



Print Media's Projection of Female Electoral Candidates in General Elections of Pakistan: The Case of Punjab

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Abstract

Sixty-four women contested for the General Seats in February 2008 elections but only 15 got elected. Multiple factors have contributed to these results; one significant factor is the lack of national and local media coverage they get while running their election campaigns. Therefore, this study focuses on the newspaper coverage of female electoral candidates during the campaigning months of general elections in Pakistan. The research is strengthened by the amalgamation of framing and feminist theories in perspective. Moreover, the researcher has applied the content analysis research design to do both qualitative and quantitative data analysis of both genders. In doing so, the frequency of coverage and their representation is empirically tested to produce accurate results. The paper also incorporates a comparative study of Urdu and English dailies in covering the intraparty positioning and campaign strategies keeping in view the gender roles. For this purpose, the researcher has conducted study of two Urdu (National language) and two English language national dailies i.e. Jang, Nawa-e-waqt, The Nation and Dawn, respectively. The findings revealed an inadequate representation of women in newspapers during election campaign 2008, whereas surprisingly Urdu newspapers gave more coverage to women compared to English newspapers.

Keywords: *Female Political Candidates, General Elections*

Introduction

Women are almost 49 per cent of Pakistan's population but they are a minority in the parliament. The constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan is the paramount of ensuring suffrage rights and to conduct

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political activities to “all” its citizens regardless of gender. The constitution guarantees equal rights and opportunities to women participation in electoral activities sans discrimination based on sex alone yet offers affirmative action for the welfare and strengthening of women bodies. In this research, the researcher emphasizes on how the female electoral candidates and their activities are portrayed at the time of election campaign in leading newspapers of Pakistan.

A fundamental problem faced by the democratization process world-over is the unequal distribution of political offices between both genders, which causes a continued lack of gender equality. Statistics show that women representation is only one in seven parliamentarians of the world, one woman over 10 cabinet male ministers and it is even more remorseful when it comes to heads of states with a ratio of one to 20. This is a disturbing number when we struggle to give equal rights to females who are half of the world’s population. Multiple factors including structural and institutional barriers have contributed towards this situation and it is due to the same fact that only 10 of the 192 countries have a woman elected as head of state. Other than the famous Margaret Thatcher of the United Kingdom, Golda Meir of Israel and Gro Harlem of Norway, only 39 countries have ever elected a female head of state. The 2001 United Nations report on Women Leaders stated that less than one tenth of the world’s cabinet ministers and one fifth of all sub ministerial position were led by women (Norris, P. and Inglehart, R. 2001).

Traditional attitudes towards gender equality have commonly been suspected as the important determinant of women entry into elected offices. However, so far, little systematic cross- national evidence is available to prove this thesis. As the researcher has

observed, the highest ever number of simultaneous female world leaders was 13 and it has occurred only three times till now.

Pakistani society is so entrenched in culture that the customary and traditional laws and practices usually override both statutory and Islamic laws. All these social, cultural and historical factors have directly and indirectly affected the status and rights of women at every level and consequently, the forth pillar of the state, media also follows such norms. In recent years, scholars have devoted considerable attention to understand the obstacles that women in politics confront. The factors that restrict women's access to public offices and the impact of women public officials on public policy (Thomas 1994; Burrell 1994; Dodson and Carroll 1991; Darcy et al. 1994; Witt et al. 1994). In Pakistan too, according to the latest elections results, in national cabinet, there is only one woman for every 32 male members which gives them only 3 percent of the representation, five of 26 state ministers, 10 in 39 parliamentary secretaries and one of the three advisors are women. Therefore, the researcher will aim to find out whether they are discriminated in media projection or not. The researcher has tried to evaluate how print media addresses the participation of women in politics and their representation at all levels. It is a systematic research that also focuses on the relationship between women and media.

The mass media usually subscribe to prevailing social norms and highlights deviations. Pakistan's society is primarily patriarchal and women's invisibility in the decision making process has been a generally accepted phenomenon.

