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**TÍTULO:** Igualdad de género y disposiciones sobre cuotas: un desarrollo sostenible en la participación de las mujeres en la política en Pakistán.

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**RESUMEN:** Este estudio, a través de un método descriptivo cualitativo, examina la naturaleza de los marcos socioculturales, las reglas formales e informales de selección de candidatos, estructuras de poder y sistemas de cuotas en los partidos políticos en Pakistán. Además, este artículo destaca el proceso de democracia, las prácticas institucionales y de reclutamiento y su impacto en la participación sustantiva de las mujeres, su representación en la formulación de políticas y la legislación en Pakistán. Este documento sugiere que la planificación a largo plazo para la igualdad de género es muy necesaria en lugar de los sistemas de cuotas a corto plazo porque las mujeres pueden representar mejor los problemas de las mujeres al participar en los grupos de toma de decisiones de las comunidades, ya sean nacionales o nacionales.

**PALABRAS CLAVES:** roles de género, igualdad de género, disposiciones de cuotas, oficinas públicas, Pakistán.

**TITLE:** Gender equality and the quota provisions: a sustainable development in Women's participation in Politics in Pakistan.

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**ABSTRACT:** This study, through a qualitative descriptive method, examines the nature of socio-cultural frameworks, formal and informal rules of candidates' selection, power structures, and quota systems in political parties in Pakistan. Besides, this article spotlights the process of democracy, institutional and recruitment practices and their impact on females' substantive participation, their representation in policy-making and legislation in Pakistan. This paper suggests long term planning for gender equality is much needed instead of short-term quota systems because women can better represent women's issues by taking part in communities' decision-making groups either domestic or national.

**KEY WORDS:** Gender roles; gender equality; quota provisions; public offices; Pakistan

**INTRODUCTION.**

**Background of the study.**

It's a bitter historical reality that gender biased power-politics have kept females away from the legislature, power structures and leading public office positions everywhere in the world. In spite of being an equal portion of the population of the world, women have had to play a role in public affairs and parliaments that does not match their numbers. The democratic system which entails representation on the basis of numerical strength is naturally more inclined towards ensuring women's

representation and participation in the affairs of the country. But owing to the constraints women face in the electoral processes different countries have experimented with a system of bringing in reserved quotas for the marginalized groups in the society such as women to safeguard their fair participation in policy making and decision-making structures.

This is the reason the supporters of females' rights attach great value to the argument that the notions of nationalism, democracy, and citizenship are taken to be neutral but in practice all these concepts are gender biased. According to these proponents of women's rights, the concept of democracy is effective, constant and stable only when there is equal participation of all the stakeholders of the society including women. Chusnul Mar'iyah during a workshop on the implementation of quotas in the Asian region in Stockholm in 2003 advocated that "women's political rights are also included in basic human rights, and human rights are significantly important in democratic societies. Therefore, the participation of men and women equally in the decision-making processes along with the policy-making processes is a sine qua non in the system of democratic friendly states (Mar'iyah, 2003).

During the UN General Assembly meeting on 25 September 2015 where all member countries agreed to adopt the 2030 development agenda that is titled *Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* and whose focus is to eradicate poverty, spread education, provide equal opportunities to all citizens and to promote sustainable development programs. In doing so, every UN member country aims to uplift the many underdeveloped states which have been suffering from quantitatively large and long-standing bias against females that deprives them of the basic rights of ownership, leadership, equal participation in public offices and access to the public goods and services.

To address and fix such biased notions are necessary not only for overall social, economic and political welfare but also for ethical reasons to strengthen the deprived and marginalized class in society; women.

A number of empirical studies spotlight the discussions related to symbolic representation and substantive terms to highlight the participation of women in political offices in the world and their preferences as a community and also determining the voters' opinion about women's participation in the electoral process (Franceschet, Krook, & Piscopo, 2012).

Empirical studies further showcase that the allocation of special quotas for women in electoral systems increases the number of women participants in politics as compared to the majoritarian system (Mc Allister & Studlar, 2002). Therefore, women's presence in public offices encourages the women of both educated and labor classes to enhance their participation not only in public offices but also in legislative system of the country (McDonagh, 2002). In doing so, women can get the maximum chance to take part in every walk of life through the general openness provided to women by reserved quotas (Paxton & Kunovich, 2003).

