

Women's Participation in Local Government Elections 2021 in Tehsil Jamrud: Problems and Prospects

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Abstract

Erstwhile FATA merger in 2018 no-doubt was the result of immediate response to counter the growing terrorism in the tribal belt of Pakistan. However, it was also the long awaited cry of the people as well to channelize the tribal areas in the line of mainstream politics and to counter the malaise of FCR reign. As a part of broader policy, the KP Local Government Act, 2013 was amended in 2019 to introduce for the first the local government representatives to uplift the politically alienated society from root level. To such end, local government elections were conducted in 2021. These elections were welcomed with enthusiasm by majority section of the society. However, the participation of women in especially Tehsil Jamrud has faced many problems ranging from socio-political to administrative lapses. Generally, like most of the Pakistan's societies, the social traditions, lack of social and political know-how, lack of information about the power and functions of local government authorities, voting process difficulties, socio-politically strong families and in some cases the dominant religious narratives played the major role in hindering the women participation both as a voter and candidate in local government elections, 2021. However, some specific trends like joint family structure was found politically divided and apolitical competition within the same clan was used as tool hindering the women's participation in local government elections 2021. This research is an attempt to initiate a constructive dialogue within academia and policymakers to highlight the challenges on different level with pragmatic steps to follow. Methodologically, this study is qualitative in nature and to meet such ends open-ended questions interviews were conducted to acquire the primary data.

Key Words: Erstwhile FATA, Newly Merged Districts (NMDs), Local Government Elections, Frontier Crime Regulations (FCR), Women Participation

Introduction

After much discussion and a year delay, the new cycle of Local Government Elections was conducted with much enthusiasm. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) was the first among other provinces of the country in race to undergo the Local Government Elections in December 19, 2021. According to Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) report, (2022) in the first phase of KP Local Government Elections, elections were conducted in the 17 districts of the province. The elections were of high importance to many along with political parties, since the local government elections were conducted for the first time in Newly Merged Districts (NMDs) (Ex-FATA tribal regions) since the inception of Pakistan (Mehboob, 2022). Indeed, decentralization is the efficient mechanism of improving the government accountability and has the potential to manage the public services in effective manner. In this regards, the accountability requires the large number of local people participation in local government and subsequent local government elections. Such political motivations drove tribesmen to participate in local government elections and have major impact on the voters' turnout including the women (Janjua, 2022). Local Government elections, as mentioned above, for the very first time in the history of Tribal Areas, were held in the tribal districts of Khyber, Mohmand, and Bajaur in December 2021. On January 16, 2022, local body elections were held in the four remaining tribal districts. In contrast to general elections, where the parties typically field affluent candidates, Khyber District elections featured participation from young people and women. Ladies were observed campaigning from door to door as well (Dawn, 2021). Women participated in the elections as candidates as well as voters. There was no special minority participation, though, as 300 Sikh and Christian families relocated in Peshawar and other areas after leaving the District Khyber (Dawn, 2021). Yet, it was observed that the majority of voters had no clear understanding of the local body election process. Some female polling stations reported sporadic poll suspension problems. Due to allegations of favouritism made against the polling personnel by several candidates, voting was momentarily delayed at the polling location of the government higher secondary school for girls. However, the problem was later fixed, and the polling was resumed. Yet, because of the complicated formalities and lack of knowledge, particularly in the women polling stations in the local government elections, the voting process remained slow in tribal districts (HRCP, 2022).

Background of the Study

Women are crucial section of our society as being mother and custodian of household and children. However, this section of population is lacking in term of equal political participation at different level of government (Kumar, 2004). The simple logic of democracy and social justice demands women's equal participation in political leadership and decision-making process to address women's political rights. Both the paradigms of inclusive governance and democracy comes in contradiction when government or state fails to engage or in some cases deny to engage both section of society (men and women) in governance structure (Iqbal, 2010). Moreover, the "right to equal participation" of women at different levels of government institutions is also recognized in many international normative frameworks, i.e. Articles II and III of the "Convention on the Political Rights of Women" – 1935 (UN, 2019); Article 7 of 'Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women' (CEDAW) – December 1979 which signified "women ... rights to vote, to hold public office and to exercise (political) public functions" (OHCHR, 2020); and, 'Fourth World Conference on Women' – 1995 in Beijing also articulated the similar ideas of women participation and equal rights as an essential element of society (UNFPA, 2006). History of 'Decentralization of Power' is often related with the emergence of concept of democracy in modern nation-state system (Malik, 2019). In Pakistan, the post-independence era, at initial years received a serious setback in terms of promulgating and executing Local Government System. Many reasons can be placed to those hurdles to establishment and execution of independent and effective Local Government System in Pakistan. For-instance, lack of sense of acceptance; nepotism and favoritism in political culture; priority differences in the mind of feudal (Singh, 2009); and, lack of leadership which forged the dilemma of effective policy formulation and its execution which further widened the gap between general masses and policy-makers (Arif, 2010). In the context of the above discussion, the 'Basic Democracies Ordinance' in 1959 and 'Municipal Administration Ordinance' inked in 1960 failed to operate mainly because of political instability. Similarly, the 1975 'Local Government Act' received a serious blow in its implementation, since the political begot (politicians, civil and military bureaucracies) were reluctant to transfer power to ground/root level (Kumar, 2004). And, power centralization and how it needs to be decentralized remained the core political debate in that era. General Pervaiz Musharraf under 'Local Government Ordinance 2001' introduced the prevailing Local Government System in Pakistan. Interestingly, Musharraf's undemocratic government has introduced more democratic culture in Local Government sphere (Anjum, 2001). For the effective execution of this local setup, the then President Musharraf framed Federal Agency of National Reconstruction Bureau (NRB). Among others, the basic intents of the Ordinance included ensuring citizen's maximum participation in local governance; devolution of power; and, empowering local-root level representatives in delivering services to general public with organized manner (Alam, 2013).

Local Government System and Women's Role

According to the definition of Britannica local government is the "authority to determine and execute measures within a restricted area inside and smaller than a whole state" (Britannica, 2023). Local government system is referring to the systematic formulation and implementation of policies at gross-root level by engaging those communities which has immediate impacts of policy execution. In simple words, local government is a necessary element of every locality or society to decide and to act according to the ground realities. In Pakistan, local government system is often related to the broad two phenomena, i.e. deconcentration and decentralization. However, these phenomena are misinterpreted in sphere of local government system. For-instance, deconcentration is refers to the distribution of functions from center to local administration on the spot for the sake of convenience, however, the power still is exercised by center through appointed and responsible officials, and, discretion and authority are bestowed in the center as well. Decentralization, on the other hands, represents the local government system in any particular locality where authority to decide with specific powers and functions (mostly community works and services) has been devolved/decentralized to local council with elected representation from within the community (Local Government Association, 2022). These locally elected representation/officials act on their own discretion within the constitutional limits (Khaliq, 2012).

Area Study

District Khyber formerly known as Khyber Agency is one of the seven NMDs districts which was part of erstwhile FATA. Geographically, District Khyber is located at the North-West part of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. It is bordered with Orakzai District in the South; to North-East it touches Mohmand District; to North-West is Afghanistan; to North it is surrounded by Suffaidkoh – White Mountain Range and River Kabul; Peshawar is in the East and in the West of District Khyber lays Kurram District. Total area of District Khyber is 2,576 Sq Kilometers (Hussain, 2013). Demographically, District Khyber is home to four major tribes, i.e. Afridis, Shinwaris, Mullaguris and Shilmanis. Among them Afridis are larger in term of population and area covered by the tribe. According to the 2023 Pakistan Census Report, District Khyber is home to 1.14 Million people. Administratively, the District Khyber is divided into four Tehsils, i.e. Bara Tehsil, Jamrud Tehsil, Landi Kotal Tehsil and Mullaguri Tehsil. In Landi Kotal Tehsil, Shinwari

and Shilmani tribes are located; while Mullaguris in Mullaguri Tehsil; and, Bara Tehsil and Jamrud Tehsil contain Afridis tribe (Hussain, 2013). This study is conducted in Tehsil Jamrud which is home to Afridis (Kukikhel caste only).

Statement of the Problem

The women's participation in local government elections, 2021 in Tehsil Jamrud has mixed reactions. In NMDs in general and Tehsil Jamrud in particular, local bodies' elections were conducted for the first time since inception of Pakistan. In contrast to men, the women's turnout in local government elections, 2021 was low in Tehsil Jamrud. This new political phenomenon of local government elections in the tribal areas was complicated for women to understand – whether to actively participate in it or stay aloof from it. Such state of confusion has far reaching impacts on civic engagements of women in political sphere. It is becoming a dilemma of concern in many tribal areas including Tehsil Jamrud. Since, when a specific section of society lack interest in political representation, it is more likely to become excluded over time. Addressing this particular problem in this thesis will have pragmatic benefits for Tehsil Jamrud and will be an effort to contribute to understanding of women responsibility of participation in elections both as a voter and candidate. This study will identify the problems and prospects involved in the local government elections, 2021 and women's participation using the interviews technique.

Research Questions

1. What were the significant hurdles for the women's participation in the Local Government elections 2021 in Tehsil Jamrud?
2. What are the prospects of women's participation in the Local Government elections in Tehsil Jamrud?

Research Objectives

1. To evaluate and assess various hurdles faced by women in local government elections 2021 in Tehsil Jamrud.
2. To assess the prospects of women's participation in the local government elections in Tehsil Jamrud.

Significance of the Study

There are numerous governmental and non-governmental surveys conducted on the implementation of development policies in NMDs and the women participation in Local Government is yet to be addressed. Therefore, this study will be helpful to give an insight to the problems and prospects of women's participation in local government elections in 2021 and the upcoming elections. This study will also provide a blue print for the government and policy makers to analyze and identify various problems facing by women in elections and re-arrange policy measures and options for greater benefits.

