



RESEARCH PAPER**Women Empowerment in KPK: A Case Study of District Buner**

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ABSTRACT

Women empowerment is crucial for the progress of a society and a state. In this paper the district Buner's women vulnerable position is addressed in order to produce literature which can boost awareness in the society so that women can be emancipated. Since the inception, on the pretexts of religion and culture the women have been sieged in their homes which is against the very rights of human. In this regard, it is opted to utilize both the primary and secondary data under qualitative and quantitative methodologies in order to explain it effectively. As a results, the people have been using both religion and culture to regulate women resource as per their wishes. Such issue can be addressed on the genuine efforts of the government and the civil society at all fronts by modernizing the views of the people regarding women's rights.

KEYWORDS Customs, Gender Discrimination, Religion, Women Empowerment

Introduction

The status of women in KPK (Khyber Pakhtoon Khawa) is fragile especially in Buner district in terms of social, political, and economic. For instance, women are unable to get their fundamental rights such as, education, freedom of movement, independent decisions, right to marriage, and right to property and so on. Owing to the pretexts of religion and culture, women's basic rights have been violating by the society. As USAID's survey shows that women in the district cannot take their own decision independently. It means that almost all decisions of a woman are taken by their men. Even their life partner decision is also taken by their family members. In contrary, Islam has nothing to do with such kind of suppression while owing to such pretexts they justify their wrong doings for their own interests. Besides, culture is also being used in order to get their interests. Thus women population keeps in a state of ignorance and backwardness.

Besides, right to vote and right to contest election are the core political rights. In the district Buner women have been facing immense issues in casting their vote whereas the idea of contesting election is out of question in the society. Because, people are not ready to allow their women to caste vote. How can they agree to allow women to context election? It means that women of the district are unable to exercise their political rights in spite of the constitutional safeguard. It shows that culture is above the constitution. The people refrain women on the pretexts of religion and culture while here religion has nothing to do with such stance to refrain women from their political right while mere culture influences the people.

Moreover, in terms of economic rights, women of the district, are in a pathetic position. Because they all are in the position like a home prisoners except some of the

families. In this circumstances, they do not have any education, skills, and even they do not know what is going on in the globe. How can they be economically independence? Owing to their economic vulnerability they are unable to take any decision on their own behalf. Henceforth, it needs of the hour to address the women vulnerability in the district.

In addition to it, the most dangerous thing is that the victim class of the society is not ready to accept that their basic rights have constantly been violating because the clerics have inculcated the concept of inferiority complex successfully. There is no check of the government on the clerics and they have constantly been interpreting the religious rituals on their own prisms. Henceforth, such system is dangerous for both state and families because Buner has more women population than men. All these women are not only burden on the state but also on their own families. For the progressive state and society, it is significance to empower the women population.

Literature Review

Additionally, women have been striving for their equal rights and due shares. Owing to such struggle, improvement comes as a whole population in Punjab province. However, some difficulties are still exist. Moreover, the writer says that laws are not mere enough in order to empower the effected segment of a society but education, organizations of women, and laws implementations are also crucial to address the evils in a society against fragile class (Zamurad Awan, 2022).

Besides, religion has also been misinterpreted by the society and some lacunas prevail in the laws for women protection. Owing to such misinterpretation and laws lacunas keep women in a fragile state. They cannot contribute for the well-being of a society due to above hurdles (Rashid Patel, 2010). Additionally, Pakistan is a theocratic state while some traditions and customs have been exercising which are not mere suppressed women but also against the basic principles of Islam (UN, 2011).

Moreover, Pakistan culture and religion create hurdles to women population. In spite of theocratic state, religious rights of women have been denied. Because religion has been interpreting by the local cleric under their own prism. Such extreme interpretation effects the women status in Pakistan. It is not mere misinterpretation of religion which effects the fragile population in the country while some traditions and costumes are also affecting the women population in the country because people interpret Islam according to their traditions and costumes (Ibrahim, 2014).

Women, in spite of being fragile, suppressed, and ignorant, they have been blaming for every mistakes. Even though men are responsible for any wrong doings, yet women are being accused. Such kind of torture and misbehaviour makes them further suppressed and fragile (Ali, 2008). Additionally, many laws have been passed in order to protect women fundamental rights and give them equal opportunities which men enjoy. Unfortunately, these laws and pledges remain mere a claim of government not more than that. These deliberate ignorance of the government encourages the violence against the effected class in the society. Henceforth, such unequal evil is exist in the Pakistani's society so far (Bhattacharya) (Ahmed et. Al 2015).

Having been closely examined, the writer reached to a conclusion that women basic rights have constantly been violating on the pretexts of religion. Besides, he mentions that even people of Pakistan's society knowingly and unknowingly are crossing the boundaries which Islam defines in terms of women. Either ignorance or self-interest is a robust force behind such kind of brutality (Khan). Moreover, owing to the

fear and drastic punishments the effected class is unable to raise their voices. When they go against the already defined customs and traditions they will face the music even such defined customs violate their fundamental rights. Henceforth all these lacunas are crucial to be addressed in a practical ways (Bari, 2011).

Material and Methods

In this research, liberal feminism theory has been used in order to examine the Buner's gender equality. Liberal feminism theory was, firstly, presented by Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1799) while later it was further upheld by Betty Friedan's book "the Feminine Mystique" in 1966. The theory focuses on the equal status of women as men have in a society. It means that both men and women should treat, educate, and provide opportunities equally regardless of any discriminations. In the case of Buner women population have kept suppressed and fragile in terms of equal rights to men. Henceforth, the given theory is pertinent in the case of Buner's women empowerment.

In this research both qualitative and quantitative methodologies have been used to understand the women status in the Buner district. Moreover, both primary and secondary sources have been consulted in order to comprehend the acumen of the phenomena in terms of gender discrimination. In the primary sources mere a question puts before the masses about women political rights while the rest of the factors have investigated through different interview. In addition to it, Cluster sampling and unstructured interviews have been taken in the field. Factitious names have been given to the interviewers or indirectly indicated in the research because of the consequences of their views. Additionally, descriptive and diagnostic analysis have been used to address what and why questions in the district. Thus we can comprehend the hurdles and obstacles to the women empowerment in the district.

Limitations and future research areas

In this research, owing to the limited time and resources I did not include women interviews because of the social and religious restrictions. However, in the upcoming research a researcher can include women interview as well. Moreover, questionnaire questions can also be enhanced I have asked question in terms of political rights the rest of the factors such as economic, social, and so on can also be investigated from the primary sources. In addition to it interview number can also be enhanced in order to get new acumen.

The upcoming researchers can also work in-depth in social factors such as women marriage rights, women health hurdles, women family planning approach and so on. Besides, a researcher can investigate that why women are unable to contest elections what are the main hurdles which keep them inside the four walls. Moreover, a researcher can also investigate that how a woman has been treated by her family in terms of food and upbringing as compare to man. In sum, many research areas are available in the province in terms of women vulnerability.

In addition to it, the forthcoming researchers can also work that how the ignorant women can be made independent economically. It means that most of the women population are uneducated which steps would be beneficial to be taken by the government and families to provide skills to such ignorant women in order to make them economically independent. Besides, they can use these skills in a proper platform where full security be provided to them. How all these thing will be done in order to make sure the women empowerment in all fronts?

Results and Discussion

Economic status of women in the District Buner women are extremely vulnerable in this regard. Majority of the female population of the district is dependent upon their men owing to which they are unable to take independent decisions at any sphere of life including their life partner decisions. Besides, such vulnerability is deliberately created by their men on the pretexts of Islam and they do not want to send their women for education. Owing to the women ignorance, they are unable to get jobs. The clerics have constantly been organizing different events in order to keep such violation by justifying it through religion. In contrary, religion has nothing to do with such kind of deprivation of women.

Besides, the clerics have the interest to attract women towards Madrasahs' education rather than school education because they consider that government education system is working on the behalf of foreign agendas. Such argument is also in the interest of common people because they are not supposed to pay fee for madrasahs' education while in government system they are supposed to pay.

