Decoding Socio-Cultural Challenges Hindering Women's Engagement in Electoral Processes: A Case Study of NA.29 Peshawar

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Dr. Nadia Bashir	Lecturer Pakistan Studies, Edwardes College Peshawar, nadiabashir1977@gmail.com
Dr. Shumaila Ihtisham	Assistant Professor Islamia College Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. shumylaehtisham@gmail.com
Dr. Farmanullah	Assistant Professor Pakistan Study Centre, University of Peshawar farman.ullah@uop.edu.pk

Abstract: *This research paper, titled "Decoding Socio-Cultural Challenges Hindering Women's Engagement in Electoral Processes: A Case Study of NA-29 Peshawar," seeks to delve into the complexities of women's electoral participation within the socio-cultural context of Peshawar. By examining the barriers and enablers shaping women's involvement in electoral activities, this study aims to provide insights that can inform evidence-based strategies for promoting gender-inclusive democracy. Women have played a critical role in elections as voters, particularly in Pakhtun society. However, a number of obstacles impede them from casting their votes despite the fact that it is the civic obligation of citizens of Pakistan, irrespective of gender. As voters, women can shape the political landscape by casting their ballots for the candidates or parties that best represent their interests and values. They can use their vote to push for policies and laws that support gender equality, women's rights, and other issues that affect them and their communities. The present study includes the research findings about women's electoral participation in NA-29 Peshawar constituency in the general elections of 2018. The study aims to measure the affects of socio-cultural factor on women's meager electoral participation in the general elections of 2018.*

Introduction

Ensuring equal opportunities for participation in all aspects of life is essential for the progress of any society, be it economically, socially, or politically. Despite comprising a significant portion of the global population, women continue to face barriers to political decision-making and leadership roles, reflecting deeply ingrained gender disparities across cultures (Doyle & Paludi, 1991; Naz & Rehman, 2011).

Recognizing the imperative of gender equality, the United Nations and its specialized agencies have championed initiatives to promote women's empowerment and combat discrimination in various spheres, including electoral politics (Charter of the United Nations, 1945; United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948; Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 2014). Political participation, particularly through electoral engagement, is heralded as a cornerstone of women's empowerment, offering avenues for women to assert their voices and influence decision-making processes (Rauf & Shah, 2015).

The right to vote, enshrined as a fundamental aspect of democracy, holds particular significance for women, who have historically

fought for suffrage rights worldwide (Nagler, 2014; Lawless & Fox, 2010; Celis, 2012). Despite early milestones such as New Zealand granting women the right to vote in 1893, achieving gender parity in electoral participation remains an ongoing challenge (Grimshaw, 2013). While legislative frameworks such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights have sought to codify voting rights, disparities persist in the implementation and realization of these rights, especially in regions like Pakistan (Islam, Zubair, & Muhammad, 2019).

Pakistan, despite constitutional guarantees of gender equality and political participation, grapples with low levels of women's electoral engagement, particularly evident in regions like Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Khan I., 2017). Efforts to address these disparities have included legislative measures such as the Elections Act of 2017, aimed at increasing women's registration and turnout through quota systems and enforcement mechanisms (Report of The General Elections of 2018, 2017).

However, cultural and societal barriers continue to impede women's electoral participation, often perpetuated by entrenched patriarchal norms and practices (Khan, 2013). In NA-29 Peshawar, the focus of this research, understanding these socio-cultural challenges is paramount for devising targeted interventions to enhance women's engagement in the electoral process.

Method:

The selection of District Peshawar for the present study is due to its historical and political importance other than the reason that it is the hometown of three of the authors. According to the General Elections of 2018 District Peshawar was divided into five constituencies. Out of five, one constituency was randomly selected, i.e. NA-29 Peshawar III with 24.95% women's electoral turnout. Data have been collected through a survey comprising of a multistage random and systematic sampling. Population of the study is the registered voters of NA. 29 Peshawar III. The total number of registered voters in NA. 29 Peshawar as per elections 2018 was 222021 (FAFEN, 2018) .

The Yamane formula is used as a criterion for selecting the participants.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

where "n" is the sample size and "e" denotes the margin of error, which is 0.05.

Sampling Size of NA 29 Peshawar

$$\frac{222021}{1 + 222021\,(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = 399.2$$

$$n \approx 400$$

So the overall sample size came to 400 respondents. These respondents were selected from the voters' lists on the basis of random and systematic techniques. Data was collected using Google forms sent via the internet from the women registered voters of NA.29 Peshawar. Data gathered through the survey was subject to descriptive statistical analysis and logistic regression. Collected data was coded, summarized, and analyzed using SPSS, a comprehensive and flexible statistical analysis and data management system. Statistics were used to describe the following overarching question and sub-questions:

- To what extent do demographic factors affect the decision of female registered voters to vote cast in the 2018 elections?

- To what extent do the socio-cultural factor affect the decision of women registered voters to vote cast in the 2018 elections.

Dependent Variable
Electoral Participation of Women in the General Elections of 2018
Table 1
Electoral *Participation* of the Respondents

Variable	Response Options	n	%
Electoral Participation	Yes	161	40.25
	No	239	59.75
	Total	400	100

Table 1 shows that the maximum number of respondents did not cast their votes. Out of the total respondents from Peshawar urban and rural areas, 161 (40.25%) had cast their votes, whereas 239 (59.75%) did not come out to cast their votes in the General Elections of 2018.

Independent Variables

Respondents' Demographic Profile

The respondents' profile is an important aspect of any research study, as it provides insights into the characteristics of the individuals who participated. Understanding the respondents' profiles can help researchers better interpret their findings and draw conclusions relevant to the studied population. Analyzing respondents' profiles is an important step in any research study. It provides researchers with valuable information to help them better understand the population being studied and draw meaningful conclusions from their findings.

A descriptive analysis was conducted on demographics to rule out variations among respondents regarding their age, educational level, marital status, family type, occupation, electoral area, monthly income, family income, and the right to electoral participation of women. A Chi-square test is conducted to find the link between demographic variables and electoral participation.

Age
Descriptive Statistics
Table 2
Age of Respondents

Variable	Response Options	n	%
Age	22-32	151	37.75
	33-42	92	23.0
	43-52	63	15.75
	53 and above	94	23.5
	Total	400	100

Age is a commonly used demographic variable. The present study is being utilized to help understand the characteristics and behaviors of different age groups of women voters, particularly in relation to their decision to exercise their right to vote, and how these groups may differ from one another.

Table 2 indicates the age of the participants. It is clear from the table that the majority of the participants were from the age group of 22-32.

Out of the total sampled population, 151 (37.75%) were from the young age group of 22-33, 92 (23.0%) were from 33-42 years of age, 63 (15.75%) were from 43-52 years, and 94 (23.5%) were 53 years and above. Results can also be seen in figure 1
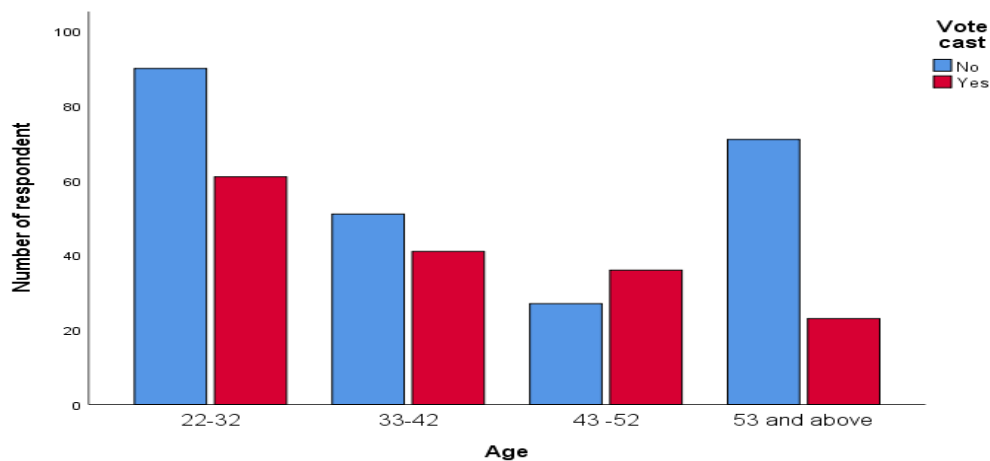
Figure 1.

Age of Respondents and Electoral Participation

Inferential Statistics

Table 3. *Association between Age and Electoral Participation*

Variables	Response options	No (%)	Yes (%)		χ2	P
Age	22-32	90 (59.60)	61(40.4)	151	17.92	0.000***
	33-42	51 (55.43)	41(44.57)	92		
	43-52	27 (42.86)	36(57.14)	63		
	53 and above	71 (75.53)	23(24.47)	94		
	Total	239 (42.36)	161(41.64)	400(100)		

* P < 0.05, **P < 0.01, ***P < 0.001

Among the significant age groups, the majority of the participants, 61 (40.4%), were between 22-32 years of age who had cast their vote. Furthermore, only a minimum of the participants, 23 (24.47%), were from the 53 and above age group. The Chi-square test yielded a significant P-value, and a remarkable association was found between age and the electoral participation of the respondents, as χ2 = 17.92 with a p-value <0.05. It is concluded that young voters are more enthusiastic about casting their vote.

Educational Level

The educational level of respondents in the present research refers to the level of education acquired by the people who took part in the study or survey and is used as a demographic profile. The respondents' educational status, such as whether they graduated high school, went to college, pursued graduate studies, or were illiterate, are included in this study.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 4

Educational Level of Respondents

Variable	Response options	N	%
Educational level	Illiterate	77	19.25
	Primary	13	3.25
	Middle	7	1.75
	Matric	17	4.25
	Intermediate	17	4.25
	Bachelor	114	28.5
	Masters and above	155	38.75
	Total	400	100

The educational level of respondents shows variations among qualifications, which is an essential influencing factor in their electoral participation. Of the respondents, 77 (19.25%) were illiterate, 13 (3.25%) were primary passed, 7 (1.75%) were middle passed, 17 (4.25%) were matriculate, 114 (28.5%) held bachelor's degrees, and 155 (38.75%) were masters and above. The majority of participants belonged to an educated background and were aware of their electoral rights.

Inferential Statistics

Table. 5 *Association between Educational Level and Electoral Participation*

Variables	Response options	No (%)	Yes (%)		χ2	P
Educational level	Illiterate	61 (79.2)	16 (20.8)	77		
	Primary	8 (61.5%)	5 (38.5)	13		
	Middle	6 (85.7)	1 (14.3)	7		0.000***
	Matric	12 (70.6)	5 (29.4)	17		
	Intermediate	8(47.06)	9(52.94)	17	31.266+	
	Bachelor	74 (64.9)	40 (35.1)	114		
	Masters and above	70 (45.2)	85 (54.8)	155		
	Total	239(64.88)	161(35.12)	400		

*P < 0.05, **P < 0.01, ***P < 0.001, + Fisher's exact test

Table 5 shows the association between educational level and electoral participation. The table presents the number and percentage of respondents who did not cast their vote and those who did, broken down by educational level.

