

Hegemonic Masculinity in Politics and It's Influence on Women's Representation

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Abstract



Political structures have long been shaped by masculinity, reinforcing male dominance and limiting women's access to decision-making power. This study uses a mixed-methods approach to examine how hegemonic masculinity impacts women's political representation and their exclusion from decision-making roles within political parties. The survey was conducted with female members of Pakistan's two largest political parties, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), using structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews. The quantitative phase identified trends in women's descriptive representation within the parties, highlighting the extent of their involvement in various political roles. The qualitative phase, on the other hand, explored women's substantive representation, focusing on their personal and subjective experiences, and how they perceive and are affected by their representation in political spaces. The findings demonstrate a significant negative relationship between hegemonic masculinity and women's representation in decision-making, with cultural norms acting as barriers that reinforce male-dominated power structures. This study provides practical evidence of the obstacles to gender equality in politics and highlights the need for inclusive measures to enhance women's influence in political decision-making processes.

Keywords: Hegemonic Masculinity, Women's Representation, and Political Decision-Making

Introduction

Women's representation in politics is a vital issue for achieving global gender equality, as evidenced by the ongoing gender gaps in political participation and decision-making (Inglehart & Norris, 2003). Despite comprising nearly half of the world's population, women remain underrepresented in political leadership, especially in patriarchal societies where traditional gender norms favor male dominance (Connell, 1987). In Pakistan, progress has been made through initiatives such as reserving seats for women in the National Assembly; however, overall participation in the political process remains limited. Currently, women hold only about 20% of the seats in the National Assembly and 18% in the Senate IPU & UN Women (2023). These statistics highlight the significant barriers women face in engaging in politics, particularly in a male-dominated environment like Pakistan's political landscape (Shvedova, 2005).

At the core of these barriers is the concept of hegemonic masculinity, which refers to the dominant form of masculinity in a particular society that upholds male power while subordinating alternative masculinities and femininities (Connell, 1987). In Pakistan, this form of masculinity is deeply embedded in the political system, where political roles are predominantly reserved for men, and leadership is often associated with traditionally masculine traits such as aggression, assertiveness, and control. Consequently, women who seek to enter politics or challenge these norms are frequently marginalized, with their abilities questioned based on societal expectations of femininity (Shvedova, 2005).

Hegemonic masculinity serves as both a societal expectation and a powerful force within political institutions, enforcing male dominance (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Cultural stereotypes deeply discourage women from participating in politics by portraying political power as a masculine trait. Additionally, these gender norms are reinforced by the media, which often emphasizes the personal lives or emotional expressions of female politicians. This focus undermines their credibility and perpetuates the belief that politics is an inappropriate realm for women (Henslin, 2007).

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In Pakistan, political parties like PTI and PML-N operate within a masculinize framework that often excludes women from key decision-making processes. Women are frequently perceived as unprepared or incapable of taking on leadership roles, particularly if they lack political experience or connections to influential political families. Consequently, the women's wings in these parties are usually assigned lesser roles, which perpetuates the cycle of male dominance in Pakistan's political landscape.

Objectives of the study

1. To explore how Hegemonic Masculinity within political party influence women to participate in decision-making processes.
2. To understand the standpoint of women regarding Hegemonic Masculinity within political Party.

Literature Review

Women's under-representation in political institutions is a significant barrier to achieving gender equality. Although the number of women in legislative positions worldwide is increasing, their impact on political decision-making processes remains limited (Lovenduski, 2005). Many countries have implemented gender quotas to address this imbalance (Dahlerup, 2007). These quotas, which can take the form of reserved seats or candidate quotas, aim to ensure that women have a place at the table (Kabeer, 2005). However, while these quotas have increased the representation of women in some countries, they have not necessarily led to greater substantive representation or political empowerment (Maqsood, 2024).

Electoral gender quotas have been shown to improve the numerical representation of women in politics (Goetz & Hassim, 2003). However, their impact on policy influence and decision-making power remains a contentious issue (Zia, 2019). Scholars have debated whether quotas act as a tool for achieving equality of opportunity or equality of results (Dahlerup, 2006). While quotas create opportunities for women to participate in the political process, they do not always ensure that women can shape policy or effectively influence political agendas (Kabeer, 2005). According to Mumtaz et al. (2025), deeply ingrained cultural norms and patriarchal values continue to impede women's political participation in Pakistan, despite constitutional protections and growing awareness of gender equality.

The concept of hegemonic masculinity is crucial in understanding the exclusion of women from political leadership (Connell, 1987). This idealized version of masculinity establishes societal norms that equate leadership with traditionally masculine traits such as aggression, decisiveness, and control (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

In Pakistan's political system, these masculine traits are still considered essential for political leadership, which further marginalizes women (Shvedova, 2005). Women in political parties often encounter significant challenges due to the widespread influence of hegemonic masculinity. This influence is evident in party dynamics, media representations, and cultural expectations surrounding leadership (Maqsood, 2024). Consequently, while gender quotas may increase the number of women in politics, these barriers diminish their potential to achieve meaningful political influence (Shvedova, 2005).

Substantive representation of women in politics goes beyond simply having women in office; it involves ensuring that they can actively participate in shaping policies, particularly those related to gender equality (Childs, 2008). Naheed et al. (2021) highlight that women's participation in politics in Pakistan is hindered by persistent sociocultural and institutional barriers, which limit their involvement in decision-making processes. In Pakistan, increasing women's participation through quotas must be accompanied by efforts to dismantle structural barriers within political parties and cultural norms that perpetuate male dominance (Zia, 2019). Political empowerment for women requires more than just the right to occupy seats; it demands access to influential positions where they can advocate for gender-sensitive policies (Maqsood, 2024).

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in three interrelated theoretical concepts: Gramsci's (1971) concept of cultural hegemony, Connell's (2005) Theory of hegemonic masculinity, and Childs' (2008) Theory of substantive representation. Together, these frameworks explain how dominant cultural norms, gendered power structures, and institutional barriers restrict women's ability to exercise meaningful political influence in their political parties.

The concept of cultural hegemony, proposed by Gramsci (1971), helps explain how dominant political ideologies and societal norms sustain gender inequalities. Gramsci argued that power is upheld not just through force but also through cultural institutions that shape values to benefit the ruling class. In politics, this cultural hegemony reinforces male dominance, associating leadership with traditionally masculine traits like decisiveness and control. Such ingrained norms make it difficult for women to access decision-making power, as they are often viewed as unsuitable for leadership roles due to their gender.

Connell's (2005) concept of hegemonic masculinity, building on Gramsci's Theory, examines how masculinity is constructed within social institutions. Hegemonic masculinity represents the dominant ideal that positions men as natural leaders while marginalizing women and alternative masculines. Political parties, as organic intellectuals (Gramsci, 1971), reinforce this ideal, portraying male leadership as superior and normative. This exclusion is evident in political discourse, where male leaders are depicted as strong and decisive, while women are often viewed as less capable (Connell, 2005; Petrogiannis & Freidenvall, 2022).

Sarah Childs' (2008) Theory of substantive representation highlights that gender quotas alone do not ensure meaningful political influence for women. While quotas may increase female representation in legislative bodies, they do not guarantee women the ability to influence policy or decision-making. Childs argues that women must not only hold seats but also actively participate in decision-making to achieve substantive representation, challenging the notion that mere presence equals genuine representation (Childs & Krook, 2009; Celis, 2012).

By integrating these perspectives, this study examines how hegemonic masculinity and cultural hegemony create barriers that prevent women from achieving substantive representation in politics (Gramsci, 1971; Connell, 1995; Childs, 2008) Although gender quotas improve descriptive representation, they fail to address the deeper power dynamics that constrain women's influence. Gramsci's and Connell's theories reveal how cultural and institutional norms perpetuate male dominance. In contrast, Childs' Theory underscores the need for systemic reforms to ensure women's meaningful participation in political decision-making.

