

Role of Women Lawmakers in Decision Making process : An Assessment of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly

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Abstract

This paper examines the role of women lawmakers in the decision-making process of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) Assembly in Pakistan. It explores the legal framework, challenges faced, empowerment initiatives, impact on decision making, notable contributions, public perception, and recommendations for increasing women's participation in the assembly. Women lawmakers have made significant contributions to legislation, policy advocacy, and constituency services, particularly in areas such as women's rights, education, healthcare, economic empowerment, and social welfare. However, they continue to face challenges stemming from gender stereotypes, cultural norms, and limited resources. Public perception and attitudes towards women in politics also influence their participation and influence. To enhance women's role in decision-making, recommendations include legal and policy reforms, political party engagement, gender-sensitive training, outreach campaigns, and supportive infrastructure. Leadership development, mentorship, networking, data collection, and monitoring are also crucial. Implementing these recommendations can create a more inclusive and gender-responsive environment in the KPK Assembly, fostering equitable governance and empowering women in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Embracing women's leadership is not only a matter of justice but also vital for building stronger and more inclusive democratic systems.

Keywords: *Women, lawmakers, decision-making, empowering, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.*

Introduction

Women's involvement in political decision-making processes has become increasingly important worldwide. As societies strive for gender equality, the presence and participation of women in legislative bodies has gained prominence as a vital indicator of democratic progress. The role of women lawmakers in the Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) Assembly is particularly important in the context of Pakistan . Politicians have historically had disproportionately low representation of women in leadership positions. Women have made a notable effort to increase their participation in lawmaking bodies, however. Women's participation and active participation in decision-making processes have been promoted by initiatives promoting gender diversity in political institutions in recent years².

An evaluation of the impact and influence of women legislators within legislative assemblies is essential to understanding their effectiveness. The assessment of their role involves examining policy advocacy, legislative initiatives, constituency services, committee engagements, and the incorporation of women's perspectives in lawmaking. We can measure how women legislators contribute to decision-making and policy outcomes when we assess these dimensions. It is the purpose of this study to examine how women legislators participate in the decision-making process of the KPK Assembly. Specifically, it examines their contributions, challenges, and overall impact on legislation and policy. This study aims to provide insights into how policies and practices can enhance gender equality and women's empowerment in the political process by analyzing women's involvement in lawmaking³.

Gender Representation in Political Leadership:

The gender representation in political leadership refers to the proportion of women who hold positions of power and decision-making authority. In order to ensure that women's voices, perspectives, and interests are adequately reflected in policymaking, it is crucial to democracy and social equality⁴.

KPK (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) Assembly women legislators assess the gender representation in this particular political institution. The study examines the number, roles, and contributions of women within the assembly. Historical trends and context are considered when examining women's political participation in the KPK Assembly. Women's inclusion into political leadership positions may be discussed in relation to historical struggles and milestones. Additionally, it assesses the current legislative landscape, including the number of women lawmakers in comparison to their male counterparts, and their party affiliations⁵.

Several factors may hinder women's access to political leadership roles in the KPK Assembly, including societal, cultural, and structural barriers. The study explores the impact of gender representation on policy agendas and decision-making processes, taking into account the unique perspectives and priorities that women lawmakers bring to the table. A look at the achievements, policy initiatives, and legislative accomplishments of women legislators in the KPK Assembly. Including women in political leadership often leads to more comprehensive and inclusive policies that address a variety of societal concerns⁶.

Legal Framework for Women's Participation in Decision Making

The legal framework governing women's participation in decision-making

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processes in the KPK Assembly plays a crucial role in promoting gender equality and empowering women in political leadership. The Constitution of Pakistan contains provisions that uphold the principles of equal political rights and opportunities for women. These constitutional guarantees form the basis for ensuring women's participation in the decision-making process within the KPK Assembly. Additionally, electoral laws and regulations have been implemented to increase women's representation, including the provision of reserved seats for women and party quotas. These measures aim to address the historical underrepresentation of women in political leadership roles. The KPK Assembly has also witnessed gender-sensitive legislative reforms that seek to create a more inclusive and equitable political environment. Various laws have been enacted to promote gender equality, protect women's rights, and prohibit gender-based discrimination. Moreover, women empowerment policies and programs have been implemented to enhance women's political awareness, capacity building, and leadership development. The KPK Assembly's legal framework is influenced not only by domestic laws but also by international commitments and conventions aimed at promoting gender equality and women's political participation. Monitoring and enforcement mechanisms, including electoral commissions and human rights bodies, ensure compliance with the legal provisions and provide avenues for addressing violations. However, it is important to critically evaluate the existing legal framework to identify gaps and challenges that need to be addressed to further enhance women's representation and influence in the decision-making process within the KPK Assembly⁷.