The educational level shows variation among respondents who had voted in the general elections of 2018 and those who did not cast their votes. Of the total respondents, 16 (20.8%) illiterate respondents had cast their votes, and 61 (79.2%) had not cast their votes. 5 (38.5%) of primary passed respondents had cast their votes, and 8 (61.5%) had not cast their votes. 1 (14.3%) of middle-passed respondents had cast their votes, and 6 (85.7%) had not cast their votes. 9 (29.4%) of matriculation passed respondents had cast their votes, and 12 (70.6%) had not cast their votes. 40 (35.1%) of bachelor graduate respondents had cast their votes, and 74 (64.9%) had not cast their votes. Lastly, 85 (54.8%) of master's graduate respondents had cast their votes, and 70 (45.2%) had not. The results indicate that educational level is significantly associated with the decision to cast a vote, with a Chi-square value of 31.266 and a p-value of

<0.05. This suggests that there is a notable relationship between educational background and electoral participation. Results can be clearly shown in figure 2.
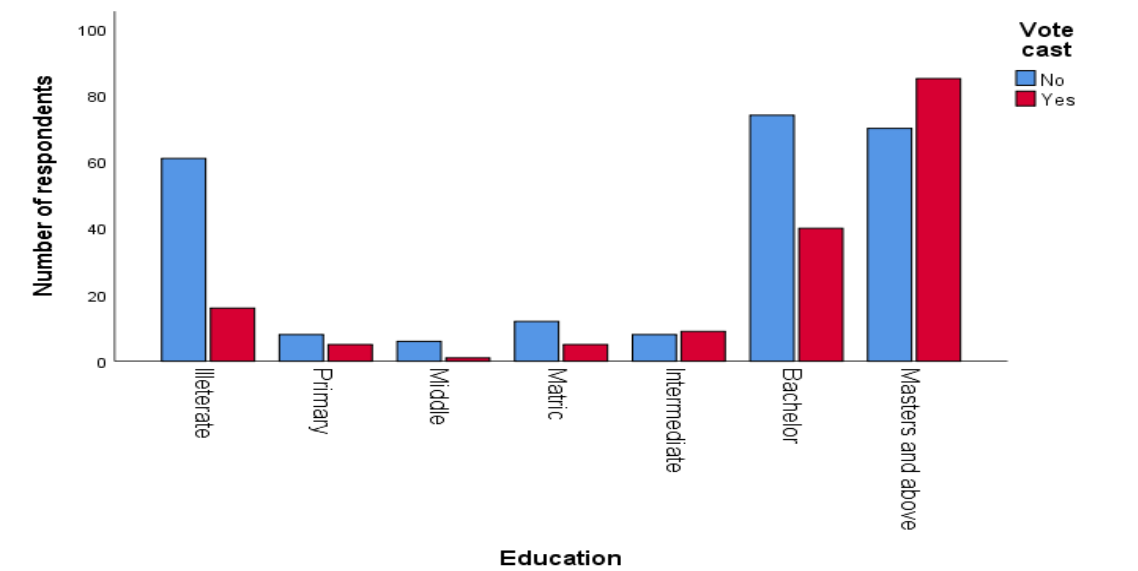

Figure 2. *Educational Level of Respondents and Electoral Participation*

Marital Status

The marital status of respondents is used to describe the characteristics of individuals who participated in this research. Marital status refers to the legal relationship between a person and their spouse or partner. Common categories of marital status include unmarried, married, divorced, and widowed.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 6.

Marital Status of Respondents

Variable	Response options	N	%
Marital status	Unmarried	167	41.75
	Married	197	49.25
	Divorced	11	2.75
	Widowed	25	6.25
	Total	400	100

As mentioned in table 6, out of the total respondents, 167 (41.75%) were unmarried, 197 (49.25%) were married, 11(2.75%) were divorced, and 25(6.25%) were widowed. Most of the participants were from the married group.

Inferential Statistics

Table. 7

Association between marital status and electoral participation

Variables	Response options	No (%)	Yes (%)		χ^2	P
Marital	Unmarried	116 (69.5)	51(30.5)	167(100)	13.349+	0.003**

status	Married	101 (51.3)	96(48.7)	197(100)		
	Divorced	8 (72.7)	3 (27.3)	11(100)		
	Widowed	14 (56.0)	11 (44.0)	25(100)		
	Total	239(62.4)	161(37.6)	400		

P < 0.05, **P < 0.01, ***P < 0.001, + Fisher's exact test *

Marital status shows variations among respondents who cast or had not cast their votes, as in table 7. In the unmarried category, out of the total respondents, 51 (30.5%) had cast their votes, while 116(69.5%) had not. Among married respondents, 96 (48.7%) had taken part in casting their votes, whereas 101(51.3%) had not. Out of the total sampled population, 3(27.3%) divorced women had taken part in casting votes, and 8(72.7%) had not. Whereas 11 (44.0%) of widowed women had cast votes, and 14(56.0%) had not cast their votes in the general elections of 2018. Results shows a remarkable link between marital status and electoral participation, as the p-value is less than 0.05. There is also a significant association between marital status, and the decision to cast a vote as $\chi2 = 13.349^+$ with a p-value of 0.003^{**}.
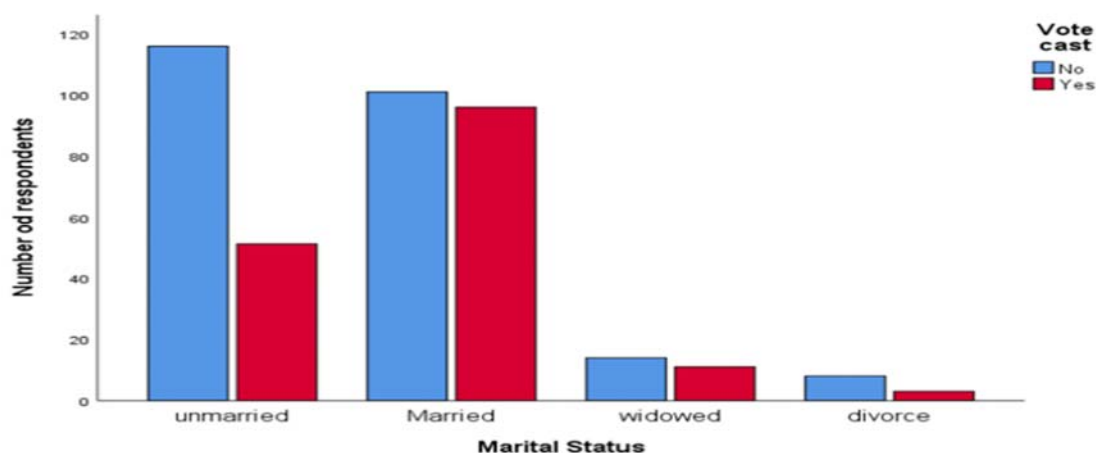