The elections of February 18, 2008 brought a total of 216 women into the national and provincial assemblies. By including the already

existing 17 women in the senate, the number of women represented in the legislatures of Pakistan rises to 233, taking their overall proportion of representation to almost 20 percent. These are exactly the same figures as from the elections of 2002-2003, which were the highest ever since the assemblies came into being. A closer examination of the results reveals that the overall figure has remained the same, which is 19.9 percent. However, as compared to elections 2002, there have been many changes within the individual results of the national and provincial assemblies. In 2006, half of the upper house retired, including one woman, reducing women's representation to 17. Currently, there are 76 female members in the National Assembly, out of which 16 were elected on the general seats - the highest number to date whereas in the Punjab Assembly nine are elected on general seats. Therefore, the best time to initiate and motivate a change in the system is the general elections and preceding electoral campaign. It provides the public representatives a chance to present their programs and suggestions and to communicate directly with the masses whose interests they strive to articulate through their candidature. Statements made during the election campaign reflect the candidates' policy, preferences and direction of policy in the coming years.

Issues of ever increasing gender discrimination in socio-economic and political sectors and violence against women have been a menace for policy makers since the inception of Pakistan as an independent state. Women rights movement has made a clear headway over the past two decades. Their major success was the increase in number of women seats in the local government as well as the provincial and federal legislatures. But unfortunately, this

success has been confined to a mere number game and not much achieved by the women legislators during their five years tenure from 2002-2007. It was rightfully expected that the candidates for the general elections 2008 would focus on women's emancipation as one of their prior policy plans.

Print Media's Role

Print media's performance during an election campaign is of great significance since it is one of the cheapest and most effective ways of constructing a communication line between the masses and their proposed representatives. But to the great disappointment of the women activist groups and concerned citizens at large, the primary focus during the electoral campaign 2008 remained on inter-party and inter-personal issues, independence of judiciary, and Pakistan's participation in the war on terror but women related issues were not brought forward with full vigor even by the female candidates, who behaved as replicas of their male counterparts in strengthening the norms of male dominated society.

Problem Statement

In this research, the researcher is trying to find out how the leading newspapers of Pakistani print media projected women candidates contesting in general elections of 2008 and during that time of campaigning how much coverage was given to women issues like violence against women, women unemployment, and health. For this purpose of investigation, the researcher focuses on the news items, editorials, features and articles published in the prominent newspapers of Pakistan.

Rationale of the Study

The study examines the role of print media in the projection of

women candidates during general elections of 2008: how much coverage is given to their campaigning and what kind of news regarding them was covered in the national newspapers. Projections based on the current pace of global change indicate that the women will achieve parity in parliaments a century from now. Multiple factors have contributed towards this development and the researcher analyzes the factors that reduce the number of women at authoritative positions and whether our daily newspapers are a part of supporting this situation. This issue is all the way through addressed by exploring the use of different news items in four top newspapers of Pakistan.

Objectives of the Study

The study aims to meet the following objectives:

- to study the treatment of print media in election campaigning of female electoral candidates
- to analyze the portrayal of female candidates in political decision making
- to evaluate print media's role as an agency of public opinion during election campaign

Hypothesis

H1: Print media gave adequate coverage to female candidates in Punjab during 2008 general elections campaign.

H2: Print media gave adequate coverage to women issues in Punjab during the electoral campaign of general elections.

H3: Urdu newspapers gave more coverage to female electoral candidates in contrast to English dailies.

H4: Urdu newspapers gave positive coverage to female electoral candidates in contrast to English dailies.

Research Questions

The researcher finds answers of the following questions in this study:

1. Did Pakistani print media give adequate coverage to female electoral candidates?
2. Did print media give positive coverage to female candidates while campaigning?
3. Did print media give adequate coverage to women issues during election campaign?
4. How did Pakistani print media represent women's relations within their own political party?

