

Explaining Gender Segregation In Legislative Committees: A Case Of Punjab Assembly (2013-2018)

Nayab Javed

Department of Gender and Development Studies
Lahore College for Women University

Ra'ana Malik

Department of Gender Studies
University of the Punjab

Abstract

Legislative committees have power to take decisions and influence key matters in Legislatures. Women's descriptive representation is measured through their appointment in various including power/ masculine and low status/feminine committees. This study examines the gender gaps both vertical and horizontal in various parliamentary committees of Punjab Assembly. The Punjab Assembly has been taken as a case, because it is the largest Provincial assembly of Pakistan. The committee system has been taken as a unit of analysis from 2013 to 2018, in order to examine the women's appointment as heads (horizontal) and member (vertical) in committees. The findings show that the committee allocations are gender biased; women are over-represented in feminine and low prestigious committees, while under-represented in masculine and power committees. This study suggests, political parties may develop gender neutral mechanism for committee allocations.

Keywords: Committees, Gender Gaps, Punjab Assembly, Appointments.

تلخیص

قانون ساز کمیٹیوں کو پارلیمنٹ میں فیصلے کرنے اور کلیدی امور کو متاثر کرنے کا اختیار حاصل ہے۔ خواتین کی وضاحتی نمائندگی کو ان کی تقرری کے ذریعہ متعدد پاور / مذکر اور کم درجہ / نسائی کمیٹیوں میں مایا جاتا ہے۔ اس مطالعے سے پنجاب اسمبلی کی مختلف پارلیمانی کمیٹیوں میں عمودی اور افقی دونوں طرح کے فرق کا جائزہ لیا گیا ہے۔ پنجاب اسمبلی کو بطور کیس لیا گیا ہے، کیونکہ یہ پاکستان کی سب سے بڑی صوبائی اسمبلی ہے۔ کمیٹیوں میں خواتین کے سربراہ (افقی) اور ممبر (عمودی) کی حیثیت سے تقرری کی جانچ پڑتال کے لئے کمیٹی سسٹم کو ۲۰۱۳ء سے ۲۰۱۸ء تک تجزیہ کی اکائی کے طور پر لیا گیا ہے۔ نتائج سے پتہ چلتا ہے کہ کمیٹی مختص صنفی تعصب کی حامل ہے۔ نسائی اور کم وقار والی کمیٹیوں میں خواتین کی زیادہ نمائندگی کی جاتی ہے جبکہ مذکر اور پاور کمیٹیوں میں ان کی نمائندگی کم ہوتی ہے۔ اس مطالعے سے پتہ چلتا ہے، سیاسی جماعتیں کمیٹی مختص کرنے کے لئے صنفی غیر جانبدار طریقہ کار تیار کر سکتی ہیں۔

کلیدی الفاظ: کمیٹیاں، صنفی فاصلہ، پنجاب اسمبلی، تقرریاں

Introduction

Women's numeric representation has been achieved by introducing gender quotas, and subsequently, many countries adopted quota to upsurge women's descriptive representation in the parliaments (Barnes, 2014). A mere 24.3% of women are representatives at national legislatures, which compared to 11.3% in 1995, as a very gradual increase (IPU, 2018). Women's participation in parliaments has attracted much attention in the growing body of literature (O' Brien & Piscopo, 2018). However, apart from descriptive representation, women's substantive representation is highly essential to influence policies and programs collectively through the legislative committees (Piscopo, 2014). Committee membership is the centre of attention and provides a convenient opportunity to work on new policies and legislation (Mattson & Strom, 1995); and reflects the culture of mini gendered organizations within the parliaments (Coffe, Bolzendahl & Schnellecke, 2019). Women under-representation or absence from the certain committees may affect the policy decisions and outcomes regarding key areas (Wängnerud, 2000 & Carroll, 2001) and some important aspects might be overlooked due to women absence (Murray & Sénac, 2018).

However, the studies related to the identification of gendered gaps in committee allocations are getting attention in the growing literature of gender and politics (Murray & Sénac, 2018); but, related literature is not much developed (Hansen, 2010). The literature on women's descriptive representation has eminently indicated that committee allocations are gender bias (Dodson & Carroll, 1991; Skjeie, 1991; Thomas, 1994; Taylor-Robinson & Heath, 2003; Heath et al., 2005; Schwindt-Bayer, 2010; Baekgaard & Kjaer, 2012; Barnes, 2014; Bolzendahl, 2014; Pansardi & Vercesi, 2017) and importantly based on power and gender hierarchies (Brush, 2003).