The basic purpose of the introduction of the reserved quotas for women is to deal with the traditionally fixed mindset about gender roles and where women have been typically disadvantaged of this dismal situation. However, after reservation of political and job quotas women have increased their political and public power and attained worldwide acclaim and popularity and now reserving a share of the seats for women is present in more than hundred countries of the world (Krook, 2009).

In many European countries, reservation of quotas also present and females are playing their vital role public offices and legislature of the countries, however, in some cases, the impact of the quota system may be reduced by applying to contestants rather than the electoral seats<sup>1</sup>. In some countries like Rwanda, the popularity of the reserved seats for women increased to a great extent that in 2003 there was only 30 % reserved quota for the women and this provision of quota contributed to the fact that by 2007 they gained the majority in legislative assembly (Powley, 2007) and dramatically by

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<sup>1</sup> For example, in France, although 50 per cent of candidates are required to be women, only 18 per cent make it to the national assembly (Frechette, Maniquet, & Morelli, 2008).

now it has the majority of about 68% female representation in assembly that is a world record set in 2018<sup>2</sup>.

The allocation of quotas for women received huge approbation throughout the world and lead to increased adaptation but such allocation of quotas was also questioned and considered controversial by some circles. For example, the supports of quota systems are of the opinion that traditionally disadvantaged groups of society can work more efficiently after getting their specific representation in law and policy-making institutions (Kudva, 2003; Skjeie, 1991).

According to De Paola et al (2012), making discussion on results inferred from Italian municipality elections data in 2012 found that the provision of gender quotas had increased the political involvement and female voters' participation. It also increased the access to public services for women such as education, health, and other public properties by ensuring optimal progress opportunities and utilization of human potential. The critics are of the view that the allocation of special quotas has a negative impact as it may increase the possibility of bringing in such individuals who are not competent or suitable for the reserved positions due to their lack of qualifications or aptitude. This selection may easily fall prey to the manipulation and mismanagement by traditional elite's pressure (Cowley & Childs, 2003; Nanivadekar, 2006; Tripp, 2006). Further, such reserved quotas also affect the competent and fairly elected candidates morally and may, in future, inculcate a sense to adopt prejudiced patterns of behaviors that would cause harm to the long term social and political welfare projects.

It is necessary to look at the long-term benefits for the society with equal participation of the citizens to promote the social awareness for both genders' significance in socio-economic and socio-political betterment of any country. Therefore, with reservation of quotas, long term plans should also be

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.konbini.com/ng/lifestyle/women-now-make-68-parliament-rwanda/>

implemented which would enable the population of the society to come forward equally without any need for special treatment for a specific class of people. This is far beyond the immediate relief that may be provided by the reserved period or quota systems. Long term planning can bring a real difference as opposed to the optics and superficial impact of the short-term or project-based reservation effects as the quotas help the elected persons for specific seats to acquire the skills (Raabe, Sekher, & Birner, 2009). It would also be helpful to revise the criteria/policies for the female candidates' ability and aptitude for the seats (Beaman, Chattopadhyay, Duflo, Pande, & Topalova, 2009; Rudman & Fairchild, 2004).

Pakistan was one of the first few members of the UN to adopt the 2030 agenda through National Assembly Resolution No. 113 as the national agenda on February 19, 2016. To attain the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), women's participation in public offices in Pakistan has been set as a key focus by highlighting the need and perusal of the ways to ensure equal participation of both the genders in practical life.

The framework of SDGs paves the way to put women at the core of development by giving them central attention and specific quotas at every level as an accelerator for the rapid and overall progress of the society. Moreover, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has been collaborating with Government of Pakistan to promote gender equality in all walks of life with special focus on women development and their participation in the socio-economic development of Pakistan. JICA with Women in Development (WID) approach tried to abolish the gap between social responsibilities and roles traditionally defined for men and women and their primary objective was to define the gender dynamics of the country within its context keeping in view the emerging changes and chronic issues. Being a democratic state, in Pakistan provision of rights regardless of gender has been enshrined in the Constitution of Pakistan since its inception but the number of reserved seats for women had never been brought to limelight since 1947 till when Musharaf's government in 2000 under its slogan of

enlightened Pakistan took up the issue of promoting women's rights and increased the number of reserved seats from three percent to 33 % in the lower legislative house, the National Assembly, and 17 % respectively in the upper house, the Senate.

