

MANAGEMENT OF DIVERSITY THROUGH DECENTRALIZATION IN FEDERAL SYSTEMS AND CHANGING DYNAMICS OF GENDERED POLITICAL REPRESENTATION IN PAKISTAN

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Abstract

This paper analyses the impact of decentralization process on descriptive representation of women in highly patriarchal countries like Pakistan. In seeking to explore this under research area, the paper aims to assess the impact of decentralization on descriptive representation of women at the local bodies' level. It also suggests that decentralized policy without substantial gender quota provision does not facilitate women inclusion in politics with special reference to Pakistan.

Key words

Women, Decentralization, Local Bodies, Pakistan, Federal System

Introduction

Decentralization is considered a key to managing diversity and strengthening federal democratic system but it has been seen that impact of decentralization may not be even across the country and may inhibit negative impact on female representation/participation by limiting their access to decision making process. Multi ethnic federation of Pakistan has been under continuous strain to provide maximum provincial autonomy but the process of decentralization has revealed the changing patterns of women's political representation in the country. Pakistan stands very high at the Gender Disparity Index and quota policy is a short term measure to facilitate women inclusion in mainstream politics. The Devolution of Power Plan 2000, first time in the political history of Pakistan specified 33 percent quota for women at national and sub national level to raise their representation and its impact was a drastic increase in female leadership at local bodies' level.

This inclusion was supposed to leave a positive impact on women political empowerment at provincial and national level and

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bridge the gender gap in the country. The provincial legislation have decreased gender quota in the local bodies acts a result of decentralization policy after the Eighteenth Amendment in the Constitution. The paper will analyze the impact of decentralization process on women's political descriptive representation at local level by employing qualitative approach covering the period of 2000 to 2015. My hypothesis in this study is that decentralization process in highly patriarchic societies like Pakistan does not facilitate the women representation without federal incentives or special measures (It rather reinforces male dominance in the absence of state intervention and special institutional measures) and second, decentralization in Pakistan has resulted in the reduction of descriptive representation of women in the local bodies due to certain strategic party interests in the respective provinces making quota option uneven across the country.

Federalism simply means constitutionally established 'balance of self-rule or shared rule'. It is considered a kind of constitutional mechanism for conflict management in diversified/fragmented societies. It's kind of system which divides powers not only horizontally but vertically. Federalism also provides certain forms of power sharing from central authority to lower level to accommodate different interests of diversified groups. Decentralization of political authority, considered as an important element of participatory democracy has become a notable trend of devolution and power sharing among established democracies over the past three decades and is viewed as a transfer of political, fiscal and administrative powers and authority¹ from the central/federal government towards sub-national/provincial or local governments.

Political Decentralization is considered a key to promote women's participation in political matters and it is believed and propagated that women generally as well as from low income or marginalized groups are expected to benefit from the accountability and service delivery improvements. The process is also regarded a "political apprenticeship arena" for women as they found it more feasible to overcome the barriers which hinder them to get actively involved in political affairs like travelling time, Campaign cost, social connections and political expertise etc. Decentralization and devolution has been a focus of governance agenda since 1990s and certain legal and constitutional incentives were adopted by different governments under international obligations to promote women participation like women quota. But the decentralization process in developing counties have proved that it gets stuck at intermediate level and the effects or consequences of decentralization have proved it challenging for

advancing and promoting gender equality without state intervention in countries with highly patriarchal values.

Pakistan, diversity and decentralization

The question of ethnic diversity and provincial autonomy had been very crucial in the politics of Pakistan since its inception. The multi ethnic state of Pakistan adopted federal structure² under the Government of India Act 1935 as interim constitution³ and efforts of constitution making were started. Though it was not an easy task to accommodate diversified interests claiming maximum political and fiscal autonomy but finally the Constitution was implemented on 23 March 1956⁴ which is claimed to be an ideal of provincial autonomy. Unfortunately, this constitution could not last for more than two and half years and was abrogated as a result of first nationwide Martial Law in October 1958. The conflict and controversy among federal government and provincial governments particularly, in Eastern Wing of the country reached at its peak during Martial Law period due to centralized policies of Ayub Khan resulting in the removal of his government, imposition of second Martial Law and separation of East Pakistan. The leader of Pakistan People's Party who won majority from West Pakistan in the general elections 1970 was handed over powers and task to rebuild the truncated Pakistan. The new constitution was federal in nature and powers were divided among Federal and provincial governments in to three lists; federal, provincial and concurrent. The provinces demanded maximum political and fiscal autonomy at the time of constitution making but Bhutto government promised to abolish the Concurrent list within ten year of implementation and transfer all powers to provinces. This could not happen because Bhutto regime was sacked by military imposing another martial law in 1977. Even after the removal of Zia-ul-Haq the Concurrent list could not be abolished either by civilian or military governments despite the repeated demands of the provinces for autonomy till 2010 and finally in April, 10 eighteenth amendment in the Constitution was made and powers were transferred to provinces by abolishing the concurrent list.