Gender stereotyping is one of the major factor that widens the gender gap in committee allocations intentionally or unconsciously (Murray & Sénac, 2018). Such stereotypes are specific attributes, qualities and interests based on one's gender rather than individual characteristics (Dolan & Lynch, 2014). Like, women are welcomed to sit in committees related to social issues even it was not their own preference to be member of such committee (Kenney, 1996 & Towns, 2003). However such behaviour may be just because of assigned socially constructed gender roles, women are assumed to perform care duties and men productive role (Larimer, Hannagan & Smith, 2007).

This study attempts to explore the gendered patterns of women descriptive representation in committees of Punjab Assembly. The committee has two types of hierarchies including, vertical and horizontal. Vertical hierarchies, include the executive members of the committees or committee heads while horizontal dealt with the male and female dominated committees (Murray & Sénac, 2018). Currently, in Punjab Assembly, the

committee system is considered as a mini parliament, where specialized experts are appointed for detailed consideration of particular matters related to different government departments. Chapter XVII of the Rules of Procedure of Punjab Assembly 1997, emphasizes the rules and procedures about the constitution, composition, and functions of committees. Under it, clause 150 (2) of chapter XVII deals with allocating members to committees; Punjab assembly elects members in accordance with proportional representation. Moreover, clause 151 (1) of chapter XVII states that the chairperson of the standing committee is elected by the members of the committee.

Though, this study explores that once women enter legislative bodies, they are fully incorporated in all the decision making and key positions through different committees in Punjab Assembly. Additionally, it discusses that women are assigned more to the committees related to soft and feminine issues (Krook & Brien, 2010). Additionally, discusses the gender dynamics and women marginalization in the legislative committee structure in the Punjab Assembly (Largest Provincial Assembly of Pakistan).

In doing so, this research makes a new contribution to the emergent body of literature that is based upon gender gaps in legislative committees in the Pakistani context. Previous literature is available from the perspective of the US, Europe, Latin America and Asia (Prihatini, 2019). However, no prior study has been found, in my best knowledge, to address the gender gaps in legislative committees in Pakistan.

The main objective of this study is to explore gender segregation regarding committee membership that prevails in the Punjab Assembly. Moreover, both vertical and horizontal gender segregation in standing committees have been analyzed. This study further helps to understand the women's descriptive and substantive representation in the mini gendered organization of the Punjab Assembly.

Review of Literature

Committees are an integral part of parliaments for many reasons, including law-making in different policy areas, budgeting and administrative tasks (Mattson & Storm, 1995), political careers and legislative outcomes (Murray & Sénac, 2018). Moreover, committee appointments are important to understand gender dynamics in the legislatures (Murray & Sénac, 2018). Previous studies indicated that some committees are associated with women due to the soft nature of their issues, which addresses the issues associated to; social affairs, culture, gender equality, and education (Krook & O' Brien, 2012; Baekgaard & Kjaer, 2012). In contrast, other committees, defined as men committees are related to men's interests such as defence, foreign affairs and budget (Franceschet, 2011). Research on legislative committees suggests that gender gaps have been found in the appointment of legislative committees (Coffee & Schnellecke, 2013; Schwindt-Bayer,

2010) and women have not been appointed in political power posts in prestigious committees like their male counterparts (Schwindt-Bayer, 2010; Heath, Schwindt-Bayer, & Taylor-Robinson, 2005).

Some evidence suggests that women are appointed more in soft committees, whereas, men are over-represented in hard committees (Heath et al., 2005). A study of German parliamentary committees revealed that women members were over-represented in committees related to family and health; on the other hand, under-represented in committees adhering to defence, foreign and legal affairs. Moreover, it exposed that conservative parties were more likely to follow gender segregation in committee membership (Coffe, Bolzendahl & Schnellecke, 2019).

