



Femininity, Patriarchal Political Culture and Women Political Participation in Punjab, Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

Stereotypically emotionality, beauty, faithfulness, warmth, honesty, compassion are feminine characteristics associated with women and have very little scope politics. This research article explores the interplay of feminine attributes possessed by Pakistani women and patriarchal political culture and foresees the scope of their participation in the political sphere. Structured interview schedules were administered to 414 women voters from two randomly selected Tehsils i.e. Jhang and Gujar Khan, of the Punjab Province. Results confirmed that research participants not only confirmed the three constructs of femininity but also strongly endorsed the patriarchal political notion of the Pakistani politics. It can be concluded that interplay of femininity and patriarchal political culture lower the level of participation of women in politics and restrict their participation in political activities.

KEYWORDS: Femininity, Patriarchal political culture, Women political participation, Punjab

INTRODUCTION

Background & Literature

Stereotypically emotionality, beauty, faithfulness, warmth, honesty, compassion are feminine characteristics associated with women and have very little scope politics [1], [2], [3]. Being associated with women feminine traits are devalued in the politics [4], [5] and are not consistent with many professions including politics. People take politics as masculine sphere and do not like women in it [6], [7], [8]. They generally, consider men ideal for politics and political activities [9], [10]. Candidates with masculine characteristics are favorable to hold certain political offices [11]. Voters like politicians and leaders with masculine qualities. And they think that masculine traits are more required to run higher offices [12], [13], [14], [15]. On the other hand, the women have to face discrimination while entering into masculine profession including politics [16], [17]. Thus, Femininity plunks women out of the political context and unsuitable for political activities [18]. Objective of this research article is to explore the interplay of feminine attributes possessed by Pakistani women and patriarchal political culture and foresees the scope of their participation in the political sphere.

Voters evaluate political abilities and personal characteristics for the suitability of candidates for some political office [19], [20]. Issues are categorized as “masculine” and “feminine” in politics [21]. Healthcare, women rights, social welfare are feminine while military, defense, crimes and economy are the masculine issues [22], [23], [24], [25]. And voters generally perceive feminine issues less important than masculine one [26].

Pakistan is a patriarchal society where women are considered inferior by the male counterpart [27]. They have very little knowledge of politics, political parties and political affairs of the country [28], [29], [30]. A study [31] considers socio-cultural and economic barriers as important factors that restrict women political participation. A research [32] concluded that sex segregation, illiteracy, and lack of political awareness are the key factors of women’s low political participation in Pakistan. They also pointed out that socio- cultural values consider women inferior. In a qualitative study [33] stated that economic dependence of women, male chauvinism, restricted mobility, family responsibilities and physical weakness of women to endure pressures in politics are the important factors of women low political participation. The research study also highlighted that respondents from low socio-economic group were not in the favour of women to participate in politics. Women are subject to exclusion and face seclusion due to patriarchal societal norms of Pakistani society which barred them from (political) empowerment [34].

Patriarchal structure of the Political parties still does not consider women appropriate for politics [35]. Political parties used women representation for public gatherings, political meetings and during political campaigns however, they consider them idle vote bank [36]. Women wings of the political parties serve this purpose of representative function [37]. This trend of political parties point out the important fact that they are not active/ serious in

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addressing women issues [38]. National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) blamed state institutions, political parties, patriarchal and customary values for low registration of women as voters. It further added that the belief that politics is male area to operate is providing a strong support [39].

MATERIALS & METHOD

Participants

Analysis for this research is based on the interviews with 414 women voters living in two Tehsils i.e. Jhang and Gujjar Khan of the Punjab Province, Pakistan. The mean age of the participants was 29.52 years with SD 7.70. Married respondents were 57% ($n=236$) followed by 29.71% ($n=123$) single, 11.35% ($n=47$) widowers and 1.9% ($n=8$) divorced. Respondents (61.6%, $n=311$) were literate up-to graduation with little involvement in income generation activity (19.8%, $n=82$); and, most of the participants were homemakers (80.19%, $n=332$).

Participants were living dominantly in the joint family system (78.7%, $n=326$). Mean household monthly income of the participants was Rs. 29898.5(Pak Rupees).

Participants were affiliated with different political parties (79.2%, $n=328$) however, 20.8% ($n=86$) of the respondents did not identified them with any political party. The participants who casted their votes in the last elections were 58.4% ($n=242$).

Participants were asked who suggested you to cast vote. The results showed that 41% ($n=194$) of the participants casted their votes on the suggestion of their male family members (Husband, Brother, Father) while 11.5 % ($n=48$) of the respondents were self suggested to vote for candidate/political party of their own choice.

Procedure

The interviews with the respondents were conducted by the female enumerators hired for this study. Informed consent was obtained from the participants before the start of the interview. Every participant was briefed about the purpose and utilization of the data obtained. They were free to discontinue the interview if they want so. The participants were assured of confidentiality of the information obtained.

Measures

Femininity scale was designed originally by Lehman [40] to access the degree to which women adhere to traditional femininity and it contained 45 statements. However, this scale of adapted. The current scale includes three factors comprising 09 normative statements using 4 point Likert scale where score 1 indicate strong disagreement and 4 shows strong agreement were derived. These three factors were stereotypical image with Cronbach's alpha 0.735, purity with Cronbach's alpha 0.718, and emotionality with the Cronbach's alpha 0.763.

Patriarchal Political Culture (PPC) scale was developed for this study to measure the masculine political culture in the Pakistani society. The scale has 10 normative statements regarding suitability of males for politics on 4 point Likert scale. The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was 0.83.

RESULTS

Table 1: Analysis of image

Stereotype Image	Mean	SE of Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Beauty	2.98	.045	.924	-.530	-.635
Attractiveness	2.95	.043	.871	-.526	-.379
Feminine Look	3.10	.045	.913	-.787	-.206

Table no. 1 shows the analysis of one of the construct of femininity i.e. image of a woman. Respondents recruited for the current study were strongly adhering beautiful image possessed by the women. They believe that women should look beautiful ($M=2.98$, $S.D=.924$) and attractiveness ($M=2.95$, $S.D=.871$). They think that women should look like women ($M=3.10$, $S.D=.913$). It can be concluded that Pakistani women very typically, think that these above characteristics should be the part of beauty.

Table 2: Analysis of Purity

Purity	Mean	SE of Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Contact with male	2.94	.050	1.014	-.504	-.924
Family honor	3.28	.045	.920	-1.245	.687
Immoral activities	3.11	.048	.981	-.863	-.329

Table no. 2 measures second construct of beauty that is purity. The respondents think that women should avoid contact with male at large (M= 2.94 S.D=1.014) Women are supposed to be the guardian of family respect and honor (M=3.28 S.D =.92). Women are taken as the custodian of moral order of Pakistani society and are advised for restricted contact with males (M=3.11, S.D= .98). The respondents value high to contact, family honor and avoidance from getting into immoral activities.

Table 3: Analysis of Emotionality

Emotionality	Mean	Std. Error of Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Submissiveness	3.08	.037	.762	-.693	.457
Care	3.25	.041	.826	-1.092	.827
Lovingness	3.32	.040	.812	-1.223	1.160

Table no. 3 presents the analysis of emotionality. The women endorsed their submission (M= 3.08 S.D= .762), Caring (M= 3.25, S.D= .826) and lovingness (M= 3.32, S.D= .812). The statistics endorse the emotionality associated with women and present in Pakistani society.

Table 4: Analysis of Patriarchal Political Culture

Patriarchal Political Culture	Mean	Std. Error of Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Trained in politics	2.73	.039	.792	-.394	-.149
Born political leaders	2.46	.046	.927	-.081	-.865
Better understanding of the political affairs	2.68	.042	.859	-.339	-.467
Better policies to run the government	2.75	.042	.856	-.304	-.495
Electability	2.83	.045	.908	-.324	-.726
Run a good political campaign	2.93	.040	.815	-.523	-.094
Support of caste group	2.97	.042	.845	-.507	-.337
Better negotiation skills	2.78	.040	.809	-.300	-.343
Maneuvering political issues	2.86	.046	.933	-.409	-.713
Best suited for political activities	2.76	.044	.886	-.509	-.371

Table no.4 indicates the patriarchal values present. All the statements were referring men as center of politics and suitable for political activities. Respondents believe that the men are in politics / political activities (M= 2.73, S.D= .792), they have leadership qualities (M=2.46, S.D= .927), they can understand the politics/ political affairs in a better way (M=2.68, S.D=.859), they can make effective policies for governance (M=2.75, S.D=.856), they have more chances to be elected as candidates (M= 2.83, S.D= .908), they can run political campaign in an effective way, (M=2.93, S.D=.815). Respondents also pointed out towards the important fact of Pakistani politics - the *Baradri* (caste group). The caste support to the male only (M= 2.97, S.D .845), Men exhibit good negotiation skills (M= 2.78, S.D .809), men can very easily maneuver (M= 2.86, S.D .933). Women think that men are best for political activities (M= 2.76, S.D .886). Analysis pointed out and confirmed the male political discourses and strong support by the women voters.

Table 5: Correlational Analysis of Femininity and Patriarchal Political Culture

Variables	Patriarchal Political Culture
Emotionality	.377**
Purity	.399**
Image	.369**
** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). (N=414)	

Table no. 5 reports Pearson R Correlational Analysis. Results show significant relationship ($r = .377, p < .01$) between emotionality and patriarchal political culture. Purity and patriarchal political culture is significant statistically ($r = .399, p < .01$) and Image is also correlated significantly ($r = .369, p < .01$) with patriarchal political culture. The results confirm the endorsement of the patriarchal notions of Pakistani politics.

DISCUSSION

Patriarchy has been deeply rooted in all spheres of Pakistani society including politics. Women have disproportionate social position in comparison with men [41]. Women have to face much discrimination from home to public sphere and there are frequent incidences of violence against them. Women subordination is a normal gender expression in Pakistani society [42]. Femininity is ideal for home and all its expressions best suit the women within four walls of the house. So women are not liked in political roles and in political activities [43]. Researches [44], [45] pointed out that the cultural patterns are not allowing women to become the part of the politics and exercise their rights including legal one. Low status of women is the result of low participation in economic and social spheres and resultantly women are becoming more and more dependent on men [46]. This trend can also be seen in the overall Muslims countries where women possess lower socio economic status and wider gender gap [47], [48]. Thus, patriarchal notions of Pakistani society eliminate women from politics/ political activities and consequently they participate less in politics e.g. [49].

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that interplay of femininity and patriarchal political culture lower the level of participation of women in politics and restrict their participation in political activities. Hence, the findings of the present article are in accordance with the current scholarship on gender differences in political participation describing the unsuitability of feminine characteristics and their limited scope in the politics see e.g. Jackman [50], Segal [51], Hollows [51], Cole & Zucker, [53] Cole & Sabik, [54]. The future research can look into feminine characteristics possessed by women of different social classes and areas to explore the level of political participation of women in Punjab, Pakistan.

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