

Abstract

Political empowerment of women is imperative to the development and progress of a nation. Though, the subject has gained attention across the globe and strategies are being framed to uplift the political status of women, but Pakistan still lags in this regard. Pakistani women are still under-represented in mainstream politics due to lack of women friendly legislations to ensure gender inclusive governance. Gender disparity has been an issue of grave concern in Pakistan and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) is no exception. Since its accession to Pakistan the women of GB had no role in politics until 1991, when they were allotted reserved seats. Since then, numerous initiatives have been taken to increase the political representation and participation of women but are insufficient considering the political marginalization of the women of the region. Women of GB remained under-represented and marginalized over years due to glass ceiling and socio-cultural discrimination against women. This dissertation also argues that the idea of political empowerment of women is gaining popularity on the horizontal front, but societal norms and the glass ceiling prevent real empowerment from occurring vertically. Thus, a significant effort must be made to alter the prevalent attitude. Like other governments, the government of GB promotes women's involvement in the socio-political and economic arenas in order to foster gender parity. Nevertheless, the struggles that most working women experience are often hidden by the achievements of a select few prominent females. This dissertation explores the legal frameworks and policies that have been adopted to uplift the political representation and participation of women in GB from 2008 to-date. It also highlights the challenges and obstacles in the way of political empowerment of women. In addition, it also suggests recommendations and possible way outs to ensure the political empowerment of women.

Key Words: Political Empowerment, Gender Disparity, Glass Ceiling, Political Marginalization, Gender Inclusive Governance.