Similarly, a study conducted in Indonesia revealed that women MPs are appointed more in committees that are known to be feminine in nature and low-status committees, and very few women are serving as committee leaders (Prihatini, 2019). Likewise, another study conducted in Argentina suggested that women were marginalized in powerful committees due to backlash and sidelining against quota women; however, after 12 to 16 years of quota, women learn to negotiate for gaining powerful positions in the legislature (Barnes, 2014).

One more study conducted in France indicated that few committees are highly male-dominated, including Defence, Finance and foreign affairs; on the other hand, women are over-represented in feminized committees that inculcate educational and cultural affairs, and social affairs (Murray & Sénac, 2018). Additionally, another comparative study of Germany, Sweden and the United States exposed that in Germany, leadership roles in women dominated and men dominated committees are highly gender segregated; women are under-represented in powerful positions, but narrow differences have been found regarding membership in German committees. In Sweden, women's leadership roles improved gradually but were limited to women dominated committees. However, the legislative institution of the United States is a significantly male-dominated gendered institution in terms of overall women numbers and leadership roles. Women were strategically excluded; thus, there are no feminine committees that exist in the United States legislative institution (Bolzendahl, 2014).

Hence, gender institutionalism has shown the patterns of gender typing and gender construction of political issues in legislatures. Additionally, the gender imbalance has been found in membership and leadership of different legislative committees. Consequently, women were excluded from the power positions recurrently in all legislative institutions (Bolzendahl, 2014). Research also concluded that women are being marginalized and do not have the availability of the same opportunities as men in regards to power positions (Heath et al., 2005). Moreover, across the regions, gender gaps

are non-existent, such as in Great Britain, Mexico, Scotland, Costa Rica, Wales and Sweden in committee allocations (Brown et al., 2002; O'Brien, 2012; Kerevel & Atkeson, 2013; Funk, Morales & Taylor- Robinson, 2014). On the other hand, in many regions, gender gaps have been widely found in committees including the USA, Australia, Latin America, France and Europe (Murray & Sénac, 2018); Argentina (Barnes, 2014) and Indonesia (Prihatini, 2019).

Literature also indicated that women are under-represented in power positions; because committee assignments take place by keeping in view the traditional gender roles (Thomas, 1994; Towns, 2003; Barnes, 2014; Coffé & Schnellecke 2013; Heath et al. 2005; Wängnerud, 2009). Different factors have been explored in the gendered distribution of committee appointments, including cultural implications such as gender stereotypes (Inglehart & Norris, 2003; Jacob et al., 2014; Reynolds, 1999; Krook & O'Brien, 2012; Paxton & Kunovich, 2003), the institutional-like selection process of women candidates, party ideology, women access to power positions at party level (Heath et al., 2005; O'Brien, 2012; Krook & O'Brien, 2012) and, personal factors including the previous experiences of women MPs (Heath et al., 2005). A study conducted in German Bundestag revealed that women legislators with more experience had higher chances of committee assignment; moreover, the external interest was also an influencing variable for committee assignment along with partisan justification (Mickler, 2018). Likewise, another study of the European Parliament found that previous experience and education were more likely to influence committee membership (Yordanova, 2009).

Political parties are considered a pivotal source to promote gender equality in committees' assignments (Noris & Lovenduski, 1995). A study in the United States which focused upon committee requests and assignments according to women's interests, highlighted that women from Democratic Party were more likely to receive committee assignments of their interest compared to a Republican woman (Frisch & Kelly, 2003). Therefore, Party memberships have a direct impact on getting preferred committee allocations. Another study conducted in Italy highlighted that party plays the role of gate-keeper in the appointment of women in committees and further emphasized that right-wing parties were more likely to appoint women in feminine committees as compared to left-wing parties (Pansardi & Vercesi, 2017). Moreover, a study conducted in Latin America also suggested that women were sidelined by assigning them in committees that dealt with women issues and kept them away from power committees; however, women's committee assignment was controlled by party leaders. Particularly when specific committees were made to address women issues in Latin American Legislature (Heath et al., 2005).