Legal Framework	Assessment
Constitution of Pakistan	The Constitution of Pakistan guarantees equal rights for men and women, including the right to vote and hold office. However, there are still some discriminatory laws in place, such as the Hudood Ordinances, which can restrict women's participation in public life.
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Rules	The KPK Assembly Rules provide for a quota of 20% reserved seats for women in the Assembly. This quota has been in place since 2002, and has helped to increase women's representation in the Assembly.
Women's Empowerment Policy	The KPK government has adopted a Women's Empowerment Policy, which aims to promote women's participation in all spheres of life, including decision-making. The policy includes a number of measures to support women's empowerment, such as providing access to education and training, and creating jobs for women.

Challenges Faced by Women Lawmakers in KPK Assembly

Women lawmakers in the KPK Assembly face a multitude of challenges that hinder their effective participation in the decision-making process. One significant challenge stems from deeply ingrained patriarchal norms and gender stereotypes prevalent in society. These biases can undermine the credibility and authority of women lawmakers, creating skepticism and resistance towards their role in decision-making. Additionally, limited access to political networks and power structures presents a barrier for women in building relationships and forming alliances, which are vital for influencing policies and advocating for their constituents. Social and cultural constraints also play a role, as traditional gender roles and expectations may impose limitations on women lawmakers, making it challenging to balance personal and professional responsibilities. Unequal resource allocation further exacerbates the challenges, with women facing limited funding, staff support, and access to crucial information and research facilities. Furthermore, women lawmakers often encounter harassment, discrimination, and gender-based violence within political spaces, creating hostile environments that discourage their active participation. The underrepresentation of women in leadership positions within the KPK Assembly is yet another obstacle, impeding their influence in decision-making and their ability to shape policies. Finally, the absence of gender-sensitive policies and practices overlooks the unique perspectives and needs of women, leading to policies that fail to adequately address their concerns. It is crucial to address these challenges by promoting gender sensitization, implementing inclusive policies, providing capacity-building opportunities, and fostering respectful and supportive political environments. Only by overcoming these barriers can the KPK Assembly fully harness the potential of women lawmakers and create a more inclusive and effective decision-making process⁸.

Empowerment Initiatives for Women in KPK Assembly

Empowerment initiatives for women in the KPK Assembly play a pivotal role in promoting their active participation and influence in the decision-making process. Leadership development programs provide women lawmakers with specialized training, mentoring, and networking opportunities to enhance their skills, confidence, and strategic decision-making abilities. These programs equip women with the necessary tools to navigate the complexities of politics, build alliances, and effectively advocate for policies that promote gender equality and women's rights. Capacity building workshops further strengthen their legislative knowledge and technical expertise, enabling them to actively contribute to policy debates and draft impactful legislation. Establishing networking platforms and support networks allows women lawmakers to connect with their peers, exchange experiences, and collaborate on initiatives that advance their collective interests. Gender-responsive policies and practices within the KPK Assembly are vital in creating an inclusive environment,

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ensuring equitable resource allocation, and integrating gender perspectives into policy formulation. Awareness campaigns and advocacy efforts raise public awareness about the importance of women's participation in decision-making and challenge societal stereotypes. Mentorship programs facilitate the growth and development of emerging women leaders by providing guidance and support from experienced women lawmakers⁹. By implementing these empowerment initiatives, the KPK Assembly can foster an inclusive and supportive environment that enables women lawmakers to effectively contribute, shape policies, and pave the way for greater gender equality and women's empowerment in the political arena¹⁰.

Initiative	Description
Women's Empowerment Policy	A policy that was approved in 2017 to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The policy aims to improve women's access to education, health care, employment, and other essential services.
Women's Parliamentary Caucus	A group of women MPAs who work together to promote women's rights and interests in the assembly. The caucus has been instrumental in passing legislation that benefits women, such as the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Women Protection Act.
Women's Development Department	A government department that is responsible for implementing the Women's Empowerment Policy and providing services to women in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The department offers a variety of programs and initiatives, such as literacy programs, vocational training, and microfinance programs.
Women's Shelters	Safe spaces for women who are victims of violence or abuse. The shelters provide food, shelter, and counseling services to women in need.
Legal Aid Clinics	Clinics that provide free legal services to women who are victims of violence or abuse. The clinics can help women file for divorce, child custody, or other legal matters.
Women's Training Programs	Programs that provide women with skills training so that they can find employment. The programs offer training in a variety of areas, such as sewing, embroidery, and computer skills.
Microfinance Programs	Programs that provide small loans to women so that they can start their own businesses. The loans can be used to purchase equipment, inventory, or other business expenses.

Impact of Women Lawmakers on the Decision Making Process

The impact of women lawmakers on the decision-making process of the KPK

Assembly is profound and multifaceted. Through their active participation, women lawmakers bring diverse perspectives, experiences, and priorities to the table, resulting in more comprehensive and inclusive policy outcomes. Their policy advocacy efforts focus on addressing gender-based discrimination, promoting women's rights, and tackling social issues affecting women and marginalized groups. By championing legislative initiatives, women lawmakers contribute to the introduction and passage of bills that address critical societal challenges and advance women's rights. Moreover, they play a vital role in providing constituency services, bridging the gap between citizens and the government, and advocating for resources and community development. Within committees, women lawmakers bring their expertise and perspectives, ensuring that gender considerations are integrated into discussions and policy recommendations¹¹. Their presence challenges traditional norms and biases, leading to a more inclusive and gender-sensitive approach to policy formulation. Importantly, women lawmakers serve as role models, inspiring other women and girls to engage in politics and leadership roles, ultimately contributing to the broader goal of gender equality in political representation. By evaluating and recognizing the impact of women lawmakers, the KPK Assembly can promote their continued participation and create an environment that values gender equality and women's empowerment in decision-making processes¹².

Case Studies: Notable Contributions of Women Lawmakers in KPK Assembly

The notable contributions of women lawmakers in the KPK Assembly serve as inspiring case studies that highlight their invaluable impact on policy-making and societal development. Through their dedicated efforts, women lawmakers have been instrumental in driving positive change in various areas. For instance, their advocacy for women's rights has resulted in the passage of legislation that addresses gender-based violence and ensures the safety and well-being of women. Additionally, their focus on education reforms has led to increased access to quality education, particularly for girls, and has helped bridge the gender gap in educational opportunities. Women lawmakers have also prioritized healthcare initiatives, establishing women's health centers and improving access to essential healthcare services, thereby positively impacting the health outcomes of women and vulnerable communities. Moreover, their emphasis on economic empowerment has led to policies and programs that support women's entrepreneurship, access to credit, and skill development, promoting economic independence and improving livelihoods. Lastly, their dedication to social welfare and community development has resulted in the establishment of social welfare programs that provide essential support to marginalized populations, improving their overall well-being. These case studies demonstrate the invaluable contributions of women lawmakers in the KPK Assembly, showcasing their commitment to addressing critical issues and creating a more

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inclusive and prosperous society for all¹³.

Name	Contribution
<i>Ayesha Gulalai</i>	<i>Led a movement against sexual harassment in the assembly.</i>
<i>Fauzia Kasuri</i>	<i>Successfully tabled a bill to ban child marriage.</i>
<i>Rubina Khalid</i>	<i>Advocated for the rights of women and children.</i>
<i>Samar Haroon</i>	<i>Successfully passed a bill to provide free education to girls.</i>
<i>Shahla Malik</i>	<i>Worked to improve the lives of women in rural areas.</i>

Public Perception and Attitudes towards Women in Politics

Public perception and attitudes towards women in politics play a significant role in shaping the opportunities and challenges faced by women lawmakers. Gender stereotypes, cultural and social norms, media representation, role models, education, political party support, and changing dynamics all contribute to the public perception of women in political leadership roles. Deep-rooted gender stereotypes can hinder the acceptance of women as capable leaders, while cultural and social norms may impose traditional expectations on women's roles. Media portrayal of women in politics can influence public attitudes, either reinforcing biases or challenging them. The visibility of successful women leaders and the presence of influential role models can inspire and change public perceptions. Education and awareness initiatives that promote gender equality and challenge stereotypes are crucial for shaping positive attitudes towards women in politics. Political party support for women candidates and prioritization of gender equality can send a powerful message to the public. Importantly, public attitudes towards women in politics are not static and can evolve over time as societies become more aware of gender equality and women's rights. By addressing biases, promoting inclusivity, and ensuring equal opportunities, societies can create an environment that supports and values the participation and leadership of women in politics¹⁴.

Perception	Attitude
<i>Women are more honest and less corrupt than men.</i>	<i>Women should be included in politics to improve the level of honesty and transparency.</i>
<i>Women are better at listening and representing the needs of their constituents.</i>	<i>Women should be included in politics to ensure that all voices are heard.</i>
<i>Women are more likely to focus on</i>	<i>Women should be included in politics to</i>

<i>social issues such as education and healthcare.</i>	<i>address the needs of women and children.</i>
<i>Women are less likely to start wars.</i>	<i>Women should be included in politics to promote peace and diplomacy.</i>

Recommendations for Increasing Women's Role in Decision Making in KPK Assembly

Promoting and increasing women's role in decision-making processes within the KPK Assembly is crucial for achieving gender equality and inclusive governance. The following recommendations outline strategies to enhance women's participation and influence in the assembly:

- 1. Legal and Policy Reforms: Implement legal and policy reforms that promote gender equality and women's representation in political positions. This could include introducing quotas or affirmative action measures that ensure a minimum percentage of seats are reserved for women in the assembly.*
- 2. Political Party Engagement: Encourage political parties to actively recruit and support women candidates. Parties should adopt internal policies and mechanisms to increase women's participation in party leadership positions and provide training and mentorship opportunities to enhance their political skills and knowledge.*
- 3. Gender-Sensitive Training: Provide gender-sensitive training programs for lawmakers and political actors to raise awareness about gender issues, unconscious biases, and the importance of inclusive decision-making processes. This will help foster a more gender-responsive and equitable political environment.*
- 4. Outreach and Awareness Campaigns: Launch public outreach and awareness campaigns to challenge gender stereotypes, promote women's political participation, and educate the public about the benefits of gender equality in decision-making. These campaigns should involve various stakeholders, including civil society organizations, media, and community leaders.*
- 5. Women's Leadership Development: Establish leadership development programs tailored specifically for women, providing them with the necessary skills, knowledge, and networks to thrive in political roles. These programs should focus on capacity building, public speaking, negotiation, and coalition building to empower women lawmakers to effectively contribute to the decision-making process.*

Conclusion

The role of women lawmakers in the decision-making process of the KPK Assembly is of paramount importance in achieving gender equality and inclusive governance. This paper has explored various aspects related to women's participation

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in politics, including the legal framework, challenges faced, empowerment initiatives, and impact on decision making, notable contributions, public perception, and recommendations for increasing women's role in the assembly. It is evident that women lawmakers in the KPK Assembly have made significant contributions to legislation, policy advocacy, and constituency services. Their efforts have been instrumental in promoting women's rights, education reforms, healthcare initiatives, economic empowerment, and social welfare programs. These case studies exemplify their dedication to addressing critical issues and improving the lives of constituents. However, women in politics still face numerous challenges, including gender stereotypes, cultural norms, and limited access to resources and opportunities. Public perception and attitudes towards women in politics also play a crucial role in shaping their participation and influence. It is essential to address these challenges through legal and policy reforms, political party engagement, gender-sensitive training, outreach campaigns, and supportive infrastructure.

To increase women's role in decision-making, it is vital to prioritize women's leadership development, mentorship, networking, data collection, and monitoring. Engaging civil society and ensuring a supportive legal environment are equally important in promoting women's participation in the assembly. In conclusion, by implementing the recommendations outlined in this paper, the KPK Assembly can create an inclusive and gender-responsive environment that enhances women's participation and influence in decision-making processes. This will contribute to more equitable and effective governance, addressing the needs and concerns of diverse communities and advancing the overall development and empowerment of women in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Embracing women's leadership and voices is not only a matter of social justice but also a catalyst for stronger, more inclusive democratic systems.



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