Conceptualization

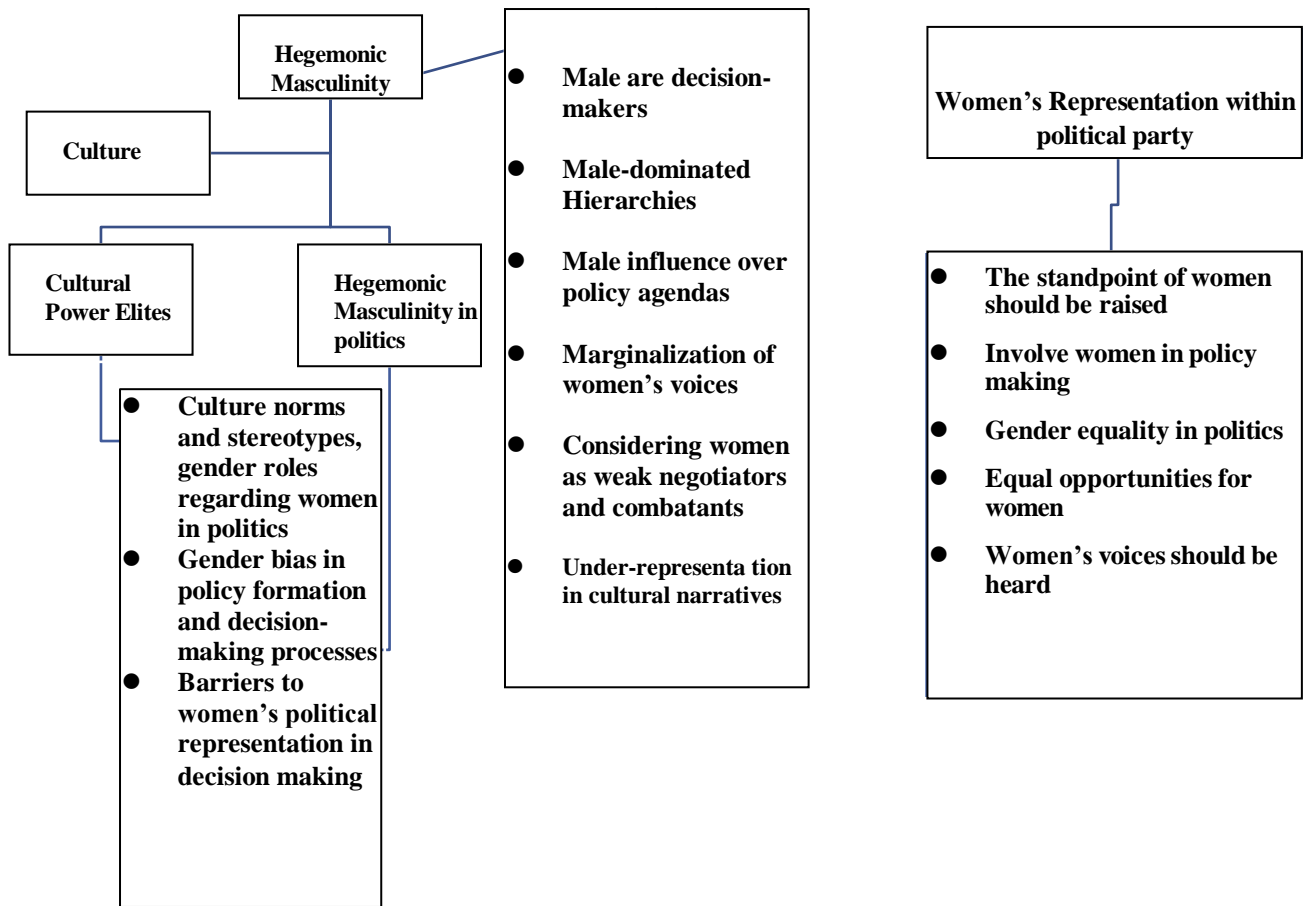
Hegemonic & Cultural Masculinity within Politics

Hegemonic masculinity, defines as the dominant, socially accepted form of masculinity in a society. Cultural Hegemonic within Politics refers to a dominant and culturally accepted set of masculine norms, behaviors, and values that shape and influence the political landscape. The dominance of a ruling class over society through a combination political, and cultural leadership. (Gramsci, 1935; Connell, 2005; Messerschmidt, 2000).