Gender dynamics of power showed masculinity is privileged, and femininity has been undermined in legislative committees (Brush, 2003; Connell, 2005; Krook et al., 2011a). Committee membership has been conceptualized in the power hierarchies of gender

(Brush, 2003). Another line of thought outlines that the absence of women MPs from the key committees could minimize their policy outcomes (Wängnerud, 2009; Murray & Sénac, 2018). A study conducted in Latin America showed that standing committees that address women's issues were dominated by the female members and very few or even no male MPs (Piscopo, 2014). This further indicated that women were more likely to represent women's interest by occupying overwhelming seats in women related committees (Piscopo, 2011).

Methods

Case study design was employed to explore the gender gaps in committees. Punjab Assembly has been taken as a case, it is one of the biggest provincial assembly in Pakistan comprised of total MPAs n=371) and women MPAs n=66 (Bano, 2009).

Data Sources

This study was based on the quantitative data accessed from the official website of the Punjab Assembly. Additionally, the quantitative data of different legislative committees, members of committees and committee heads was gathered from Punjab assembly website (www.pap.gov.pk). A certain time frame was chosen, which is the 18th legislative period of the Punjab Assembly (2013-2018).

Procedure

Legislative committees have been taken as a unit of analysis apart from the other functions of Punjab Assembly. However, only committees dealing with various Government departments are a part of the analysis, though some special committees are temporarily made for a specific matter and collapse when the issue resolved. Moreover there are few 'other committees' dealing the internal matters regarding Punjab Assembly, are not part of this study.

Findings

Punjab assembly has a total of 50 committees, 36 standing committees working for the different Government departments, 6 other standing committees, and the rest of 8 are special committees. Standing committees are working with the government departments, have fixed members, and perform regular business. Moreover, other standing committees are not working for the Government departments; they only work for the matters within the Punjab Assembly. However, the special committees are not permanent because they are formulated to undertake and tackle special issues and are dissolved after resolving that particular issue. Keeping in view the above-mentioned facts, I argue that by the rules, there is no gender proportional representation that should be assured while electing

the members of committees. So, here an imperative concern would be discussed; that explaining gender segregation in horizontal hierarchies and vertical hierarchies in the mini organization of Punjab Assembly.

Legislative committees play a significant role in initiating and revising the numerous legislation. Moreover, committee membership is crucial because all committees do not have an equal impact on policies and drafting legislation; however, some of the committees are more powerful and prestigious than others (Heath et al., 2005; Munger, 1988). The allocation of different committees is helpful for career advancement and potential outcomes of legislation (Murrey & Sénac, 2018).

Horizontal Gender Gaps in Legislative Committees

A total of 50 committees are working with government departments, 8% headed by the female members, while 92 % are led by male members which further helps in identifying the gaps in the directly elected and reserved seats of female MPs regarding committee headship. It showed all of 8% committees led by the female MPs on reserved seats and no single committee run by the directly elected female MP in Punjab Assembly. Interestingly all of the committees headed by female members are related to feminine issues, including gender mainstreaming, Zakat & Ushr, and Information and Culture. Moreover, no female members have been appointed as head of power committees, including finance, Excise and taxation and law.

Vertical Gender Gaps in Legislative Committees

With regards to the gender pattern of committee membership, the analysis exposed that overall, 72 % are male members and 28% are female members, including both direct and reserved women MPs. In Correspondence with the previous literature, it also revealed that men represent the majority of the members in all committees (Palmieri, 2011). However, the analysis showed some interesting findings about the gender patterns of committee membership.