Literature Review

Introduction

The dilemma of women discriminatory participation is the harsh reality of society at large through-out the human history. Whether, social and cultural inter-play or political and economic competition, the factor of power relations has always undermined the women's participation in almost every aspect of life (Celis, 2008). Politics, among the many aspects, has on the top of list where the gender inequality has caused jeopardy the most. The discriminatory representation of women in politics, from being a voter to being an elected member, lack of women's ability is not the core issue, rather, the constructed social-cum-political order has induced the discriminatory element even in democratic culture as well (Iqbal, 2010). Indeed, the NMDs or erstwhile FATA region has been long ruled by infamous FCR roles till the 2018 merger. Since independence, the said region has been kept deprived from the basic political rights of having its own local representatives. Surprisingly, the NMDs areas were controlled from Federal/Islamabad which has had little know/how about the cultural political dynamics of the areas. This dilemma further dragged the NMDs regions to political and administrative uncertainties. From the political uncertainty to the religious extremism, erstwhile FATA areas have witnessed many proxy wars since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1980s.

Understanding the Demographic Dynamics of Erstwhile FATA/NMDs

The erstwhile Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) is situated on the northwestern border of Pakistan with Afghanistan famously known as Durand Line. Historically, the British India drew the 1500 mile-long boundary in 1893 which was named after Sir Henry Mortimer Durand – the British Diplomat. It split the Pashtun tribes some of whom into British India and other remained in Afghanistan (Hussain, 2013). Soon after partition of Indian Sub-continent, the Durand Line was used as the international border between Pakistan and Afghanistan which the later did not officially recognized it as international border saying that it was an enforced agreement from British which the Amir of Kabul Abdur Rahman had no other option but to accept it (Ullah, 2015).

Evolution of Local Government System in Pakistan: An Overview

No-wonder, currently, the legal system of Pakistan has many provisions in support of women's equal role especially in politics which has evolved since inception in many shapes (Iwanaga, 2008). The hasty overview of such provisions place three documents i.e. Constitution of Pakistan, Devolution Plan and 18th Amendment, which have created a ray of

hope for this deprived section of society – women (Mehboob, 2022). Generally, Constitution of Pakistan ensured through many articles the equal status of men and women in every sphere of life especially the political rights referring to participation in election, voting, avoiding law to discriminate on sex basis etc. yet, Constitutional Article 34 gives direct emphasis on the uplifting of women participation in all fields of national life. In terms of Local Government System in Pakistan, a new era was coined when the then President Musharraf introduced the Devolution Plan in 2000 (Pandey, 2005). The Pakistan's political landscape witnessed reformatory policy surge from the very grass root level. The reorientation introduced in Local Government politics under Devolution Plan 2000 “provided 33 per cent reservation of seats for women through a combination of direct and indirect elections” (Javed, 2006). Yet another milestone in the political life of women was added in the 18th Constitutional Amendment of Pakistan. The 18th Constitutional Amendment empowered provinces and were held responsible for the establishment of their self-independent provincial local government structure, devolving financial, administrative and political responsibilities, and authority to locally elected members of local government without sex discrimination (Siddiqi, 2014). Consequently, under 18th Constitutional Amendment, Balochistan Local Government Act was passed in 2010; KP Local Government Act in 2013; Sindh Local Government Act in 2013 and Punjab Local Government Act in 2019 (Farooq, 2019). The post-independence era despite of early reservation from the religious elite, the 1956, 1962 and 1973 constitutions of Pakistan were successful in maintaining the colonial state legacy of women representation in legislative assemblies. However, the formula for women representation was based on reserved seats quota i.e. the respective assemblies had to indirectly elect them on reserved seats (Javed, 2006). The quantitative study of Pakistan's parliament in terms of elected women as member of the house shows men domination since inception. Since, reserved seats concept was the most common practice, yet two basic problems prevailed in women representation in almost every political regime: first, the women selected for indirect election usually come from elite, upper middle and middle classes of the society and in some cases only from educated families (Samina, 2009); second, in majority cases those women were not given any political or executive bargaining power instead they acted merely as figureheads (PILDAT, 2019). A brief history of post-independence era from the tenure of Ayub Khan to Pakistan's People Party 2008-13 political terms in regards to women representation in local government indicates a gradual evolution and improvement, as shown by Table No. 1.

Table No. 1: Brief Summary of Women Representation History in Local Government

Regime/Political Era	Period	Number/Percentage of Women Representation
ay Khan	1958-68	ay Khan introduced Basic Democracies. However, no-sp resentation was granted to women.
ah Bhutto	1971-77	dominance continued. No representation was given to Women.
il-Haq	1977-85	its at Union Council level, 10% quota in other tiers was provid en except the then NWFP.
izir Bhutto	1988-90	elections for Local Government were not held.
az Sharif	1990-93	% seats were granted to Women.
izir Bhutto	1994-96	ions for Local Government were again not held.
az Sharif	1997-99	rate quota system in each province was introduced: Balochist %, Sindh – 23%, Punjab – 12.7% and the then NWFP – 2.9%.
ez Musharraf	1999-2008	quota for Women representation at all levels.
raf Raza Gillani	2008-13	ained 33% quota with further decentralization of Federal inicial powers under 18 th Amendment.

Source: Dr. Khalid Manzoor Butt, “Women Empowerment by Local Representation: A Case Study of Lahore”
(Journal of Political Science, XXXII, GC University, Lahore, 2014), 74.

Though, the governance history of Pakistan has passed through many complications. From constitutional struggle to Military coups and democratic conations, governments and consequent governance were way behind in managing their affairs (Mehboob, 2022). However, Musharraf's Devolution Plan – 2000 and Legal Framework Order (LFO) – 2002 empowered women in political sphere. Under the Devolution Plan, women were given 33 percent representation in all administrative level of local government. During Musharraf era, the first local government elections were held in 2000 (Hening, 2001). Women were given permission to contest election at all level of local bodies' i.e. District, Tehsil and Union levels. For the first time in history of local government of Pakistan, “16 females were elected as *Nazims* and *Naib Nazims*” (Anjum, 2001). Though, it is widely contested debate that why *Nazims* and *Naib Nazims* were not able to deliver according to the expectation of general masses. However, still the political analyst considered it as an achievement (Mehboob, 2022). And, instead of focusing on the capacity and performance of the elected, they insisted on the decentralization of power phenomenon which would improve with the passage of time. It is true that the local

government political culture was new to the society and the elected had given emphasis on the short-term interests, i.e. placing personal interests before societal interests, instead (Sajid, 2013). Similarly, under Legal Framework Order – 2002, the number of women reserved seats were increased and fixed at different level of government bodies. For instance, 60 reserved seats in National Assembly out of total 342 seats and 17 seats in senate out of total 100 for women were fixed (Farooq, 2019). Beside reserved seats, National Assembly contained 16 female ‘Member National Assembly’ (MNA) which were directly elected by public. Numerically, the strength of women in National Assembly was 22.2 percent, senate 17 percent and provincial assemblies were directed to grant 17.6 percent seats as well (Iwanaga, 2008). Table No. 2 elaborate the total number of reserved seats for women in both houses of parliament while Table No. 3 illustrates the same in provincial assemblies.

Table No. 2: Women Legislative Representation in both Houses of Parliament

Provinces/Regions	onal Assembly (Total Number of Mte Reserved Seats for Women	(Total Number of Senators rved Seats for Women
ral/Islamabad	1	0
ab	4	35
h	4	14
hen NWFP	4	8
chistan	4	3
while FATA	0	0
I	17	60

Source: Legal Framework Order, 2002

Table No. 3: Women Legislative Representation in Different Provinces of Pakistan

inces	l Number of MPAs	rved Seats for Female MPAs
ab	371	66
h	168	29
hen NWFP	124	22
chistan	65	11
I	728	128

Source: Legal Framework Order, 2002

Constitutional Evolution of Self-Government System in NMDs

The erstwhile FATA have not been granted the power to self-government since the pre-partitions era of Indian Subcontinent. In response to Simon Commission, throughout majority areas of India a system of self-representation and rule was implemented, however, it was not extended to the erstwhile-North West Frontier Province (NWFP) (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) and to the tribal belt. A statutory committee led by Sir John Simon was established by the British government to investigate the nation’s constitutional concerns in November 1927 (Kerr, 2006). The decision was made on the assumption that democratic self-rule lacked the general public interest and potentials. After partition and inception of Pakistan, the tribal area continued to face the same constitutional denial until 2002, when the Musharraf’s tenure granted the erstwhile FATA the right to self-representation and rule (Abbasi, 2015). In 1997 the erstwhile FATA received the constitutional and legal status and was empowered to participate in voting process but only to the election of National Assembly members. Since the time of inception of such clause there exist no political party in the erstwhile FATA region, the elections were conducted on the non-party basis. Similarly, the erstwhile FATA was prohibited from participating and choosing their own local government representatives for Union, Tehsil and Agency Councils because the Local Government Ordinance (LGO) 2001 was not extended and implemented in the NMDs until 2002 (Ali, 2013). Finally, the erstwhile FATA masses tenacious effort and loud voices forced Musharraf’s administration to enact the FATA-Local Government Regulation (LGR) in 2002 (Ullah, 2017). The LGR rules permitted the establishment of Councils at local level in erstwhile FATA (Malik, 2006).

Devolution Plan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Local Government System

Since 1959, Pakistan has had three different forms of local government setups. The first among them was the “Basic Democracies” system or simply BDs which was put in place by the military government of Ayub Khan and had four tiers hierarchical power division structure. When the military rule came to an end in 1969, this four tiers local government system was abolished as well. Local government system once again was established in 1979 under another military regime – Zia’s tenure (Anjum, 2001). In accordance with arrangement, distinct local bodies, governed by the province, were established for rural and urban areas. The way functions were assigned under Zia’s local government

bodies was not very different from how the BDs operate; furthermore, the way revenue system was introduced, stayed weak for many reasons (Janjua, 2022). Zia's local government system persisted, although it faced complex political cum administrative problems. In certain instances, in some provinces the government had appointed administrators thereby replacing the elected local government personnel and this situation lasted for almost ten years. Again during the time of Musharraf's military regime, the Zia's local government system was superseded by the Devolution Plan (Mukherjee, 2007). The structure and composition of local government system under Devolution Plan in each province and district was varied according to the size and population with taxation capacity of that particular area or region. However, all four provinces used to have the same three tiers local government system. District Government and Zilla Council were placed at the top of this system as upper tier. Section 14 of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa LGO of 2001 divided 30 departments connected to the provision of social services in to 11 different groups, including agriculture, roads, education, health, social welfare, community development and business and industrial development (Ahmed, 2015). The financial and administrative jurisdiction of these departments was made the subject of District Government. The District Government was empowered to generate its own revenue within the specified sources (Ullah, 2015). The second tier was comprised of Tehsil Municipal Administration (TMA) and Town/Tehsil Council. The TMA jurisdiction within each district was determined by the number of population and size of the district. This (Second) tier was established by adding the rural hinterland to the pre-2001 Urban Local Bodies, for-instance, the Municipal Corporations, Municipal Committees and Town Committees (Kumar, 2004). At first, the Tehsils were established under the Land Revenue Act 1967 as the geographical areas to be administered by the Land Revenue Department. As a result of the reforms made in 2001, the entire Tehsil was made eligible for services that were previously only offered to urban centers. Similarly, during the previous local government system the jurisdiction of local bodies were only extended to the urban centers. And, the District Council with limited jurisdiction was established to look after the rural affairs and TMA was held responsible for carrying the jurisdictions of both rural and urban centers (Kerr, 2006).