Women Representation within politics

Beyond simply having more women in political office (Descriptive Representation), Childs argues that substantive representation goes further. It involves ensuring that these women representatives actively engage with women's issues, advocate for policies that address gender inequality, and work to empower and uplift women in decision making process in politics. (Childs, 2008; Caul, 2013; Thomas, 2004; Murray, 2010).

Conceptual/Theoretical Framework

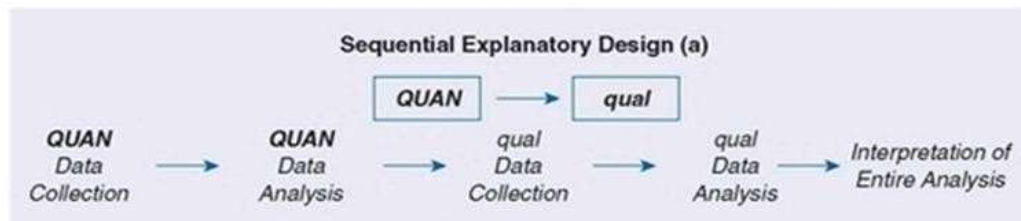


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Research Methodology

Research methodology is a systematic process of steps used to gather and analyze data, aiming to enhance our understanding of a particular topic or issue (Creswell, 2014). This study used a mixed-methods approach with an explanatory sequential design to explore the impact of hegemonic masculinity on women's political representation in political parties in Pakistan. The research commenced with the collection of quantitative data, which was followed by a qualitative phase aimed at providing deeper insights into the initial findings.

SOURCE: Adapted from Creswell et al. (2003).



Explanatory Sequential Design (Two-Phase Design)

Quantitative Phase

In the quantitative phase, a survey was conducted with female political members from Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) to examine women's descriptive representation and their perceived influence in decision-making processes. A structured questionnaire employing Likert scales was used to measure variables such as hegemonic masculinity and male dominance in decision-making. The survey included 210 respondents, with equal numbers selected from both parties to allow for balanced comparison. The sample size was determined in accordance with Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sampling table, which provides established guidelines for selecting an adequate sample relative to a given population. This ensured that the data collected were both reliable and representative. The quantitative phase involved statistical analysis to interpret the data, revealing trends in women's representation in political decision-making roles. The analysis showed a correlation between hegemonic masculinity and women's representation, suggesting that the presence of hegemonic masculinity limits women's roles in key decision-making positions.