Rationale for the Selection of Newspapers

Newspaper is an old medium of communication. People feel it is more reliable as compared to other sources of information. For the purpose of this research, the researcher selected four leading newspapers of Pakistan in terms of circulation, which are: Dawn, Daily Times, Jang and Nawa-i-waqt.. Dawn and Daily Times are English dailies, while, Jang and Nawa-i-Waqt are Urdu dailies. These newspapers are chosen because they are considered to be found not only on the tables of decision makers, policy makers, opinion leaders but also read by people of all ages and social backgrounds.

Literature Review

In the Indo-Pak subcontinent, Syed Amir Ali, an eminent scholar of Islam and history for the first time said that it is not the Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H.) but the bigotry of early ulemas who tried to reduce women's role in the society. According to Syed Ali's interpretation, Islam recommended observance of privacy, not seclusion or confinement of women. To prove his point, Syed Ali says

that the women members of the Prophet's (P.B.U.H.) family enjoyed remarkable freedom from such restraints. His daughter, Fatima (R.A.) took part in religious and legal discourses and his wife, Ayesha (R.A.) commanded her army of troops in the battle of Camel.

Muslim women broke the barriers of veil many times and distinguished themselves in various fields. For example, Razia Sultana was the ruler of Dehli. Like other Muslim princesses of the time, she was trained to lead armies and administer kingdoms, if necessary. Razia Sultana was the only woman ruler of both the Sultanate and the Mughal period. She refused to be addressed as Sultana because it meant "wife or mistress of a sultan" and preferred to be called as Sultan. Similarly, Chand Bibi was a Muslim woman warrior who acted as the regent of Bijapur and Ahmednagar and fought battles against the Mughal emperors. Nur Jehan was the empress of the Mughal Empire as the chief consort of Emperor Jahangir.

A strong, charismatic and well-educated woman, she is considered to be one of the most powerful and influential women of the 17th century Mughal Empire. She is the only Mughal empress to have her name struck on silver coins. These and many other incredible Muslim women have played a dominating part in the history of Islam and sub-continent. Pakistan's history is also filled with the stories of incredible women without whom the struggle for independence and development would not have been the same.

1946 Elections

Organized one year before the creation of Pakistan, the elections of 1946 were of utmost importance. They were the test of Muslim League's claim of being the sole representative of the Muslims of

British India. Begum Shah Nawaz, Miss Mumtaz Shah Nawaz, Begum Salma Tasadduque Hussain, Begum Kaka Khel, Miss Iqbal Rathore, Miss Husan Ara Hafizullah and Miss Nusrat jahan are the names of the ladies who took the early steps in taking Muslim women to the parliament. It was because of the struggle of these women that Muslim League won a tremendous victory in the elections, particularly in Punjab from where women won two seats and 75 percent of the women voters turned up to cast their votes (Asghar, A. A. 1920-1947)

It was a revolutionary development in the country's politics when the first constituent assembly of Pakistan witnessed two female representatives Shaista Ikramullah and Jahanara Shahnawaz on its benches. But that assembly was dissolved in 1954 and new assembly was elected through indirect elections. There occurred a demand of three percent women members on the reserved seats but women were unsuccessful in securing seats creating a void in the committee which contributed to develop the constitution of 1956. But by that time, women were now given the right to vote for both general seats and reserved seats for women.

In 1958, under General Ayub Khan's military coup, first martial law was imposed in the country which resulted in the abrogation of 1956 constitution. The country remained under autocratic rule for 10 years in which both provincial and national assemblies were elected by fabricated local body governments. The assemblies consisted of six women in total who whose presence was symbolic and totally beholden by the president and hence had no power to raise voice or perform significantly for women rights.

An important event unfolded in 1965, when Fatima Jinnah, sister

of Pakistan's Founder Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, decided to contest for the highest position of the country. It was for the first time that a Pakistani woman was contesting for the President's seat. She ran a campaign against the military dictator Ayub Khan. Her candidature was supported by religious parties of that time, predominantly Jamaat-e-Islami (JUI) led by Maulana Maudoodi, who had strictly been against the idea of women running for government earlier. Historians say that the nation had great respect for the lady for her role in the freedom movement and overall there was minimal prejudice against her in the country being a woman. But in return the government machinery running under Ayub Khan gave her tough time with rigged elections and propaganda campaigns by damaging her reputation. It is widely believed that if the elections were held free and fair then she would have won with a heavy mandate and thus became the first president of a Muslim country (Mumtaz, & Shaheed,(n.d.))

By the time of 1970 elections, the women became aware of their political rights to suffrage and the elections witnessed a huge turnover from women of the country. Two major political parties Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP) and Awami League, both liberal, paid particular attention to get women voters out of their houses to vote and become active members of their parties. Political leaders of PPP's founder Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Awami League (AL) Sheikh Mujibur Rehman inspired women through their manifestos to participate in the electoral process. Especially PPP designed its manifesto in a manner that addressed and promised to resolve women issues. As a result, women voted vehemently for the party and helped it in making government in the southern part of West Pakistan (now

Pakistan). Similarly, AL swept in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). Despite this entire hullabaloo about women empowerment, not even a single ticket was given to any woman by both parties. However, in 1970 elections, 10 women did contest for general seats as independent candidates. Though they could not win from their constituencies, it laid a foundation for the women to step into politics. The need for woman representation was rising and realizing the severity of situation; three women were made part of the 1972 constitution committee.

It was Article 25 of the 1973 Constitution that first time rejected racial, religious, sexual and caste discrimination. Women were more empowered and equal before law, but they were unable to secure the right of reserved seats and hence, had to be elected by the parliamentarians indirectly.

Military Regime (October 1999)

The 1988 and 1993 elections did not witness any significant improvement in women representation in assemblies. Even though the country had elected its first female prime minister, the women had only 10 per cent seats in the National Assembly and only five per cent seats in all provincial assemblies of the country till 1990. The concept of dynasty politics was introduced and those elected on reserved seats were either from influential families or they inherited constituencies from their fathers. Hence, the marginal status of female politicians remained too low to actually get a bill passed in the assemblies or make their voice heard in the houses.

Though the political tug-of-war between military and civilian leadership kept them at loggerhead, women legislation, under such circumstances, was a far cry but it was the 1999 bloodless coup by

Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) and Joint Chief of Staff Committee General Pervaiz Musharraf that turned out to be a ray of hope for women of the country. Though he unconstitutionally toppled down a democratically elected Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and declared a state of emergency by imposing Provisional Constitutional Order (PCO), it was Musharraf led government which awarded 33 percent seats to women candidates at district level. Under his rule, the women seats were fought from the general constituencies. The idea received a huge backlash from religious and other conservative groups but civil society and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) lobbied hard to make it happen.

Since that time, the women rights movement in Pakistan has taken a shift and now it is more focused on securing women representation in National and Provincial assemblies and government departments. Its second focus is on raising consciousness on family planning and finally to counter suppression of women rights in Pakistan.

Methodology

The study is a content analysis of the four Pakistani newspapers, Dawn, Daily Times, Jang and Nawa-e-waqt to examine the portrayal of female electoral candidates and women issues. Therefore, the universe of the study is Pakistan's print media. The analysis constitutes the news, editorials, columns and pictures in these papers from November 2007 to February 2008. The editions of these newspapers were acquired from the Punjab Library in Lahore, Pakistan.

Moreover, the study gets strength from the framing and feminism theories. In setting frames, the researcher has argued that

the media creates social frames in their coverage for the audience or readers in a mindful way to make them believe on their election reports. Such methods gives basis to the study of feminist theories highlighting the agenda setting goals of media houses to give poor representation to female politicians at large. The issue has been addressed several times but the underrepresentation of female politicians in the main stream media has not significantly improved or increased over time.

Sampling

This research has a sampling frame of 4,290 items published in Dawn, Daily Times, Jang and Nawa-e-waqt from November 2007 to February 2008 time period. Out of these news items, through purposive sampling, the researcher selected the matter that mainly focused on the political activities of the male (n= 2,232) and female (n=73) electoral candidates contesting in Punjab Assembly and minor focus on the women issues covered by these newspapers.

Unit of Analysis

The researcher selected headlines, paragraphs, sentences, words and pictures as unit of analysis in the published information. All the units were analyzed in order to determine the frequency as well as the quality of news comments made in these units.

The research comprised two sections. The first part focused on the projection of female politicians and their male contemporaries, news coverage of male and female politicians respectively and those in which both were talked about, likewise the total number of editorials, columns/features and pictures.

In the second section, coverage of women issues including judiciary, transparency in elections, political assassinations, political

party issues, law and order, economy, poverty alleviation, foreign affairs, women rights and their marginalized issues were analyzed.

Content Direction

Qualitatively the content was examined under three categories i.e. favorable/supportive, unfavorable/negative and neutral/balanced. Categories for favorable portrayal highlighted policy programs, showing loyalty, bravery and social activeness. Unfavorable categories included criticizing rivals, pessimism, agitation, ridiculed, underestimated or became part of a news just because of their glamour. However, the personal information about the candidate (attending meetings, information about their constituency) or in case of pictorial representation, equal placement according to the situation or position was noticed.

Findings and Observations

In the selected time period, a total of 4,290 political stories (news, editorials, columns, pictures) were covered in the four dailies of Pakistan, among them only 340 stories were about women politicians whereas 3,916 stories were reported of their male counterparts.

Table 1: Frequency and Genre-wise News coverage of female electoral candidates as compared to male counterparts

Genre	English		Urdu	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
News	444 (11.6)	57 (1.49)	2963 (77.05)	218 (9.01)
Editorials	22 (41.5)	00	26 (49.06)	00
Features/Columns	52 (28.9)	08 (4.64)	112 (63.07)	01 (0.57)
Pictures	16 (4.44)	07 (0.55)	283 (77.75)	54 (14.83)

In Table 1, the researcher has compared the total number of news, editorials, features, columns and pictures published about female and male electoral candidates. The findings indicate that 88.65% news covered were about male politicians, whereas only 10.5% news

covered for female politicians. The readings were even more shocking for editorials, as no article was solely dedicated to female electoral candidates. On the contrary there were 90.57% editorials discussing male politicians during the months of election campaigning. It was also interesting to see that 9.43% editorials discussed both male and female electoral candidates. In features and columns, the researcher witnessed a positive trend, as 7.1% of the feature stories were about female candidates and 92.05% about men. Though the difference is huge yet, there was optimism in the coverage, 0.87% articles talked about both male and female candidates. Here it is pertinent to note that Daily Times gave more coverage to women candidates with 2.94% of the total coverage, it was the largest of the four.

The last unit of analysis was pictures that observed a welcoming trend in the coverage as 82.19% coverage was given to male politicians. However as compared to feature stories, 15.3% pictures of female contesting candidates were published. It was mainly due to the fact that after the assassination of Pakistan Peoples Party's Chairperson Benazir Bhutto, the media was trying to fill the spatial gaps on the papers. The pictures show, women politicians campaigning in their constituencies and taking lead. Nawa-e-Waqt took the lead in portraying women politicians by publishing 8.79% more pictures as compared to other English and Urdu dailies under observation. After evaluating the stories, it was found that the coverage was primarily about the performance of women politicians and their election campaigning.

If compared with male politicians, the frequency of coverage given to females was minimal and almost negligible. However, while

comparing the frequency of coverage in Urdu and English dailies, we learn that in English dailies, the news stories on women candidates were more related to their representation as compared to Urdu dailies, but with a close margin.

Table 2: Comparative coverage of female electoral candidates in four dailies.

Image	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Total
Coverage in all newspapers	201 46.42%	178 41.11%	54 12.47%	433 100%

The findings in Table 2 show that the papers portrayed the positive image (46.2%) of female electoral candidates more while 12.47% coverage was neutral.

Table 3: Comparative analysis of the coverage of female candidates in the four dailies.