Local Government Regulations – FATA, 2002

To transfer political cum administrative powers to erstwhile FATA, the Musharraf's government introduced the Local Government Regulations, 2002 to empower the region through local administration. The LGR was welcomed and rejoiced by the tribesmen of the areas (Ullah, 2017). However, Syed Iftikhar Hussain Shah the then governor of KP and Khalil ur Rehman his successor put many obstacles in the way and did everything to hinder the smooth implementation of the said Regulations. Khalil ur Rehman, the governor's commander, introduced the formation of unique and biased formula i.e. formation of "Agency Councils" (Papin, 2013). In 2004 the "Agency Councils" were imposed with most undemocratic features: the councils despite of having elected members were subjected to nominated members; the council has to serve as the advisory bodies only with no decision making power; and, councils were completely alienated and stayed aloof from administrative powers (PILDAT, 2019). Similarly, the LGR 2002 was kept aside in the local government elections 2004. Failure to strict adherence of LGR 2002 in Local Government Elections 2004 simply portrays an image of selecting favorites to the Agency Councils by Political Agents impose the harsh policies of "war on terror" in the erstwhile FATA (Iwanaga, 2008). Moreover, only *Maliks* and *Mashrans* (elders) were allowed to participate in the voting process of electing the councils members with specific interests despite of holding free and open elections where people voices could be put into consideration (Wazir, 2011).

LGR 2002 and Women Empowerment

The concept of women representation in the political and administrative matters of the erstwhile FATA region was initiated and formalized for the first time in the Local Government Regulations, 2002 development (Ali, 2016). Previously, this very concept of women's role in the affairs of local government activities was considered as completely non-existing phenomenon. The Chapter 2 of the LGR 2002 provided the details of the compositions of the areas, i.e. Union, Tehsil, Frontier Region (FR) and Agency. Under the Chapter 2 of the said Regulations, an Agency Government having its own Agency Council in all seven Agencies of erstwhile FATA shall be constituted to look after the local affairs (Ali, 2013). Chapter 3 of the LGR 2002 provided the compositional details of the local government structure in the erstwhile FATA Agencies. According to it, the Agency government was consisted of Agency Administration headed by Agency Nazim. In this Chapter, the Agency Nazim authority has also been highlighted. Through the Agency Coordination officer, the Agency Nazim had the power to purchase, possess, and transfer any type of property, both movable and immovable, as well as to contract, sue, and be sued in its name. The operation, management, and control of department offices that were decentralized to the Agency Government or that may be established in accordance with the Regulations were among the duties assigned to the Agency Government (Cheema, 2005). The Agency Nazim power and functions was vast including assessment and provision of policies giving for the Agency Government. These power and functions contain leadership, future development vision, direction for effective operation, controlling the framework and implementation of the annual budget for development plans, service provision, and Agency Government affairs in

maintaining the internal social harmony in terms of guiding local Jirga etc. In addition, the Agency Nazim was required to uphold administrative and financial discipline within the Agency Council and to offer tax recommendations to the Agency Council in accordance with the LGR 2002 rules (DAWN, 2004). Chapter 4 of the LGR-FATA, 2002 provided the composition of the Agency Council. According to the said Chapter, Agency Council would be the body consisted of all the Nazims of the Unions in that particular Agency and other members both elected and nominated. This act for the first time provided a platform for the women of erstwhile FATA to actively participate in the political and administrative affairs of the tribal local areas, since the composition of the Agency Council especially the number of reserved seats were set as such to facilitate the women in the society (Local Government Regulations, 2002). For instance,

S.No.	Number of Seat(s)	Seat(s) Nature
1	10	Nominated Members
2	04	Women Seats
3	01	Minority Seat

Similarly, women representation in the Tehsil Council was also made mandatory which provided more confidence in the women to represent and address their issues in the society. According to the Chapter 8 of the FATA-LGR, 2002 every Tehsil in any particular Agency should have a Tehsil Council. The composition of the Tehsil Council was consisted of: all union Nazims of the Tehsil, elected and 8 nominated members. Theoretically, the Tehsil council power and functions were set as such to represent and address the local problem in true spirit. For-instance, recommendations and observance of short and long terms plans for development of local services and infrastructure, estimation of annual budgets for the areas and Tehsil administration and approval of all by-laws in order to facilitate and boost the quality of municipal service delivery (Local Government Regulations, 2002).

S.No.	Number of Seat(s)	Seat(s) Nature
1	05	Nominated Members
2	02	Women Seats
3	01	Minority Seat

Chapter 10 of the LGR, 2002 provided the formation of Union Councils in every Tehsil of the Agency. According to the said Chapter, the union council was empowered to formulate and send recommendations for the annual budget of the union administration and the immediate development plans directly dealing the public interests especially the municipal services (Local Government Regulations, 2002). The composition of the Union Council was consisted of:

S.No.	Number of Seat(s)	Seat(s) Nature
1	07	General Seats (one Nazim, one Naib-Nazim)
2	03	Nominated members
3	01	Women seat

Chapter 14 of the FATA-LGR, 2002 gave the complete details of the election procedure for the local government. The procedure and provision for the election of Tehsil Nazim and Naib-Nazim and Agency Nazim and Naib-Nazim were based on the direct election through joint electorate on adult franchise basis (Ali, 2013). Separate provision was kept for the elections of women and minorities against the reserved seats, i.e. for them the Electoral College was made the elected members of that particular council at respective level. After every four years, local government elections were to be held initially on non-party basis (Local Government Regulations, 2002).

Local Government Regulations-FATA, 2012

On August 14, 2012, on the eve of Pakistan's 66th Independence celebration day, Asif Ali Zardari the then President Pakistan, promulgated the Local Government Regulations Act for the erstwhile FATA regions. However, the announcement was limited to the documents only and Pakistan's machinery failed to executive it properly, since the People Party Pakistan government had completed the constitutional tenure and general elections were held in 2013 (FATA-Local Government Regulations, 2012). A month before it was formally announced, the FATA-LGR, 2012 draft was made available for the general masses especially the erstwhile FATA people on FATA website to see the public interest and comments. The LGR 2012 draft established the municipal bodies in the erstwhile FATA. The draft was more like the modified version of KP-LGA, 2012 which was passed on the same year from the KP Assembly for local government in the settle areas of the province (FATA-Local Government Regulations, 2012). The Chapter 2 of the LGR, 2012 provided the geographic and democratic and, local members composition of the local councils established under its jurisdiction. Under the LGR provision the local areas was renamed as Town. Governor was authorized to divide the local areas into different wards with clear boundaries in order to facilitate the smooth conduct of local body elections and their respective responsibilities. For every notified Town, the local council that would be established in

accordance with the Chapter 2 of LGR, 2012 provisions will be known as the Municipal Committee. Local council shall be consisted of Chairman and assisted by Vice-Chairman elected directly by the council members (FATA-Local Government Regulations, 2012). Chapter 3 of the LGR, 2012 maintained the process of electing members to the local councils and the role of governor in supervising the role of these councils. The provisions bestowed in Chapter 3 direct that “election of members of all Municipal Committees shall be held on the basis of adult franchise and joint electorate through secret ballot” (Ali, 2016). However, the role of governor as mentioned in the said Chapter was of controversial and undemocratic nature. The Governor KP was given the overriding powers of dissolving the elected councils if found unsatisfactory in their role and delivery of public interests. The LGR, 2012 states that “Governor, when he is satisfied that remaining in office of office holders and members of Local Council is no longer in public interest, he may dissolve Local Council before the expiry of term on such a date as he deems fit”. Such provisions hindered the process of power decentralization phenomenon and had legally contributed to the delay of mainstreaming the erstwhile FATA regions in both political and socio-economic spheres of the country (FATA-Local Government Regulations, 2012). Chapter 6 of the LGR, 2012 describes the detail account of the power and functions of the Municipal committees to be established under the said Regulations. The basic functions assigned to these committees were: food and drinks, water supply, drainage, public health, monitoring sanitation, removal and dumping of waste, latrine, public safety, livestock, municipal planning, streets construction, building control, traffic vehicles, arboriculture, cultural promotion and sports events (FATA-Local Government Regulations, 2012). Empowering the local bodies definitely requires the decentralize nature of budgetary policy making structure. Chapter 7 of LGR, 2012 envisages the formation and approval of the budget of said local bodies. However, many grey areas which have completely made controversial the true spirit of local representation have been left in the said Regulations. For-instance, first, the direct power of passing the local budget of any local council was not given to them instead this power was kept under governor’s office; and, second, if council fails to prepare, submit and approve the budget from the governor before the new financial year, the governor was given power to decide the budget either himself or through political agents. Resultantly, a chance to meddle into the local councils affairs on various pretexts was provided to the political administrations. Such provisions have hindered the applicability and implementation process at root level (FATA-Local Government Regulations, 2012). Similarly, the governor’s upper hand in power concentration was also seen in the taxation and local policy legislation as mentioned in the Chapter 9 and 10 of the LGR 2012 respectively. Under the Chapter 9 rules, governor was empowered to “direct a local council to levy any tax, increase or reduce any tax and suspend or abolish the levy of any tax”. In passing of local order and resolutions too, the governor was empowered by Chapter 10 to suspend any order or resolution passed by the local councils. It stated that “if governor finds anything not complying with the law, he can squash the proceedings, suspend the execution of any resolution passed or order made by the council and prohibit the doing of anything proposed to be done” (FATA-Local Government Regulations, 2012). A comparative analysis of both FATA Local Government Regulations clearly reveals that the governor of KP in terms of dealing the affairs of the erstwhile FATA has been given significant power, which prevents the local government from operating effectively. Among many, the LGRs hefty taxation clause on the erstwhile FATA people was one factor contributing to the discontent of the tribesmen. There was no need of imposing further taxes on the erstwhile FATA region since the areas had passed through worse wave of terrorism and subsequent military operations. And, the erstwhile FATA people were already paying taxes in the form of permit to political administration. Moreover, lack of basic facilities – education, health and infrastructure – and complete ignorance in foreign funds utility have weakened their capacity of paying taxes and businesses. Similarly, the concept of “town” as introduced in LGR, 2012 was very strange since the erstwhile FATA is a backward area and majority features of the area are fulfilling the requirements of village only (FATA-Local Government Regulations, 2012). If comparatively analyzes both the LGRs, the LGR, 2002 was more thorough and practical in nature than LGR, 2012. However, most of the tribesmen prefer the LGR, 2012 mainly because it was framed by the democratic government through democratic process. And, the Musharraf’s “war on terror” policy has created unpopular impression due to the afterward military operations and any legislation or policy introduced by military regime was mostly disliked. Yet, academically, the LGR, 2002 as compared to the LGR, 2012 was of more democratic in nature, since in the later Regulations the governor of KP was given more power and had reduced the say of elected representatives in the public affairs. To foster the democratic culture in true essence and spirit, the need of the time was to enhance the role and authority of the local elected representatives instead of centralizing the power in the hands of political administration. Another significant barrier to the implementation of the LGRs 2002 and 2012, no doubt, was the British draconian FCR provisions which had prevented erstwhile FATA regions from having a truly functioning democratic local government. The unlimited power of Political Agent was the dilemma which had hindered almost majority of democratic developments. Government lack of seriousness too was among the main reason for such