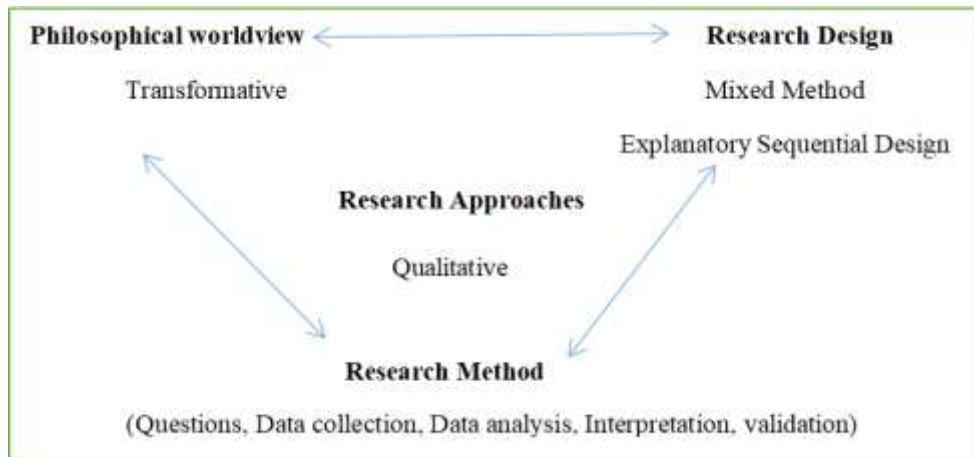
Qualitative Phase

In the qualitative phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 female party workers, comprising seven from Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and eight from Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N). The purpose of these interviews was to gain deeper insights into participants' personal experiences of hegemonic masculinity and the challenges they encountered within male-dominated political environments. Purposive sampling was employed to ensure that participants possessed relevant experiences and perspectives. All interviews were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis, which generated key themes concerning substantive representation, barriers to women's political participation, and the persistence of gendered power dynamics within party structures. However, the numerical trends of this study only provided a broad overview and could not capture the subtle experiences of the women involved. This is where the qualitative phase played an important role. Through in-depth interviews, I was able to explore the subjective and lived experiences of women party workers. The qualitative data revealed the personal stories behind the statistics, offering insights into how hegemonic masculinity manifested in everyday interactions and decision-making processes within the parties.

Data Consolidation

As an external researcher, I initially used a quantitative research design to identify trends in women's representation in decision-making roles within political parties, providing a statistical overview. Recognizing the limitations of this approach, I then adopted a qualitative design to explore the personal experiences of women in these roles. This combination enriched my analysis by capturing both statistical trends and the lived experiences of women in political landscapes. Throughout, I was aware of my position and its influence on data interpretation and my interactions with participants. (Creswell,2014). The two data sets were integrated to provide a comprehensive understanding of the influence of hegemonic masculinity on women's political representation. The quantitative results revealed broad patterns, while the qualitative findings offered deeper understandings into the lived experiences of female political workers. Integrating both types of data provided a strong basis for

analyzing the significant challenges women face in securing meaningful representation in decision-making.



Ethical Consideration

In research, prioritizing ethical considerations is essential. The safety and wellbeing of participants should always be the primary concern, ensuring their cultural, physical, and social security. To protect the data provided by participants, stringent confidentiality measures were applied throughout the research process. Maintaining the integrity of the study was critical, and ethical standards were upheld without exception (Creswell, 2014).

Findings of the Study

1. Demographic Distribution of Respondents.

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Female	210	100
Age		
30-35	83	39.5
36-40	53	25.2
41-45	37	17.6
46-50	37	17.6
Marital Status		
Unmarried	83	39.5
Married	127	60.5
Education Status		
Matriculation Level	1	0.5
Intermediate level	1	0.5
Bachelor's	99	47.1
Masters	101	48.1
Others (MS)	8	3.8
Total	210	100%

The table presents demographic information about the respondents, including their age groups, marital statuses, and educational backgrounds. This diversity is essential as it helps us understand how various demographic factors intersect with gender, influencing experiences and representation within political parties.

2. Respondents' concerns about the hegemonic masculinity scale.

Statements (Hegemonic Masculinity)	SA f(%)	A f(%)	D f(%)	SD f(%)	Mean	Sd
Men as the primary decision-makers.	37 (17.6%)	97 (46.2%)	43 (20.5%)	33 (15.7%)	2.65	0.946
Hierarchies in politics dominated by men.	38 (18.1%)	84 (40%)	61 (29.0%)	27 (12.9%)	2.633	0.924
Strong male influence over policy agendas	71 (33.8%)	106 (50.5%)	16 (7.6%)	17 (8.1%)	3.10	0.855

Women's voices being marginalized in political discussions.	57 (27.1%)	82 (39.0%)	36 (17.1%)	35 (16.7%)	2.766	1.02
Women are often seen as weak negotiators and combatants in politics.	55 (26.2%)	84 (41.4%)	29 (13.8%)	39 (18.6%)	2.75	1.04
Noticeable lack of representation of women in cultural narratives about political leadership.	113 (53.8%)	69 (32.9%)	7 (3.3%)	21 (7%)	3.30	0.939

Our findings largely support our initial assertion that hegemonic masculinity continues to influence the political landscape in Pakistan, where decision-making predominantly remains a male domain. What we found particularly illuminating was the striking consensus 84.3% and 86.7% indicating that men dominate both policy agendas and the cultural narratives surrounding leadership. This suggests that the exclusion of women is even more rooted than we had initially believed. These results align with existing literature, including Connell’s (1987) work on hegemonic masculinity and insights from Childs and Krook (2009) on institutional bias, highlighting the persistent obstacles to women’s political empowerment. This study emphasizes the need to examine deep-rooted issues and their impact on political inclusivity.

