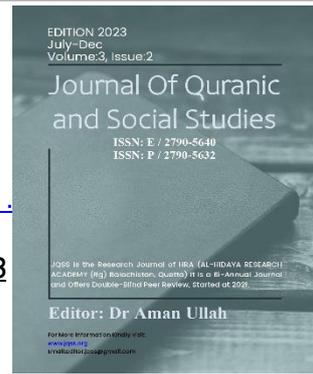


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Women's Political Empowerment in Balochistan: A Focus on Political Literacy Among Policymakers

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Abstract

Political Empowerment of women in Balochistan is debatable in sense of how policy and the process of policymaking defined with reference to the knowledge, attitude and practices of policymakers. In 2001 the Devolution plan in Pakistan gave 33% representation for women in the local government system nationwide. The women political empowerment (WPE) is mostly taken in institutional context in the available literature; the significance of this research is to highlight the prevalence level of political literacy as a source to assess the policy makers to see the actual progress of the women political empowerment. In Balochistan the legislated empowerment is not succeeded because the policy makers are known about the institutional context and not known about the societal context of WPE. KAP (Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice) framework is used to examine the political literacy of policy makers in context to WPE. Purposive sampling is being used in this respect. The study would be useful to enable government to make effective policymaking to meet the contemporary challenges of women political empowerment in and around Balochistan.

Keywords: Policymaker, Political Literacy, Women Political Empowerment, Institutional Context, Challenges of Women

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Introduction:

“Through regional and international conferences, we have achieved far-reaching agreements on gender equality. The challenge now is holding stakeholders — governments, UN agencies, the private sector, and civil society — accountable for implementation.”¹

Women's political empowerment (WPE) in Pakistan-Balochistan is located in national policies of 2001. The local government system ensures the protection of people's interest and their rights by providing a supporting environment, participation, free and fair administrative responsibilities and makes them accountable to the elected heads of the district. Devolution Plan allocated 33% seats for women in local government in Pakistan-Balochistan.

The political empowerment grants voice at all level of governance as it ensures the decision making power determined by the democratic process. In Balochistan it can clearly observed with the decisions of descended 21 years to 18 years of voting age and 33% women representation in local bodies. Most of the time the strategies of WPE emphasized by promulgating laws; women in Balochistan are lacking in education and economic opportunities that resulted the inefficient legislation to get ideal policy in contact to political literacy.

Political literacy in this research is defining factor of informed political policymaking which contains knowledge (formal and informal), attitude (commitment, possibility and importance) and practice (participation, expertise and commitment) dynamics of political policymaking. Political literacy is the main source to determine the actual progress of the political policy. The enabling conditions are required at all level of governance to exceed political literacy. It may help to capacitate the policy makers with reference to WPE. If the participant as policymaker politically literate, they may enable the effective policies for WPE. The political literacy of policymaking contains;

1. Substantive capacities: to understand how WPE integrate in national plans by focusing the potential of policies for achieving the goal.
2. Institutional capacities: it is an ability to initiate the supporting process and it is a tool to focus engendered policies.
3. Process-related capacities: is to understand the process of identification, designing, and implementation to all related policies.

This paper presents the informed political policymaking as indicating factor of actual women's political empowerment in Balochistan. The research covers the discussion on the prevalence level of political literacy among policymakers as their capacity of informed political policymaking.