ignorance, for-instance, two Regulations of local government was enacted within the timeframe of ten years, however, no elections for local government was conducted until 2021 (FATA-Local Government Regulations, 2012).

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Local Government Act (KPLGA), 2013 and Amendment to KPLGA, 2019

Under Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Local Government Act, 2013 a three tier system was introduced in the province to run the local affairs according to the wishes and needs of the populations. KPLGA, 2013 local system was more of an extension of the previous existing local government systems with minor amendments. The top tier of the said local government setup was the District Council with District Nazim as the executive authority. The District Council was divided into general seats and reserved seats categories: women, non-Muslim, workers, youth and peasants were given representation in the reserved seats to actively engage all sections of the society. Deputy Commissioner was held responsible for the smooth conduct of the district affair under the authority of District Nazim and was assigned the task of coordinating and supervising the conducts of district offices (KP-Local Government Act, 2013). The most significant structural changes includes the introduction of two tier local government system with the inclusion of city government model – where the formation directly elected mayor seat was held responsible for the urban affairs. According to the Amendment Act, 2019 the two tier system contains: first tier is composed of City Local Government in urban centers while Tehsil Local Government in rural areas; second tier is consisted of Neighborhood Council in urban setup while Village Council in rural regions. According to the Section 5 of the Amendment Act, 2019 of LGA, the district local government domain which used to be the first tier of the KPLGA, 2013 was abolished. Section 8 of the Amendment Act, 2019 provided that title of “Nazim” is replaced by “Chairman” and “Convenor” instead of “Naib Nazim” in the rural areas; while, in the urban areas (City Local Government) the head will be called “Mayor”. Section 21 of the Amendment Act, 2019 directs the procedure of election to the upper tier Tehsil/City Council, i.e. the Mayor and Chairman will be elected directly through an adult franchise purely on party basis where the Tehsil and city will act as a single constituency. It further clarifies that the Neighborhood and Village Councils elected “Chairmen will be the ex-officio members of the respective” Mayor/Chairman of City/Tehsil Council. Similarly, section 27 of the Amendment Act, 2019 maintains that the Village/Neighborhood Council shall be elected directly on adult franchise but on non-party basis. Composition and functions of the councils is placed almost same as prescribed in KPLGA, 2013 with minor changes (Amendment-2019 to KPLGA, 2013).

Extension of Local Government System Jurisdiction to NMDs

Soon after the enforcement of the Amendment Act, 2019 KP government grants extension of the said amendment jurisdiction to the NMDs regions. With its extension additional 711 Neighborhood and Village Councils and 25 Tehsil Local Government Councils were established. The extension of such jurisdiction allowed the NMDs regions to conduct first ever local government election in 2021. According to the Amendment Act, through district administration, provincial government will provide guidelines and recommendations for accomplishing the desire policy objectives and for the achievement of province’s social and economic security, infrastructural development, revision of different ongoing or new projects, social and population welfare and human resource management etc. The district administration was made the coordinating body between provincial government and local government bodies. The district administration was assigned the task to make sure the non-devolved offices carry out their duties efficiently and properly and, to conduct routine/periodic inspections. If requested by the provincial government, district administration and local government bodies will examine and report on the budgetary usage of the yearly development program of the local government. Upon the recommendation of provincial government, district administration and local government bodies will settle dispute involving the district City/Tehsil local governments, assist the former in enhancing the provision of services, and carry out any other tasked by the government in support of implementing the government policies (KP-Amendment Act, 2019).

Research Gap

Generally, considerable numbers of studies in different form are available on the discourse of Local Government System dealing different regions of Pakistan. However, Tehsil Jamrud in this case scenario is lacking-behind since the execution of merger policy is still under process. Though, there are numerous governmental and non-governmental surveys conducted on the implementation of Local Government policies and devolution of power, but they mainly focuses other areas of developments; the women participation in Local Government is yet to be listed in priorities.

Research Methodology

Nature of the Study

This research is descriptive and qualitative in nature. For the in depth analysis, researcher has utilized both primary and secondary data. The reason that the scholar has chosen qualitative methods is that it is not possible to quantify all the possible aspects, dimensions and variables responsible for curtailing women’s political participation in Tehsil Jamrud.

Moreover, the researcher endeavor was to generate sense making and draw inferences in terms of attributes instead of predictions and hypothesis testing (Hareendran, 2018).

Research Design

Research design generally is referred to overall strategy or plan which researcher chooses to follow during the whole process of thesis writing till the achievement of the desired objectives (Gauker, 2005). Among many research designs Descriptive research design is adopted in this case study. As the descriptive research envisages the obtaining of information for a particular cause or action to systematically describe a specific population, situation or phenomenon (Michel, 2007), therefore the dilemma of Tehsil Jamrud women's participation in Local Government is efficiently described through this method. Similarly, to address the objectives of the study, an appropriate data collection technique (primary data collection through open ended interviews) was conducted for this study. Both male and female were included in the interviews to collect and cover mix responses of the society and how they perceive the women role in the local government. An attempt was made to conduct the interviews in an environment which facilitate the respondent(s) to freely express their views or ideas for the broader understanding which is one of the key elements of the descriptive research design. Afterward, research population and research sampling were confined through convenience sampling technique. Finally collected data analysis was done through the interpretivist and descriptive techniques of data analysis (Hareendran, 2018).

Sources of Data

Secondary Sources of Data

For secondary data sources, researcher utilized different print and online published books, articles, journal papers, print and online news, focus-group discussion on the subject matter of local government in NMDs in general and Tehsil Jamrud in particular.

Interviews as Primary Source of Data Collection

The primary sources of data collection included semi-structured open ended interviews with both men and women in Tehsil Jamrud. An interview schedule consisting of six questions (open-ended questions) after discussion and approval from supervisor was prepared. It is generally accepted idea in social sciences that semi-structure interview is more reliable source of data collection for any particular phenomenon under study. Semi-structured interview provides an opportunity for both scholar and interviewee to explain and elaborate the issue under discussion with varying information and examples (Michel, 2007). As it is explained that "the literature of Research Methodology on semi-structured interviews replenish comprehensive richness and in-depth elaboration of the topic under discussion which leads to unpredictable directions and untouched avenues", therefore it was best utilized in the women's participation in local government elections of Tehsil Jamrud. Open-ended questions helped researcher to fully communicate with the respondents, for-instance, when some of the respondents failed to understand the real essence and purpose of the interview they were re-engaged by asking the same question(s) with different words and pattern. Similarly, most of the respondents especially the common uneducated women when interviewed had provided an outstanding in-sight on the issue of women's participation in local government but with lack of clarity and in disorganized way. For-instance, most of the times their responses were blaming the political elite and government institutions for terrorism, poverty, education and other social evils instead of focusing on the causes and hurdles in the way of women's participation in local government elections. However, these open-ended questions facilitated researcher to interact with interviewees in different way and approaches to meet the desire ends.

Focus Group Discussion

A group of 12 female students and female lecturers in Tehsil Jamrud Government Girls Degree College was selected in order to gather more authenticity of the data.

Research Sampling and Population

Research sampling – the group of people which were engaged in interviews for data collection – in this thesis is qualitative in nature, i.e. selected number of respondent with specific professions were interviewed. The scholar chosen convenience sampling technique in order to get authentic information's about women political participation and various hurdles associated to them (Patton, 1990). Since this study is aimed at providing the different types of hurdles pertaining to the women's participation in local government elections held in 2021, the overall women of Tehsil Jamrud who are liable for voting is not considered as the research population. Instead, here in this thesis by research population writer means the people who were interviewed to collect the data and unfold the causes and hurdles in the way of women's participation in local government elections, 2021. Writer for research sampling has selected sample size of 30 respondents. The interviews were conducted from: five from academia (female lecturers from Government Girls Degree College, Jamrud) and, five from female students of the same college analyze the phenomenon under study in a comparative manner as well. Furthermore, five female candidates for local government elections, 2021 of the Tehsil

Jamrud among them four have won their seats in their respective categories were interviewed to acquire the political and institutional hurdles existing for women's participation in said elections within the local government institutions and respective policies. Five females and five males respondents working in the different local government and governmental departments of Tehsil Jamrud to attain an insight of the government policies formulation, its practical execution, public utility and public perceptions of the women's role in local government. Lastly, five randomly selected uneducated females were interviewed as well to collect their point of view and how it is perceived in the normal family life.

Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data is critically assessed and analyzed through interpretivist and descriptive techniques in order to reach on assessment, findings and conclusion. Moreover, the descriptive and interpretive approach gives scholar a holistic approach to analyze the problem, study and then reach on the conclusion and findings.

Discussion

Theme One: Women Perceptions Towards Local Bodies Election in Tehsil Jamrud

This is the first theme of the study. Under this theme the questions related to the perceptions of local women of Tehsil Jamrud towards the Local Government 2021 election is discussed. The Local body elections were held for the first time in the history of NMDs after the merger with the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. These elections were perceived by the Jamrud women in terms of their participation with mix reactions. In this regard one of the respondent told that: "I felt that the local government elections in Tehsil Jamrud were a step towards empowering women in our community" (Afridi, 2023). It was further highlighted by her that, it was encouraging to see more women participating and being involved in the political process, which gives us a voice in decisions that affect our lives. Another respondent a college teacher commented that: "From my perspective, the local government elections were an opportunity for us, as women, to express our opinions and concerns about the issues that matter to us" (Nadia, 2023). It was further told by her that, it was a chance to elect representatives who understand our unique challenges and can advocate for our needs. Another respondent a college student elaborated the thoughts on the subject matter in a very constructed way. She added that the local government elections were a positive development for women in Tehsil Jamrud. It allowed the women of Jamrud Tehsil to contribute in the decision-making process at the local level, ensuring that their voices are heard and priorities are addressed in the community's development plans (Faryal, 2023). Such strong voices from college student represent the general willingness of the society toward the women's participation in local government activities. It was highlighted that this election was a first step towards breaking traditional barriers and promoting gender equality in governance. A very strong argument was place by the local government candidate and member as that "I personally saw the local government elections as a platform for women to actively engage in politics and play a role in shaping the future of our Tehsil, since the old fashion thinking of society is changing slowly and gradually" (Salma, 2023). However, the experience of local government elections for many was quite interesting in way that it was difficult for them to simply put it in the decision of good or bad. "The local government elections were a mixed experience for me. While it was a step forward in terms of involving women in the political process, there were still challenges." She further added that societal expectations and limited resources for campaigning that hindered full participation of women in these elections. "We need more support and opportunities to truly make a difference" (Faryal, 2023). Most the uneducated women section of the interviewees highlighted that they were not aware of the process of the election for the local bodies, as previously we have to only vote for one candidate, but this time there were multiple candidates to be vote for, so they face challenges in voting to the right candidate. That is why most of the women do not perceive these elections very positively. It is true that the process of local government elections, 2021 both as a voter and as candidate was difficult task before ECP and local regulatory authority, since of there still exist many administrative gaps.

Analysis

The first theme of this study delves into the perceptions of local women in Tehsil Jamrud regarding the 2021 Local Government elections, which marked a historic event in the merged regions. The responses are varied, reflecting a mix of sentiments among the women. Some view the elections as a positive step towards women's empowerment and political involvement, applauding the increased participation of women in the political process. They believe it offers them a voice in decisions impacting their lives and the opportunity to address their unique challenges. However, challenges like societal expectations and limited campaign resources are recognized as barriers to full participation. While some see the elections as a platform for women's political engagement and breaking traditional barriers, others, particularly those less educated, found the multiple-candidate system confusing, highlighting the need for better voter education. This diverse array of perspectives underscores the complexity of women's experiences in local politics.

Theme Two: Social Responses to the Women Participation in 2021 LG Elections

Several socio-cultural challenges have limited female participation in the political system. Beliefs, perception and local customs, cultural norms and practices, patriarchal system, and male-dominated society hindered the political empowerment of females. Under this theme the responses of the respondents regarding the social responses to the women participation in local government elections 2021 in Tehsil Jamrud had been recorded. On question regarding the social responses to the women participation in 2021 local government elections in Tehsil Jamrud, District Khyber mixed responses from the respondents were recorded. Many interview respondents in this regard were of the opinion that the community generally welcomed and encouraged women's participation in the local body elections. It was seen as a positive step towards a more inclusive and representative government that addresses the needs and concerns of all community members. A college teacher highlighted mixed social responses. She told that: "There was a diverse range of social reactions within the community regarding women's participation in the elections" (Ayesha, 2023). She further added that some individuals were supportive and recognized the importance of women's involvement, while others had reservations based on traditional beliefs and cultural norms. Other respondents commented that the local body elections significantly increased awareness about the importance of women's participation in governance. Over time, more people began to accept and appreciate the value of having female representation in decision-making roles within the local government. Female respondents further added that although progress was made, there were social challenges and resistance faced by women candidates. Some members of the community held onto traditional gender roles and were hesitant about women taking on political roles, leading to obstacles in campaigning and garnering support. Among those hurdles, physical space for women in the society, acceptance by family member to go out for voting, traditional narratives like 'what will they say' and women belongs to kitchen remained the dominant factors which prevailed in the whole election process. A female college student responded that the involvement of women in the local government elections empowered many, especially younger generations, to challenge gender stereotypes. "It sparked discussions and helped change mindsets within the community, promoting the idea that women have the right and capability to actively participate in the political process" (Huma, 2023). Many women who participated in the elections were fortunate to have supportive families and community networks that encouraged and aided their campaign efforts. This support played a vital role in breaking down barriers and enabling more women to engage in politics. Other responses especially the female college teachers and student in the group discussion expressed that the 2021 local government elections were a turning point for our community, with more women participating than ever before. It was heartening to see women stepping forward to take an active role in decision-making at the local level by breaking the traditional mindset of the society. Women brought different perspectives to the table, focusing on issues like healthcare, education, and community welfare. This added diversity enriched the discourse. However, challenges persisted. Some women candidates faced resistance and even violence during their campaigns, which is unacceptable. This underscores the need for improved security measures and increased awareness about the importance of women's political participation. Another political activist expressed her view during the interview that in the 2021 Local Government elections, the increased participation of women was a significant and positive development in our community. It was a step toward more inclusive and representative governance. "Personally, I believe that women's participation in politics is long overdue, and these elections were a clear indication of progress. Women brought fresh perspectives and priorities to the table, addressing issues that had previously been overlooked" (Ambareen, 2023). However, she highlighted several challenges too. According to her many women candidates faced gender-based discrimination and harassment during their campaigns, which was disheartening. It highlighted the need for greater awareness and education about gender equality in the society. Additionally, there is room for improvement in creating a supportive environment for women in politics, including mentorship programs and training.

Analysis

The socio-cultural challenges that have historically hindered female participation in politics, including beliefs, perceptions, cultural norms, patriarchal systems, and a male-dominated society, are still prevalent in Tehsil Jamrud during the 2021 local government elections. Responses from the community reveal a mixed picture. While some respondents welcomed and encouraged women's participation, viewing it as a positive step towards a more inclusive and representative government, others exhibited reservations rooted in traditional beliefs and cultural norms. These diverse reactions highlight the ongoing struggle to break down gender barriers. Despite these challenges, the elections did have positive effects. They raised awareness about the importance of women's participation in governance, slowly changing mindsets within the community. Supportive families and networks played a crucial role in helping women overcome obstacles.

Theme Three: Impacts of Women Participation in Local Government Elections of 2021 on Women Empowerment

The lack of adequate female representation in any echelon of governance and decision-making leads to a deficiency in democracy. Repeatedly, it has been demonstrated that varied groups tend to make more effective decisions. This holds especially true when dealing with the intricate task of representing the concerns of citizens at the community level. Local governments frequently wield substantial influence over policies related to housing, security, transportation, and the economy, directly impacting the lives of both women and men. Achieving gender equality in women's participation and representation within local decision-making processes is essential for elevating women's practical needs and concerns on the agendas of local governments and for adapting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to the local context. Establishing gender-balanced local councils could represent a pivotal stride toward achieving gender parity at the national level. The impacts of women's participation in local government elections in 2021 on women empowerment have been multifaceted, with both positive and negative aspects to consider. One of the uneducated female respondent shed light on the said discussion in a very unique way and expressed that the increased participation of women in local government during the 2021 elections has had a significant positive impact on women's empowerment in our community. Women should not be considered as men property instead the society must accept their role as an equal partner in all aspects of the life. This change is gradually coming since the local government elections, 2021 have occurred and, men are though a little but realizing and accepting it. Women bring unique perspectives and priorities to the decision-making process. For-instance, awareness regarding the health of women during pregnancy, their say in daughter's life key decisions of education and marriage and women participation in managing financial matters of the house. On administrative level, As a result, more policies and programs that are more inclusive and responsive to the needs of women and girls should be placed on the agenda on priority basis. One of the key positive outcomes has been increased access to education for girls according to her. Through the efforts of women in local government, we have seen improvements in college infrastructure, the availability of scholarships, and awareness campaigns promoting girls' education. This has led to a significant rise in the enrollment of girls in our college. Moreover, women leaders have played a crucial role in addressing issues such as gender-based violence and women's health. They have advocated for the establishment of support centers for survivors of violence and improved healthcare services for women. These initiatives have empowered women to seek help and support when needed (ZarGulla, 2023). During the group discussion emphasize was given on the importance of acknowledging the positive impacts of women's participation in local government elections in 2021, however there exist certain challenges and negative consequences. It concluded that the significant issue has been the backlash against women leaders in our community, there has been resistance from some conservative elements who are not comfortable with women in leadership roles. This has led to threats, harassment, and even violence against women politicians. Another negative aspect is the burden of expectations placed on women in local government. They are often expected to not only perform their official duties but also to fulfill traditional gender roles at home. This double burden can be overwhelming and may discourage some women from seeking or continuing in political positions. Additionally, the lack of resources and support for women in local government has been a hindrance. Many women candidates face financial constraints and lack access to campaign funds, making it challenging to compete effectively in elections. While women's participation is crucial for empowerment, it is essential to address these negative aspects to ensure that women in local government can work effectively and without fear for their safety. A male respondent of the Tehsil Jamrud which was a candidate for local government elections 2021 as well has given his thought regarding the women participation in local government, said that; the increased participation of women in local government during the 2021 elections has had a profoundly positive impact on women's empowerment in our region. According to him "One of the most significant benefits has been the enhancement of economic opportunities for women" (Mudasir, 2023). Women leaders have been instrumental in promoting women's entrepreneurship, access to microcredit, and vocational training programs. This has resulted in a notable increase in the economic independence of women in the community. Moreover, women in local government have been champions of women's rights and gender equality. They have introduced policies and initiatives that address issues such as wage gaps, workplace discrimination, and gender-based violence. For-instance, first, female were not allowed to work in private institutions even some families do not give permission to female to work in public sectors as well; and, second, female usually in private school are paid much less than men at the same position which forged grave concerns in our Tehsil. This (local government elections, 2021) has created a more inclusive and equitable platform for women. Few schools and other private institutions in our area have witnessed a shift in both the local female as a worker and increased in salaries which shows that local government elections 2021 has just began its positive impacts on our society. Another crucial area of positive impact has been the improvement of healthcare services for women. Women leaders have advocated for better maternal health care, family planning services, and reproductive health education. For-instance, the idea of family planning and proper mother-child care discussion many families have started for the first time. More interestingly, these ideas of family planning and women role in management of house finance are