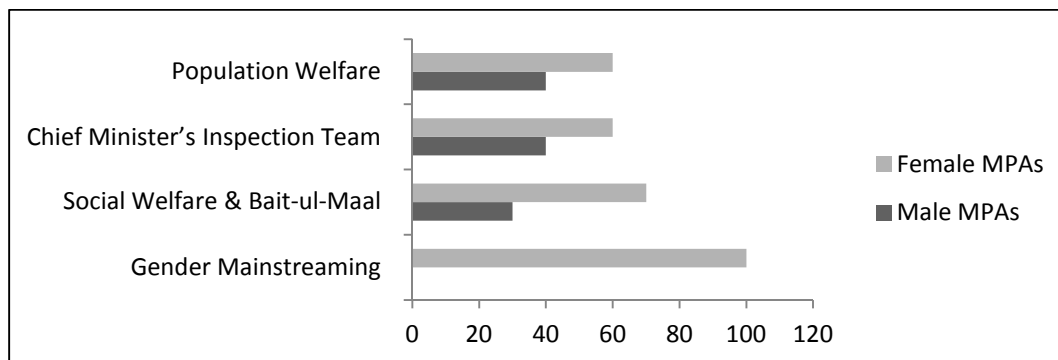


Figure 1: Over represented committees by Women MPAs

Committees directly relevant to women's issues, including Gender Mainstreaming, welfare (Social Welfare and Bait ul Maal and Population welfare) and Chief Minister Inspection, have been overwhelmingly represented by women members. It showed, strategically women members are being excluded from the power committees and key areas of decision making. Previous research also showed similar findings across all the regions that women representation is higher (more than 30 %) in committees of gender equality, education, family and health (Palmieri, 2011). However, in Punjab Assembly, the gender mainstreaming committee is predominantly feminine.

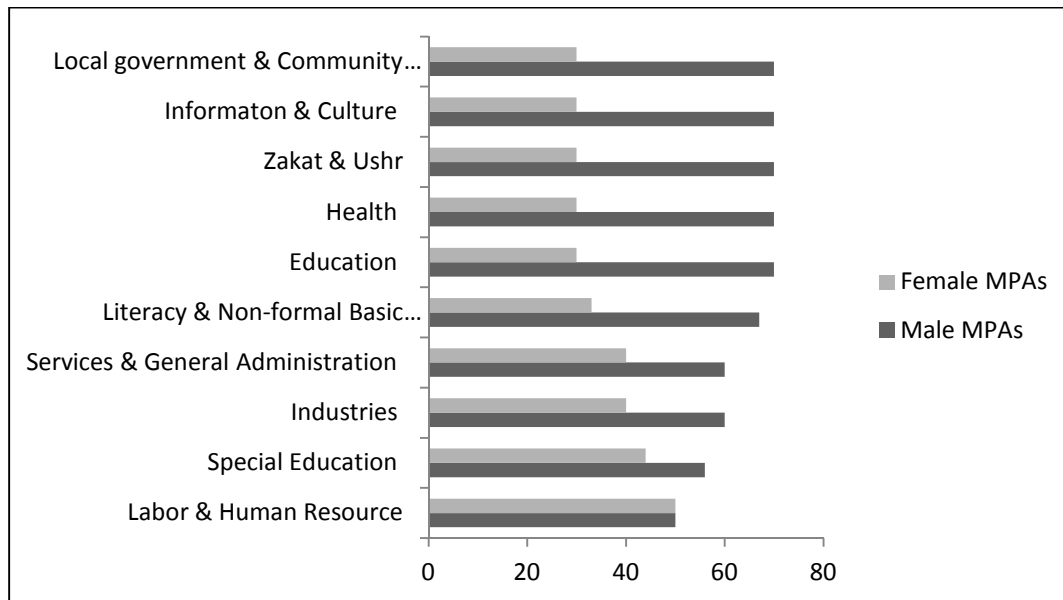


Figure 2: Neutral represented committees by Women MPAs

However, in other committees related to soft areas, female MPs got 30 to 50 % representation that is considered balanced and neutral committee membership, including Education, Health, Zakat & Ushr, Community development, general administration, and industries. Moreover, previous studies also concluded that women are over-represented and associated with 'soft committees' of social welfare issues, culture and equality issues (Baekgaard & Kjaer, 2012; Krook & O'Brien, 2012). Moreover, many studies concluded similar findings, that women are more likely to be appointed to committees with 'feminine issues domains' including education, health, family, youth and human rights (Heath, Schwindt-Bayer & Taylor-Robinson, 2005; Kerevel & Atkeson, 2013; Schwindt-Bayer, 2010; Thomas, 1994; Towns, 2003).