Local Bodies and Women in Pakistan

The local governments experience in Pakistan presents a fractured picture of "centralized" local governance and women participation in local bodies since 1947. Surprisingly, local bodies system in Pakistan has been introduced and promoted by military regimes rather than democratic/civilian governments. First time four tier⁵ local bodies system called 'Basic Democracies' was established by

first military ruler Mohammad Ayub Khan in 1959 (one year after taking power) but the system did not provide any quota reservation for women. The Basic Democracies was not aimed to decentralize powers and authority at local level but to seek legitimacy for a martial rule and keep the political parties and political leadership away from political arena⁶. The local bodies' members served as an electoral college for the election of Chief Martial Law Administrator as president and desired members' for central and provincial legislatures.⁷

The Local Government Ordinance 1979⁸ issued by Zia-ul-Haq was also an attempt to legitimize his rule by revitalizing local bodies system even ignoring /delegitimizing politics at national and provincial level. He reserved two seats or twenty percent for women in the union councils and ten percent quota (or two seats minimum) in other councils⁹ elected on indirect basis except NWFP.¹⁰ This system was abolished after the death of Zia-ul-Haq in 1988 and local affairs were being run and controlled by administrators during the period of four elected governments due to high political polarization in the country. The elections for local governments were held during the first term of Nawaz government but in his second tenure the elections were held only in Punjab and Baluchistan and quota was just 2 to 25 percent as it was left at the discretion of provincial governments. The government was not concerned with women and quota issue as a private member bill presented in the National Assembly was defeated because of non-cooperation of treasury benches taking a plea that an issue of women seats in the parliament will be a part of constitutional package presented soon but it could not happen till the removal of Sharif government in October 1999. Unfortunately, local governance and female inclusion in political matters has never been a priority of the civilian governments. The political leadership also ignored the demands of provincial autonomy despite the fact that Concurrent list of the Constitution of 1973 was only for the period of ten years expired in 1983. Surprisingly the three local bodies' elections out of four during the period of 1959 to 1988 were held by military rulers by empowering bureaucracy not to decentralize powers and authority at the local level but to maintain centralized control at federal level to delegitimize party politics and seek legitimacy for undemocratic regimes.

General Pervaiz Musharraf, C-in-C of Army toppled down Nawaz Government in October 1999 and introduced 'Devolution of Power Plan' after assuming power. First time, women mainstreaming in local bodies elections were seen in 2000-2001 through 'National Plan of Action' and 'National Policy for Development and Empowerment'. Under the Local Government Ordinance that followed, the government reserved 33% seats¹¹ at all tiers of local government¹²,

the highest proportion ever reserved for women in any elective body. Equally important was the fact that the reserved seats at the union council level were contested by a joint electorate of men and women through direct elections, though the method for the tehsil and district levels remained indirect. There were 4030¹³ seats allocated to women (including women from peasant and workers) and 35963¹⁴ women were elected out of 67546 nominations against the seats reserved. 11 women were elected as Union Nazims (chairperson), 01 as Naib Nazim (deputy chairperson) and 2 as District Nazims (Reyes 2002) across the country.

The women enthusiastically contested the election and overall, 89.8 percent seats were filled. The highest percentage was witnessed in Punjab where 96.7 percent seats¹⁵ were filled followed by Sind with 90.4 percent of total seats¹⁶. The percentage in Baluchistan and NWFP¹⁷ remained 77.4 and 70.6 respectively.¹⁸ The overwhelming presence of women in local councils since 2000 contributed enormously to mainstreaming women into politics. These elections provided political apprenticeship to women to develop their political and administrative skill and better performance of women councilors was reported in local bodies 2005 as compare to 2002. This experience also provided impetus for women's effective participation in the national election 2002 and first time 58 women contested election for the general seats in the National Assembly and 13 were elected while in 2008 elections, 64 women were contestants for the general seats in national and 115 for provincial assemblies in the history of Pakistan. Punjab and Sindh witnessed high level of female political participation¹⁹ and contestation as compare to KP (former NWFP) and Baluchistan.