welcomed by men's family members as well. This has led to healthier lives for women and their families. A contested candidates both male and female when interviewed have pointed out that one must appreciate the efforts of women in local government, however, one must also point out some negative consequences of their increased participation in the 2021 elections. One issue is the polarization of our community along gender lines. Instead of fostering unity, women in politics have sometimes unintentionally deepened divisions as some community members feel marginalized or unheard. Another concern is the allocation of resources. In some cases, resources have been redirected from other vital sectors to fund women-centric programs and projects. This reallocation has sometimes led to neglect in areas like infrastructure development and education for boys. Additionally, there is a perception that women in local government tend to prioritize women's issues over broader community concerns. While addressing gender-specific issues is essential, it is equally crucial to strike a balance and address the overall development needs of our community. A girls student responded the question and given her point of view that the increased participation of women in local government during the 2021 elections has undeniably had a positive impact on women's empowerment. One of the most remarkable outcomes has been the shift in societal attitudes towards women's leadership. As more women take on leadership roles, they serve as role models for young girls, inspiring them to aspire to positions of influence and authority. Moreover, women in local government have been instrumental in addressing pressing issues such as access to clean water and sanitation. They have championed infrastructure development projects that directly benefit women by reducing the time and effort required for household chores like fetching water. Furthermore, women leaders have played a vital role in promoting education for girls. They have initiated scholarship programs, built schools, and launched awareness campaigns to encourage parents to send their daughters to school. This has led to a significant increase in female literacy rates (Umbreen, 2023).

Analysis

The analysis provides a comprehensive view of the impact of increased female participation in local government during the 2021 elections. It underscores the critical role of women in politics, both positive and negative. On the positive side, women's participation has significantly empowered women in the community. It has led to more inclusive policies, improved access to education for girls, and a focus on addressing issues like gender-based violence and women's health. Additionally, economic opportunities for women have expanded, contributing to their economic independence. Moreover, women leaders have been instrumental in changing societal attitudes towards women's leadership, serving as role models for young girls. However, there are also challenges and negative consequences to consider. Backlash against women leaders, the burden of traditional gender roles, resource allocation concerns, and perceived prioritization of women's issues have created some obstacles. Additionally, the polarization along gender lines has raised concerns about unity within the community.

Theme Four: Social and Political Constraints to Women Participations in 2021

Women encounter numerous challenges when it comes to engaging in political activities. Structural impediments persist in the form of biased laws and institutions, which continue to restrict women's opportunities for political candidacy. Additionally, disparities in skills and resources mean that women are at a disadvantage compared to men, as they often lack the necessary education, connections, and assets required to excel as leaders. The culture has been played very vital role in the women Participation in politics. The interviewees shared views that the Tehsil Jamrud community, which is located in a socially and politically weak area, women's participation in the 2021 local government elections faced significant challenges. The most prominent constraint is the influence of Pakhtunwali Code, our traditional code of conduct. According to Pakhtunwali Code, women's participation in politics is often discouraged as it is seen as a violation of honor and cultural norms. This deeply ingrained belief restricts women from running for office or even engaging in political discussions openly. Furthermore, the limited access to education and awareness about political processes also hindered women's involvement. Illiteracy and lack of exposure to the electoral system made it difficult for women to navigate the complexities of running for office. Additionally, the scarcity of female candidates and role models in politics discouraged many from considering political careers. According to a college teacher the 2021 local government elections highlighted several social and political constraints that hindered women's participation; for instance, "One of the major issues was deeply rooted gender stereotypes that limit women's roles to homemakers and caregivers" (Kanwal, 2023). Further during group discussion it pointed out that these stereotypes perpetuate the belief that women are less capable in the political arena, discouraging them from running for office. Moreover, there were practical challenges. The lack of accessible childcare facilities during campaign events and voting days made it difficult for women with young children to participate actively. Additionally, the absence of gender-sensitive policies within political parties made it challenging for women to secure party nominations. On the political front, the absence of quotas or affirmative action policies further hindered women's representation. Women faced stiff competition from male counterparts who had more resources and political networks. To improve women's participation, we need to challenge

stereotypes, provide support systems, and push for gender-inclusive policies. Other social constraints which played a significant role in limiting women's participation in the 2021 local government elections, according to election candidates are: traditional gender roles and expectations continue to prevail in our society; many women are burdened with domestic responsibilities that leave them with limited time and energy to engage in political activities. Furthermore, societal norms often discourage women from entering the public sphere. Female candidates faced judgment and criticism for being "too ambitious" or "neglecting their families." This stigma deterred many potential candidates from running for office. Another issue was the lack of female role models in politics. Without visible female leaders, it's difficult for women to envision themselves in such roles (Fozia, 2023). During the 2021 local government elections, a significant political constraint was the absence of affirmative action policies. According to many respondents during group discussion without gender quotas or incentives for political parties to nominate women, many women found themselves marginalized within their own parties. The lack of a level playing field deterred potential female candidates. Additionally, there was limited support for women who did decide to run for office. Campaign financing was a major issue, with male candidates often having more resources at their disposal. This financial disadvantage hindered women's ability to campaign effectively. Moreover, the electoral process itself posed challenges. Intimidation and harassment of female candidates were not uncommon and discouraging women from participating in the process of election were other causes hindering women's active participation (Rana, 2023).

Analysis

Women face multifaceted challenges when engaging in political activities. In the specific context of the 2021 local government elections in a socially and politically vulnerable area, the impact of cultural norms and traditional beliefs, such as Pakhtunwali Code, was profound. These customs often discouraged women's political involvement, viewing it as a breach of honor and cultural norms. Limited education and awareness about politics hindered women's participation, and the scarcity of female role models added to the reluctance. Gender stereotypes played a significant role, reinforcing the notion that women are better suited for domestic roles. Practical challenges like childcare, gender-insensitive party policies, the absence of quotas, limited support, and campaign financing disparities further hindered women's participation.

Theme Five: Women Participation in Politics as voter and as Candidate

Studies indicate that a higher presence of women in parliament typically leads to increased attention to women's issues. Women's active involvement in politics is a fundamental prerequisite for achieving gender equality and fostering a true democracy. It enables women to directly participate in public decision-making and serves as a mechanism for holding decision-makers accountable to women. However, enhancing political accountability to women isn't solely about elevating the number of women in leadership roles; it requires gender-sensitive reforms in governance that empower all elected officials to effectively promote gender equality in public policies and ensure their implementation. UN Women's mission includes promoting women's political participation and good governance to guarantee that decision-making processes are inclusive, responsive, equitable, and participatory. These efforts are channeled through strategic entry points that aim to elevate the status of women by catalyzing extensive and lasting impacts. An election contested female political activist has shared her experience that she has been actively involved in politics for a decade now, and firmly believe that women's participation is crucial. As voters, women often bring unique perspectives and priorities to the table. However, as candidates, we still face substantial challenges. The gender bias and stereotypes are disheartening. "I have personally encountered skepticism about my leadership abilities solely because of my gender" (Fozia, 2023). To encourage more women to participate, there is need not only to supportive policies but also cultural shifts. Society should celebrate women leaders and their accomplishments, emphasizing that political leadership knows no gender. Additionally, mentoring and training programs can help prospective female candidates navigate the political landscape. As a voter, women should remember the power of their voices in shaping policies and electing representatives who truly represent their interests (Salma, 2023). Another teacher who served as presiding officer in local government in 2021 has shared her point of view that she believes women's participation in politics, both as voters and candidates, is crucial for a balanced and just society. "As a teacher, I have witnessed the importance of informed citizens, and women are often more socially aware and empathetic. However, there's still a lack of representation when it comes to women candidates" (Kanwal, 2023). Many women hesitate to enter politics due to the negative campaigning and personal attacks. To address this, political parties should ensure safe environments for female candidates and discourage mudslinging (Rana, 2023). As a voter, women need to stay informed about political issues and it is the duty of state and concern administration to introduce such policies which address such remedies. It must be recognized through different policies that women collective power in influencing political decisions is the key to different socio-political ills affecting female of Tehsil Jamrud. Education plays a significant role here. Schools should include civic education programs that emphasize the importance of political participation for everyone, regardless of gender (Sanam, 2023). Many

interviewees placed the constructive perspectives of the local government needs for women's participation and argued that politics is impacting the daily lives of women in many ways. Therefore, it is essential for women to actively engage in the political process as both voters and candidates. As a voter, women often bring a practical and compassionate approach to decision-making, while as candidate those ideas are reached to the tables where it is considered. However, there's a need for more women to step up as candidates. The fear of balancing personal and political life can be intimidating. Also, the financial aspect of running for office can be a significant barrier. To encourage women to run, there should be more accessible funding options for campaigns. Additionally, mentorship programs would be beneficial, connecting aspiring female candidates with experienced politicians. There is a need to create an environment where women are confident that their voices will be heard and respected and societal and cultural norms must be facilitating forces instead of hurdles. Commenting on the women participation as a candidate and voter, majority interviewees agreed to a common assumption that since the merger of erstwhile FATA to KP significant changes have been witnessed in women's active participation in political activities of the Tehsil Jamrud. "As a teacher, I believe women have an indispensable role to play in shaping our society. Voting is a fundamental right, and women should exercise it fully" (Riffat, 2023). Indeed, the social acceptance to the cause of women as a voter has seen major shift in the said region. However, as candidates, there are still barriers to overcome. One significant challenge is the underrepresentation of women in political parties' leadership positions. This lack of representation often leads to policies that do not fully consider women's issues. Political parties should be more proactive in promoting female candidates and adopting gender-sensitive policies. Women's perspectives are diverse, and having more women in decision-making positions will lead to better governance. A female political candidate in Jamrud expressed optimistic views that in my work as a candidate, "I have seen the transformative power of women's involvement in politics". Women bring a unique perspective and often prioritize social justice and equality. However, the journey for women as candidates can be arduous. "Gender biases persist, and female politicians are often subjected to unfair scrutiny" (Fozia, 2023). To address this, political parties should adopt more inclusive selection processes and promote women in leadership roles. As voters, women should recognize the importance of their votes. It's essential to stay informed, engage in meaningful discussions, and encourage fellow women to participate actively.