The initiative to provide rights, better status and a more visible social position to women has now been enriched and has spread to different departments such as education, health, business, in almost all public sectors in Pakistan. More specifically, three major categories of reserved quota i.e. reserved seats for women parliamentarians, legal quota and the very organizational structure of political parties. In addition, some seats are also reserved in to ensure religious, ethnic and minority mainstream in the party. Therefore, the study intends to explore current gender equality in public offices in Pakistan as to how these quotas in every field of life from the parliament to school admissions will have direct, tangible results which will be beneficial not only for the females but also for the progress of the entire country. Dahlerup (2006) provided a detailed description of the quota system and stated that providing equal rights by removing cultural barriers does not show a significant contribution in providing equal quota for both the genders. However, women face a direct criticism and criticism at political positions which dispirit women leaders in their competence. Breaking norms and awarding women the right to cast vote was stupendous. Announcing quotas to provide equal status, rights and equal opportunities show significantly positive measures without any cultural barriers<sup>3</sup>.

Women's affirmative inclination to work evident throughout the history of Pakistan, though exhibited in albeit limited circle has been both fundamental and monumental and with the opening of new avenues to them there is only growth in the scope of this contribution ahead. Given the opportunity a female, Benazir Bhutto, became the first female Prime Minister of an Islamic country. The pleasant increase in the submission of parliamentary bills in the National Assembly indicates to the significant

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<sup>3</sup> Retrieved from : <http://www.quotaproject.org/aboutQuotas.cfm> on 27.12.2018

contribution of women. It is due to their performance that the number of women parliamentarians has grown from 127 in the year 2008, to 134 in the year 2012 whereas this ratio has increased now more than 140 % (Fleschenberg and Bari, 2015)<sup>4</sup>.

### **Objectives.**

The present research has been carried out to with the primary objective of ascertaining the impact of allocation of reserved quotas and its contribution to ensuring gender equality and their roles in the sustainable development of women in Pakistan. This study also aims to analyze the fields and institutions most crucial for women quotas and gender equality issues and the variables that have visible impact on both genders' roles in policymaking, politics, leadership and changing norms, socio-cultural issues, economic and traditional and human behaviors to effect sustainable development in public offices in Pakistan.

There are two main objectives of this article: firstly, to address the issues of gender equality and quota provisions in public offices in Pakistan, and secondly, the impact of increasing quotas for women in every field of life and its contribution in the sustainable development of the country. In doing so, this study further explores and identifies the impact of gender equality and provision of quotas in policy making and effects social, political, cultural, economic prospects of both men and women's lives in Pakistan. This is also helpful in finding the gaps among previous gender-based studies related to national policies and their accomplishments recorded and implemented by National Policy for Development & Empowerment of Women, National Plan of Action, and Gender Reform Action Plan etc. Moreover, this study finds and assesses the nature and degree of change happening in perception towards the role of men and women in economically emerging and socially changing society where

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<sup>4</sup> Fleschenberg and Bari (2015), "Unmaking Political Patriarchy through Gender Quotas?" Policy Brief, Heinrich BöllStiftung, p. 10.



the traditional and typical fixed gendered roles are modified and replaced accordingly in politics, health, education, law and order, economic development and even in agriculture departments.

### **General situation of women in Pakistan.**

According to the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the state gives equal opportunities and rights to all citizens without any discrimination of gender preferences of male or female. However, the practical application of this law is not quite satisfactory as throughout the country in almost every field of life women are rarely considered equal to men and their participation with men is still almost a taboo outside the urban educated classes.

According to the report of 2007/2008 by Human Development sector, Pakistan is ranked 82 among 93 countries on the UN Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM). This report and ranking are developed country wise according to the statistics of the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) and it quantitatively studies about the specific region. The focused areas in this report are the participation of women and their equality and inequality as indicators to showcase the control of gender-based earned economic and financial resources, political participation, policy making and decision making along with involvement in legislative matters.

According to a recent Global Gender Gap (GGG) ranking of 2018, Pakistan remains at the lowest position in the South Asian region while its overall rank among 144 countries is a dismal second to last: 143<sup>5</sup>. This report spotlights the situation of gender equality and opportunities provided to both the genders in all sections of society including basic literary and professional education gap, women's participation in public offices along with females' labor force involvement in country's economic development.

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<sup>5</sup> [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GGGR\\_2017.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2017.pdf) pp.33.