Before local bodies election 2005, provincial governments demanded amendments in Local Government Ordinance²⁰ and changes were made on 6th of June 2005 resulting in the reduction of seats in union councils from 21 to 13 and increase in the powers of chief ministers etc. Despite of disappointment as a result of reduction of seats, women participated enthusiastically and 96.57 percent of the reserved seats were filled (first phase showed 98.3 percent seats filled in 54 districts and 95.63 in 56 districts during the second phase). Total 62,550²¹ nominations were filed while the number of reserved seats were 28,562 and 27,581 were declared successful.

Results of both elections showed that quota provision facilitated women's inclusion in politics at the grass root level and first time in the political history of Pakistan women (even from very low income strata) contested and won elections. Women councilors actively participated in local political affairs and were also involved in networking at national level. This system also provided impetus for

women's effective participation in national politics and first time 13 women were elected on general seats of National Assembly in general election 2002 and 17 in 2008. But this system was suspended by the new elected government after 2008 and all the four provincial governments were running local affairs through local administration.

Women, Decentralization and Representation: Post Eighteenth Amendment Scenario

The long awaited demand of provincial autonomy was realized by the federal Government of Pakistan on 10th of April 2010 and Concurrent list²² in the Constitution of 1973 was abolished²³ by transferring all powers mentioned in the list to provinces to ensure maximum political and fiscal autonomy. First time elected provincial governments were assigned sole responsibility to draft or amend local bodies' acts for their provinces²⁴ without any federal control or authority but the provinces disinterest in this regard was obvious as no initiative was taken by any provincial government till April 2012 when Supreme Court of Pakistan, while hearing a case regarding law and order situation in Baluchistan directed all provinces to establish local government system as mandated by the Constitution of Pakistan to resolve socio economic issues at grass root level. Under immense pressure finally the provincial governments started the process and diverse kind of response was witnessed by the provinces in terms of legislation and elections.

Baluchistan was the first one in the provinces to pass Local Government Act in May 2010²⁵ followed by KPK (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa). The Baluchistan government kept the 33 percent women quota provision²⁶ (minimum one) in the Act²⁷ but suggested indirect method of election for reserved seats (elected members on general seats of union councils will elect the members on reserve seats). Provincial government of Baluchistan also took a lead to hold local bodies' election in the province and direct election for general seats were held on 7th of December 2013²⁸ followed by elections on reserved seats including women. Total 2332²⁹ seats are reserved for women in 725 local councils.³⁰ elected on indirect basis by the elected members but no consolidated data is available about the total number of seats filled or women contesting on general seats so far either by ECP or any non-governmental organization except media reports that not a single woman was issued party ticket in the elections.

KPK government passed the Local Government Act in November 2013 and elections were held in May 2015. The quota for women in KP varies for different types of councils, from 20 to 24 percent³¹ in district councils, 11 to 24 percent in tehsil or town councils

and two female members in village or neighborhood³² council. Total number of elected members in Neighborhood/village councils varies from 10 to 15 so percentage of women member also varies accordingly. No consolidated and sex segregated data is available so far by ECP.

Unlike Baluchistan and KP, Punjab, (the largest province in term of population and political power³³) reduced women quota in local bodies in its new Local Government Act 2013. The new provincial legislation allocated 2 seats out of 13³⁴ elected indirectly by the elected members³⁵ at the union council level and sets around 10 percent of total seats at the district level³⁶ (though the quota was increased to 33 percent after a series of protests and hue and cry by women rights groups and activists) The elections were held in three phases due to large number of constituencies in Punjab³⁷. There were only 102 women out of 33794 candidates awarded party tickets for general seats of union councils. Total 15 women candidates were for the seats of chairperson and 7 for the post of vice chairperson among 4500 candidates. The second phase witnessed elections in 9011 constituencies of 12 districts of Punjab for 7909 general seats³⁸ and 1102 seats of chairperson and vice chairperson³⁹.