Analysis

The analysis highlights the critical role of women's participation in politics. Research shows that when women are well-represented in parliament, there's a greater focus on women's issues, making their active involvement essential for achieving gender equality and genuine democracy. However, it's not just about increasing the number of women in leadership roles; it requires gender-sensitive governance reforms to empower all elected officials in promoting gender equality. The efforts of organizations like UN Women aim to ensure inclusive, responsive, equitable, and participatory decision-making processes. Voices from various perspectives, including political activists, teachers, and researchers, emphasize the importance of supporting women in politics through cultural shifts, mentoring, safe environments, funding options, and inclusive policies. Women's participation as voters and candidates is seen as crucial for better governance and societal balance.

Theme Six: Factors that Needs to Highlight by Policymakers to Facilitate the Women Participation

The group discussion concluded many aspects which can be beneficial for women's participation in local government system. Policymakers must prioritize specially the women's cause to facilitate and enhance their participation in various political spheres. Certain pragmatic steps which can be considered as key ingredients are: First, it is crucial to address gender-based discrimination and violence against women. Implementing and enforcing strict laws to protect women's rights and safety is paramount. Second, educational opportunities should be made accessible to all women. By investing in education, policymakers empower women to engage in informed decision-making and contribute meaningfully to society. Third, financial inclusion and economic empowerment are vital. Providing access to capital, credit, and entrepreneurship support can enable women to become financially independent and participate actively in politics and leadership roles. Lastly, promoting gender diversity in leadership and decision-making positions is essential. Policymakers should encourage political parties and organizations to adopt gender quotas, ensuring women's representation at all levels of government. Additionally, from a political perspective, there are several factors that policymakers should focus on to promote women's participation. First, electoral reforms are critical. Policymakers must work towards creating a level playing field by eliminating barriers such as voter intimidation, voter suppression, or discriminatory registration processes. Second, public awareness campaigns can help dispel traditional gender stereotypes and encourage voters to support female candidates. Moreover, political parties must be encouraged to nominate women in winnable positions and provide them with adequate resources and campaign support. Third, it is crucial to address the issue of women's safety during elections. Policymakers should work with law enforcement agencies to ensure that polling stations are secure environments for female voters and candidates. Lastly, promoting

mentorship programs and leadership training for women interested in politics can help build a pipeline of capable female leaders. Focus group discussion further revealed that policymakers should also focus on: First, there should be an emphasis on capacity-building programs tailored to women in leadership roles. This includes training in decision-making, governance, and policy formulation. Second, formalized and channelized financial support is crucial. Policymakers should allocate resources to fund women-led initiatives and community development projects, allowing women to demonstrate their leadership and decision-making abilities. Additionally, there should be a focus on family-friendly policies. Providing childcare facilities during community meetings or government sessions can make it easier for women with familial responsibilities to participate actively. Lastly, policymakers should actively promote networking and collaboration among female leaders to share experiences and support each other's efforts, fostering a sense of solidarity and empowerment. From community perspective, there are several factors that policymakers should prioritize to encourage women's participation. First, education is a key. Policymakers should invest in programs that promote female literacy and awareness of their rights. This not only empowers women but also enhances their ability to engage in community decision-making. Second, community outreach is essential. Policymakers should work closely with grassroots organizations to facilitate dialogue and gather input from women at the local level. Third, it is important to address cultural and social norms that may discourage women from participating. Policymakers can engage community leaders to challenge traditional gender roles and promote gender equity. Lastly, providing economic opportunities and micro-entrepreneurship support can empower women economically, enabling them to contribute to community development and participate actively in decision-making processes. A young female political scientist expressed his thought that from a youth perspective, there are specific factors that policymakers should take into account to promote young women's participation in politics and leadership roles. First, “digital literacy and access to technology are vital”. Policymakers should ensure that young women have the necessary skills and resources to engage in online advocacy and campaigning, which are increasingly important in modern politics. Second, “mentorship programs connecting young women with experienced female leaders can provide guidance and inspiration”. Additionally, educational institutions should incorporate civic education and leadership training into their curricula to empower young women from an early age. “Policymakers should also create safe spaces for young women to express their opinions and ideas without fear of harassment or intimidation”. Lastly, “recognizing and celebrating the achievements of young women in leadership roles can serve as a powerful motivator for others to become politically active” (Ghani, 2023).

Analysis

Policymakers must focus on several key factors to facilitate and enhance women's participation across various domains, including politics. Addressing gender-based discrimination and violence is a priority, with the implementation and enforcement of protective laws being crucial. Ensuring accessible educational opportunities empowers women to engage in informed decision-making. Financial inclusion and economic empowerment are vital, requiring access to capital and entrepreneurship support. Gender diversity in leadership and decision-making positions should be promoted through gender quotas. In politics, electoral reforms must create a level playing field by eliminating barriers, and public awareness campaigns can dispel gender stereotypes. Encouraging political parties to nominate women in winnable positions and ensuring their safety during elections is essential. Additionally, capacity-building programs, financial support, family-friendly policies, and networking opportunities are crucial for women in leadership. From a youth perspective, digital literacy, mentorship, civic education, safe spaces, and recognition of achievements are key factors to promote young women's participation in politics and leadership roles. Overall, a comprehensive approach is needed to overcome socio-cultural challenges and empower women across all spheres of society.

Major Findings

Joint Family Structure

The joint family structure, deeply ingrained in many societies, often plays a pivotal role in local elections. In many traditional joint families, members share not only living arrangements but also political affiliations and decision-making processes. This interconnectedness can significantly influence the outcomes of local elections. When members of a joint family hold differing political views, it can lead to internal tensions and even competition during elections. In the context of Tehsil Jamrud, where the research was conducted, this dynamic might have created complex scenarios. While joint families can provide a strong support system for individuals running for local office, they can also become arenas of competition if multiple family members decide to enter the political fray. Such competition within a family can potentially divide votes, affecting the overall election results. However, it's essential to note that joint families can also stand together in support of a single family member's candidacy. This collective support can be a significant advantage in local elections, where personal relationships and community ties often carry more weight than party affiliations or individual qualifications. The research on women's participation in local government elections in Tehsil Jamrud likely sheds light on how joint family structures impact these elections. It may reveal instances where joint families rallied

behind a female family member's political aspiration, enhancing her chances of success. Conversely, it might also uncover cases where family divisions or competition hindered women's participation or success in the elections. Understanding the role of joint families in local elections is crucial for devising strategies to enhance women's participation in such contexts. If the research identifies challenges arising from family dynamics, it can inform targeted interventions and awareness campaigns aimed at promoting women's political engagement within the joint family structure. Conversely, it can also highlight successful cases where joint families have supported women candidates, offering valuable insights and best practices for replication in other communities.

Religious Norms

Religious norms have played a significant role in shaping societal perceptions and attitudes towards women's participation in local government elections in Tehsil Jamrud in 2021. While progress has been made in recent years to promote gender equality and women's empowerment, deeply ingrained religious norms continue to present challenges and opportunities for women's political engagement in the region. One of the foremost challenges arising from religious norms is the traditional and conservative interpretation of gender roles. In many parts of Tehsil Jamrud, prevailing religious norms dictate that women should primarily focus on household and family responsibilities, while men take on more public and leadership roles. This perception often results in limited support and encouragement for women who aspire to participate in politics. Yet, religious norms can intersect with tribal customs in Tehsil Jamrud, creating additional barriers for women in local government elections. These norms may discourage women from seeking leadership positions, as they are perceived as going against the established order. Such norms can also lead to resistance and pushback from within the community, making it difficult for women to gain the necessary support for their campaigns. Another challenge stems from religious interpretations that restrict women's public visibility and interaction with unrelated men. In conservative areas, this can hinder women's ability to campaign effectively, as they may face limitations in engaging with male voters or attending public meetings and events. These restrictions can limit women's access to the political arena and hinder their ability to build grassroots support. However, it is essential to recognize that religious norms are not solely barriers to women's political participation. There are also prospects and opportunities within these norms. For example, Islamic principles of justice and equity can be leveraged to advocate for women's rights and equal participation in political processes. Religious leaders who support gender equality can play a crucial role in challenging traditional interpretations and encouraging women's political involvement.

Culture Rigidity

The participation of women in local government elections is essential for fostering inclusive and representative governance. However, in many regions, including Tehsil Jamrud, women face significant challenges due to cultural rigidity and deeply ingrained patriarchal norms. This cultural rigidity stems from deeply entrenched societal norms, traditional roles, and gender stereotypes that have persisted for generations. Cultural rigidity in Tehsil Jamrud remains a formidable obstacle to women's participation in local elections. Traditional gender roles and conservative norms often confine women to the domestic sphere, limiting their access to public life and political engagement. This deeply entrenched cultural rigidity creates resistance to women entering the political arena, as many still view it as incompatible with their roles as wives and mothers. The perception that politics is a male-dominated domain further deters women from participating in local elections. The prevailing notion that women should prioritize family and household responsibilities perpetuates the cultural rigidity that undermines their political aspirations. Women are discouraged from seeking leadership roles, as they often face social stigma and resistance from their own communities. Cultural practices, such as *pardah* (seclusion of women), has restricted women's mobility and interaction with unrelated men, create additional barriers for the women's participation in local government elections. In many instances, these practices hinder women's ability to campaign, attend political gatherings, or even visit polling stations, further limiting their participation. The role of tribal *jirgas* (councils of elders) in Tehsil Jamrud contributes to cultural rigidity. These *jirgas* wield significant influence in decision-making processes, and their conservative interpretations of tribal customs and Islamic principles can impede women's political involvement. They may view women's participation in elections as a breach of tradition and religious norms, reinforcing cultural rigidity.