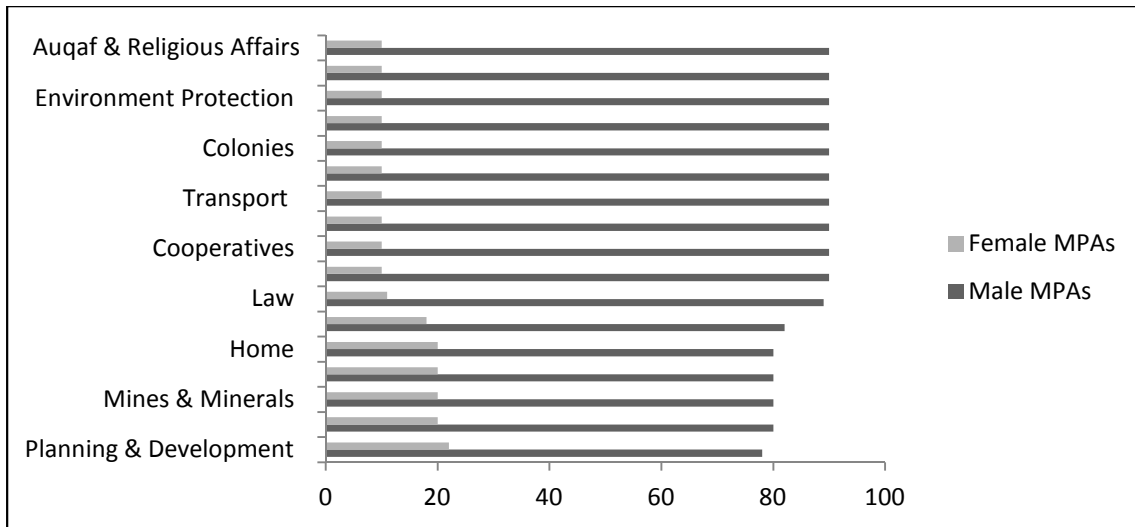


Figure 3: Under Represented Committees by Women MPAs

The current case, female MPs have less than 20 % membership in committees related to hard areas; planning and development, mines and minerals, Forestry Wildlife & Fisheries, Law, Communication & Works, Irrigation & Energy, Finance, Human Rights & Minority affairs, Auqaf & Religious Affairs and Environment Protection. Similarly, findings from all regions showed that women representation is lower (less than 20%) in committees that deal with trade, agriculture, finance, foreign affairs, public works, immigration and home affairs (Palmieri, 2011). Corresponding with the previous findings that hard committees, including budget, foreign affairs, and defence, are more dominated and associated with men’s interests (Franceschet, 2011; Baekgaard&Kjaer, 2012; Heath et al., 2005).

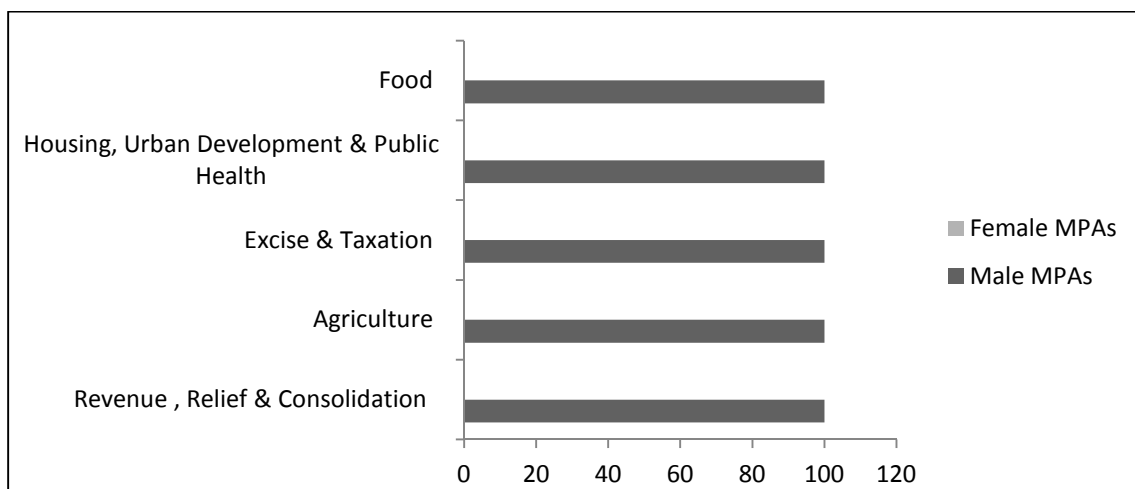


Figure 4: Zero Represented Committees by Women MPAs

Another interesting finding emerged from the data, in the context of Pakistan, that a few of the committees have no single women member in power committees. This assures that they meant to exclude them from policy-making regarding important issues, Excise & Taxation, Revenue, Relief & Consolidation, Housing, Urban Development & Public health and food. It is quite alarming that low female representation in committee membership could negatively affect their substantive representation regarding legislation, policy-making and outcomes.