Total 31,930⁴⁰ candidates' nominations were accepted for general seats by ECP and 894 candidates were elected unopposed. Only 47 were women contesting for the general seats of union councils making the ratio of 0.2 percent of the total members. Total 5,024 joint candidate contested election on the seats of chairperson and vice chairperson and women were only 08. The third phase of elections in Punjab was in 6,906 wards of 1151 Union Councils⁴¹ of 12 District Councils and no sex segregated data is available so far.

The Sindh Government in Local Government Act 2013 reduced women quota by making it 2 out of 9 in the union councils and 22 percent in the other councils elected indirectly by the generally elected members. The election for the second phase were held for 688 union councils in 14 district councils, 96 Union Committees, one Municipal Corporation, 277 ward of 17 Municipal Committees and 535 wards of 83 town Committees. The third phase witnessed elections only in 23 union councils of 2 district councils and 213 union committees of four districts and Municipal Corporation in Karachi area. Neither ECP nor any nonprofit organization has provided consolidated sex segregated data for local elections in Sindh.

It's quite evident from the discussion above that woman descriptive representation has been either reduced or made less effective at the grass root level by the new provincial legislation even despite consistent demands by women organizations to retain 33 percent quota. It also depicts the male dominated and patriarchal

nature⁴² of regional/provincial politics towards women role in Pakistan. The local elections in all four provinces have proved that women inclusion is not possible without quota measures and lesser the quota less the women representation will be.

The reduction of quota in three provinces except Baluchistan raises certain serious questions on the role of patriarchy in party structures. The local bodies system before 2010 has been an agenda of military governments to seek legitimacy and keep political activities confined to local level on non-party basis. All local bodies' elections from 1959 to 2005 except one in 1998 were held by military rulers and under the direction/control of federal government.

The democratic governments have not been interested either in local governance or women representation at local level and even after the general election 2008 the system of local governance was discontinued by provincial governments. The provinces took more than four years to devolve powers at local level after the authority was solely transferred to them as a result of 18th Amendment. While the 33% seats are reserved in Baluchistan but the indirect method of election makes these women less effective and more dependent on male members of the councils. The elected provincial governments particularly from Punjab and Sindh have not paid any concern to all hues and cries by women forums /organizations after reduction of quota and their decision to reduce women seats in the local bodies in a country with male dominance and patriarchic nature of social and political system seems a reversal of women empowerment policy of the federal government committed at the international level. The federal government while giving away authority of local governance; did not make provinces responsible to safeguard at least 33 percent women representation⁴³ through quota⁴⁴ as is being practiced in neighboring country India.⁴⁵ The provincial Assemblies were entitled to more powers and authority as a result of decentralization but they ignored the globally acclaimed notion of gender parity previously implemented successfully in the elections of 2002 and 2005. Significant shortcomings remain in regards to women's political participation with a lack of gender disaggregated data precluding a full assessment and forward planning but women appear to be underrepresented in local elections across the country as a result of reduction in quota provision (but statistics of two provinces show that women participation was almost nil in direct elections in Baluchistan and very insignificant in Punjab).

Conclusion

The discussion above clearly reveals that decentralization may facilitate political participation at grass root level in established democracies but it is difficult for women to exercise their political rights in a country highly patriarchal in character and enjoy benefits of decentralized framework without state intervention and institutional provisions like gender quota system and new local elections in Pakistan are clear manifestation of this argument. The decentralization process was an effort to satisfy the demands of provincial autonomy to strengthen the federation of Pakistan but it witnessed regressive effects on women representation at the local level. Provincial legislation contradicts the international obligations and commitments made by federal government and past policy being practiced successfully in the last elections 2002 and 2005.

