

**RESEARCH PAPER****Role of Women in Provincial Assembly of Punjab (2008-2018)****<sup>1</sup>Aqsa Munawar\* <sup>2</sup>Dr. Kalsoom Hanif and <sup>3</sup>Sumaila Aziz**

1. Ph.D Scholar, History Department, Lahore College for Women University, Lahore., Punjab, Pakistan
2. Assistant Professor, History Department, Lahore College for Women University, Lahore., Punjab, Pakistan
3. Visiting Lecturer History Department, Lahore College for Women University, Lahore., Punjab, Pakistan

**Corresponding Author** Saqsa609@gmail.com**ABSTRACT**

Despite making up half of the world's population, women are rarely depicted in proportion to their numbers. This underrepresentation is pervasive in all socioeconomic domains as well as in all cultures. Women still face discrimination, particularly in the political sphere, regardless of geography. It aims to assess the extent of genuine female political participation Pakistan has experienced since becoming independent. In this research woman participation in one of the important institutions of Pakistan is analyzed. Women role in Punjab legislative Assembly from 2008-2018 will be focused. Women side by side with the male counterpart took part in every field where legislation was needed like education and health sectors. The article examines the proportion of women appointed to positions of authority and evaluates their contributions to the legislative process with a focus on the introduction of bills and resolutions concerning women's rights in order to complete the aforementioned goal. This article is qualitative research. Primary and secondary data will be used. Data gathered from Punjab Assmby. The results show that women are not fairly represented in decision-making roles within the Punjab Assembly. With a few exceptions, the majority of female parliamentarians remained idle and inoperative for their entire term. They couldn't actively participate in the legislative process as a group. They continued to do a poor job of advocating for the rights of their own gender community.

**Keywords:** Female Participation, Legislation, Politics, Punjab Assembly, Women**Introduction**

The global population is 7.7 billion and is increasing by 1.07% year. Almost half of the world's population is made up of women, regardless of a little rise or fall in the proportions of the two sexes. Despite this enormous number, women's engagement in politics and decision-making is far from satisfactory. Women are just 15% represented in the legislature. There are just twelve nations where women make up at least 33% of the parliament UNDP 2005 Report. Pakistan is a democratic federal parliamentary republic. The society of the country is diverse, with various social ideals and cultural standards. The state of women is comparable to that of other third world nations. Largest province of Pakistan's is Punjab. Women share more actively in politics than males do.

The 1973 Constitution of Pakistan warrants all basic human rights for women. Article 25 of the Constitution sheds light on gender relations, wherein "all citizens are equal before law and are entitled to equal protection of law". Article 25 also restricts any kind of discrimination on the basis of gender. In addition, it allows for any special provisions to safeguard women and children (metraux, 2013). However, constitutional protection aside, women enjoy little presence in many sectors, especially in politics and governance. According to Nazir and Musarrat, political authorities remain unenthusiastic towards

enhancement of political participation and empowerment of women. Members of legislative bodies pay nominal consideration to women's apprehensions (musarat, 2017) . Metraux & Akhtar opine that male legislators have strongly opposed any legislation brought forth to parliament for equal respect, justice and equality of men and women (metraux, 2013). Women legislators have also not performed better, wherein their political party's affiliation have taken priority over the interests of their gender community.

The research examines the proportion of women appointed to positions of authority and evaluates their contributions to the legislative process with a focus on the introduction of bills and resolutions concerning women's rights in order to complete the aforementioned goal. The results show that women are not fairly represented in decision-making roles within the Punjab Assembly. With a few exceptions, the majority of female parliamentarians remained idle and inoperative for their entire term. They couldn't actively contribute in the legislative procedure as a assemblage. They continued to do a poor job of advocating for the rights of their own gender community. (khan, 2010)

Women empowerment and decision-making are inter-linked. Women's inclusion in the processes of Legislation and decision-making are a proven instrument towards women empowerment. This avenue helps them become an active part of developmental programs in all significant sectors of the state. The most effective catalyst, in this regard is the energetic and operative legislators role of Women in the decision-making procedure. They can not only uplift the condition of their gender community by protecting and promoting their rights and interests but also enhance the degree of women empowerment at social and political level.