Figure 3. *Marital Status of Respondents and Electoral Participation*

Family Type

The family type of respondents in the present research refers to the composition and structure of their family. Family type includes joint and single family. Family type is an important demographic variable because it provides insight into the social context in which women make decisions about their electoral participation.

Descriptive Statistics
Table.8
Family Type of Respondents

Variable	Response options	N	%
Family type	Joint family	203	50.7
	Single-family	197	49.3
	Total	400	100

In the current data collection, as shown in table 8, 203 (50.7%) of the total respondents were from the joint family system, and the remaining 197 (49.3%) belonged to the single-family system.

Statistics

Table.9

Association between family type and electoral participation

Variables	Response options	No (%)	Yes (%)	Total	χ2	P
Family type	Joint family	108 (53.20)	95 (46.80)	203	7.349	0.004**
	Single-family	131 (66.50)	66 (33.50)	197		
	Total	239(59.85)	161(40.15)	400		

*P < 0.05, **P < 0.01, ***P < 0.001

Table 9 shows the variations in decisions to cast votes based on the family type. Among the respondents, 95 (46.80%) from joint family systems and 66 (33.50%) from nuclear/single family systems had cast their votes, while 108 (53.20%) from joint family systems and 131 (66.50%) from nuclear/single family systems had not cast their votes. There is a significant association between the type of family and electoral participation, as shown by the χ2 value of 7.349 with a p-value of 0.004**. This suggests that family type is a factor that influences the decision-making of casting a vote. It is clearly shown in Figure 4.
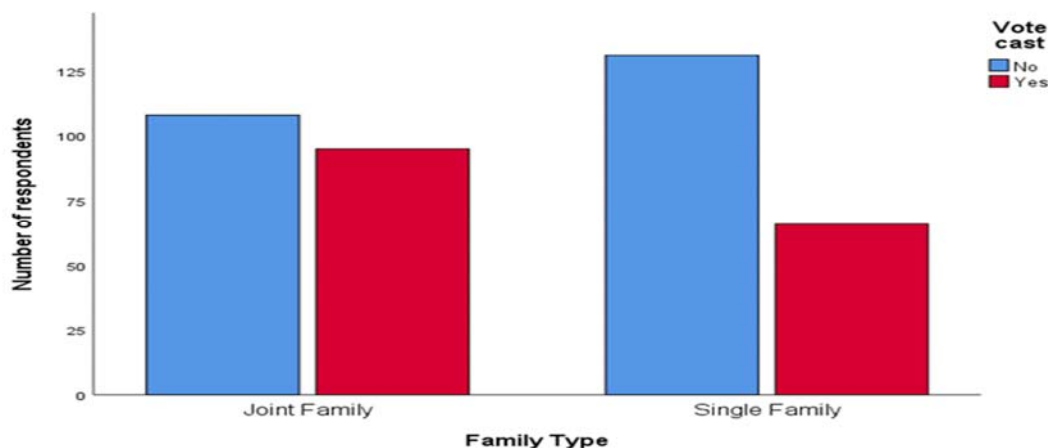

Figure .4 *Family type of Respondents and Electoral Participation*

Occupation/ Profession

Including the occupation or profession of the respondents as a demographic profile in the present research provides valuable information on the relationship between occupation/profession and their electoral participation. In addition, the occupation/profession of the respondents can also provide insight into their socioeconomic status, level of education, and political beliefs, which may, in turn, influence their decision to vote. For instance, women in certain professions or occupations may have higher levels of education, greater financial stability, or different political ideologies, all of which could affect their likelihood to vote and the candidates or

issues they support.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 10.

Occupation of the respondents

Variable	Response options	N	%
Occupation	Agriculture	2	0.5
	Business	23	5.75
	Govt. Employee	53	13.25
	Housewife	156	39.0
	Labour	12	3.0
	Non-Govt. Employee	89	22.25
	Sports	6	1.5
	Unemployed	59	14.75
	Total	400	100

Occupation and employment status are vital in defining the voting trends among various occupations. For the current study, respondents from the Agriculture sector were 2(0.5%), from Business, 23(5.75%), from the category of Government Employees 53 (13.25%, and 89 (22.25%) of the total respondents were non-government employees. However, 156 (39.0%) were housewives, 59 (14.75%) of the respondents were unemployed (yet not housewives) and 12 (3.0%) respondents were from the category of labour, and 6(1.5%) of the total respondents belonged to sports.