## **UNDP and Gender Equality and Quota System in Pakistan.**

United Nations Development Program (UNDP) is the primary platform from where the research projects based on gender equality and participation in public life is highlighted at grass root level initiated. In doing so, the UNDP conducted various projects and launched a report in 2014 based on gender equality in public administration (GEPA) where particular attention was given to women's status in public offices throughout the world. That report identified issues and challenges in policy and lawmaking to address the gender roles and their equal participation along with specific quotas for women in almost all fields of life. The need of the GEPA initiative was based on the two priorities: first to support and encourage the females' participation and interest in public offices of the country and second to make a significant contribution in the existing data about GEPA to support the process of policy making and decision-making agenda for women in particular.

In the GEPA 2014 report, the following initiatives were suggested:

Goal 1: to achieve empowerment for all females and gender equality at all levels.

Target 5.5: to ensure significant and effective involvement of women and provision of equal opportunities in public offices including policy making and leadership.

Indicator 5.5.2: to promote females at higher managerial positions where they can take part in the decision-making process.

Indicator 16.7.1: the allocation of positions according to gender, age, disability and regional quotas in all public offices including parliament, senate, public service nominations and judiciary at national and provincial levels<sup>6</sup>.

The situation in Pakistan according to UNDP 2007 reports about gender equality and provision of quota systems in public offices was not satisfactory as there was a dire need to improve the existing

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<sup>6</sup> United Nations Development Programme. (2014). *Gender Equality in Public Administration*. New York, NY 10017, USA.

quota systems for women in public offices in Pakistan. The UNDP report analyzed the quota system in Pakistan on the following grounds:

- a. Does quota system work as a catalyst to improve the participation of females in public offices that would make a difference in outcome in stipulations of implementation, evaluation, and policy-making?
- b. For the effective and successful implementation of the quota system what type of socio-economic, cultural and political environment is required in Pakistan?
- c. Quotas to taken as the integral part of policy-making initiatives in the much needed and gender equality neglected public offices.

In the following part of the article, the provision of quota systems in various institutions and public offices in Pakistan is analyzed with its importance and the need to bridge the gender equality gap and its role in sustainable development of the society.

### **Representation of Women in Public Offices and Legislation.**

There are many countries in the world including Pakistan where the participation of women in policy-making and legislation is very little at both the national and the local levels (Dahlerup, 2006)<sup>7</sup>. This under-representation is due to many barriers including social, cultural, and religious and gender defined discriminations in such societies. Observing such conditions, it is unavoidable to increase the equality for both genders in every opportunity and outcomes. The developed countries strengthened their legislature and public offices with equal female participation to eliminate the gender biased approach from every institution. This thing is also noticed in certain studies that female legislators provide more facilities and funds and care more about the women rights their cause (Paxton & Hughes, 2007).

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<sup>7</sup> Globally, less than 20 per cent of members in national parliaments are female, a variable that varies from close to parity in Nordic and some African countries such as Rwanda to some 10 per cent in Arab states (IDEA, 2008).

This study aims to analyze the situation of gender equality and the provision of quotas in public offices to support sustainable development in Pakistan. For this purpose, detailed study of the situation of women in Pakistan along with their participation in public offices has been focused in this study.

### **Women Representation and Quota System in National and Senate level in Pakistan.**

The quota system has been a feature of all the Constitutions of Pakistan with some variations. The Constitution of 1956 reserved 3 % seats for women at all positions of the government of Pakistan, whereas this ratio was increased in the constitution of 1962 and 1973 to 2.75% at the National Assembly and 5 % at Provincial level.

The allocation of reserved seats was further increased later to 10% in 1985. The ratio saw no further increase in the 1990s under the democratic regimes of Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif. However, 30 % quota was initiated in early 2000, (Reyes, 2002). In addition to the national legislative houses the regime also initiated quota system at the local government level through the LGO act of 2001. However, the number of the reserved seats was decreased by the end of the Musharraf era by the adaptation of new local government act in the Punjab and Sindh, consequent to which the number of the earmarked seats dwindled.

Musharraf's National Plan for Action (NPA) focused on the practical implication of providing around 33% quota for reserved seats for women via elections whether direct or indirect. Equal gender quotas represent the involvement, competence, and efficacy of women role as compared to their counterparts.

