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Print ISSN: [3006-2497](#) Online ISSN: [3006-2500](#)Platform & Workflow by: [Open Journal Systems](#)**FAITHFUL RESILIENCE: THE UNSEEN ROLE OF CHRISTIAN WOMEN IN POLITICS: A CASE STUDY OF LAHORE****Khush Bakhat Bajwa**

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ABSTRACT

Research evaluates the essential yet frequently overlooked political influence of Christian women within the governance of Lahore Pakistan. The study investigates how these women show their faithful resilience throughout their political journey by confronting societal challenges and political obstacles in Lahore. The Christian women of Lahore fight against religious discrimination and gender obstacles while working for their community's development. The research examines political resilience development through its analysis of Mary James Gill and Sarah Benjamin and their educational empowerment. Understanding how Christian women in Lahore have experienced political life adds to general understanding of diversity needs in politics while pushing for comprehensive inclusion among Christian women voters throughout Lahore and its surrounding areas.

Key Words: Christian Women, Political Landscape, Resilience, Advocacy Inclusive Political Environment

Introduction**Brief overview of the Christian minority in Pakistan**

Christianity in Pakistan a small minority constituting about 1.5% to 2% of the country's population as per population surveys, with several denominations of Christianity in use. The presence of Christians in Pakistan can be traced back to the British colonial period and many Pakistani Christians are descendants of Hindus or converts from indigenous religions. It includes Roman Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox. Facing socioeconomic challenges, Christians are often engaged in low-income jobs, and they contribute to the nation's cultural diversity through participation in various fields, despite occasional incidents of discrimination and violence (Gill, 2017). The Constitution guarantees religious freedom, but issues related to representation and protection persist for religious minorities in Pakistan.

Importance of understanding the political role of Christian women

Understanding the political role of Christian women holds significant importance in fostering inclusive governance and social harmony. By examining their participation in politics, we gain insights into the diverse perspectives and contributions that women from religious minorities bring to the political landscape. (Ali, 2021). Such understanding serves as the foundation to create a democracy system which represents all citizens through pluralistic means. Study of Christian women in politics allows for the identification of exclusive obstacles that limit their political advancement so targeted interventions can be developed to overcome these obstacles. The political participation of Christian women remains essential to establish pluralistic equality and diverse and effective governance in contemporary society (Ahmed, 2021).

A thorough analysis 'Lahore' as Case study

Using Lahore as an investigative case reveals the detailed interaction between Pakistani political forces and the obstacles Christian women confront in Pakistan. As Pakistan's largest multicentered city and cultural centre Lahore gives local perspectives which align with national socio-political realities. The political involvement of Christian women in Lahore reveals deep-rooted determining factors and present-day matters that shape their activism (Bano, 2020).

Lahore displays the complete spectrum of challenges and successes that Christian women encounter in Pakistan thanks to its position as a cultural and political centre. Analysing Christian women's political experiences in Lahore enables us to discover patterns alongside accomplishments and barriers that possibly differ from Pakistan's overall trends. The specific research generates achievable tools and methods that demonstrate value for broader religious minority women empowerment throughout Pakistan and achieves deeper comprehension of Christian women's political pathway (Gill, 2017).

Historical Context

From Pakistan's establishment to present day Christians have maintained essential political involvement starting from their early presence in British colonial government. During multiple decades Christians established their influence in political matters by navigating complex linkages between race and religion and societal structures. Christian religious leaders committed their backing to independence movements by uniting with nationwide political groups. Upon gaining independence new troubles emerged such as restricted minority group political participation as well as religious discrimination (Jivan, 2018). Against obstacles Christian political engagement has escalated along with members of the community seeking national and regional political offices. Participating leaders from Christian backgrounds have left their mark on political discourse by defending minority groups while enhancing political

inclusivity at various points in history. The growth of Christian political participation demonstrates the community's tenacity and resolve in securing a significant role in determining the direction of the country's government, as well as the shifting dynamics within Pakistan's larger political landscape. (Julius and Gill, 2020).

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research approach with a case study design, focusing on the political participation of Christian women in Lahore. Data is collected through semi-structured interviews with Christian women actively engaged in politics, civil society organizations, and grassroots activism. Additionally, content analysis of political party manifestos, parliamentary speeches, and legal frameworks is conducted to assess the institutional landscape. Purposive sampling is used to select participants with relevant political experience. The study also incorporates secondary sources, including government reports, human rights publications, and academic literature, to provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by Christian women in Lahore's political sphere.