Inferential Statistics

Table.11 A*ssociation between occupation/profession and electoral participation*

Variables	Response options	No (%)	Yes (%)	Total	χ^2	P
Occupation	Agriculture	2 (100)	0 (0)	2		
	Business	12 (52.2)	11(47.8)	23		
	Govt. Employee	28 (52.8)	25 (47.2)	53		
	Housewife	106 (67.9)	50 (32.1)	156		
	Labor	5 (41.7)	7 (58.3)	12	14.536+	0.032*
	Non-Govt. Employee	43 (48.3)	46 (51.7)	89		
	Sports	4 (66.7)	2 (33.3)	6		
	Unemployed	39 (66.1)	20 (33.9)	59		
		239(61.96)	161 (38.04)	400		

P < 0.05, **P < 0.01, ***P < 0.001, + Fisher's exact test*

Variations among various occupations and employment status in the decision to cast a vote have been observed in respondents belonging to those occupations such that none 0(0%) from agriculture, 11(47.8%) from Business, 25(47.2%) from Government employee, 50(32.1%)from housewife's category, 7 (58.3%) from labour, 46 (51.7%) from non-government employee, 2 (33.3) from sports and 20 (33.9%) from unemployed category had cast their votes. However, 2 (100%) from agriculture, 12(52.4%) from Business, 28 (52.8%) from Government employee, 106(67.9%) from housewives, 5 (41.7%) from labour, 43(48.3%) from non-government employed, 4(66.7%) from sports and 39 (66.1%) from unemployed category had not cast votes. There is also a striking link between occupation, and the decision to cast a

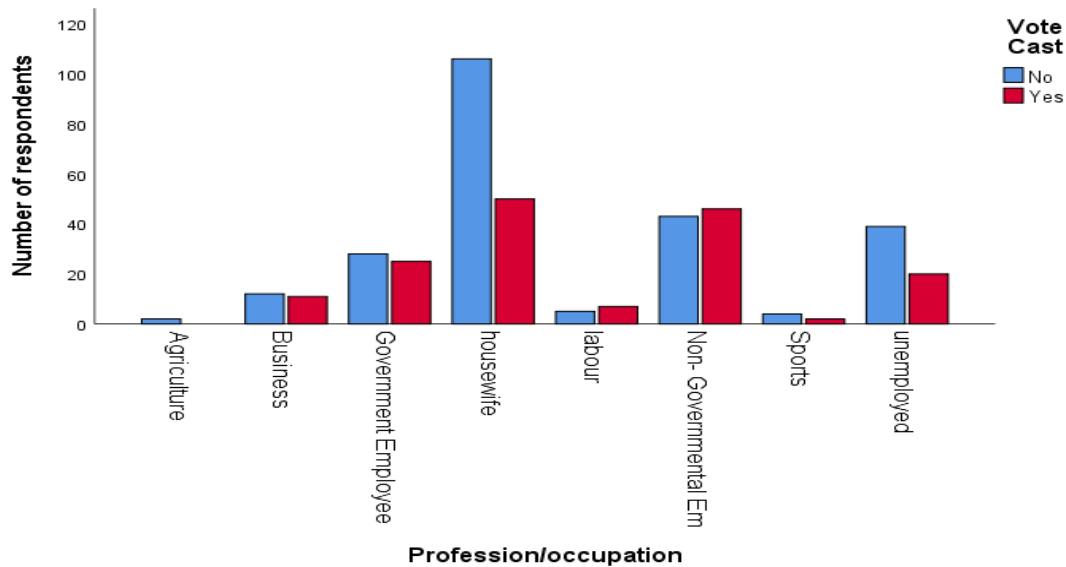vote as $\chi2 = 14.536^+$ with a p-value 0.032^*. It can be clearly seen in figure 5.

Figure.5
Occupation and Profession of the Respondents and Electoral Participation

Monthly Income of the Respondents

It's important to consider the monthly income of the respondents in the study's findings and to analyze the data with this in mind. In the present research, researcher need to know the relationship between the economic dependency of women and their decision to cast their votes.

Descriptive Statistics
Table.13 *Monthly income of the respondents*

Variable	Response options	n	%
	< 10000	25	6.25
	11000-20000	20	5
	21000-30000	25	6.25
Monthly income	31000-40000	34	8.5
	41000-50000	23	5.75
	>50000	72	18
	None	201	50.25
	Total	400	100

Monthly income shows the financial condition and well-being of individual respondents. According to the current data, 25(6.25%) respondents earn below 10000. Of the respondents, 20(5%) earn 11000-20000 monthly. As shown in the above table, 25 (6.25%) respondents earn 21000-30000 monthly, 34 (8.5%) of the total respondents earn 31000- 40000 monthly, 23 (5.75%) of respondents earn 41000-50000 monthly, and 72 (18%) of total respondents were earning more than 50000 monthly, 201(50.25 %) of respondents do not earn and financially dependent on their male family members.

Inferential Statistics
Table.14
Association between family type and electoral participation

Variables	Response options	No (%)	Yes (%)	χ2	P
Monthly income	< 10000	14 (56.0)	11 (44.0)	24.600	0.000***
	11000-20000	9 (45.0)	11 (55.0)		
	21000-30000	12 (48.0)	13 (52.0)		
	31000-40000	13 (38.2)	21 (61.8)		
	41000-50000	13 (56.5)	10 (43.5)		
	>50000	35 (48.6)	37 (51.4)		
	None	143 (71.1)	58 (28.9)		
	Total	239(51.91)	161(48.09)		

* $P < 0.05$, **$P < 0.01$, ***$P < 0.001$

Variations in the decision to exercise women's electoral right concerning monthly income ranges have been found as 11 (44.0%) from a range of monthly income less than 10000, 11 (55.0%) from a monthly income range of 11000-20000, 13(52.0%) from monthly income range 21000-30000, 21(61.8%) from monthly income range 31000-40000, 10(43.5%) from monthly income range 41000-50000, 37 (51.4%) from monthly income range above 50000 and 58 (28.9%) from not earning category had cast their votes. However, 14(56.0%) from a range of monthly in b come less than 10000, 9(45.0%) from a monthly income range of 11000-20000, 12(48.0%) from a monthly income range of 21000-30000, 13(38.2%) from monthly income range 31000-40000, 13(56.5%) from monthly income range 41000-50000, 35(48.6%) from monthly income range above 50000 and 143(71.1%) from not earning had not cast their votes. Moreover, there is a remarkable association between monthly income, and the decision to cast a vote as $χ2 = 24.600$ with a p-value 0.000***. Monthly income of the respondents is shown in the figure below.
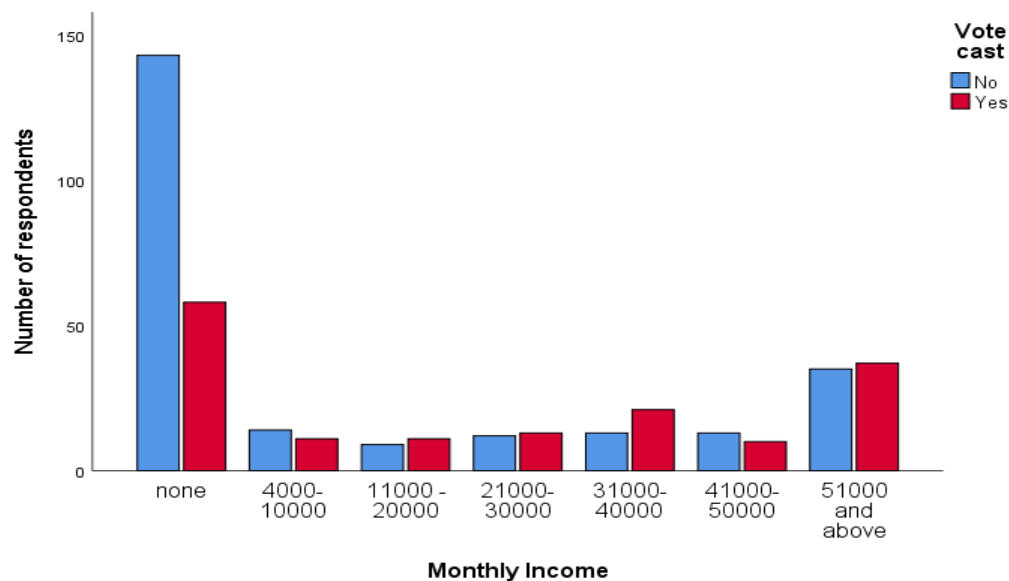

Figure 6 *Monthly Income of the Respondents and Electoral Participation*

Family Income of the Respondent
Family Income

The total family income defines the overall living conditions of respondents that can

influence their electoral participation.

Descriptive Statistics
Table.15
Family income of the respondents

Variable	Response options	N	%
Family Income	< 25000	47	11.8
	26000-35000	73	18.2
	36000-50000	66	16.5
	>50000	214	53.5
	Total	400	100

As per the data collected from respondents, 47 (11.8%) of the total respondents' family earnings were under 25000, and 73 (18.2%) of the total family earned between 26000-35000. 66 (16.5%) of the total respondents had a family income between 36000-50000, and 214 (53.5%) had more than 50000 as family income. That shows the majority of respondents belong to the financially settled family.

Inferential Statistics
Table.16
Relationship between family income of the respondents and electoral participation

Variables	Response options	No (%)	Yes (%)	χ2	P
Family Income	< 25000	27 (57.4)	20 (42.6)	17.980	0.000***
	26000-35000	59 (80.8)	14 (19.2)		
	36000-50000	32 (48.5)	34 (51.5)		
	>50000	121 (56.5)	93 (43.5)		
	Total	239	161		

*P < 0.05, **P < 0.01, ***P < 0.001

Variations in family income also shows different responses with regards to their electoral participation as 20(42.6%) from a family income less than 25000, 14(19.2%) from a family income range of 26000-35000, 34(51.5%) from family income range 36000-50000 and 93(43.5%) from family income range more than 50000 had cast votes. However, 27 (57.4%) from a family income of less than 25000, 59(80.8%) from a family income range of 25000-35000, 32(48.5%) from a family income range of 36000-50000, and 121(56.5%) from family income range more than 50000 had not cast their votes. There is also a remarkable link between family income and the decision to cast a vote as χ2 = 17.980 with a p-value 0.000**

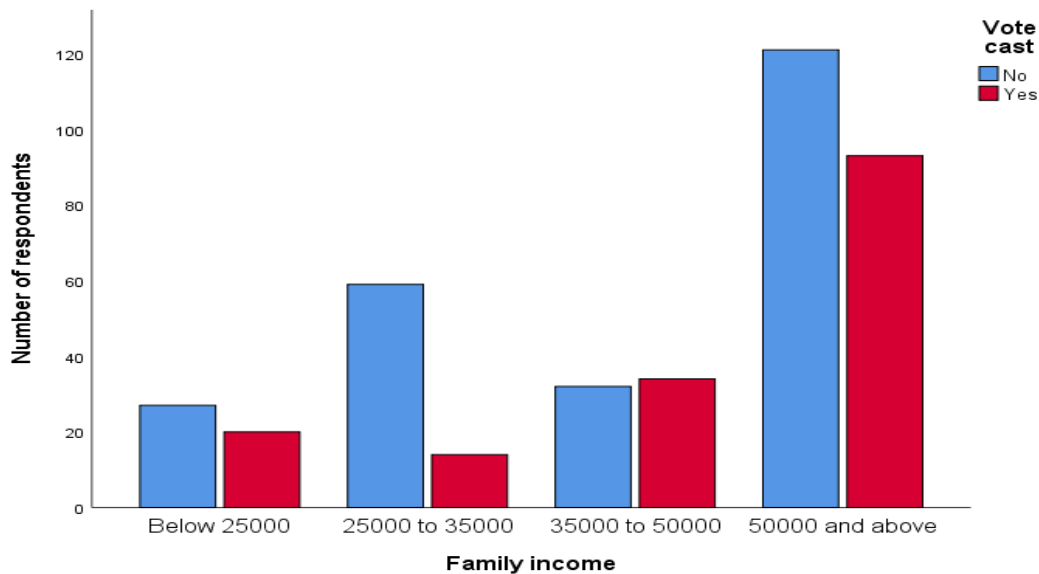**Figure 7.** *Monthly Income of the Respondents and Electoral Participation*

Socio-Cultural variable

As an independent variable Socio- cultural variable has analysed all those socio-cultural beliefs which hamper women's electoral participation. The socio-cultural variable is covered in the form of women's subordinate position while making a decision, their only responsibility of looking after the home and children, cultural *purdah* and people's perception of the women's co-existence in a mixed gathering. The socio-cultural variable is analysed in the light of 10 constructed questions measured by a 5-Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

Table.17 *Responses about the Socio-cultural Variable (n=400)*

Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Women's right to vote is accepted by our society.	7 1.8%	53 13.3%	41 10.3%	213 53.3%	86 21.5%
2. Women are free to cast their vote.	15 3.8%	55 13.8%	42 10.5%	195 48.8%	93 23.3%
3. Women can easily go to polling stations even if it is far away.	79 19.8%	149 37.3%	49 12.3%	90 22.5%	33 8.3%
4. Women are allowed to cast vote for the candidate of their choice.	17 4.3%	81 20.3%	43 10.8%	193 48.3%	66 16.5%
5. Women can easily get their national identity cards.	5 1.3%	44 11.0%	41 10.3%	233 58.3%	77 19.3%
6. Cultural purdah is a hurdle for women to go to the polling station	31 7.8%	124 31.0%	46 11.5%	113 28.2%	86 21.5%
7. Women have family support in casting votes.	24 6.0%	80 20.0%	59 14.8%	198 49.5%	39 9.8%
8. Lack of time and domestic responsibilities are the main hurdles for women in the way of casting a vote.	8 2.0%	68 17.0%	53 13.3%	152 38.0%	119 29.8%
9. Male security guards in polling	21	164	63	92	60

stations is the main hurdle in the way of casting vote due to our purdah system.	5.3%	41.0%	15.8%	23.0%	15.0%
10. Less polling stations in their localities is the main hurdle in way of casting votes for women.	4 1.0%	55 13.8%	71 17.8%	130 32..5%	140 35.0%

The table shows the percentage of responses to each of the ten questions related to the socio-cultural variable. Of the total respondents 74.8% agreed with the opinion that our society accepts women's right to vote. Out of the total respondents, 72.1% agreed with the statement that women are free to cast their vote. In response to question 3, Women can easily go to polling stations even if it is far away, 30.8% agreed with mentioned statement. In response to question 4, Women are allowed to cast a vote for the candidate of their choice, 64.8% agreed with mentioned statement. In response to question 5, Women can easily get their national identity card, 77.6% agreed with mentioned statement. In response to question 6, Cultural purdah is a hurdle for women to go to the polling station,

49.7% agreed with mentioned statement. In response to question 7, Women have family support in casting a vote, 59.3% agreed with mentioned statement. In response to question 8, lack of time and domestic responsibilities are the main hurdles for women in the way of casting a vote, 67.8% agreed with mentioned statement. In response to question 9, Male security guards in polling stations are the main hurdle in the way of casting a vote due to our *purdah* system, 38% agreed with mentioned statement. In response to question 10, less polling stations in their localities is the main hurdle in casting a vote for women, 67.5% agreed with the mentioned statement. The figure below shows the percentage of responses for each socio-cultural-related question.
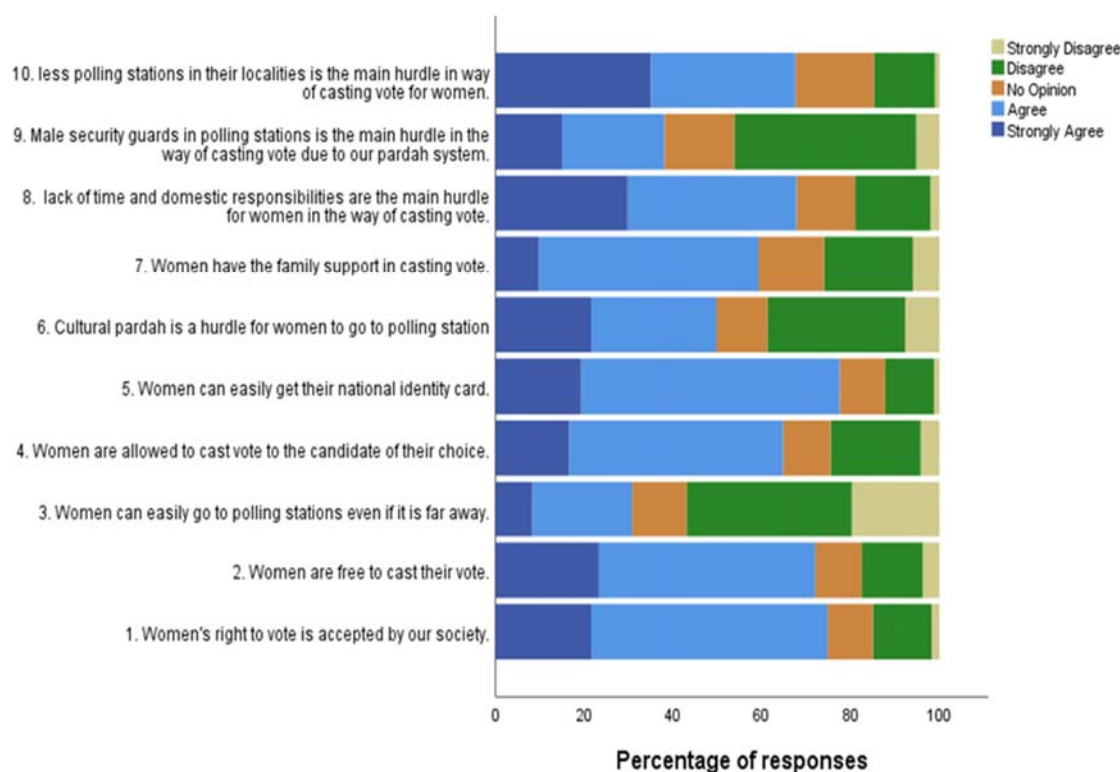

Figure. 8 *Responses of the Respondents to the Socio-cultural Variable*

Relationship between Socio-cultural Variable and Electoral Participation

A point-biserial correlation is run to find the link between the socio-cultural variable and electoral participation. The results are given below

Table.19

correlations of socio-cultural variable and electoral participation

Correlations		Electoral Participation	Socio-cultural
Electoral Participation	Pearson Correlation	1	.059
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.241
	n	400	400
Socio-cultural	Pearson Correlation	.059	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.241	
	n	400	400

The result shows a weak positive correlation between socio-cultural variables and electoral participation, which is statistically insignificant at p=0.241. Therefore, it is found that there is no remarkable correlation between socio-cultural variables and the decision to vote cast.

Findings

The findings of the current study are based on data analysis (quantitative). Through the close-ended questionnaire, respondents presented their views about the electoral participation of women in the General Elections of 2018 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Following are the findings.

➢ In NA-29 Peshawar maximum number of respondents had not cast their votes. Out of the total respondents from Peshawar, 161 (40.25%) had cast their votes, whereas 239(59.75%) had not.

➢ The chi-square test provides the p-value of age as <0.05 in Peshawar.

➢ The p-value of educational level and the decision to vote is <0.05 in Peshawar.

➢ Taking the marital status of respondents as an independent variable, results show that in Peshawar p-value is 0.003.

➢ The p-value of the type of family and the decision to vote is 0.004 in Peshawar.

➢ Taking occupation as a demographic variable, the p-value is 0.032 in Peshawar.

➢ Monthly income as a variable shows a p-value of <0.05 in Peshawar.

➢ Family income as a variable shows a p-value of < 0.05 in Peshawar.

➢ Socio-cultural factor as an independent variable shows the p-value as 0.241 in Peshawar

Conclusions

A vital component of any democracy is the right to vote, essential for ensuring that people may participate in politics. No community can advance economically, socially, or politically without the fair participation of every member in practically every aspect of daily life. Election turnout is regarded as a key indicator of democratic development. An election with a low turnout may not accurately reflect its citizens' will. Voter engagement is crucial since women have long fought for the right to vote. Women's distinct objectives and views on voting can help to form judgments on public policy that considers the needs and concerns of a wide variety of citizens. Women make up about half of the population, so their votes could significantly impact the results of elections. Women may contribute to ensuring that their interests are reflected in government and that the policies implemented reflect the ideals of a truly democratic society by utilizing their right to vote. The significance of women participating in elections cannot be overstated.

Although making up half of the world's population, women have little representation in leadership and political decision-making. Pakistan, like other developing countries, typically has low women's electoral turnout. Many factors influence election turnout, including socio-cultural, economic, educational, and political factors. The present study attempts to dig out the factors that result in the low turnout of women in Pakistan.

In many regions of the world, women's voting rights have advanced significantly, yet socio-cultural barriers still prohibit them from exercising that privilege. Gender stereotypes and patriarchal views are still prevalent in many nations, which may deter women from engaging in politics. This can be especially difficult for women, who are supposed to put their household commitments before their civic obligations. When women participate in public life, it can put established gender roles in jeopardy. In these situations, women may experience explicit discrimination or violence if they try to vote. In addition, women might not have access to the knowledge or tools required to engage in politics, such as voter education initiatives or means of transportation to polling places. Following are the results of Socio-cultural factors.

There is a down-and-out positive correlation between socio-cultural variables and the electoral role that is statistically insignificant at p=0.241 in NA 29 Peshawar. As far as NA. 32 Kohat is concerned, there is a weak positive correlation between socio-cultural variables and the decision to vote, which is insignificant at p=0.124. Combining the data of both the Peshawar and Kohat studies found a weak positive correlation between socio-cultural variables and the decision to vote, which is insignificant at p=0.053. Therefore, it is found that there is a meaningless correlation between socio-cultural variables and the decision to vote cast.

Suggestions for Socio-cultural Barriers

Overcoming socio-cultural barriers to women's right to vote requires a multifaceted approach that involves addressing external and internal factors preventing women from exercising their franchise. Here are some strategies that can help:

1. Education: Providing education on the importance of women's right to vote and their role in shaping the future of their communities and the country can help change cultural attitudes and norms.

2. Community Engagement: Engaging with local communities, leaders, and influencers can help challenge existing gender stereotypes and encourage women's participation in the democratic process. This can be achieved through community events, public discussions, and awareness campaigns.

3. Women's Empowerment: Empowering women through education, training, and economic opportunities can help build their confidence and agency, enabling them to participate more effectively in the democratic process.

4. Legal Reforms: Enacting laws that guarantee women's right to vote and protect them from discrimination and harassment can help provide a legal framework that supports their participation in the democratic process.

5. Role Models: Promoting and celebrating women who have broken socio-cultural barriers and become successful in politics can help inspire and encourage other women to follow in their footsteps.

Overall, overcoming socio-cultural barriers regarding women's right to vote requires a sustained and collaborative effort from the government, civil society, and the private sector. Working together can create an environment more conducive to women's participation in the democratic process.

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