References

- ¹Decentralization process does not necessarily require constitutional guarantees like federal arrangement but the powers can be delegated by central or federal government through ordinary law (Topperwien 2008).
- ² The federation was composed of four provinces, Baluchistan, capital area, tribal areas and princely states.
- ³The powers were divided among federal and provincial governments in three lists federal, provincial and concurrent though the federal government has supremacy on provincial government in different ways.
- ⁴ To solve the issue of division of powers among provinces, the three provinces and Baluchistan area were merged in one province called West Pakistan and Pakistan was declared a federation comprised of two provinces.
- ⁵ Union council at village/ward level, tehsil councils at sub district level and district council in the rural areas and union committees and Municipal committees (town with less than 14000 populations) and municipal corporations in urban areas were established by Ayub Khan.
- ⁶ The elections were held on non-party basis and political leader were either banned or jailed under EBDO and PODO (Nawaz 2008, Ahmed 1998).
- ⁷ Total 80,000 members served as electorate for the election of president and members of central and provincial legislatures.
- ⁸During Zia regime, three tier local institutions in the rural areas were union councils, tehsil councils and district councils. In Urban areas four kinds of institutions were town committee, municipal committee, municipal corporations and metropolitan corporations.
- ⁹ Different local councils were established in the rural and urban areas by Zia-ul-Haq. Union Council, Tehsil Council and District Council in rural areas and Town Committees for smaller cities, Municipal Committees for larger cities and Metropolitan Corporations in big cities were established.
- ¹⁰ There was no quota for women in the union councils or town committees in NWFP (NCSW 2010, Mumtaz 2005). The province is renamed Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in the 18th Amendment of the constitution to satisfy the ethnic demands of pushtoon people.
- ¹¹ The basic level was union council which was composed of 21 members, union nazim and naib nazim (Chairperson and deputy chairperson), twelve member on general seats(including four women on reserved seats), six elected for peasants and workers(including two women on reserved seats), one member from minority communities. Tehsil council at the middle tier, was composed of all naib nazim from all the union councils and one third of the elected representatives from reserved seats for women from all unions councils, peasants and workers (five percent of the total number of unions), and minority communities (five percent). At the top tier was district council composed of nazims of all union councils and thirty three percent women members on reserved seats, five percent from peasants and workers and five percent from members from minority communities (Reyes 2002).
- ¹² No seats were reserved for women as nazim or naib Nazim of the councils.

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- ¹³Total 39,964 seats were allocated to women across the country (36,066 seats for the 6,022 union councils, 1,749 for 305 tehsil councils, 161 for 30 town committees and 1,988 for 96 district councils) (Reyes 2002) while According to Aurat Foundation report total seats were 40,030 (36,132 for union councils,19,10 for tehsil councils and 1988 for district councils (Foundation 2014).
- ¹⁴ The figure includes women on reserved seats for peasant/workers and minorities (Foundation 2014).
- ¹⁵ Total 44,163 women filed nominations on 22,950 reserved seats out of which 22,196 were elected (Foundation 2014).
- ¹⁶ In Sind province 11,391 women filed nominations on 7,229 seats reserved and 6,535 were elected.
- ¹⁷ In NWFP province now called KPK, women were not allowed to cast votes or contest election in 21 union councils in Swabi and Mardan districts and 34 union councils in Dir district in LG election 2001 due to local religious or social pressures which resulted in the loss of 650 seats for this region (Reyes, 2002). Further, women in Dir, Kohistan, Batgram, and Mardan were not even allowed to file nomination papers (NCSW 2010).
- ¹⁸ In Balochistan 3,848 women filed nominations against 3432 reserved seats and 2,655 were elected while the lowest ratio was seen in NWFP where 7,575 women filed nomination and total seats were 6,258 and 4,416 were elected (Foundation 2014).
- ¹⁹ Many women councilors later joined political parties and were elected as members of provincial assemblies. (NCSW 2010).
- ²⁰ Under Pervaiz Musharraf, the provinces had been required to have presidential approval for any amendment in the local government legislation (International 2014).
- ²¹ In election 2005, Sind province was in the front with 99.05 percent of filled seats followed by Punjab with 98.77 seats. Total nominations filed in Sind against 5,154 seats were 12,306 out of which 5,105 were elected. Total seats in Punjab were 16,158 and 15,995 women were elected out of 36,231 women candidates. Women participation in Baluchistan was also appreciable where 6,268 women filed nomination and 2,577 were elected while total seats reserved for women were 2,654. NWFP statistics showed again women's less participation and contestation where 3941 women won election out of 7,745 women candidates while total seats were 4,596 (Foundation 2014).
- ²² Concurrent list contained 47 item and federal and provincial assemblies had competence to legislate on those items like civil and criminal law, marriage and divorce, minor and adoption, will and succession, agricultural land, education, electricity population planning, social welfare, tourism, environmental pollution, ecology and etc.
- ²³ Initially concurrent list was added in the constitution for the period of ten years but later the period was extended from time to time despite consistent demands to abolish the list particularly smaller provinces to ensure maximum political and fiscal autonomy to federating units.