Key milestones and challenges faced by the Christian community

The Christian community in Pakistan experienced numerous challenging circumstances while steering through multiple important transitions throughout its history. Pakistan's founding in 1947, which signaled the country's separation from India and the beginning of its independence, was one significant turning point. At this crucial time the Christian community had several challenges and opportunities while working to establish their identity and position in Pakistan's new nation (Khan, 2015). Later turning points include Christian leaders' work defending the rights of minorities, offering input on constitutional revisions, and taking part in social and educational changes that attempt to raise the community's standard of living. Although major achievements exist these difficulties persist to this day. Just like other minority religious groups in Pakistan Christians encounter exclusion and occasionally suffer violence and experience discrimination. The Christian community experiences difficulties to achieve progress due to economic disparities and limited educational chances and professional opportunities. Through proactive engagement with societal challenges the Christian community maintains its ability to construct an inclusive nation that embraces equality. (Khan, 2019). Historical turning points together with present-day problems form the basis for shaping Pakistan's Christian community's ongoing development which requires continuous advocacy work and awareness.

Changes in the political landscape of Lahore

As Pakistan's political center, Lahore has seen tremendous shifts in the country's political climate over time. The city maintains its worldwide reputation in history and cultural heritage yet its politics evolved due to both national developments and

resident particular demands. The numerous changes in political powers and civic engagement throughout Lahore reflect broader political movements according to Robinson (2018). The city of Lahore maintains its position as a powerful political party domain because changes in leadership influence how politics shapes its territory. Political power shifts in response to voting outcomes together with emerging political figures and public sentiment modifications. Lahore's importance as a hub of culture and commerce has also made it a popular destination for political events, protests, and public conversation, adding to the liveliness and vitality of the country's political scene. Lahore's political transformation is a microcosm of Pakistan's political development, with its developments entwined with larger national tendencies. The political evolution of present-day Pakistan continues to pass through Lahore while the city continues to display the fundamental elements of contemporary Pakistani politics regardless of shifting political ideas (Yousaf and Parray, 2022).

Political Challenges Faced by Christian Women

The principal political hurdles affecting Pakistani Christian women include religious discrimination and insufficient representation in politics. Christians together with other religious minorities regularly encounter challenges because the Muslim population predominates political decision-making in Pakistan. The religious identity of Christian women leads to discrimination and intolerance that hinders their entire participation in political life. The discrimination against these women expresses itself through multiple barriers which stop them from participating in politics as well as through subtle prejudices according to Rizvi (2018). One of the primary barriers which obstructs minority involvement in political institutions remains a significant problem. Although the legislature includes reserved seats and religious minorities have constitutional rights the advancement of Christian women to key positions remains challenging. The implementation of minority participation safeguards finds resistance at times leading Christian women to receive insufficient attention in political decision-making activities. Religious prejudice and inadequate minority representation at the national level must be resolved before Christian women in Pakistan experience political inclusion (Nasir, 2019). Collaborative action must be developed to stop discriminatory practises so the political framework properly reflects Pakistan's diverse demographics.

Gender-specific hurdles in political participation

The unique gender-specific obstacles facing women in Pakistan effectively prevent their complete political participation in the country. Generally, society's tenacious socio-cultural traditions combined with sex-linked rules convey limited choices women and especially Christian women have to endure against more than one arm of discrimination. Societal stereotypes, cultural norms, and gender stereotypes prevent women from taking up political careers and contribute to the growing gender divide

in political leadership (Malik, 2020). Limited professional and educational access prevents women from achieving political exposure or developing leadership skills. In some location(s), education inequality between the sexes prevents women from obtaining the skills necessary to be politically involved (Khan, 2015). Women who have home duties in society continue gender roles and discourage political careers. Promotion of gender equity in education combined with breaking through cultural norms and providing a conducive environment for political participation is critical work for LEVEL-UP to move past gender-based barriers. Developing such inclusive platforms also produces in the best interest of Arab Muslim women such that Pakistan advocates create a just political framework to promote equal rights for Christian women. (Khan, 2019).