3. Respondents’ Perspicuity on Decision-Making Authority

Statements (Masculine System)	Centric	SA f (%)	A f (%)	D f (%)	SD f (%)	Mean	Sd
Unequal opportunities for men and women in political representations.		17 (8.1%)	95 (45.2%)	58 (27.6%)	40 (19.0%)	2.42	0.889
Disparity in gender representation within political decision-making bodies .		51 (24.3%)	104 (49.5%)	15 (7.1%)	40 (19.0%)	2.79	1.018
Symbolic masculinity reinforcing traditional male roles.		38 (18.1%)	111 (52.9%)	16 (7.6%)	45 (21.4%)	2.676	1.007
Institutional biases that marginalize feminine perspectives in political processes.		36 (17.1%)	75 (35.7%)	41 (19.5%)	58 (27.6%)	2.42	1.069
Policies that disproportionately affect genders, promoting inequalities.		51 (24.3%)	92 (43.8%)	17 (8.1%)	50 (23.8%)	2.685	1.087
Tendency to prioritize policy areas traditionally associated with masculinity.		63 (30.0%)	87 (41.4%)	10 (4.8%)	50 (23.8%)	2.77	1.12

The table shows clear gender power imbalances in political systems. A substantial majority, 73.7%, agree that men dominate decision-making. Additionally, 71.4% believe that policies focus on traditionally masculine areas. This suggests that institutions still support male authority. These patterns relate to Connell’s idea of hegemonic masculinity and the analysis by Childs and Krook about gendered agendas. However, only 52.8% recognize institutional bias, indicating that some exclusions are more subtle. This connects to Butler’s argument about how gender norms can be invisible and performative. Overall, these findings highlight that inequality is not only due to obvious hierarchies but also through cultural and institutional practices that normalize male dominance in politics.

Qualitative Findings

In this research, we conducted a thematic analysis to investigate the experiences of female political members affiliated with the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). Through open-ended interviews, we discovered that the prevailing culture of hegemonic masculinity and the presence of male-dominated networks significantly limit women's representation and involvement in decision-making processes. This often results in women's contributions being marginalized or treated as mere tokens, rather than being recognized and valued as substantial input in political discussions. This study brings attention to the barriers women encounter in politics and emphasizes the need for stronger measures to enhance their voices and acknowledge their contributions.

4. Demographic Profile of the participants

S.no	Respondent Num	Age	Marital status	No of Children	Education	Political Party	Member of Party
1	Participant 1	32	Unmarried	0	Bachelors	PTI	5 years
2	Participant 2	35	Unmarried	0	Masters	PTI	6 Years
3	Participant 3	34	Unmarried	0	Bachelors	PTI	6 Years
4	Participant 4	41	Married	4	Masters	PTI	10 Year
5	Participant 5	37	Married	3	Masters	PTI	9 Year
6	Participant 6	37	Married	4	Bachelors	PTI	4 Years
7	Participant 7	38	Married	3	Masters	PTI	7 Years
8	Participant 8	37	Married	4	Masters	PML(N)	5 Years
9	Participant 9	32	Unmarried	0	Bachelors	PML(N)	4 Years
10	Participant 10	42	Married	5	Masters	PML(N)	12 Years
11	Participant 11	37	Married	3	Masters	PML(N)	6 Years
12	Participant 12	39	Married	2	Masters	PML(N)	8 Years
13	Participant 13	40	Married	4	Masters	PML(N)	7 Years
14	Participant 14	40	Married	2	Masters	PML(N)	8 Years
15	Participant 15	41	Married	4	Masters	PML(N)	7 Years

The following table summarizes the traits of the 15 female party members who participated in the study, representing two of Pakistan's major political parties: the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N). The participants were aged between 32 and 42 years. Most of them were married, though some were unmarried, with the number of children ranging from none to five. In terms of education, the group included individuals with both Bachelor's and Master's degrees, indicating a well-educated cohort. The majority had been active members of their respective parties for a period of 4 to 12 years. These characteristics are crucial for contextualizing their viewpoints and understanding their roles within the political arena.