Literature review:

Policy is a method of action opted by individual, group, institution or government to guide or determine present and future decisions in prevailing conditions. Policy in the capacity of government is as “basic principles by which a government is guided and declared objectives which government seeks to achieve and preserve in the interest of national community”². It is a course of action or decision making framework to attain desired effect of change. The process of policymaking follows: identification of problem,

setting the agenda, formulation of policy, process of adoption, implementing the policy and monitoring of the policy. In today's world international system is merged in a complexed networking of policy making, governmental and non-governmental actors which is based on interaction, exchanging information and other resources.³ Political policymaking comprised of political ideology, interests, mass media and the public opinion that government purposes to meet the contemporary challenges. Modern political policymaking is a combination of formal politico-institutional arrangements. Further it is stated that, "Policies are formulated to an increasing degree in informal political infrastructures outside conventional channels such as legislative, executive and administrative organizations".⁴

Women in political policymaking are found underrepresented particularly in decision making positions of governing structure throughout the world. Women representation in national parliaments is only 23.3% all over the world.⁵ There are many issues of women's underrepresentation in political domain such as; stereotypes, absence in political parties, lack of opportunities, lack of financial resources, insufficient social support, gender disparities, threat and violence.^{6.7.8}

The women's representation (as appointive or elective) in decision making position on equal basis at all levels of governing structure is termed as women's actual political empowerment.^{9.10} Women's presence in decision making structures signifies the association of women in political spheres. Equal participation at all levels of governing system with no discriminations leads to sustainable decision-making structure^{11.12}.

The situation of WVPE in Balochistan is found miserable when we look back in the history. There was no women representation particularly in local legislative bodies. During the period of 1991-1993 only 2% women representation which further increased to 10% only. In Balochistan women representation found highest if we compared it to other provinces in 1998; Balochistan 25.8%, NWFP 2.9%, Punjab 12.7%, Sindh 23% respectively.^{13.14} Endorsement of 33% representation of women in local government system under Devolution plan (2001) considered as milestone in the history of WVPE.

The existing literature on Balochistan in context to WVPE is found nominal. Few of the research papers that highlighted the policy of WVPE are; "devolution plan and its impact on women lives and development of Balochistan".^{15.16}, "Women Representation in Local Government in Pakistan: Impact Analysis and Future Policy Implications"¹⁷, "Women's Empowerment in Challenging Environments: A Case Study from Balochistan"¹⁸, "Economic empowerment of women in the rural areas of Balochistan: World System analysis at Micro level in Anthropological perspective"¹⁹. and "Problems and Challenges Faced by the Rural Women: A Case Study of Balochistan" were found.²⁰

Available literature related to devolution plan with reference to WVPE in Balochistan demonstrates different aspects such as; "Women Representation in Pakistani Politics, the Quota Systems under the Musharraf Regime"²¹, "the political concerns of women with reference to political education, women participation in political parties, constituencies, policy formulation and decision making structures, as representatives"²².

Jabeen & Iqbal (2010) described the political policies of Pakistan in context to the changing realities of international agenda with reference to WVPE 23. By focusing Balochistan the researches focused the women councilors and their issues. Women's political empowerment as initiative to bring gender equality in Balochistan marginalized by the norms and practices of socio cultural system.24. The devolution plan brings new ways to policy executive to persuade common people by involving them in decision making at grass root level.25.26.

The representation of 33% of women in local government system of Balochistan seems inadequate to embrace the ideal culminated policy is because of negative societal support. Women hold 27.7% seats against 33% allocated seats of women in 2001.27. The increase number of women in political representation enlarged the women's status in political developments.28. In this context the women councilors challenged by following issues; women as power minority lacking financial resources for development projects, lack of awareness, knowledge and finances to attend the council meetings, they do not have transport facilities, their reproductive responsibilities and illiteracy leads to lack of confidence and skills, stereotype social behaviors make them to face discouraging attitude from their family, community, nazims, naib nazims and even from male councilors.29. These prevailing issues lead to lack in political motivation at provincial level for further development.30.

Political policy making literacy:

Political policymaking literacy referred to societal and institutional context that how policy makers balancing the two in their political policies. Balancing the societal and institutional context in policies is actually political policymaking literacy. It can also be said that the consciousness to balancing these factors is political policymaking literacy. "Policy is mostly about the design and implementation of a particular intervention. Politics is about how the decision was made. Policy is mostly determined in government, where the politics is focused by ministers, the cabinet, and the party leadership. In the legislature, there is less policy and more politics. For good governance initiatives include ones for opening up the policy making process, and others for building evaluation into policy implementation".31.