Moreover, on the pretext of religion and culture men have imposed strict restrictions on women in order to keep them inside the four walls of house owing to which women are unable to get any skills in order to start work for their economic dependency. On the top of it, when women need any item to get from bazars they are supposed to urge to their men to get it after so many applications.

Interview with Umar he says that women must be inside the four walls of their homes because Islam and Pashtoonwali restrict them from outing. Further he added that if a woman wants such outing she must be controlled by their men. Those who are unable to control their women they have no position in our society they are cowards. Umar further added that women have nothing to do with any salary and money because all expenses are fulfilled by their men.

Social status of women in Buner the district comprises on 52% of women population but the large chunk of women are ignorant. As per the statistic at least 7% of women can mere read and write the rest of them are ignorant. Owing to such illiteracy, they are unable to identify their self-actualization and their basic rights. On the top of it religious clerics have constantly been inculcating the sense of inferiority in their mind. Astonishingly, due to the above efforts, the effected class itself accedes that we are inferior. Besides, they are not mere considering themselves inferior but also denying their due shares in their parents' property.

Properties of women is obviously defined in Islam, meanwhile people are claiming that we follow Islam while on the other hand they are not ready to give share to their women. When a question raises about this double stander, they argue that our women do not want to take properties from us willingly. Being a part of the society, I personally do not see anyone who gives their women shares in their properties except few of them who filled petition against their brother after their parent demise. Thus the dominant class uses religion and culture for their own interests.

Interview with Sameer he is a resident of Buner, he says that women has the right of property in Islam but if a woman willingly agree to leave their property to their parents then it is okay. Moreover, Sameer added that Islamic education is a good for a woman but government education is doubtful. Being a Muslim we do not accede such types of education. Our culture and religion reject it.

Political status of women in Buner moreover, political status is also fragile because most of the citizen are not agree to permit their women to take part in election process. In some urban villages, however, people permit their women in order to cast vote in election while most of the areas' masses are strictly against the women political participation owing to religion and culture. They believe that Islam is against democracy such narrative has been upholding the traditional clerics that democracy is against the Islamic system. Besides, culturally they do not like to send their women for poling.

In spite of the above motives they breach their own rule when it comes to Benazir Income Support Program (BISP). Here for their own interest they all agree to happily send their women to get their money while in the election process they obey the Islamic provisions while when it comes to their personal interest they are they have nothing to do with Islam. Here again the double stander comes out owing to their contradictory approach to Islamic provisions. A question asks from the common masses should women be allowed to cast vote independently. Below is their response.

Table 1
Women and Vote

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	To a great extent	140	43.8	43.8
	To some extent	55	17.2	60.9
	To a limited extent	31	9.7	70.6
	Not at all	94	29.4	100.0
	Total	320	100.0	100.0

In the above table a large chunk of population (29.4%) is not ready to permit their women in order to exercise their political right. Additionally, mere 43.8% masses agree to a great extent while 17.2% to some extent, and 9.7% to a limited extent are in favour of women rights. In a nutshell, the women political rights have been violating in the district by the dominant class. Such mind is not only against Islam but also against the constitution of Pakistan. Henceforth, such evil needs to be eliminated.

Critical analysis the women status in Buner under theoretical framework

Betty Friedan theory of liberal feminism core theme is to respect all human being equally regardless of any gender discrimination in all fronts. Here in the case of Buner they have constantly been using religion and culture for their own interest. They make their homes mini jails for their women and hotels for their men except few of them. They are using religion and culture to save their properties, money and keeping the vulnerable class (women) further suppressed and fragile. Henceforth they are double stander.

Taking the BISP's money through their women is Islamic while women casting vote is un-Islamic. Taking aid from the government by sending their women is Islamic whereas sending their women for casting vote is un-Islamic. They are following Islam and culture strictly while in terms of women rights of property they ignore Islam and taking advantage from culture (Pashtoon Wali) in order to deprive women from their properties. Is it not double stander? Of course, it is double stander of the masses who try to find out their interests by using Islam and culture.

Besides, they are against to send their women to government education system because it is un-Islamic. Meanwhile, they are sending their men to get such un-Islamic

education. Is it a justification to keep women ignorant from their basic rights? Owing to the clerics' efforts women are satisfied in their fragile position. If anyone wants to raise voice for women basic right of education they itself are refusing such right because they deem it is an un-Islamic. However, some exceptionalities prevail.

Interview with Hameesh he says that government education is western oriented, we being a Muslims need to keep ourselves away from such education. Besides, he adds that democracy is also the system which promotes by the English people who wants to destroy Islam. Henceforth, women should not be sent to cast vote. Further he added that Pakistan needs to adopt the Islamic system and such voting system must be abolished.

Interview with former member of assembly one of the assembly member says that women should not give the right to cast vote because they are dependent on their family and they have no education, no awareness and women cannot take decision because they are directly or indirectly influenced by their family. Henceforth, they should not give the right of vote.

Apart from the above hurdles some minor positive development has occurred in rural areas they are sending their women to both schools and for casting vote while the large chunk of population is, by now, indulge in such traditional concept and they are constantly violating the basic human rights of the effected class in the society. Henceforth liberal feminism theory is perfectly pertinent to describe the Buner's case in terms of women empowerment.

Conclusion

The above discussion shows that women are extremely fragile and ignorance class in the district. They have been kept in the fragile position by pretexts of religion and culture because the dominant class is mere perusing their interests. They have nothing to do with religion and culture but self-interest. Islam does not permit anyone to keep women ignorant and fragile. However, they ignore the Islamic provision and in practice, they are keeping almost all women in a vulnerable status. It means that the majority 52% women population in the district are mere burden on the state and the society owing to their dominant class.

The government's motto "empowerment of women so that they can realize their full potential and participate fully in development". Besides, the KP's government mentions in their policy that "to take affirmative action through advocacy for targeting patriarchal mind-sets, social attitudes and customary practice" (KP policy, 17). In spite of the above policy and motto the KP's government has failed to implement in ground. In practical ground mere elite capture, misogyny, male domination, and clerics' misinterpretation are in full swing. It does not mean that the government is unaware of such kind of issues in the province especially in Buner district while the government is unable to take action against religious class and cultural manners because they exert immense pressure which the government is unable to cope with the situation. Besides, the government members are also the product of such society. Henceforth, they also incline towards such kinds of practices. Thus the dominant class comfortably exploits the situation and keeps their hegemony up which is not only harmful for the state but also for the society and families.

In a nutshell, owing to the religion, culture, and societal taboos women are in the fragile status. It is a need of hour to address the issue on time because majority of human resource is becoming a burden on both state and family. In above all, such

attitudes not only harm the economy but also violate the basic human rights. Henceforth, it needs an in-depth consideration in order to nip the brutal evils in the bud.

Recommendations

- The government must adopt a policy to provide equal and same education to all classes in the society. The three tires education system should be abolished by adopting one tire education for all classes. The government should inculcate the actual rights of all segments of the society regardless of any discrimination. Besides, lessons should be included in the curriculum in order to address the misconceptions and stereotypes in the society.
- Addition to it, the government should make legislation in order to curb the so called clerics' speeches which are the main cause to enhance inferiority complex in the mind of women. Besides, such speeches are not only effecting the women inferiority complex but also enhancing the men superiority complex. Henceforth, it should be curb or check and monitor.
- Moreover, the government should make laws which compel men to provide due share to their women in their properties because women have been emotionally blackmailing in order to men save the property in their own hold. For instance, if women demand for their legal properties that have been defined by laws and Islam. They can get their property by cutting their all kind of relations with their parents' family. Owing to such emotional blackmailing women are unable to get the dues share in properties. Henceforth the government must make laws in order to address the issue.
- Additionally, both state and not state organizations must conduct seminars in different areas and institutions in order to keep updating the ignorant class about the women rights.
- Besides, educated people must play their role in order to liberate the women from the clutches of dominant class. Besides, proper research must be done in order to support the victim class.

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