Exclusion from Key Decision-Making Roles

Access to decision-making positions was consistently described as one of the most significant barriers faced by female party workers. Respondents emphasized that, despite their commitment and loyalty, they were often excluded from conversations and strategic planning where critical choices were made. One respondent explained that her contributions were repeatedly overlooked. At the same time, male colleagues assumed influential posts: *“No matter how hard I worked or contributed, I was left out of meaningful conversations and strategic planning.”* This reflects Connell's (2005) concept of hegemonic masculinity, which naturalizes male leadership and sidelines women's voices.

Another participant noted the frustration of seeing key responsibilities assigned to men: *“Despite my persistent support and hard work, I was frequently disregarded when crucial choices were being made.”* Such experiences align with Childs and Krook's (2009) argument that women's presence in politics does not necessarily translate into meaningful influence, as institutional practices continue to privilege men.

One participant stated: *“Despite having the qualifications and commitment to work towards our common objectives, I was never prioritized for positions of power.”* This echoes Kanter's (1977) Theory of tokenism, which highlights how women may be symbolically included yet denied substantive authority. Similarly, another participant attributed her exclusion to entrenched party traditions, observing that *“the leadership culture clearly favored men, leading to my exclusion and severely limiting my capacity to effect meaningful change.”* This observation corresponds with Lovenduski's (2005) discussion of gendered political institutions, which sustain cultures resistant to women's advancement.

These findings indicate that women's exclusion from leadership roles is deeply rooted in organizational cultures and upheld by longstanding traditions that favor male authority. While existing literature addresses these structural barriers, the narratives from participants provide further insight into the emotional and psychological effects of exclusion. This includes feelings of frustration, declining confidence, and a reduced sense of belonging.

Struggle for Substantive Representation

Although the number of women in politics has increased, their presence does not necessarily translate into influence, as persistent structural and cultural barriers continue to limit their inclusion. Participants emphasized that representation alone does not guarantee that women's voices are heard or

their perspectives valued, reflecting the gap between descriptive and substantive representation (Childs, 2006).

One participant explained that *“our perspectives are frequently overlooked in decision-making processes,”* reinforcing systemic inequalities in policy outcomes. This experience aligns with Lovenduski's (2005) argument that integrating women's perspectives is crucial for developing inclusive and comprehensive policies.

Another participant emphasized that *“cultural resistance to women in leadership roles continues to create challenges in attaining meaningful representation,”* echoing Lawless & Fox (2010) observation that gender stereotypes and institutional barriers hinder women's advancement in politics.

Other participants emphasized how women's contributions are diminished. One noted that *“our accomplishments are often downplayed, and our leadership abilities questioned,”* underscoring how entrenched norms shape the reception of women in power. Another explained that *“limited access to funding, mentor ship, and leadership development programs makes it challenging for women to sustain their political careers and have a substantial impact,”* reflecting the institutional gaps identified by in studies on women's empowerment (Krook & O'Brien, 2012).

Similarly, another participant described hegemonic masculinity as a major obstacle: *“Even with more women entering politics, entrenched norms and practices often sideline our contributions and reinforce male dominance.”* This observation resonates with Connell's (2005) concept of hegemonic masculinity, which illustrates how male-dominated structures reproduce themselves by excluding women from meaningful decision-making spaces.

Collectively, these accounts show that progress in descriptive representation has not eliminated the cultural and institutional barriers to substantive influence. The literature explains how gender norms, structural inequalities, and a lack of institutional support constrain women's political impact. Still, the participants' voices highlight the everyday frustrations and systemic exclusions that make substantive representation remain an elusive goal for women in their political parties.

Discussion

This study has demonstrated that although the number of women participating in politics is increasing, their influence remains limited by structural and cultural barriers. Respondents shared that leadership within political parties is still shaped by hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005), which positions men as the legitimate decision-makers and marginalizes women's contributions. Gramsci's (1971) concept of cultural hegemony helps to explain how these patterns become ingrained in party culture, making women's exclusion seem routine rather than something to be contested.

While gender quotas have paved the way for increased female representation, the findings suggest that merely having women present does not guarantee that they have a voice. Many participants described their roles as largely symbolic, echoing Celis and Lovenduski's (2018) critique of tokenism, where inclusion creates an illusion of equality without redistributing real power. Childs (2006) also stresses that having descriptive representation is not sufficient if women lack the empowerment needed to influence policy agendas. In this study, women reported being overlooked in strategic discussions and decision-making, highlighting the ongoing institutional norms that continue to prioritize male voices.

These experiences also revealed the personal costs of exclusion. Women expressed feelings of frustration, demoralization, and a lack of confidence when their efforts were dismissed. Such insights emphasize that the struggle for representation is not only an institutional issue but also an emotional one, impacting women's sense of belonging in politics. Without institutional reforms focused on mentor ship, resource allocation, and leadership development, women will remain confined to symbolic roles with limited ability to effect change.

Therefore, the results suggest that achieving gender equality in politics cannot rely solely on quotas or numerical representation. Meaningful change demands dismantling entrenched cultural norms, rethinking leadership structures, and creating inclusive environments where women's perspectives are valued. As Dahlerup (2006) asserts, systemic reform must work in tandem with cultural change to ensure genuine participation. Until women are recognized not just as members, but as decision-makers, substantive representation will remain an aspiration rather than a lived reality.

Conclusion

This study highlights the significant obstacles women face in securing meaningful representation within Pakistan's political decision-making processes. The dominant culture of hegemonic masculinity, coupled

with deeply rooted patriarchal systems, continues to hinder their full representation, often relegating their contributions to symbolic gestures rather than recognizing them as substantive input in political discussions (Krook & Mackay, 2011). Despite their resilience, women in political parties like PML-N and PTI are constrained by male-dominated networks and traditional gender roles (Kainaat et al., 2024).

Notably, the study identifies a significant and negative correlation between hegemonic masculinity and women's active participation in politics, which not only reinforces male dominance in political spheres but also constricts women's authority and decision-making capabilities. Additionally, it also highlights how political environments and party cultures that prioritize masculine norms often sideline women's issues, further exacerbating their marginalization. The study calls for comprehensive efforts to dismantle these systemic barriers, advocating for reforms that would foster a more equitable political landscape where women's voices and contributions are genuinely acknowledged, valued, and integrated into the political narratives.

Limitations of the study

1-Narrow Focus on Two Political Parties: The study's concentration on PTI and PML-N restricts the generalization of its findings to the broader Pakistani political landscape.

2-Contextual Specificity: The study focuses on Pakistan's unique political context, which may limit the applicability of its findings to other countries with different gender dynamics. Comparative studies in various political environments are needed to evaluate the global relevance of these findings for advancing gender political equity.

Recommendations

Creating a fairer political system requires addressing the rules and attitudes that hinder women's substantive representation. This can be accomplished by reforming candidate selection processes to mandate a specific number of women candidates, ensuring that women have a meaningful voice in key party decisions, and promoting democratic practices within political parties. Furthermore, implementing stronger transparency and accountability measures is essential to prevent discrimination and tokenism, ensuring that all individuals are treated fairly.

Cultural transformation is essential, as it involves challenging traditional notions of masculinity and normalizing the presence of women in decision-making roles. Ultimately, it is crucial to integrate women's perspectives into party agendas by maintaining ongoing dialogue with advocacy groups. Achieving gender equality in politics requires both institutional reforms and cultural changes to ensure that women's voices can genuinely influence decisions.

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