



## Women's Participation in Pakistan's National Assembly Elections: A Historical Review (1970-1997)

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**Abstract:** This article aims to discuss women's political participation in the context of the country's electoral history. Additionally, it discusses barriers that have had an unembellished consequence on women's participation in the elections in the past. Women's representation in legislatures remained low, which led to the absence of their voices in the political affairs of the country. Gender and politics study in Pakistan has centered on the participation and representation of women in legislatures since 2002. It is critical to analyze women's participation in elections prior to 2002 to comprehend the contribution made by those female politicians who took part in elections under unusual circumstances. The people of Pakistan have elected a female prime minister twice prior to 2002. Because of the efforts of those women legislators, Pakistan currently has a better level of female representation in both the national and provincial legislatures, respectively.

### Introduction

During the pre-partition era, new structures led to the expulsion of Muslim women from social and political life and kept them confined to the domestic sphere. Women's rights activism in Pakistan had commenced in the pre-divided colonial period, and it carries traces of the legacy of British colonial feminist activism to this day. During the Pakistan, movement, the women's movement gained momentum. It is argued that with "the advent of the Pakistan movement, women's participation in the freedom struggle became a dire necessity both for increasing the Muslim vote bank and for displaying numerical strength at the Muslim League political rallies" (Shami, 2009). During this period, it is evident that women played a visible role in the struggle for independence (Weiss, 1999). One of the first issues to be taken up by Muslim women in India was the right to education (Mumtaz, 1998).

Women have had equal political rights since Pakistan got independence from British rule. However, their political representation continued to be very low. It is argued that during the early period of independence no substantive transformation occurred in the lives of common women of Pakistan (Afzal, 1999). The India Act of 1935 introduced gender quotas in the subcontinent, and the newly formed state of Pakistan continued with this policy (Ali, 2000).

All three constitutions of Pakistan adopted in 1956, 1962, and 1973, kept the policy of women's reserve seats intact. President General Zia-ul-Haq brought twenty reserve seats for women in the Majlis-e-Shoora in 1985. Following the expiration of the provision for women to reserve seats in 1988, women's presence in legislatures remained extremely low (UNDP, 2005). These statistics validate the argument that women of Pakistan need a policy of reserve seats to let them be part of mainstream political institutions. It is significant to

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notice that only 113 women served in the parliaments of Pakistan from 1947 to 1997 (Mumtaz, 1998). Another researcher has identified several factors that severely limit Pakistani women's capacity to participate in and be represented in political life.

Women's position in party structures, the method by which they are elected, the absence of a power base, and the role of the election commission in promoting their representation are interconnected. They all pose a challenge for women legislators in making their role effective (Haroon, 2011).

There are, however, autobiographies that give an insight into the role women played in the early days of Pakistan's independence (Ikramullah, 2002; Shahnawaz, 2002) and two more describing their roles in the seventies and eighties (Bhutto, 1989; Hussain, 2015). The major chunk of the writings focuses on women's low level of representation. Only a single study evaluated data of proceedings of the national Parliament from (1947 to 1988) to evaluate the contribution of women in the parliament, but women did not have significant representation in the National Assembly during this period. In her study, Mumtaz (1998) highlighted that in the early period of independence, women legislators, despite low numbers and an unstable political environment, had been very active and vocal in the legislative business. They had a higher share in legislative interventions than men (Mumtaz, 1998, p. 350). Women politicians raised diverse issues in the parliament like women's role in politics, female employment, participation in sports, and, family laws during these years. The issue of women's

reserve seats was persistently raised by these women parliamentarians. Begum Nasim Jehan submitted an important constitutional amendment that women on reserve seats should be directly elected by female voters; however, she could not get the support of the parliament for this proposal (Krook, 2009, p. 67). Women parliamentarians also paid great regard to women's issues above party affiliations. Mumtaz (1998) summed up her study,

Women parliamentarians have demonstrated their capacity to participate ably and fully in the assemblies. Indeed, their presence is crucial from the women's point of view. It is critical that agreed modalities be adopted to ensure the entry of women having involvement in politics and an understanding of women's issues. It is equally important for male politicians and political parties to reflect on their attitude and give women their due place in the political system and structures (p. 125).