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- ²⁴ Article 140(A) declared respective provincial assemblies responsible to establish a system of local government and devolve the political, administrative and fiscal powers to elected representatives but under the sub clause 2 of the same article National Election Commission was held responsible to conduct local elections in all areas of the country.
- ²⁵ Amendments in the Act were made in August 2013 and January 20, 2014.
- ²⁶ In rural areas of Baluchistan, union councils and district council are established while urban areas have municipal committees, municipal corporations and metropolitan corporations.
- ²⁷ The Government of Baluchistan passed Local Government Act in May 2010 and amendments were made in August 2013.
- ²⁸ Elections on general seats were poorly organized. ECP accepted 22,274 nomination papers, 07 percent seats remained vacant (had no candidate) and 35 percent elected unopposed as there was only one candidate (International 2014).
- ²⁹ There were total 2335 seats reserved for women (ECP 2014) and 2332 according to Ministry of Local government and Rural Development (Tribune 2014).
- ³⁰ Total number of council in Baluchistan is as follows: District Councils 32, Union Councils 635, Metropolitan 01, Municipal Corporations 4, and Municipal Committees 53 in the province (ECP 2014). According to Ministry of Baluchistan, District Councils 30, Metropolitan 01, Municipal Corporations 01, Municipal Committees 51 and Union Councils are 584 (Balochistan 2016).
- ³¹ For example 31 women out of total 138 in Peshawar, 16 out of total 74 in D.I. Khan and 13 out of 60 in Lower Dir.
- ³² The local government system in KPK has an urban-rural divide; multimember institution village council in rural and neighborhood in urban areas. At the second tier, town council is established in urban area and tehsil councils in rural area. The highest tier is called city district council for urban and district council for rural areas.
- ³³ Punjab has dominance in federal level politics by having 148 seats in the National Assembly out of 272 general seats.
- ³⁴ Initially there was only 01 seat out of 9 but the act was amended and seats were increased by provincial government after public hue and cry.
- ³⁵ Six elected general members, one chairperson and one deputy chairperson.
- ³⁶ According to Local Government Act Punjab, the composition of District Councils varies according to the number of union councils (Chairpersons of union councils, number of women notified by provincial government on the basis of number of union councils but not more than fifteen, one youth and one technocrat, peasant/workers not more than 3 and minorities not more than 5 depending upon the number of union councils as notified by government). In Municipal Corporations women members should not exceed more than 25 depending upon the number of union councils in Corporations (Punjab 2014).
- ³⁷ Election for the first phase were held in 9468 wards of 1578 union councils and 1118 wards of 60 Municipal Committees in 12 districts of Punjab out of

36 districts. Total 33794 candidates contested election for rural, urban councils and municipal committees during first phase on general seats for union councils while 639 were elected unopposed. 5531 candidates were for 1118 wards of Municipal Committees and 21 won unopposed

³⁸ Among the general seats 6612 fall in 1102 union councils and 1297 seats for 64 Municipal Committees (b. FAFEN 2015).

³⁹ Chairperson and vice chairperson are only elected for the posts in union councils and chairperson or vice chairperson for municipal committees are elected indirectly by the elected members of union councils and women does not have a right to participate in the election process of those seats.

⁴⁰ 17,953 nominations for the general seats of union councils in District Councils and 2,299 for 642 general seats for 107 Union Councils in Municipal Corporations were filed. 6,654 candidates were for the 1297 seats of Union Councils in Municipal Committees.

⁴¹ Elections were held in 1,104 wards of 184 Union Councils in 5 Municipal Corporations and 1,172 wards in 58 Municipal Committees (b. FAFEN 2015).

⁴² Women councilors complained that they were denied physical space in the offices and most of the time were not even informed about official meetings. They were not even have been consulted by Nazims (chairman) or Naib Nazims (deputy chairman) in budget or financial matters but women did not accept the discriminatory attitudes and kept raising their voices against it (NCSW, 2010; PATTAN, 2006).

⁴³ The Article 32 of the Constitution of Pakistan makes the state responsible to encourage local government institutions to provide special representation to women, peasant and workers. Article 25 of the Constitution guarantees equal rights to citizens and Article 34 provides equal participation to women in all spheres of life.

⁴⁴ Punjab Commission on the Status of Women confirmed after monitoring of the first phase of election that political parties did not work to field women candidates in the election on general seats (Punjab Commission on the Status of Women 2015).

⁴⁵ Indian federal government through constitutional amendment reserved 33 percent quota for women directly elected at local level and made it mandatory for provincial governments to ensure women representation at all tiers of institutions in 1996.