This research paper intends to investigate the enclosure and efficiency of women legislators of the Punjab Assembly from 2008 to 2013, in the decision-making process with regards to women's political authorization. This period has been selected due to two reasons. Firstly, it represents the first democratic regime of Pakistan that completed its tenure successfully followed by a peaceful transfer of power. Secondly, ratio of women representation was considerably increased under Devolution of Power Plan 2000 during Pervez Musharraf's rule in order to meet the MDGs proposed by the United Nations. Women remained part of this institution before 1947 but after independence many ladies like Bagum Musadaq Hussain and bagum Shahnawaz took part actively in the Assembly proceedings and highlight important issues of the country. Initial problems of Pakistan especially refugees' issues and health issues were addressed by women many times in the Assembly. Trend of the women participation in the Assembly was not new so with the times their strength increased and their role in Assembly became more effective. Mohtrma Fatima Jinnah became role model of many women to come forward and took part in politics in Ayub era. (bhattacharya, 2014)

Later Banazir became the ideal when she became first female prime Minister and lead women to come forward to take this responsibility. Tahmina Daultana and many others from Punjab became the part of the Assembly although most of them belonged to landed elites but internationally Pakistan's image improved when these ladies represented Pakistan on different forums. In Mushraf period called enlightenment encouraged the women to take part in politics side by side women number of women representations increased not only in Punjab but all assemblies.

Later years followed this trend and assemblies become colorful with the presence of females. Now the contribution in legislation is important and it must be analyzed so that it can be seen that what positive and affective role these ladies could play and whenever they were not able to perform affectively what were the reasons and hurdles. What kinds of reforms can be introduced which will be helpful that half of the population can play their role better and more affectively. This study will definitely covered all the aspect of the study. In this way we can appreciate the working of the women in past and make better and

suitable atmosphere for the female to grow and flourish where they can use their full abilities.

### Literature Review

There are numerous writings covered the women in Pakistan in general but my study focus is on Punjab Legislative assembly. Brief literature review proves gap of the study and my study will fill this gap.

By Naveeda Noreen, "An Overview of Women Representation in National Assembly of Pakistan and their Career Persistency" (2019) (Noreen, 2019). In this investigation, she speaks for women in parliament. She discussed the lack of parliamentary representation for women and the numerous unspoken impediments to their participation in politics in the nation. Given the country's small number of lawmakers and the many unspoken barriers preventing women from participating in politics, women's job chances. Only 3% of women are elected to regular seats and 17% to reserved seats in Pakistani politics, which suggests that some unsaid issues affect their participation in politics.

Iqra Mushtaq published "The Role of Political Parties in Political Development of Pakistan" in 2018 (Mushtaq, 2018). In her research, she talked about how political parties might help women feel more powerful in Pakistan's political system. She sheds light on the methods used by political parties to solicit political contributions when one is absent. To strengthen democracy, political parties must efficiently carry out their responsibilities. Greater measures are required to strengthen women's accountability in Pakistan as political parties there do not function well to promote their political development. "author Arfan Latif, "Female Political Participation in South Asia: A Case Study of Pakistan" (2015) (Latif, 2015). This article looked at the gender gap in politics. Women's political empowerment is primarily hampered by education, social and environmental factors, and the feudal system. A 2005 UNDP survey found that women made up just 15% of the global population overall and occupied only 33% of parliamentary seats in 12 countries. The author created three categories of hurdles after analyzing male attitudes towards female political activity. A male-dominated culture that have faith in politics is just for men is the first obstacle; the second is cultural thought; and the third is economic need.

Hina Rashid's "Role of Women Legislators in Decision Making Process: An Assessment of Punjab Assembly" (2008-2013) (Rashid, 2022). In addition, Pakistan made a lot of initiatives to enhance rights of women, cumulative their representation in both the Provincial and Central assemblies. It is true that a community's representatives can better represent and protect the interests of the community. This article's goal is to emphasize the relationship between women's decision-making and empowerment in this respect, with a focus on the presence of female representatives in the Punjab Assembly from 2008 to 2013. The Punjab Assembly does not fairly represent women in positions of decision-making. With the exception of a few number, the majority of female lawmakers did little during their mandates. They were unable to actively contribute as a group in the legislative procedure. Additionally, they did not succeed in furthering the needs of their gender civilization.

Articles by Kalsoom Hanif discussed the creation and operation of the Punjab Assembly. She throws light on historical background of this institution, formation and evolution period in colonial era and then after 1947 in initial years of newly established state what kind of role played by this prominent institution of Punjab. one of her article is on role of Christians in Punjab Assembly (Hanif, June 2020) with the focus after 1947 in most crucial years in history of Pakistan. But her focus is generally working of the Punjab Assembly not focused on gender role especially women separately are not discussed.

"Women Role and Participation in the Politics of Punjab" (2019) by Muhammad Yasir Ali Just 15% of females are addressed in the legislature (Ali, 2019). There are only 12

countries where ladies convey 33% or a greater amount of the legislative seats. Pakistan is a government popularity-based nation with a legislative framework. The country's general public is broadened, with numerous social principles and social goals. Ladies' circumstances are no greater than in some other underdeveloped nation. As indicated by populace, Punjab is Pakistan's most crowded region. Ladies take part in the political cycle at higher rate than the other areas. This research analyzed the hardships and impediments that ladies involvement in a male-overwhelmed ethos.

### **Material and Methods**

This study covers the political participation of women legislation 2008-2018 in Punjab Legislative Assembly study approach is qualitative and descriptive with the help of information available in different form study can be fulfilled with primary and secondary sources especially Assembly debates, different committees report, bills, amendments and Punjab Government reports will help me to get authentic information on topic.

### **Results and Discussion**

#### **Women participation in the PAP: In Historical perspective**

Half of the world's population are women. Due to their double positions in the manufacture and production sectors, their involvement in the social and economic realms is also quite significant. But it's unclear whether they'll get involved in politics. The greatest important societal organization that engages in the processes of power and administration is politics. Only 12 countries have 33% of the seats in women's parliament, while only 15% of lawmakers worldwide are female. Globally, women's political participation is constrained. The current structure is viewed as an obstacle to its development for economic and financial reasons. The Pakistani Constitution grants women complete participation in policymaking, still their involvement in politics at all stages is nominal due to due to constructive and social blockades. In Pakistan, women have historically had little political representation, but in latest years, assemblies have elevated women to the highest political office (Latif, "Female Political Participation in South Asia: A Case Study of Pakistan, 2015). "We are the victims of wicked habits; no nation can reach to the height of grandeur except your women are with you. Our treatment of our women as prisoners within the four walls of our homes constitutes a crime against humanity. The appalling circumstances our women are forced to live in have no repercussions wherever. You should travel with your female friends as allies in every walk of life. (1944, M Ali Jinnah). In Pakistan's First Constitution, women were given representation. Miss Fatima Jinnah later played her role in the presidential opposition during the Ayub Khan elections after changing her name to Madar-e-Millat (National Mother), sharing the same status as her brother. Ms. Jahanzeb Ali Jennifer Musa Qazi is the first Pakistani citizen from outside of Pakistan. Saima Usman was elected as Pakistan's first female senator in 1974, while Ms. Ashraf Mika Abbasi was chosen to serve in the National Assembly in 1972. the first female deputy speaker Khaleeda Rana Riaz Ali Khan, who was active in the movement, was then chosen to serve as governor of Sindh in 1974. The first Pakistani woman in history is Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto to be elected as Prime Minister. When she established the government, her age was just 35. In 2008, Fahmida Mirza became Pakistan's National Assembly's first female speaker. In 2011 Hina Khar became first female foreign minister of Pakistan. In comparison to other South Asian women, Pakistani women currently enjoy a higher standing. (Bari, 2009) Despite the emergence of new political tendencies, Pakistani women's participation at the local, national, and international levels continues to provide essential services. The implementation of true democracy is thought to need equal representation on equal basis for of women and men, especially in the legislative and executive branches. There were 30 people who participated in the first National Legislature from August 10 through October 24, 1954, and only two (3%) of them were women. The second National Legislature had no seats for women, hence they had no representation in the body that made decisions (Awan, 2018. ) On August 21, 2002, General Pervez Musharraf

issued a Legal Framework Order (LFO) that established procedures for reintroducing women's quotas, particularly in politics. All state assemblies and other decision-making bodies increased it to 33%. From 1.4 percent in the 11th National Assembly to 20 percent in the 12th National Assembly (1997–1999), it increased the proportion of general seats for women in the twelfth National Assembly. 60 out of 342 seats in the National Assembly and 17 out of 100 seats were won by women in the Upper House, based on the given quota.

After Zia's era, a notable turning fact is subsequently noticed. The government changed the quota it had set for women in 1988, increasing it from 3% to 10%. Consequently, women were able to secure 5% of seats in provincial assemblies and 22 seats in the national assembly (of which 21 were elected on reserved seats and 1 was directly elected). Women held 0.9% of the seats in 1990 as well (out of 217 representatives, only 2 women were directly elected). It was only 1.8% in 1993 (4 women out of 217) and 2.8% in 1997 (6 women out of the 217 members in total). (shami, 2019)

Pervez Musharraf delivered a Legal Framework Order (LFO) on August 21, 2002, which started the process of restoring the quota for women in politics. In all state legislative and executive bodies, it was increased to 33%. The percentage of general seats held by women climbed from 1.4% in the 11th National Assembly (1997-1999) to 20% in the 12th National Assembly. Women received 17 out of 100 seats in the Upper House (Senate) and 60 out of 342 seats in the National Assembly in accordance with the allotted quota. According to PILDAT, the same quota rule was implemented in the Provincial Assemblies, and women received 17.8% of the seats in Punjab Assembly, 66.8% of the seats in Sindh Assembly, and 29.3% of the seats in Punjab Assembly. (PILDAT, 2004). The proceedings of the Punjab Assembly from 2002 to 2007 showed that women actively engaged in making decisions. Compared to their male coworkers, they were more trustworthy and reliable. The women in the Punjab Assembly were quite watchful and actively engaged in the legislative proceedings, but they were obligated to adhere to party policy and were unable to transcend their party allegiance to address the issues that affected women. The respondents acknowledged that most of the women nominated for the reserved seats were selected based on their affiliation with the party and were tied to well-known male party officials. They said that there was no alternative way to select such women in 2002, but that after that the selection procedure should have been changed. Despite the fact that the women parliamentarians were selected solely on their party membership. Sadly, Musharraf's policies could not be continued after his presidency. The number of available seats has not changed. The procedure continued during Shahbaz Sharif's ten-year administration. He offered Punjabi women many packages, but nothing practical could be done.

### **Women Legislators in Punjab Assembly: 2008-2013**

On 18<sup>th</sup> February 2008, provincial elections for Punjab Assembly were held along with National general elections. There were 281 general seats, 62 reserved for women and 7 for non-Muslims. According to the turnout, Pakistan Muslim League (N) was leading party in Punjab Assembly by occupying 171 out of 350 total seats. There were total 279 males and 71 women representatives. Thus representation of women was 20%. Though the figure is quite low as compared to demographic percentage of women in the province of Punjab, but it was a positive improvement over the previous representation ratio in Legislative Assemblies. (Waqar Zargar, 2017)

### **Women Legislators and Decision-Making Positions**

During the era of 2008-2013, fewer number of women appointed on decision making positions in Punjab Assembly, besides constituting 20% chunk of it. Following table is demonstrating an overview of the number of females, working on decision making positions as Provincial Ministers, Parliamentary Secretaries and Special

Assistant to Chief Minister during the selected span of time.

**Table 1**  
**Women on Decision Making Positions in Punjab Assembly**

| <b>Punjab Assembly:<br/>2008-2013</b> | <b>Women MPA</b> | <b>total seats</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| Provincial Ministers                  | 71               | 371                | 20%               |
| Assistant of Chief<br>Minister        | Nil              | 07                 | 0%                |
| Parliamentary<br>Secretary            | 03               | 02                 | 7.5%              |

“Source: [https://www.pap.gov.pk/about\\_assembly/cabinet/en/19?filter=true](https://www.pap.gov.pk/about_assembly/cabinet/en/19?filter=true)

Women constitute almost 50% of total population of the province of Punjab and occupied only 20% of seats in Provincial Legislative Assembly during the selected tenure. It indicates their proportionally under-representation in the house of power that made them unable to support any women-specific legislation or initiative. The situation ultimately decreased their effectiveness in decision-making process. (Saeed, 2018)

In order to raise women’s voice in the house of power, it is mandatory that every woman legislator needs to play an effective and active role in legislative process and proceedings of the house. Particularly, Women representatives from the ruling party need to stay more vigilant regarding their gender’s interests. Women legislators need to look beyond Party objectives, in particular with regards to gender concerns. Male legislators need to stand in support of their female colleagues to focus the issue of women’s rights. (Akber, 2016) Their support will give strength to the gender cause. Moreover, this practice would be helpful in promotion of better awareness of gender issues and ultimately lead to tolerance and cooperation, in State and Society.

### **Women participation in Provincial Assembly of Punjab 2013-2018**

The main goal is to highlight the importance of women being appointed to positions of authority, notably in legislative assemblies. No community can become more powerful if its rights and interests are not legally secured, safeguarded, and advanced. Women's subordination, repression, and weakness will ultimately result from their exclusion from decision-making bodies. Their selection as decision-makers will increase women's empowerment (Jalalzai, 2018)

Over the past few decades, the idea of empowerment has become entrenched in the thoughts of an increasing number of people. It advocates for the empowerment of many repressed social groups, particularly women, and is recommended by many scholars as the only way to combat injustice and subordination. The population of the globe is roughly 50% female. Most of them are unable to even carry their own weight and are utterly reliant on the other gender to meet even their most basic needs. This trend is linked to a number of sociocultural and political issues that prevent women from participating in development. Because of this, they are also underrepresented in political systems while having a significant amount of voting power. Lack of representation for women limits their ability to participate in political decision-making, which ultimately inhibits their path to empowerment. In the Punjab Assembly, very few women were given the chance to hold high-ranking positions, according to an analysis of the rate of appointments of female members to those seats. Below are specific statistics comparing the appointment of men and women to positions of decision-making. (Imran, 2018)

### Leader of the House and Opposition

Since 1947, no woman has been appointed as speaker of the house or leader of the opposition in the Punjab provincial legislature. Again, men were chosen for the two positions for the period from 2013 to 2018. The opposition's leader was Mian Mehmood-ur-Rasheed, while the leader of the house was Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif (PAP, About Assembly, 2013-2018).

**Table 2**  
**Women representatives and percentage of various designations**

| Post                    | Women Designated | Total designated | Percentage |
|-------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------|
| Provincial Minister     | 4                | 34               | 11%        |
| Adviser to CM           | 0                | 1                | Nil        |
| SP to Cm                | 0                | 4                | Nil        |
| Parliamentary Secretary | 5                | 42               | 11%        |

Source: (PAP, Cabinet and Functionaries, 2013-2018).

### Provincial Ministers

The Chief Minister named 34 Provincial Ministers in his cabinet between 2013 and 2018. There were four female provincial ministers. 11.7% of women were represented in the aforementioned category. The names of female ministers, the political party to which they are

**Table no:3**  
**Women Minister and their Ministeries**

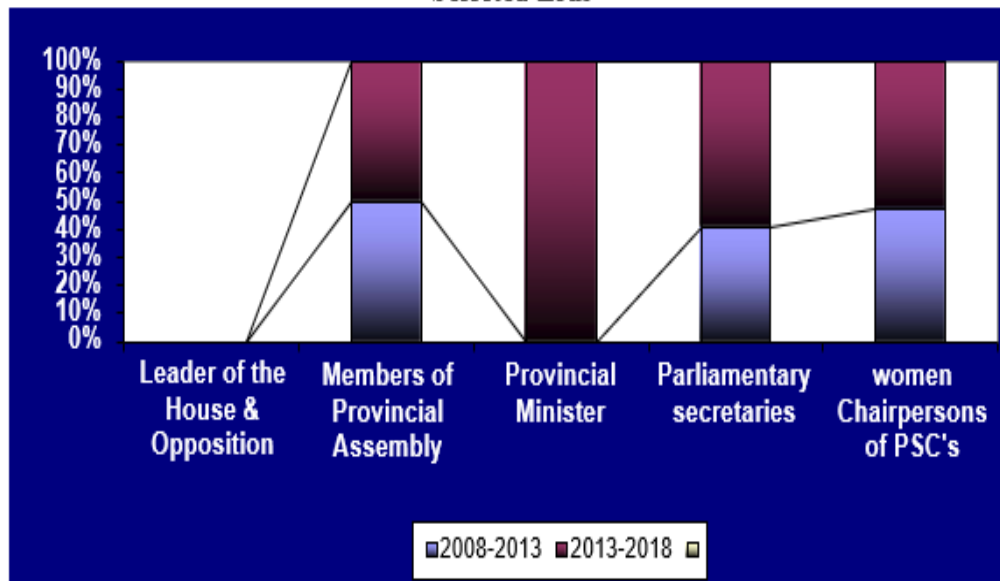
| Department                      | Political Party | Name of Minister            |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| Department of Finance           | PML-N           | Aisha Ghous Pasha           |
| Department of Environmental     | PML-N           | Zakia Shah Nawaz Protection |
| Department of Zakat and Ushr    | PML-N           | Naghma Mushtaq Hameeda      |
| Department of Women Development | PML-N           | Waheed-ud-Din               |

### Comparative Analysis of Both Eras

In the Punjab Assembly there are currently 76 women out of a total In the Senate: membership of 371 (20.5%). [During Their representation in 2002–2003 was 73 out of a total of 371 (or 19.75%). Of the 76 ladies, 66 are seated on designated women's seats, 1 is seated in a designated non-Muslim seat, and 9 have entered the building on regular seats. Of these 76 ladies, 20 are PPPP members, 36 are PML N members, 18 are PML Q members, I am a PML F member, and 1 is an independent. Out of 41 Ministers, only one woman has been appointed as a Minister; Ms. Neelam Jabbar as Minister for Population Welfare. The only female Minister belongs to PPPP. (Ali S., 2015,)

The comparative statistics of the representation of female legislators in the Punjab Assembly's few key decision-making seats are shown in the following graph;

### Comparison of Percentage of Women on High-ranking Positions during both Selected Eras



**Figure 1**

The graph above illustrates a negligible change in the representation of women in positions of decision-making throughout the later period of 2013–2018. Although the numbers are not much different, it would be exaggerated to disregard even a small improvement. The graph demonstrates that no woman was chosen to lead the house or the opposition during either timeframe. A slight increase in the proportion of female Assembly members is visible. Additionally, during the first era, no woman was selected as a provincial minister; but, during the second, four women were chosen to these positions. The proportion of women appointed as parliamentary secretaries has also somewhat increased. Additionally, there has been a marginal improvement in the nomination of women as chairs of key parliamentary standing committees for government agencies. Overall, there were no appreciable differences between the two periods in the placement of female members in higher positions, although the slight changes observed during the latter time can be viewed as a hint of impending progress.

### Conclusion

The aforementioned data and analysis demonstrate how minimally female legislators were represented in positions of power. Politicians were unable to pass pro-women legislation because women were not represented in decision-making structures and processes. It is a well-known reality that nobody will stand up for a community's rights unless it takes action to defend and protect them. Pakistan boosted the presence of women in legislation during the start of the twenty-first century, as did other nations throughout the globe. Due to allocated tickets, this representation was regrettably only a fleeting appearance. Additionally, the underrepresentation of female legislators in significant decision-making roles further favours the other gender. According to their representation in the population, women representatives should be appointed to decision-making positions, such as the cabinet and committees. (Rashid, 2018)

Despite making up about 50% of Punjab's population, women only held 20% of the seats in the provincial legislature during the chosen term. It demonstrates that they were unable to support any legislation or initiative that would specifically benefit women due to their unequal representation in the house of power. Out of the total 14 measures mentioned above, just two, according to Punjab Assembly data, were solely proposed by female



members. One of them highlighted specific concerns about women who work in-house. Together with male legislators, 11 legislation were introduced in the legislature. None of these were centred on the issues or pursuits of women. (Kalsoom Hanif, 2020) The Punjab Assembly hasn't even proposed or enacted a single piece of legislation to ensure the general welfare of women during the duration of the specified period. The same is true for resolutions. 42 of the total 173 passed resolutions—or 24%—were proposed by female legislators. The same 21 female legislators regularly presented these 42 resolutions. The greatest number reported was 5, which was sparked by Ms. Samina Khawar Hayat, a single member. According to the information at hand, only 21–30 of the 71 female parliamentarians actively participated in the legislative process. As a result, women lawmakers as a whole were ineffective in the decision-making process and did not focus on their gender-specific concerns. Every woman lawmaker must take an effective and active part in the legislative process and procedures of the house in order to increase the voice of women in the house of power.

Punjab has a significant gender disparity when it comes to the representation, inclusion, and participation of men and women in public and political life, as shown by the study's analysis of a variety of characteristics. Even if the constitutional quotas for women in the NA and PA are being met, women are still disproportionately underrepresented in positions of authority. In comparison to thirty male ministers and forty male secretaries, there are only four female provincial ministers and five female parliamentary secretaries in the Punjab Assembly. With only 11% of women elected to General Seats in the Punjab Assembly, the great majority of women have been appointed to political positions across the board in the federal, provincial, and LG tiers of government on the basis of reserved seats. 73% of them are serving in their first term. The number of women voting has increased, with a 13% increase in the total number of female registered voters between 2013 and 2018. Additionally, there is still a considerable gap between female CNIC holders and female registered voters for the majority of districts. Despite efforts to secure a minimal level of women's representation and inclusion being partially successful in terms of high-quality involvement and admission to senior management positions, the situation has not significantly improved. (Bari, Women in Pakistan: Country Briefing Report., 2000)

### **Recommendations**

For implementation of true democratization, equal representation of men and women especially in Legislature and Executive, is considered to be an essential element. Many Research scholars have identified a correlation between the role of gender and the developmental process. It concludes that there is a dire need to enhance women's inclusion at the national and sub-national decision-making process.

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