### Earlier Post-Partition Period: 1947-1969

Women's representation in national and provincial legislatures has varied over time and across political systems. For instance, women held 3% of Pakistan's first legislature seats. In the 30 members' house, women had only two seats. Women were not represented in the second legislative session, which met from 1955 to 1958. Unfortunately, no women were elected to serve in this second constituent assembly, which has 80 seats. The political structure underwent a major shift from 1956 to 1958. Since the position of governor-general was abolished, Iskander Mirza became the President of Pakistan. Afterward, from 1958 to 1971, the military dominated the country (Awan, 2016).

**Table 1.** Women Political Representation in Pakistan (1947–1969)

Tenure of the Assembly (Year)	Total Seats	Number of Women Legislators			
		General Seats	Reserve Seats	Total	Percent
1947–54	30	-	-	2	6.7
1955–58	80	-	-	0	0
1962–65	156	6	-	6	3.8
1965–69)	156	6	-	6	3.8

\*One woman was elected in bi-elections

Source: PILDAT, 2004, P. 24

## **Women Participation in Elections (1970-77)**

The people of Pakistan had to wait almost two decades to exercise their right to vote and choose their representatives. General Yahya Khan revealed the key components of the Legal Framework Order in his address on March 28, 1970. There were 300 seats in the National Assembly. East Pakistan was given 162 seats, whereas West Pakistan was allocated 138 seats.

There were 13 reserve seats for women. East Pakistan and West Pakistan got seven and six seats respectively. The indirect election procedure was suggested for these seats. The 1970 elections to the Constituent Assembly were the first to use the adult franchise. There were 86.6 female voters for every 100 male voters when the country held its first general elections in 1970 ([ECP, 2002](#)). For the National Assembly election, nine women contested general seats, five from Sindh, three from East Pakistan, and one from Punjab. No women candidates contested Balochistan and North-West Frontier Province (NWFP). Unfortunately, all these women candidates lost elections. Begum Kaniz Fatimah finished third in the contest for Karachi, securing 25,529 votes ([Church World Service Pakistan/Afghanistan & Free and Fair Elections Network, 2010](#)).

The Awami League, led by Shaikh Mujib-ur Rehman, swept the votes in East Pakistan, capturing a whopping 160 seats. It was an unprecedented victory for The Awami League. In addition, it gained all seven of the province's seats allotted for women. As a result, the party gained a simple majority in the 313-members National Assembly, which was tasked with formulating a new constitution. Pakistan People's Party (PPP), qualified as the second most powerful party in the country after winning 81 seats out of the 138 seats available in the four western provinces. Only one woman from the National Awami Party (Bhashani Group) filed a nomination paper to run for a general seat. As it turned out, the National Awami Party (NAP) did not participate in the election because of a storm that hit East Pakistan during the campaign. Nusrat Rana was the first woman to compete in a by-election for an available seat ([Zia and Bari, 1999](#)). In West Pakistan, six women were elected to reserved seats in the legislature.

East Pakistan's political parties have no place in Yahya Khan's vision for Pakistan's future. His

delaying tactics produced further instability in East Pakistan, leading to civil war. After a civil conflict, East Pakistan split away from West Pakistan and became the independent state of Bangladesh. On April 14, 1972, the National Assembly convened for a brief session and elected Zulfikar Ali Bhutto as President. Martial Law was lifted on April 21, 1972. The leaders of all parliamentary parties convened for a four-day meeting on October 20, 1972, and signed an agreement on the fundamental elements of the new Constitution. On December 31, 1972, a draft of a constitutional bill was presented in the parliament that eventually led to the passage of the draft constitution on April 10, 1973. After the Senate elections were held in July, Mr. Fazal Illahi was elected President of Pakistan on August 10, 1973. On August 14, 1973, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was elected Prime Minister of Pakistan.

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's reign in Pakistan was notable because it was a time of more freedom for women. All positions in the federal government were now open to women for the first time. The National Assembly and Provincial Assemblies each had 10% and 5% of their seats reserved for women. It was not until 1973 that Pakistan's Constitution officially recognized gender equality, emphasizing women's equal involvement in all aspects of public life ([Weiss, 2012](#)). The Constitution of 1973 has certain provisions that brought equality between men and women and discourages any discrimination based on sex ([Krook, 2009, p. 67](#)).

A constitution committee was established earlier and three women, Jennifer Qazi, Nasim Jahan, and Begum Ashraf Abbasi, served on this committee. In 1975, Pakistan's official delegation attended the First World Conference of Women held in Mexico and after this, another important development happened when The First Pakistan Women's Rights Committee was established. According to the 1973 constitution, the National Assembly's tenure would have expired on August 14, 1977. In 1977, Begum Nasim Wali Khan from Awami National Party (ANP) was the only woman candidate running for election to the National Assembly. She contested from Peshawar and Mardan. In the conservative society of NWFP, contesting elections in two constituencies and later winning both seats were remarkable achievements ([Zia and Bari, 1999](#)). She became the first Pakistani woman who was elected to two constituencies on

general seats. At the time, she was affiliated with the Awami National Party (ANP), but the party was banned. Therefore, she contested elections on the ticket of the Pakistan National Alliance (PNA). Unfortunately later on, the party did not attend the assembly session, claiming that the elections were rigged and disputed. As part of their boycott of the provincial elections, the Pakistan National Alliance refused to take the oath of their elected members to the National Assembly. Following the Law, all ten nominees of PPP for the reserved seats for women were elected unopposed. The opposition parties launched an anti-government campaign against the Pakistan People's Party, which won the polls following the elections. Because of these political issues, the 1977 assembly was unable to gather, and the allotted seats for women remained unfilled.

### **General Election of 1985 and 1988**

New general elections were held on March 7, 1977 but a nine-party opposition alliance refused to take the oath of office as members of the National Assembly and indicated that these parties would boycott the elections to the four provincial assemblies. As a result, the PPP was able to take control of all of the provinces. Pakistan faced another military rule when another Martial Law was imposed on July 5, 1977 General Zia-ul-Haq, and suspended the Constitution. As of August 12, 1983, General Zia had launched an ambitious plan to restore democracy in the country and gradually hand over the government to an elected administration. He announced that a referendum would be held to confirm his legitimacy as President. On December 17, 1984, a referendum in favor of Gen Zia received 97.7 percent votes. Later on, President announced, that coming elections of national and provincial legislatures would be conducted on a non-party basis. Non-Muslims have already six reserve seats but these were increased to ten and these seats were filled directly by the non-Muslim voters.

In the election for general seats, fifteen women filed nomination papers, eight in Punjab, four in Sindh, two in the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP), and one in the Federal Capital. Only Syeda Abida Hussain was able to gain a National Assembly seat from Jhang. It was a disappointing result considering the high number of candidates who contested elections. She

revealed in her book how she worked so hard to earn this position.

Throughout my election campaign from NA 9, to Jhang 111, I remained in high spirits. I knew I would win by a wide margin. My cousins all boycotted, convinced that the parliamentary elections would go the way of the referendum. The elections were conducted on a non-Party basis, but anyone could contest by renouncing their party affiliation, as in local elections ([Hussain, 2015, p. 218](#)).

Nasim Akhtar, another female candidate who contested this election on general seats, remained unsuccessful in her bid. After that, she was elected to a seat in Bahawalnagar in a by-election. In the National Assembly, there were sixty female candidates for the twenty reserve seats for women ([Zia and Bari, 1999](#)). A single transferable vote was used to elect women to the 20 reserve seats. Each province was divided into a single constituency, which had as many seats allotted to that province. The election for these reserve seats was held on March 20, 1985.

A politician from Sindh, Muhammad Khan Junejo became the prime minister of Pakistan, and he included four women in his new Cabinet. The disputed eighth constitutional amendment grants power to the President to dissolve assemblies. Zia ul-Haq, then the president of the country dismissed the government of Prime Minister Junejo, claiming that the administration was corrupt and ineffective. On May 29, 1988, The National Assembly, was dissolved permanently.

Zia made another undemocratic announcement that the next general election would be held on a non-Party basis once more, but in 1988, he died in a plane crash, which led to the end of the 'Zia era'. Major political parties strongly opposed the idea of non-party elections, and following his death, these political parties filed a petition in the Supreme Court of Pakistan, requesting the Apex court to declare Zia's decision of holding non-Party elections null and void. Supreme Court of Pakistan in its decision overturned the orders of Zia-ul-Haq, and the Apex court ruled that the next general elections in Pakistan would be on a party base (The New York Times, October 3, 1988). In the next general elections of 1988, for the national assembly general seats, only 17 women contested elections. It is

pertinent to mention that only nine women contested elections on party tickets, and eight independent women candidates contested the elections. It was a promising insignia that the political party brought a considerable number of women as candidates in general seats, but the politics of Pakistan was still in the formative phase, so only four women could win seats. Four female candidates, including Benazir Bhutto, Nusrat Bhutto, Dr. Ashraf Abbasi, and Abida Hussain, had been elected from two different constituencies, and according to election laws, each of these women was only allowed to keep one of the seats they had won. Thirty-three women ran in the elections for the twenty seats in the National Assembly reserved for female representatives. These elections brought 24 women as members of the National Assembly, including twenty women on reserved seats, and four on general seats. Benazir Bhutto became Pakistan's first woman Prime Minister after her party won these elections. It was noted that

To the surprise of many non-Pakistanis and despite all structural barriers to women's participation in politics, these elections brought 35-year-old Benazir Bhutto to power, who took oath on December 2, 1988, as the youngest and the first female Prime Minister in the Muslim world ([Zia and Bari, 1999, p. 10](#)).

The tenure of Pakistan's first female Prime Minister paved the path for more women to enter the country's political arena. It is difficult for a woman to head a political party in a country with a male-dominated political system and compete in elections against male politicians. Benazir Bhutto, in her book, wrote about her election as Prime Minister of Pakistan.

The people of Pakistan have rejected bigotry and prejudice in electing a woman Prime Minister. It was an enormous honour, and an equally enormous responsibility. For me, taking the oath of office was a magical, surreal moment. I could not help but remember the forces of destiny that had brought me to this office, to this place, at this time ([Bhutto, 2008 p.392](#)).

She tried to include more women in decision-making institutions and in her first 45 Members' cabinet, she included five women Ministers. Unfortunately, she was not allowed to complete

her tenure of five years. In December 1990, the president of Pakistan dismissed the government of the first woman the Prime Minister 'on the charges of corruption, failure to work effectively with the provinces and attempt to question the power of army' ([Yasmeen, 1994, p.72](#)).

## **General Elections From 1990-1997**

The next election was held in 1990 and in these elections, a coalition of political parties named the Islami Jamhoori Ittihad (IJI) secured a significant victory, and the leader of the Pakistan Muslim League, Mian Nawaz Sharif became the new Prime Minister of Pakistan. Although IJI won many seats in these elections but unluckily, not a single woman was elected. Twelve women contested these elections for the thirteen general seats. Benazir Bhutto, the People's Democratic Alliance (PDA) leader, was a candidate for two seats. Nusrat Bhutto and Shahnaz Javaid were two additional women who contested elections on the People's Democratic Alliance's tickets. Syeda Abida Hussain was the only woman to receive a ticket from the Islami Jamhoori Ittihad (IJI); however, she was defeated in the elections from Jhang. Aside from these four candidates, the remaining nine women were all independent candidates who could not grab more than a few thousand votes ([Church World Service Pakistan/Afghanistan Free and Fair Elections Network, 2010](#)). Article 51 (4) of the 1973 Constitution describes the tenure of this constitutional provision of women's reserve seats in the National Assembly. It says that this provision will remain effective until the expiration of a term of ten years or until the holding of three general elections, whichever occurred first. Since three general elections were held in 1977, 1985, and 1988, that led to the expiry of this provision of women reserve seats, and there were no reserved seats for women in the 1990 elections. However, only two of them, Benazir Bhutto (PPP/PDA) and Nusrat Bhutto (PPP/PDA), were successful in their attempts to become a member of the National Assembly ([Bilal, 2004](#)). Despite running in two different constituencies, Benazir Bhutto, the former Prime Minister of Pakistan, could only retain one of them. Abida Hussain was nominated by the Islami Jamhoori Ittihad (IJI), but she was defeated ([Zia and Bari, 1999](#)).

**Table 2.** Women Political Representation in National Assembly of Pakistan (1972–1997)

Tenure of the Assembly (Year)	Total Seats	Number of Women Legislators			
		General Seats	Reserve Seats	Total	Percentage
1972–77	144	6	0	6	4.2
March 1977–July 5, 1977	210	1	10	11	5.2
1985–1988	217	2	20	22*	10.1
1988–1990	217	4	20	24	11.1
1990–93	217	2	0	02	0.9
1993–96	217	4	0	04	1.8
1997–99	217	6	0	06	2.8

\*One woman was elected in bi-elections

Sources: PILDAT, 2004, P. 24

Table 2 is highly illuminating in several ways. This table indicates a significant gap between women's political representation during the period when reserved seats were available (1985-1990) and the period when there were no reserved seats available (1990-97).

President Ishaq Khan dissolved the government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on April 18, 1993. Using the Eighth Amendment, President Ishaq Khan could bring down an elected government for the second time in as many years. Nawaz Sharif was charged with corruption and mismanagement of the economy, which were essentially identical to the claims that he had leveled against Benazir Bhutto when her government was dismissed in 1990. After the Supreme Court deemed the President's order to dissolve the National Assembly unlawful a month later. In May 1993, Sharif returned to power. In the 1993 general elections, fourteen women candidates ran for general seats in the National Assembly. These elections also showed the same philosophy of political parties that only nine women contested these elections from different political parties. On the other hand, six women contested these elections as independent candidates. The Pakistan People's Party nominated Benazir Bhutto, Nusrat Bhutto, and Shahnaz Javed as candidates. During the 1990 elections, these three women also contested elections as candidates for the People's Democratic Alliance; however, Shahnaz Javed was unsuccessful in her bid for election. All three female candidates for the Pakistan People's Party were elected to their respective seats in the 1993 elections. The other major political party, the Pakistan Muslim League (N), nominated four

women, but only one of them, Tehmina Daultana, could win her seat. The other two female candidates of the PML(N), Kishwar Abid Hussain and Majeeda Wyne, finished second in their respective constituencies. After Ghulam Haider Wyne's assassination, Pakistan Muslim League (N) nominated his wife, Majeeda Wyne. The Mohajir Qaumi Movement participated in these elections under the new name of the Haq Parast Group, and this party nominated two women candidates. However, this party boycotted the elections to the National Assembly, which is why both female candidates were successful in their campaigns.

In the 1997 elections, 35 women candidates filed nomination papers. Benazir Bhutto filed nomination from two constituencies'. They were said to be only running for seats now held by prominent politicians, and as a result, their chances of winning were considered exceedingly poor (Shaheed and Warrach, 1998). In this election, The Pakistan People's Party (PPP), led by a woman nominated nine women candidates for general seats. The Pakistan Muslim League –Nawaz (PML-N) nominated seven women candidates. It is interesting to note that a smaller political party, the Pakistan people's party (Shaheed Bhutto) also nominated seven women candidates (Zia and Bari, 1999). These elections marked the first time women were eligible to run for office in the Federal Capital. Following the death of a candidate, the Pakistani Muslim League (Nawaz) issued a ticket to another female contender for the next elections, but there was no women candidate from Balochistan and Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). Nine of these women were independent candidates in these elections. First

time in the history of Pakistan, six women succeeded in these elections in general seats. Pakistan People's Party (PPP) could garb three women seats of the National Assembly. While three women candidates of the Pakistan Muslim League –Nawaz (PML-N) succeeded from Punjab. During these general elections, there were no reserved seats for women.

Although this constituted the highest number of female members of the National Assembly in Pakistani history, these women still represented only less than 3 percent of the entire membership of the house, which had 207 members at the time of the election in 1997. Another woman was elected to the National Assembly in 1998, in bi-elections. One researcher who described the history of elections in Pakistan made the following observations, which are reproduced in full below.

Party politics remained the fundamental driving force during the elections. Indeed, party and patterns of leadership scored high marks throughout the Pakistan's electoral history.

Ideology from the leftist perspective had played a significant role in the 1970 elections. A decade and a half of the ideologization of politics followed this from the mid-1980s onward ([Waseem, 2006, p. 309](#)).

### Women Voters in Elections (1970-1997)

There are certain sociocultural constraints that kept women to be underrepresented in the voter rolls, with a lower percentage of women registering than male voters. When adult voting was first introduced in the 1950s, the gap was 20%; by 1970, it had fallen to 12% and by 1988, it had fallen to 8%. Between 1993 and 1997, the gender gap in registered voters widened by 10% ([Saiyid, 2001](#)). The Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), was granted the right to vote to women in 1997, but because of the strict social norms of that area, it remained in principle and not in practice even though women were granted the right to vote there.

**Table 3:** Registered Voters (in Millions), 1985–1997

Year	Registered Voters			
	Total Voters	Male Voters	Female Voters	Difference (in millions)
1985	32.54	17.98	14.56	3.42
1988	46.21	24.82	21.38	3.44
1990	47.06	25.38	21.70	3.68
1993	50.38	27.46	22.92	4.54
1997	55.07	30.60	24.47	6.13

Source: (ECP, 2002)

It is paradoxical that, as time goes on, the disparity between the two genders becomes greater. There are varieties of factors contributing to the under-registration of female voters. Culture-based norms, illiteracy, inadequate knowledge of the electoral registration process, and movement constraints are the primary reasons for women's under-representation in the voting population ([UNDP, 2005, p. 12](#)).

Pakistani women are subjected to a variety of sufferings because of the country's weak legal system and religious intolerance. The establishment of strong patriarchal standards has resulted in the systematic exclusion and segregation of women, who are thus denied access to the fruits of development. The argument is that men do not want women to take an active role in

the family and society, and the perception of males about the separation of responsibilities has a significant negative impact on the empowerment and autonomy of women ([Isran and Isran 2012](#)). This aspect has also been used as a justification for gender-based violence, as it fosters a sense of masculine superiority in the community. They treat women as if they are less than human, with fewer rights and fewer privileges. Even women are expected to keep their mouths shut in the face of male harshness. The female body is constantly under the influence of male relatives. This masculine attitude limits the political options available to women and has resulted in a systematic marginalization of women in the political arena. It is observed that the majority of the women who had been elected in successive assemblies, came

from influential political families that represent a narrow privileged section of the society (Saïyid, 2001). Women have admonished repeatedly that they should remain within the confines (Chardivari) of the home and that if they venture beyond, they will bring disgrace upon the family. Women's political empowerment requires freedom of choice and movement. A study that was conducted in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, has shown that women are unaware of their political rights. They also are facing the challenges of sex segregation and illiteracy. Moreover, sociocultural standards of the area also accord women a generally inferior position. (Naz, Ibrahim, and Ahmad, 2012).

## **Conclusion**

Low levels of female representation in official political institutions result from the country's volatile democratic history, sluggish economic progress, and strong identity as an Islamic republic. This summary of women's participation in Pakistan's elections demonstrates that women were not permitted to participate in public affairs throughout Pakistan's history of democracy. Initially, they were only allowed to work in social welfare. Fatima Jinnah took a risk when she decided to run for presidential elections against Ayub Khan. Although she was defeated in the election, her decision to run in the race has symbolic value. Regrettably, national elections in Pakistan were not held until 1970 due to various factors, as this deprived the marginalized sector of society of gaining crucial political knowledge and training during this time. The history of women's participation in elections indicates that they have not been able to make a significant contribution as legislators in the parliament of Pakistan.

It is a common feature of Pakistani politics that only women of feudal class, having strong political backgrounds are considered a good choice when making a selection of women for general seats. Party workers were ignored and only given a small slice of the pie, and political parties made no special efforts to assure their success even on the few seats they did get. In Pakistan, women elected to the country's lower house of parliament tend to come from elite political families. If one look at the family background of women politicians like

Banazir Bhutto, Nusrat Bhutto, Syda Abida Hussain, Begum Nasim Wali Khan, and Tehmina Dultana, a clear pattern is visible. This family background of these women members elected on general seats demonstrated that these women do not have close link with the feminist paradigm of the country.

According to the study's findings, personal influence, family history, and relationships with party leadership all significantly influenced the nomination of women for general and reserved seats. Men, overwhelmingly dominate all major political parties in Pakistan except Pakistan People's Party (PPP). This is the reason that these political parties do not place a high focus on the issues that concern women. All political parties have made numerous pledges on women's empowerment in their party manifestos, but while in power, these parties have failed to follow through on their promises and commitments. The majority of political parties have an authoritarian and undemocratic culture controlled by men, which has a significant impact on women's participation in elections.

Socio-cultural traditions and women's economic dependence on their male spouses are responsible for women's lack of political influence. Low literacy rates and gender segregation in social positions hinder women's engagement. There can be no effective participation of women without a gradual shift in society, which should begin from the bottom up. The initial step in achieving this goal is to provide women with greater social and economic mobility. First, women must be allowed to assume leadership roles in the political arena. Legislative initiatives like the quota are solely responsible for current political indicators of women's political empowerment. Despite this, political parties nevertheless adhere to norms based on structural inequality in socio-cultural practices. This is evident in how positions, responsibilities, and party nominations are distributed. The empowerment of women and their involvement in the political system must also be improved through changes to normative behaviors at the local and social levels (especially in the home and the economy) and the promotion of awareness of the importance of women's roles in society.



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