Women have been actively contributing on specified quotas in Pakistan in different ways e.g. from a top leading position to the lowest grade positions. Four different dimensions have been categorized i.e. formal, descriptive, substantive, and symbolic to show women's contribution in politics, (Pitkin, 1967). Whereas, Mansbridge further provided the supplementary notions of radical representation in

three ways. The first shows the basic interest and idea to formulate that interest into action, whereas the second represents the surrogate which displays the constituents and the last is anticipatory which enhances the contribution to electoral process which will assess quota of women politicians with respect to their experiences, and contributions within the party (Masbridge, 2003).

Three major types of quota system are distinguished i.e. reserved seats for women parliamentarian under electoral laws of the constitution of Pakistan, the second quota is a legal candidate for specific seats under constitutional law, and the third type depends on the mutual consensus of a political party. The focus of this division ensures the provision of these seats on the basis of certain representations, and contribution of women towards a certain percentage in the lower house, or the upper house. The percentage of providing quotas to women has been raised to 20% in comparison to the last decade and the aim of Government of Pakistan is to increase it to 40% in 2030 and ensures 50-50% seats on equal opportunities and eliminating social fences for females to contribute in politics in Pakistan<sup>8</sup>. Therefore, with the current statistics, National Assembly of Pakistan comprises of 342 seats in total, sixty seats have been reserved for women, and 10 for non-Muslims members of the minority. According to statistics of the government of Pakistan, details of earmarked seats are given as under;

Table 1: Distribution of Seats in National Assembly in Pakistan 2018.

	Punjab	Sindh	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	Balochistan	FATA	Federal Capital	Total
General	148	61	35	14	12	2	272
Women	35	14	8	3	0	0	60
Non- Muslims	--	--	--	--	--	--	10
Total	183	75	43	17	12	2	342

Source: National Assembly of Pakistan official website<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Retrieved from <http://www.quotaproject.org/aboutQuotas.cfm> as of 27.12.2018

<sup>9</sup> Retrieved on December 20, 2018 from: <http://na.gov.pk/en/composition.php>

In addition, there are some reserved seats for women in the upper house or Senate in Pakistan. Although the numbers of seats are less as compared to the lower house yet there is a representation of women. The following table shows the number of seats reserved for women in the Senate.

Table 2 Women Reserved Seats in Senate (upper house) in Pakistan.

Federating Unit	General Seats	Seats reserved for Women	Seats reserved for Technocrats including Ulema	Seats reserved for non-Muslims	Total
Punjab	14	4	4	1	23
Sindh	14	4	4	1	23
KPK	14	4	4	1	23
Baluchistan	14	4	4	1	23
FATA	8	-	-	-	8
Capital	2	1	1	-	4
Total	66	17	17	4	104

Source: Senate of Pakistan official website<sup>10</sup>.

Reserved seats for women in the Senate in Pakistan are 17 whereas, generally, in Pakistan women representation is divided according to article 34 of the constitution of Pakistan. According to the latest survey report of Fafen, Pakistan is placed 89<sup>th</sup> in the world and ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> in South Asia. The following table shows the over-allocation of women representation in South Asia.

<sup>10</sup> Retrieved on December 22, 2018 from

<http://www.senate.gov.pk/en/essence.php?id=10&catid=4&subcatid=138&cattitle=About%20the%20Senate>

Table 3: Women representation in South Asia.

Countries	Lower or Single House			Upper House or Senate		
	Total Members Women Members	Total Members Women Members	%	Total Members Women Members %	Total Members Women Members %	Total Members Women Members %
Nepal	165	165	3.60%	---	---	---
Afghanistan	249	249	27.70%	68	18	26.50%
Pakistan	342	342	20.50%	104	19	18.30%
Bangladesh	350	350	20.30%	---	---	---
India	542	542	11.80%	245	27	11.00%
Bhutan	47	47	8.50%	25	2	8.00%
Maldives	85	85	5.90%	---	---	---
Sri Lanka	225	13	5.80%	---	---	---

Source: Fafen website<sup>11</sup>

### Quotas at the Local Government Level.

Quotas endowment has always been abandoned in Pakistan at lower levels in most of the political governments due to many of motives such as male dominance, and patriarchal exclusionism which has dispirited women even in the political parties.