Discussion

This case provides evidence that the gender gaps in different legislative committees and further, distinguishes masculine, feminine and neutral committees in context of Pakistan. In particular, women presence is strong in feminine committees; Social welfare, population welfare, Education, Health; while gender mainstreaming is only committee solely based on women members. Many of the cases also have the similar situation regarding women allocations to feminine committees; in Asian democracy, Indonesian women legislators are also placed in feminine and low prestigious committees and very few women legislators are part of committee leadership (Prihantini, 2019).

Likewise in France, women are more likely to sit in feminine committees related to social and culture issues however strong relationship was found between the seniority and social expertise of women MPs and their placement in feminine committees (Murray & Sénac, 2018). Similarly, in Argentina, women are over-represented in feminine committees due to gender bias, stereotypes and traditional gender roles (Barnes, 2014). However, there might be another factor, in Latin America, women were prioritized women and social issues therefore they were more likely to allocate soft committees (Schwindt-Bayer, 2010). As a result, women presence in low prestigious committees may restrict their political advancement.

Importantly, this case highlights that women legislators are being sidelined and excluded from the major policy areas that are stereotypically considered men domain. These stereotypically beliefs about gender roles creates division of private and public spheres and assign women to traditional feminine areas (Barnes, 2014). However, committee appointments should be based on the interest and choice of the women legislators, in which areas they want to work (Barnes, 2014). Because women might wanted to be placed in power committees on basis of her previous own experience, expertise or interest. In particular, women presence in power committees could enhance their visibility and influence the significant policy decisions. However, if the women

legislators have potential to gain equitable committee appointments and allocations also leads to their access leadership and executive positions.

This case is limited to one provincial Assembly in Pakistan and selected period of time (2013-2018), however it might have implications for the other provincial assemblies and national assembly in Pakistan. Future studies, may be conducted to further explore the factors of committee appointments and reasons behind the gender segregation and gaps while placing men and women legislators to feminine, masculine, neutral and low. High, neutral prestigious legislative committees.

Conclusions

This study aimed to explore dynamics of gendered division of committees in Punjab Assembly. The article has shown that gender segregation has existed in horizontal hierarchies of committee leadership and women legislators have lack of access to committee headship on equal basis. Very few women have been appointed as head of committees, that are related to gender mainstreaming, Zakat & Ushr, and Information and Culture and no single high prestigious and masculine committee is headed by the women legislator. Male in executive body of committees might have strong influence on the policy outcomes and as well as discrimination in committee allocations.

Moreover, gender gaps have also existed in vertical hierarchies, including committee membership. Most of the power committees are male dominated and over represented by the men legislators including Law, Excise and taxation, Revenue, planning and development, cooperatives, Environment. Additionally, this study concludes that women are assigned more to soft committees that are known as less prestigious. We found that women are under-represented in highly prestigious committees; that are mostly considered in regards to men's interest. Additionally, this study has repercussions for the studies of gender power dynamics and committee allocations in Punjab Assembly.

This case study is evident that committee allocations are gender biased and followed by gendered power. The major findings of this case has repercussions in two different ways; that gender gap in legislative committees may lead to the absence of women legislators from the key areas of policy making. Secondly, gender stereotyping is one of the major hindrance, which prevent women membership in prestigious and male dominated committees. Moreover, this gender segregation has evident of discrimination against women as legislators throughout their political careers. For the better policy outcome, we need to integrate both male and female legislators in policy making process on equal basis.

Recommendations

Keeping in view the major findings, this study suggests the following recommendations:

1. Women's membership should be 30% to 40% in each legislative committee, particularly in masculine and power committees.
2. Men legislators may be incorporated in highly feminine committees, specifically Gender Mainstreaming.
3. Women's appointment on leadership positions should be assured in legislative committees.

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Nayab Javed is Lecturer in the Department of Gender and Development Studies, Lahore College for Women University, Lahore, Pakistan.

Dr. Ra'ana Malik is Professor in the Department of Gender Studies, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan.