access mass media and current affairs.	Agreed	230 (79.60%)	17 (63%)	3 (75.0%)	$\chi^2 = 7.646$ $p = 0.105$
	Disagreed	39 (13.50%)	8 (29.60%)	0 (0.0%)	
	Neutral	20 (6.90%)	2 (7.40%)	1 (25.0%)	
Women illiteracy is not encouraging employment of women.	Agreed	235 (81.30%)	22 (81.50%)	4(100%)	$\chi^2 = 3.169$ $p = 0.530$
	Disagreed	39 (13.50%)	2 (7.40%)	0 (0.0%)	
	Neutral	15 (5.20%)	3 (11.10%)	0 (0.0%)	
Illiterate women are not well aware to entertain their political rights.	Agreed	258 (89.30%)	19 (70.40%)	3 (75.0%)	$\chi^2 = 11.123$ $p = 0.025$
	Disagreed	22 (7.60%)	7 (25.90%)	1 (25.0%)	
	Neutral	9 (3.10%)	1 (3.70%)	0 (0.0%)	
Illiteracy among women lowers their confidence to carry political.	Agreed	239 (82.70%)	23 (85.20%)	1 (25.0%)	$\chi^2 = 13.738$ $p = 0.008$
	Disagreed	26 (12.50%)	3 (11.10%)	3 (75.0%)	
	Neutral	14 (4.80%)	1 (3.70%)	0 (0.0%)	
Illiteracy among women decreases their understanding of political culture of the society.	Agreed	239 (82.70%)	16(59.30%)	3(75.0%)	$\chi^2 = 11.850$ $p = 0.019$
	Disagreed	37 (12.80%)	10(37.0%)	1(25.0%)	
	Neutral	13 (4.50%)	1(3.70%)	0(0.0%)	
Illiteracy among Women make them ineligible to hold public role.	Agreed	238 (82.40%)	17(630%)	4(100.0%)	$\chi^2 = 12.147$ $p = 0.016$
	Disagreed	39 (13.50%)	5(18.50%)	0(0.00%)	

		Neutra 1.	12 (4.20%)	27(8.40%)	0(0.00 %)	
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Table-5 projected the value of chi-square (χ^2) as (13. 192) whereas the corresponding (p) value is (0.010) which is highly significant and hence recommending strong association between the two variables. The ‘p’ value tells us that female illiteracy is believed to have strong association with women political participation, according to the sample respondents in the current study. The results are seconded by Karl (2001), who identifies that the main obstacles to women’s participation in politics is their low education, illiteracy and lack of access to financial resources. Female literacy is never a priority because she would not support the home economically in the future she is considered a liability in father’s home and in-laws.

Next on table-5, indicated the value of chi-square (χ^2) value which is (18.187) whereas the corresponding ‘p’ value, as (0.001) which is highly significant again and hence recommends strong association between the two variables. It elucidates that illiterate nature of women in the study area lead to their lack of interest in public affairs and hence least interest in politics. The results of the variables are supported by Kazmi and Quran (2005) who opined that low literacy is the main cause of the low participation in social, economic and political initiatives on the part of women in our society⁴⁸. The perpetuating men dominancy sustains because women are not competing in the employment and public sector. Lack of understanding of the political institution results in least empowerment and political participation. It is thus evident from the above discussion that women education is not preferred and that affects their inclusion in social life.

Furthermore on Table- 5 the value of chi-square (χ^2) is (7. 646) with corresponding (p) value as given in the table is (0.105). This is non-significant and no association was found between the two variables “illiteracy and access to media”. Illiteracy has thus no relation to the access of women to media and information. The results explain that not the access to media is a problem but the structural impediments need to be removed for strengthening women’s place in public life. NCSW, (2009) reported that lack of understanding of the national and international languages is a cause of women’s least empowerment. In case of women in Pakhtun areas women are quite distant from media and newspapers that lead to their lack of understanding the system and hence their participation is affected.

Similarly, the chi-square (χ^2) value (3.169) with corresponding ‘p’ value is (0.530) is not significant and hence recommend no association between independent and dependent variables. The ‘p’ value shows that women employment and job opportunities have no association with women’s participation in politics. However, Saleem (2010) declares that women

education is responsible for the development of their capacities, responsibilities and skills that would make them able to contribute to society⁴⁹. The study results suggest that the support of male population to understand the place of women in society is important. Education not only helps in awareness about standard and quality life but also bring lifelong benefits for the whole family and the coming generations. However, in the Pakhtun society due to their lack of education, women are the least employed and mostly involved in indoor chores without any public activism.

Next row of the given Table- 5 projected the (χ^2) as (11. 123), with corresponding 'p' value (0.025) is significant and hence claim association between the two variables. The statistics tells us that there is a strong association between level of awareness among and women's political participation. Necessarily, its education which increases interest in civic life and information. The findings of the study are reinforced by Karl (2001) who identifies that illiteracy and lack of access to information leads to misunderstandings and low socialization. This not only affect their life at home but also the public sphere of women lives. However, the most negative impact of illiteracy is lack of awareness regarding the human rights⁵⁰. The given discussion conclude that awareness comes with education whereas Pakhtun women being illiterate can never avail the political and economic rights with in the society they live.

Table-5 further elucidates the chi-square (χ^2) value as (13.738), with corresponding 'p' value, (0.008) which is highly significant and hence recommended strong association between the variables. The result explains that women's illiteracy shatter the confidence among the women to take public initiative by resisting the status quo and participate in politics. Maslak and Singhal (2008), argued that education improve skills, knowledge and resources of the women in such a way as to empower them. An educated woman is more confident and can communicate in a better way to defend her views and take better decisions in comparison to illiterate. Thus, the illiterate women never feel to express her feelings or actively participate in the issues of community. The given table- 5 further in the second last row shows the (χ^2) value (11. 850), with corresponding (p) value is (0.019) which is highly significant and hence recommend strong association between independent and dependent variable. Thus female illiteracy has direct association with their lack of understanding the political system and political institutions. Nayak and Nair, (2005) elucidates that education leads to overall development of personality as it is a value in itself. It widens the mental horizon of women to improve her mobility in countering social experiences. Thus, an educated woman is more informed and can better care about her person, home and the children. Dahlerup (2013) discloses that education increases the understanding of women regarding the legal and political laws that ensure their rights and presence in public spheres.

Thus, female illiteracy not only affects their involvement in the job opportunities but also their political views and public opinion.

Next on Table-5, the chi-square (χ^2) value is (12. 147), with corresponding (p) value is (0. 016), is significant. This significance of variable recommends association among the variables. It explains that due to illiteracy, the chances for women to run a public office minimizes and thus their political role and involvement is reduced. In line with the findings of the table the results of Htun and Jones (2002) can be given as reference who proclaimed education is significantly essential for interpretations, understanding the language of official business, decision making capabilities, estimates and perception. For running a public office not only awareness regarding daily activities of the people is required but also the official language, efficient management, reading and writing all demands education. On the other mass illiteracy among women make the not eligible for appointment and holding a public office.

The aforementioned discussion revealed that out of the eight indicators of the current study only two variables were non-significant and all the remaining were found highly significant. Thus we it is determined that illiteracy among women has far reaching effects on the women empowerment in the economic, domestic and public spheres. Similarly, the current study inferred that in addition to other factor literacy has an important role in women's maximum political participation in the country generally and especially in Pakhtun society. Education is important tool for any democratic system to understand and participate. Thus higher the literacy ratio among the women in Pakhtun society higher would be their involvement in political activities of the country.

CONCLUSIONS

The above discussion it can be concluded that education is an important factor toward smooth running of the modern democratic governments. Similarly, religion Islam too has guaranteed all types of civic and political rights. Democracy is a government of all by all and for all the individuals in the society and hence the inclusion of half of world's population, 'women' shall get opportunity to participate in public activities. The current study revealed that female illiteracy in Pakhtun society has negative impacts on capacitating women's political life. The findings revealed that due to their illiterate nature women have no interest in political affairs of the country. Due to illiteracy there are no income opportunities which increase their dependency on men. Lack of access and little awareness regarding mass media confine them to masculine interpretation of normative system in society. The uneducated character vanish the confidence and hence cannot safeguard their rights. Similarly, the contributions and abilities of women are never utilized for the development of the society. In a nutshell it can be concluded that the idea

of democracy lay down importance on the participation of all sectors of society. Therefore, the involvement of woman is necessary in politics to bring forth the true spirit of democracy. It is an agreed fact that women are always friendly, cooperative, caring and kind-hearted; it is much matched style of modern welfare democratic values. If properly educated and provided with opportunities, women will better contribute in many areas which remained unimportant due male dominant structure.

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