The participation of women at local and regional levels has also been seen undermined by dominant bureaucracy and landlords since 1947. In 1958, for the first time Gen. Ayub Khan, the first Martial Law dictator after dissolving both provincial and national assemblies, brought basic democracies as local government system to involve more basic units of democratic system but unfortunately no special or reversed quota for women was introduced at any level (Mumtaz, 2005). In later times,

<sup>11</sup> Retrieved from Retrieved From <http://fafen.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/FAFEN-Women-Legislators-Performance-Report-2017-18.pdf>

Zulfiqar Bhutto from 1971-1976 introduced the system of local government and passed the law with the majority but unfortunately this time no elections were conducted at the local level by the government. However, after Bhutto's period Gen. Zia, another Martial law dictator, implemented the local government law and conducted local bodies' elections and reserved the seats for women in both union council and district council participation with two seats reserved for union council and 10% representation at district council from 1977 to 1988.

After Gen. Zia, the democratic governments from 1988 to 1999 did not contest any local level elections whereas from 1999 to 2008 a significant number of women reserved seats had been given in local elections. While from 2008 to 2018, only once the local government elections held in Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz's period (PMLN) in 2015 where significant participation of women observed as reserved members of local bodies' government.

Table 4 the representation of women in local bodies' elections.

Year of local election	The reserved quota for women
1959	No reserved quota
1977-1988	2% at Union council and 10% at district council except in NWFP
1988-1991	2%
1991-1993	10%
2002-2008	33%

Source: Elections in Pakistan<sup>12</sup>

The above table clearly highlights the participation of women in local bodies' elections years wise in different time periods of various political parties and Martial law dictators' governments. The positive

<sup>12</sup> Retrieved on November 24, 2018, from <https://electionpakistan.com/2015-local-government-election-observation-findings-and-recommendations-report/>



sign this table spotlights is the gradual increase in the number of women reserved seats in elections an optimal indication for sustainable development for women betterment at the grass root level in Pakistan.

General Musharraf was conferred three years to restructure democracy in Pakistan in 2000 by the highest court of the land. He took key steps in devolving power to the local level through his local government system<sup>13</sup>. District level authorities was awarded with power to use resources, and provision of 33% quotas for women was implemented for the first time at the lower levels, i.e. tehsil (municipality), district, and union council level. These local authorities were granted the power to approve/disapprove the budget, taxes, and financial annual plans in order to lessen scarcity at lower levels because these legislatures were very close to deprived people of their respective councils. The Union Council was comprised of 21 members i.e. Nazim (head of Union Council), Naib Nazim (Vice head), one minority community representative, twelve Muslims elected members and six from a lower class such as peasants and labors. Women quota is allocated as one third to the Muslim seats (four women) and six seats of workers. Six seats were reserved for women in every union council.

Table 5 Women Quotas at council level in Local Government elections 2002.

<b>Type of Council (Total number of councils)</b>	<b>Seats Reserved for Women</b>
Union Councils (6,022)	36,066
Tehsil Councils (305)	1,749
Town Councils (30)	161
District Councils (96)	1,988
<b>Total</b>	<b>39,964</b>

Source: Reyes, L. 2002. Quotas for Women for Legislative Seats at the Local Level in Pakistan, Case study.

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<sup>13</sup> Government of Pakistan, Local Government Plan. 2000. August 1. p. 1.

Moreover, women have also been provided special quotas in the electoral system as well in Pakistan which has increased the interest of women in participating in politics and contribution in the development in the country. According to Election Commission of Pakistan, 60 seats were filled by women politicians as women representatives in the elections in terms of proportional representations something which is practiced around ten countries in the world.

In this context, the Government of Pakistan has taken key steps in the promotion of awareness of women's role in politics through many training programs such as National Reconstruction Bureau (NRB). NRB is the leading foundation body of government ensuring the devolution process with the assistance of a many of non-government organizations (NGOs) working in Pakistan e.g. *Aurat* (woman) Foundation, Citizen Campaigns for Women's Representations, and Sarsabz (Green) etc. These NGOs have been playing a key contribution with the support of the government in forming awareness in villages, towns, and union councils in all districts to make the women aware of their basic rights. Moreover, the Government of Pakistan has taken initiatives to train women in Pakistan for their status, rights, and mentoring women in all aspects under the Ministry of Women and Development's two years program. This training program focused on the training of 2000 women councilors by 64 master trainers to train them to contribute in development projects of Pakistan.