In this research political policymaking literacy consist of knowledge, attitude and practice of policymakers.

Methodology:

The methodology of this research is followed as:

1. Analytical; secondary data is used considering different books, reports, research articles
2. Empirical; structured questionnaire was developed to generate primary data.

The structured questionnaire was formulated to assess the knowledge, attitude and practice of policymakers in context to WVPE in Pakistan-Balochistan. Bureaucracy and NGOs are found main actors related to 33% endorsement of women in local bodies

therefore 26 policymakers from these two domains were identified through purposive sampling.

Observations:

The results were substantiated through personal observation.

Data Analysis:

The data tabulated by dilating frequency distribution to analyze.

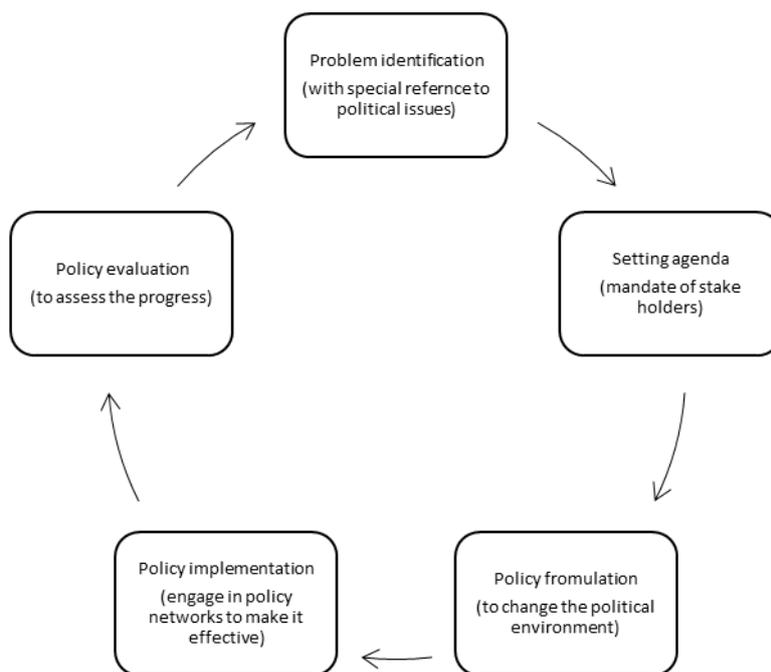
Finding and Analysis:

The main objective to formulate the paper was to comprehend the problem statement that; “The policy makers are conscious to institutional context and not conscious to the societal context of women’s political empowerment hence legislated empowerment is not likely to succeed in Balochistan”. To assess the actual political empowerment of women in Balochistan the political literacy of policymaker is found an important indicator in this research. The KAP analysis was adopted in this research to assess the knowledge, attitude and practice of policymakers with reference to political policymaking of WVPE. It helps to find the capacity of informed political policymaking of policy makers which further help them to be more inclusive about WVPE particularly in Balochistan. The finding of this research describes under three headings.

Knowledge dynamics of political policymaking

Knowledge is the ability to comprehend, analyze and learn. It can be congregated through experience, education or research. The role of knowledge is central in the process of policy referred to policy analysis and political science. The evidence based policy making can improve the quality of policy choices by applying knowledge. Weiss claimed that “knowledge can inform policy making by challenging the underlying assumptions and analytical concepts that structure policy choices”.³² She further added through her enlightenment model that in policy process how knowledge or information can change the policymaker’s basic understanding of the issue at stake. The complex social systems enhance the need of evidence based policy making for effective governance and it is argued by Sanderson that, “the ‘reflexive social learning’ informed by policy and program evaluation constitutes an increasingly important basis for ‘interactive governance’³³”. Policy knowledge basically provided the foundation, concepts and information to the decision maker to make an effective policy.³⁴ Political policy making knowledge is valuation of policy maker to their particular field. According to Daviter, “The knowledge is bound by the organizational structure of policymaking and used in the policy process to expand policy authority and exercise control”³⁵. Education, trainings and field experiences are some other sources to gain the political knowledge.

Fig 1.1: *political policymaking process*



Source: self-extract

Above mentioned facts proved that the knowledge had a strong connection to policymaking. The questions of this section were formulated to assess the knowledge of policymaker related to political policymaking about WPE. To measure the political policymaking knowledge of policymakers following questions were asked that is shown in table 1.1 with results. (Questions labeled with K to indicate knowledge)

Table 1.1: *Prevalence level of political knowledge*

Understanding of the level of concepts of women political empowerment in policy makers		YES %	NO%
K1	Political policymaking was taught to you in masters class?	35	60
K2	Have you attended trainings regarding political policymaking?	35	65
K3	Do you think that social inhibitions are stronger against women as compared to political policies for women political empowerment?	65	30
K4	Pakistan had: Basic Democracy Ordinance 1959 and Local government Ordinance 1979?	85	15

K5	Does Pakistan have successful Social Action Programs regarding women empowerment in 1990's?	30	65
K6	Do you know Pakistan ranked 147/188 in Gender Development Index 2015?	65	35
K7	Do you know the most successful devolution plan in South Asia or Africa?	45	50

The result shows the 60% policymakers had no educational background and 65% have never been a part of any training session in policymaking. Other questions of this segment based on the prevalence of relevant policies and situation in context to WVPE within and around Pakistan-Balochistan. Overall political knowledge of policymakers has measured 51% which assumed insignificant for establishing an effective political policy. The process of political policymaking concedes the mandate of stakeholder to bring change in political environment.

Attitudes dynamics of informed political policymaking

Attitude or behavior is a settled way of thinking a matter of belief towards fact. When an individual mentally involves to a phenomenon is his/her attitude. A policy maker impacts his/her attitude to a changing degree through his/her mental involvement to the fact. This attitude linked with the prevailing knowledge of any individual to the matter which further results into his/her practices. So the attitude of policymakers is directly linked with the informed political policymaking process. To measure the political attitude of policymakers with reference to WVPE the following questions were asked that is shown in table 1.2 with results. (Question are labeled with A to indicate attitude)

Table 1.2: Prevalence level Political attitudes

The political attitude		YES	NO
		%	%
A1	Do you think that women's political empowerment is possible?	90	10
A2	Do you feel committed to women's political empowerment?	90	10
A3	Do you take interest in discussions or debates about women's political empowerment?	85	15
A4	Do you give importance to women's political empowerment related trainings and workshops?	80	20

The highest results have been measured in this section of political policymaking literacy. The overall political attitude is found 86% among policy makers. This shows the pro-active attitude of policymakers towards the goal of WVPE. Positive attitude of policymakers makes them to seek more knowledge and ensure them to apply this

knowledge to their political policymaking practices. The results measured at provincial level that indicates the provincial power if the policymaking process initiated from provincial to national level will make the difference.

Practices dynamics of informed political policymaking

Practice is the application of knowledge, ideas and beliefs into materialized form. It is a set of action that has been taken in light of available or learnt knowledge, experiences and research. The practice is a result of knowledge and conviction of attitude in context to the relevant field. In this section of the research the political practice of policy makers was measured in content to all those activities which promote WVPE practices. The activities related to WVPE practices are; providing education, health and safety to women, ensuring women participation in legislative bodies, strengthen women's role as political leader, effective inclusion of women in electoral process and practicing political literacy. It is assumed that the more involvement of policymakers in policymaking practices (participation in workshops, trainings, and expertise over gender issues) resulted more WVPE practice.