Barriers to leadership roles within the political sphere

The political sphere of Pakistan faces substantial obstacles for female leadership which affects women of Christian faith. Societal traditions rooted in patriarchal beliefs together with stereotypical thinking function to decrease the number of women who occupy leadership positions. Society views leadership as a masculine domain thus creates obstacles for all women to reach influential political positions (Julius and Gill, 2020). Women face barriers to professional growth and the political environment suffers from diminished representation of alternative perspectives because of entrenched attitudes. The existing political structures produce additional obstacles which increase women's challenges in leadership positions. Political systems built around male power networks and structures create obstacles that prevent women from gaining mentorships and reaching higher political positions. Women face extreme challenges when seeking political involvement because gender-sensitive policies and support systems fail to exist while prioritising Christian women in particular. A combination of affirmative action laws together with gender stereotypes reform and political changes favouring female leadership at every organisational level must exist to overcome these barriers. In addition to establishing gender equality, tearing down these obstacles is necessary to foster a political climate that honors Pakistan's population's diversity and depth (Krook, & O'Brien, 2012).

Case Study: Christian Women in Lahore Politics

Christian females who rose in politics have transformed the public sphere through their bold actions and disproved common stereotypes in Lahore. Through her activities Mary James Gill serves as an important figure in advancing the rights of religious minorities in Lahore. Through her experience in public service Gill has campaigned for laws that particularly protect Christian women facing difficulties (Riaz, 2017). Her complete work exemplifies the urgent necessity of different voices influencing political dialogue and resulting laws in Lahore. Through her outstanding career in politics Sarah

Benjamin demonstrates that Christian women possess substantial power as change-makers in their communities. Throughout her social and community work Benjamin obtained recognition beyond religious affiliations. Through sustained dedication she has established interfaith cooperation throughout Lahore by uniting different cultural elements. The storeys showcase the important role Christian women leaders in Lahore politics play by developing communities and increasing political inclusivity through their persistence and competency (Julius and Gill, 2020)

Overview of their political journeys and achievements

The political paths of Christian women politicians Mary James Gill and Sarah Benjamin are known in Lahore for their unwavering commitment to community growth. Mary James Gill joined political life after graduating from social work while she wanted to create solutions for the special challenges religious minorities confront in Lahore. Through her work she supports reforms which protect Christian women while promoting acceptance as fundamental to her political development. Beyond the legislative arena, Gill's accomplishments include community development initiatives that have improved the quality of life for Lahore's varied populace (Bano, 2020).

Through her approach to political leadership Sarah Benjamin committed to promoting social justice and religious cooperation. The leadership of Benjamin has effectively promoted cultural understanding across many communities in Lahore which created an environment of social unity. Through her accomplishments Benjamin shows her commitment to community projects while working to develop a politically united Lahore where Christian women gain active participation in city development. Christian women Gill and Benjamin serve as inspiring examples of effective political influence in Lahore by demonstrating how diversity adds value when building policies that serve the city's multicultural population. (Krook and O'Brien, 2012).

Challenges they faced and how they overcame them

As active politicians in Lahore Mary James Gill and Sarah Benjamin encountered various obstacles that Christian women in politics routinely experience. Each leader struggled with discrimination that emerged from their faith and the way society treated both their gender and their religion while others failed to acknowledge their political accomplishments. The solution to these obstacles depended on individuals having adaptability skills while engaging their communities and utilising good judgement. Mary James Gill overcame obstacles by participating in community forum discussions while educating voters about such minorities' problems and uniting with similar advocates to enhance her advocacy (Rizvi, 2018). Through her work on building interfaith connexions and team goals Sarah Benjamin developed ways to address obstacles in social transformation. Because she was committed to bringing people together and fostering a better political environment that blasted away ignorance and

intolerance. These leaders actively leveraged their political offices to combat discrimination, while demanding that their state pass inclusive equality laws. Together with Sarah Benjamin Mary James Gill is able to show us that through community connexion and dedicated service activism is the key alone with perseverance to change lives in the face of adversity. Through their triumphs these leaders made space for Christian women to emerge as leaders in the following generations of Lahore (Nasir, 2019)