Newspaper	Positive	Negative	Neutral
News	166 (51.7%)	138 (43.0%)	17 (5.3%)
Editorials	1 (11.1%)	2 (22.2%)	6 (66.7%)
Feature/Clmn	8 (44.4%)	5 (27.8%)	5 (27.8%)
Picture	26 (23.0%)	33 (29.2%)	54 (47.8%)

Table 3 shows the distribution of categories used for the nature of news, editorials, features, columns and pictorial representation of women politicians in the four newspapers. According to the readings, Nawa-e-Waqt took the lead with frequency of 26.9% stories highlighting women's role in policy making, social activism and loyalty with the party they belong and it published 20.95% negative stories pointing to their emotional weaknesses, unawareness of party matters and busy in criticizing their rivals. Jang newspaper gave 14.86% of positive and 8.11% of negative reporting. Dawn fell behind with 7.77% of positive news and 3.38% of negative stories about women politicians. Whereas a small number of news was published in which details about their constituencies, meeting plans were

discussed.

The editorials reflected a high percentage of positive coverage to female candidates reaching the peak at 66.7%. Editorials were encouraging the women politicians in terms of participation in politics, loyalty, bravery and social activism were termed as positive, whereas the editorials that portrayed women candidates as aggrieved or glamorous are considered discouraging for their professional growth. While neutral editorial are those in which their names are randomly mentioned in coverage of meetings or political conferences. All newspapers gave no positive coverage to women in their active participation in politics. Nawa-e-Waqt gave 14.29% negative coverage to women candidates only and other three gave nil. But the observations are different on neutral coverage as equal amount of coverage 28.57% is given in all newspapers.

There is high percentage of articles in all newspapers that support women candidates through 44% positive coverage. The negative and neutral coverage from all newspapers is 27.8%. Daily Times and Dawn gave 18.75% positive coverage to women. On the other hand, Nawa-e-Waqt and Jang gave no favorable coverage to women candidates in their columns and features. Daily Times published 12.5% of negative write ups. Dawn and Jang wrote 6.25% of negative articles. Nawa-e-Waqt did not publish anything against female politicians.

In the pictorial presentation of women contesting candidates, almost all newspapers gave neutral coverage to a great extent (47.79%). Negative coverage was 29.2% and positive image was at 23.01%. The distribution of categories show that Nawa-e-Waqt gave 16.9% of positive presentation, 21.57% negative presentation to

women politicians, showing them as sub-ordinates or glamourizing their life styles and appearances to undermine their political candidacies. 35.29% coverage was about their equal placement according to situation and position. Dawn gave only 0.65% of positive coverage, 1.31% of negative and just 0.65% neutral coverage to women candidates in the general elections of 2008. Jang gave 5.88% positive, 7.19% negative and 5.23% neutral. Daily Times gave 1.98% positive, 2.61% negative and only 0.65% neutral projection to women contesting candidates.

Results

Hypothesis Testing

H1: Print media gave adequate coverage to female candidates during the electoral campaign for general elections.

To reach the result, researcher used Minitab software and applied 1 proportion test.

Sample	X	N	Sample p 95%	Lower bound	P-Value
1	340	3916	0.086	0.079	1.000

As the P-Value is 1.000 or greater than 0.05, the hypothesis is rejected which stated that the print media in Pakistan gave adequate coverage to female candidates during the electoral campaigns.

H2: Print media gave adequate coverage to women issues in Punjab during the electoral campaign of general elections.

To reach results, the researcher used Minitab software and applied 1 proportion test.

Sample	X	N	Sample p 95%	Lower bound	P-Value
1	143	10808	0.013231	0.011475	1.000

The P-Value is 1.000 which is greater than 0.05, the second hypothesis

is also rejected, showing that Pakistan's print media did not give adequate coverage to women issues in Punjab during the election promotion time period.

H3: Urdu newspapers gave more coverage to female electoral candidates as compared to English newspapers.

The researcher used Minitab and applied 2 proportion test to find results.

Estimate for $p(1) - p(2)$: 0.585455

95% lower bound for $p(1) - p(2)$: 0.528594

Test for $p(1) - p(2) = 0$ (vs>0): $Z=16.94$

P - Value = 0.000

The P-Value is 0.000 which shows significant results and demonstrates that the Urdu newspapers gave more coverage to females as compared to English language newspapers. Hence, H3 is accepted.