### **Women Performance as legislators and Parliamentarian.**

Performance of politicians on gender nature remains controversial in the parliaments around the globe. In this context, Women's performance in the parliament of Pakistan has also witnessed frequent and at times heated debate with mainly male opinion-makers and colleagues finding fault with their performance. Women elected on the quota seats have come in for particularly harsh criticism for their, perceived to be easy, route to the legislature. In this regard, Franceschet, Krook, and Piscopo (2012) debated various assumptions i.e. prevailing gendered subtleties may be affected by quotas, the controversial assumptions of political male counterpart about the quotas women

selectee on their competency and expertise etc., and the last is diversity. While in Pakistan after 2013 and 2018 general elections and local bodies election in 2015, the presence of women as elected political members and reserved seats members at both national and provincial assemblies in a substantial number played significantly positive effect in transforming the status of women and their recognition at socio-political and socio-economic domains to legitimize the recognition of women as catalyst in good governance and entitlement to citizenship and governance as well as their participation in public offices for sustainable development of the country.

Women struggled hard to achieve their vibrant and vital participation in national matters including politics, economics and policy making and are not ready to lose the gains by being complacent in the Parliament or wherever they have managed to get a foothold. It is a result of the serious efforts of an unleashing process to establish women's participation and visibility on priority basis in the national agenda. No doubt quotas promoted women throughout the country, however, their long hard efforts through the perilous journey collectively, individually and steadily with patience under the constant pressure of patriarchal structures of the society since last three decades opened the space for them.

The best example of quota reservation for women is seen in general elections in 2018 when Dr. Yasmeen Rashid a candidate from NA-125 Lahore lost her seat but her party PTI (Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf) elected her through a reserved quota of provincial assembly for women and now she is the health minister of the biggest province, the Punjab. Before this, Dr. Fahmida Mirza won the general elections in 2008 and became the first woman Speaker of the National Assembly from 2008 to 2013. Another successful example is Shehla Raza, the ex-Deputy Speaker of Sindh Assembly from 2013 to 2018. They inspired the other fellow women to come forward and play their vital role in the politics of the country.

In her interview to Global Village Space Magazine, Khawar Mumtaz, Chair-woman of the NCSW (National Commission on the Status of Women) in Pakistan laid stress on the participation of women in country's socio-political and socio-economic development eagerly because the progress of any country or region is tied intrinsically to the representation of both genders in all matters of society. About quota provisions, she further remarks, "this quota is a minimum legal requirement. It took ten years of sustained work for this quota to be established and was, by and large, the result of women's hard work" (Mumtaz, 2018). Being the head of NCSW she observed that women have shown the potential acumen to take part in the country's politics both as voter and representative. To sustain the promotion of women's participation she stressed the need to educate the people especially women to believe that this democratic system will improve their lives and she further said that "political culture needs to be changed within parties and women should not be token candidates but achieve a critical mass" (Mumtaz, 2018).

Dr. Farzana Bari in her recent study *Bridging the Fault Lines Rethinking the Gender Quota Approach in Pakistan* highlights that in male dominant and patriarchal societies like Pakistan the political parties and public offices are dominated by the male members which are the biggest hurdle in the females' substantive representation in politics. She concludes her essay with this opinion that quota provisions in Pakistan are problematic as the equality of gender and reservation for women is made by the male members of the political parties according to their liking and disliking.

The biggest challenge for women members of the assemblies is the modality of the quota itself. There is no fixed ratio for women in each political party, however, it depends upon the success of the male candidates as the higher number they won, the greater number of women quotas will be given to them. She also suggests evaluating the nature of the democratic system in our country as it favors the elitist structures and neglects the importance of participants (Bari, 2015). There is a dire need to revisit the

structure and organization of the political parties and analysis of their social setup. In so doing, it is hoped that one day women will easily take over all the fault lines by their tremendous efforts.

## **CONCLUSIONS.**

Pakistan has achieved substantial growth through gender equality and quota provisions in public offices especially in increasing women's participation in politics. To meet the target of UN 30% quota for women representation in parliament and public houses is effectively being carried out and the endless efforts made so far are encouraging.

The implementation of 5% quota in parliament on general seats is a positive step towards the improved and equal representation of women. The positive impact and real need of women's participation in public houses of Pakistan should be acknowledged and highlighted by the media houses, parliament, civil society, Election Commission of Pakistan, political parties, and most importantly women's rights commissions and NGOs working for the betterment of women in rural areas.

The present study contributes to the discussion that by allocating reserved quotas for women in all public offices the state can promote the socio-political and socio-economic development and thereby ensure sustainable development of the country.

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