Resilience and Advocacy

Pakistan's Christian women, especially in cities such as Lahore, have proven to be remarkably resilient and have advocated for political change, making the country's political environment more representative and inclusive. One such motivational tale is that of Sonia Masih, who overcame socioeconomic obstacles to become an ardent supporter of women's and religious minorities' rights. Sonia devoted her journey to grassroots organising by personally interacting with her community to teach them about political involvement's worth. Sonia Masih dedicated her campaigns to establish the participation of Christian women in government leadership roles while advocating for laws that address their specific requirements (Malik, 2020). Maria Shahbaz achieved prominence as she became an inspirational symbol following her persecution through forced marriage and forced conversion. Ironically using her personal injustice as fuel to empower activism Maria demanded from Pakistan's government better policies for forced conversion solutions and religious freedom protection. The storey resonated with Christians and people from other backgrounds which demonstrated how advocacy shapes political debate. Storeys of Christian women in Pakistani politics demonstrate how they challenge discrimination while surviving all forms of threats (Khan, 2015).

Initiatives promoting political awareness and engagement

A number of programmes in Pakistan actively support political participation development while focusing on attracting diverse groups particularly Christian women to join the process. The initiatives have been led by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) together with community-based groups that organise awareness campaigns followed by workshops and seminars to educate women about their political rights and democratic process participation. The programmes employ community-based methods to enter rural and urban spaces for filling in missing knowledge and myth busting about political involvement. The programmes work toward Christian and female empowerment in political participation by building a society that engages women in political discussions and choices (Ahmed, 2021).

The internet along with its social media features serves as an essential mechanism to enhance the political consciousness of women in Pakistan. The availability of online

programmes through social media campaigns webinars and instructional materials offers women simple methods to access rights information along with opportunities to have political discourse and maintain current event updates. Through technological tools these programmes remove geographical constraints thus enabling women to voice their perspectives and tell personal stories with other like-minded individuals. These programmes advance the foundational goal of political education for Christian women through integrated conventional and digital teaching methods (Gill, 2017). The implemented programmes improve political participation rates across Pakistan by encouraging inclusive decision-making.

The role of education and empowerment in fostering resilience

The education of Christian women in Pakistan enhances their power because it helps them break social barriers to make meaningful political impact. A top-quality educational experience equips women with accurate knowledge and thinking abilities alongside self-confidence for participating in political discussions. The pursuit of education by Christian women helps create transformational leaders in society who destroy false beliefs while securing their fundamental rights. Women become more capable through education because it enables them to share their concerns while understanding politics and actively participating in decision-making processes (Ahmed, 2021). The process of education drives individuals toward higher levels of social power while improving economic prospects and building intellectual capabilities. Christian women who learn useful skills and gain knowledge become equipped to end poverty and acquire independence while gaining expanded opportunities to impact others. Female Christians who receive education possess the ability to confront institutional problems while actively working for political reform. The transformative power of educational empowerment builds resilience across Christian women in Pakistan through both personal empowerment and tools needed to face societal barriers which results in better social and political participation of Christian women in Pakistani society (Khan, 2019).

Conclusion

Political conditions within Lahore demonstrate active historical obstacles and present-day movements that promote inclusion for Christian women. Christian women residing in Lahore face religious prejudice together with gender-driven inhibitions and limited access to executive positions. Their stories show how education coupled with empowerment and political consciousness-raising programmes effect real social change. The impact of these women extends into culture as well and is manifested nationally, through the likes of Mary James Gill and Sarah Benjamin – and locally, as Christian women in Lahore politics imitate their strengths alongside diverse ethnicities.

Christian women in Lahore are confronted with several challenges that are part of broader political issues in their region. Advocacy initiatives resulting in the achievements of Christian women leaders coupled with educational programmes and awareness-building schemes will help strengthen the political future of Lahore. The narrative of Christian women elected representatives in Lahore calls for regular endeavours to end discriminatory practises while encouraging religious pluralism to facilitate a discourse which welcomes the voice of all citizens for city and national growth.

The transition into an integrative type of political environment needs a coordinated effort from the side of decision makers and the representatives of the sub cultures with the citizens. The chaos surrounding power struggles must come to an end, and systemic and structural barriers should be removed to pave the way for the equitable representation and acknowledgement of voices that will decide this nation's future. Pakistan can attain a dynamic political framework that does not discriminate on religious or gender precepts and respects the awesome will of the native population with consistent endeavor.

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