The frequency of policymaking practice of policymakers reflects to their decision making process. The practices of WVPE are important to bring actual empowerment of women in politics.

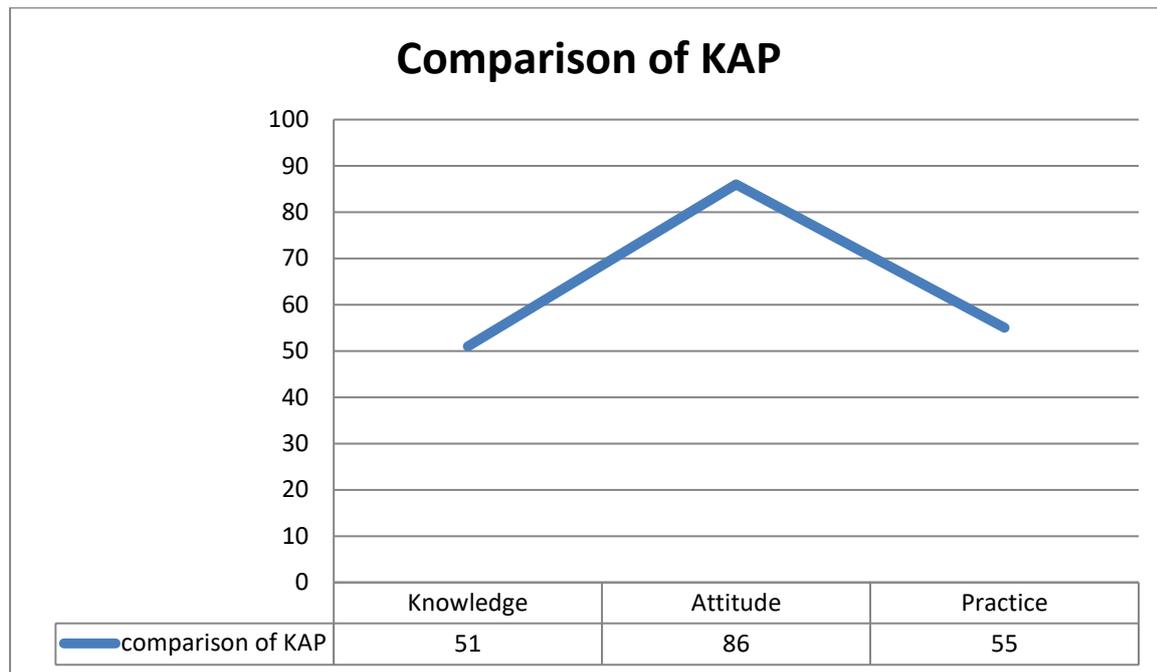
To measure the political practices of policymakers following questions were asked that are shown in table 1.3. (Questions labelled with P to indicate practice)

Table1.3 *Prevalence level of political practices*

	The practices	YES%	NO %
P1	Have you ever joined women's political empowerment related training or workshop?	45	55
P2	Do you have expertise to train others to deal with women's political empowerment related challenges?	35	65
P3	Do you communicate your concern regarding women's political empowerment to your colleagues?	90	10
P4	Have you ever been part of political campaign of women's political empowerment?	50	50

The overall result of political practice measured 55% which is not found ideal to culminate the policy ofWVPE.

Figure: 1.3 Comparison of KAP



Conclusion:

The results of KAP analysis figure out 65% overall political literacy among policymaker to formulate WPE in Pakistan-Balochistan with 51% political policymaking knowledge, 86% attitude and 55% practice respectively. The result indicates the low ebb regarding the knowledge and practices of the policymakers that signifies the inordinate commitment within personal behavior of the policymakers. The WPE ideally established under various policies and enactments but the effectiveness of this empowerment is not ideally culminated. The political literacy as informed political policymaking is important to make policymakers more conscious about indigenizing the international frameworks to be suited to the ground situation to produce the desired outcome.

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