H4: Urdu newspapers gave positive coverage to female candidates as compared to English newspapers.

The researcher has again used the H3 which was used for finding results of H2.

Estimate for $p(1) - p(2)$: 0.432836

95% lower bound for $p(1) - p(2)$: 0.358881

Test for $p(1) - p(2)=0$ (vs>0): $Z=9.63$

P-Value = 0.000

The P-value of the above evaluation is 0.000 which shows that Urdu newspapers gave positive coverage to female candidates as compared to English daily newspapers of Pakistan during the time of election campaigning of 2008.

Conclusion

During elections of 2008, three political parties emerged as a driving force, Pakistan Muslim League Quaid-e-Azam (PMLQ), Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP) and Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PMLN). These political parties outlined detailed and well-crafted manifestos that addressed almost all basic needs of public at large. Talking about PMLQ, the party was a strong advocate of women empowerment and hence, maximum numbers of women were elected on general seats in the National Assembly in 2008 elections. None of its female politicians were given authority to policy or decision making. As a result, the PMLN government did not take significant or supportive measures to review discriminatory laws against women in Pakistan.

Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP) is left centric and they passed some legislations for women empowerment. In fact, it was the only party which ensured women participation at senior and decision making ranks. They were able to elect the first female Prime Minister of Pakistan Benazir Bhutto and did not stop there. In their central committee, women are appointed at key positions and actively participate in decision making procedures.

The third largest party, Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PMLN), which is now the ruling party gave strong supporting statements on equal rights of women and minorities, about their representation at key positions including policy making bodies in their manifesto. However, they were unsuccessful in building bridges between the proposed measures and reality during their tenure.

The elections of 2008 brought a total of 216 women into the National and provincial assemblies. By including the already present 17 women in the senate of Pakistan, the number of women in the two

houses of parliament rose to 233, taking their overall proportion of representation in the government to 20%. These figures are exactly the same as were represented in the elections of 2002 – 2003, which were the highest ever since the assemblies were formed. A closer examination of the results reveals that while the overall figure has remained the same (19.9%) as compared to 2002 elections, there have been many changes within the individual results of the national and provincial assemblies. In 2006, half of the house was retired including one woman, reducing women's representation to 17 in the National Assembly. There were 76 female members, out of which 16 were voted in general seats – the highest number to date.

Sighting these statistics, the researcher used the framing and feminist theories in order to know the treatment of print media during the election campaigning of female electoral candidates, their portrayal in political decision making, their role and presentation in internal political hierarchy and evaluated public opinion making during the election campaign of 2008.

After analyzing the results, the researcher fulfilled the objectives as the outcomes clarified the situation. First hypothesis is rejected, as only 17% coverage was given to women candidates. Their presentation was very low as compared to their male competitors due to which the chances of their victory were meek. Several factors could have contributed towards the situation including judicial crises, election phobia, terrorist suicide attacks, drone attacks, economic instability and others. However, negating all those odds, the second and third hypotheses were accepted; they stated that Urdu newspapers gave more coverage to female politicians as compared to English dailies.

The low presentation roots back in the cultural, religious and indigenous societal norms picked up by the immature media of the time. Several measures can be taken to increase women candidates' representation in the mainstream media in the future. First measure would be to strengthen women wings within political parties. In addition, the media cells of political parties must advertise their women candidates in media just as they highlight their male candidates. Another measure would be to make amendments in the Political Parties Act 1962 and Representation of People's Act 1976, which disallows a political party to contest 30% or more seats unless it has at least 40% female memberships and 10% of its policy making body comprises of women. (Zia, Bari 1999, p.153) There should be media regulations for hiring more and more female journalists who may understand the importance of coverage given to female politicians. Newspapers should allocate and devise a policy to give certain percentage of coverage to women politicians. This way we can ensure equal participation of women in our legislative bodies else we will have no choice but to question, "Are women the sub-standard product of God in Pakistan?"

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