Lack of Political Education

The lack of political education stands out as a significant challenge to women's participation in local government elections. This issue encompasses various problems and prospects that affect the involvement of women in the electoral process. Firstly, the absence of adequate political education among women hinders their ability to engage effectively in the democratic process. Many women in Tehsil Jamrud may not fully comprehend the intricacies of local government elections, including the roles of different government tiers and the significance of their participation. This lack of knowledge can discourage women from running as candidates or even from voting, as they may feel ill-prepared or uninformed about the political landscape. Moreover, the dearth of political education contributes to a gender disparity

in political leadership. Without a comprehensive understanding of political structures, procedures, and their rights as citizens, women are less likely to seek leadership roles or actively participate in political campaigns. This limits the pool of female candidates and, subsequently, hampers women's representation in local government bodies. The problem also extends to the broader community. A lack of political education can perpetuate traditional gender roles and stereotypes, where women are perceived as less capable or knowledgeable in politics. This can lead to discriminatory attitudes that discourage women's involvement in elections.

Lack of Social Education

The participation of women in local government elections in Tehsil Jamrud in 2021 faced significant challenges, particularly stemming from the lack of social education and the oppressive Frontier Crimes Regulations (FCR) rules. These obstacles not only hindered women's involvement in the electoral process but also underscored the broader issues surrounding gender equality and political representation in the region. Firstly, the lack of social education emerged as a critical impediment to women's participation in local government elections. In many cases, women in Tehsil Jamrud had limited access to quality education and were often discouraged from pursuing higher studies or engaging in political discourse. This educational deficit led to a lack of awareness about the importance of political participation and hindered their ability to engage effectively in the electoral process. Without the necessary knowledge and information, many women may have felt ill-equipped to make informed choices or even to exercise their right to vote. Secondly, the oppressive FCR rules posed a formidable challenge to women's participation in local government elections. Historically, the FCR had discriminatory provisions that limited the rights and freedoms of individuals, particularly women, in the tribal areas. These regulations not only curtailed women's mobility and access to public spaces but also perpetuated a patriarchal system that marginalized their voices in decision-making processes. The FCR's restrictions on political gatherings and activities further restricted women's ability to engage in campaign activities and community mobilization, stifling their participation in the electoral process.

Influence of the Dominant Families

The influence of dominant families, such as Ibrahim Kokikhel and Shaji Gul Afridi, in the context of women's participation in local government elections in Tehsil Jamrud in 2021 presents a complex set of challenges and prospects. While these influential figures may campaign with zeal, their involvement can both hinder and potentially facilitate women's participation in the electoral process. One of the primary challenges posed by the influence of dominant families is the perpetuation of traditional power dynamics. These families often hold sway over local communities, and their interests can sometimes conflict with the promotion of women's rights and gender equality. In some cases, they may resist or undermine efforts to encourage women to participate in elections, fearing that it could challenge their established authority. Additionally, the influence of dominant families can lead to unequal access to resources and opportunities for women. They may use their power to control access to vital resources, including financial support, campaign infrastructure, and voter mobilization efforts. This can put female candidates at a disadvantage, making it difficult for them to compete on an equal footing with male candidates who have the backing of these influential families. On the positive side, influential figures like Ibrahim Kokikhel and Shaji Gul Afridi can also play a pivotal role in promoting women's participation in local government elections. Their enthusiastic campaigning and support for female candidates can help raise awareness and encourage women to enter the political arena. Their endorsement can lend credibility to female candidates, potentially increasing their chances of success. Yet another, dominant families often have extensive networks and community connections. When these networks are mobilized in support of women's participation, it can lead to greater grassroots engagement and voter turnout. This, in turn, can contribute to a more inclusive and representative local government.

Tribal Sub-division on Ethnicity

In the context of the challenges faced by tribal subdivisions regarding ethnicity and women's participation in local government elections, several key issues stand out. Two prominent tribal subdivisions, Mania Khel and Esa Khel, face distinct hurdles that hinder their active involvement in the electoral process. One significant challenge lies in the low voter turnout from Mania Khel and Esa Khel. It is observed that members of these tribal subdivisions often refrain from participating in the voting process. This phenomenon can be attributed to various factors, including historical mistrust of the electoral system, concerns about maintaining tribal identity, and the belief that their interests may not be adequately represented through voting. Yet another, the tribal subdivisions of Mania Khel and Esa Khel sometimes find themselves at odds with each other. Ethnic and tribal divisions can create polarization within the community, leading to conflicting political preferences. This internal division can result in a fragmented vote, making it challenging for a unified candidate to secure a victory. Moreover, the electoral landscape in Tehsil Jamrud has seen capable candidates from these tribal subdivisions lose elections. Despite having competent and qualified individuals who could contribute positively to local governance, they have faced electoral setbacks. This may be due to factors such as lack of adequate

political support, resource constraints, or challenges in building broad-based electoral alliances. Along with it, the tribal subdivisions often do not stand in solidarity with each other during elections. This lack of cohesion within the community can dilute their collective political influence. When tribal groups fail to unite behind a common candidate or political agenda, it weakens their overall representation and bargaining power in the local government.

Other Findings (Causes) which hindered Women's Participation in LG Elections

- i. Women's participation in local government elections in Tehsil Jamrud during 2021 faced numerous challenges. Illiteracy rates among women in the region were notably high, limiting their ability to engage effectively in the political process. Many women lacked the necessary knowledge and skills to navigate the complexities of electoral politics, hampering their active involvement.
- ii. The absence of influence among women in local decision-making processes was another significant issue. Traditional gender norms often relegated women to the margins, making it difficult for them to assert their voices and contribute meaningfully to local governance. This lack of influence perpetuated gender disparities in the region's development.
- iii. Infrastructure deficiencies in terms of schools and roads were prevalent, which directly impacted women's participation. Insufficient access to educational institutions hindered women's ability to develop political awareness and engage in informed decision-making. Poor road infrastructure made it challenging for women to reach polling stations and attend political gatherings, further limiting their participation.
- iv. The absence of separate workplaces for women in Tehsil Jamrud also posed a hindrance. Without safe and accessible spaces to conduct political activities, women faced difficulties in organizing and campaigning effectively. This constraint further marginalized their involvement in local government elections.
- v. Social security concerns, particularly related to honor and safety, deterred women from active political participation. Cultural norms and societal expectations often restricted women's mobility and visibility in public spaces, including political arenas. These concerns discouraged many women from openly engaging in political activities.
- vi. The concept of women's participation in local government elections was relatively new for many women in Tehsil Jamrud. Limited exposure to the electoral process and its significance meant that women lacked the necessary experience and understanding to engage effectively in politics. Overcoming this learning curve was a substantial challenge.
- vii. Lack of knowledge about local government structures and functions hindered women's participation. Many were unaware of their rights and responsibilities as potential representatives or voters in the local elections. This knowledge gap contributed to their underrepresentation in the political landscape.
- viii. A significant obstacle was the perceived lack of interest and support from the government. Women felt that the government's focus was primarily on counterterrorism and security concerns, rather than addressing their specific needs and concerns. This perception diminished their enthusiasm for participating in the electoral process.
- ix. Absence of general education facilities and conducive learning environments for women impeded their political engagement. Without access to quality education and resources, women struggled to develop the skills and knowledge necessary for effective participation in local governance.

Conclusion

Local government in contemporary democratic society is the pivotal element of any nation-state. The reason to its dire need is that local government representatives have the direct knowledge of locally prevailing issues, experience of problem solutions and vast ideas dealing local people. Thus, local government representative(s) can better understand the complexity of people problems and can be more beneficial for the betterment and improvement of local communities. Local government elections, 2021, in this regards, conducted in the Tehsil Jamrud for the first time, indeed is considered as the first step toward true democratic spirit and addressing the local problems with pragmatic approach. No doubt, the platform was provided by the then Prime Minister of Pakistan, Nawaz Sharif which has merged the erstwhile FATA with KP province as NMDs during the last phase of their government tenure – 2018. However, the elections conducted in the NMDs regions followed the KP Local Government Act, 2013 which was amended in 2019 as Local Government Amendment, 2019 with the extension of local government jurisdiction to the NMDs regions as well. Women as voters and women as candidates, interestingly, in very handy numbers were witnessed in the local government elections, 2021 in all four Tehsils of District Khyber. For-instance, in VC-21 Paindi Lalma 2 of Tehsil Jamrud, according to Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) (2022) Report, for the seat of women (Youth) the total number of registered females voters were 2799 in which 786 valid and 125 invalid females have cast the vote which is quite impressive number against the established perception of tribal code for women. In general pretext, majority of the women of Tehsil Jamrud perceived the local government elections and women representation in it is the only way out for streamlining the socio-political development at root level especially for females. During interviews, one thing which

is most commonly witnessed, was the women willingness toward the cause of female representation in local government elections, thought neither will informed about the power and functions of these locally elected bodies nor they have any proper education in terms of voting or as a candidate, still they have the idea that it (local female representative) has the capacity to best address their social, political and financial problems.

Recommendations

- The joint family structure in Tehsil Jamrud has provided both opportunities and liabilities for the women's participation in local government election, 2021. In certain ways, joint family structure has support the women as voter and as a candidate to align with the changing socio-political dynamics of the contemporary challenges. The healthy competition between different families has further facilitated women too actively participate in the election process. However, in many other ways, joint family structure has created hurdles for the same cause. The men centric final and decision approach of joint family structure has contributed the other way around.
- Joint family system, though has many positive impacts on the social and cultural aspect on the people of Tehsil Jamrud especially women, however, there is a dire need to initiate local forum political discussions to educate the audience specially on the subject matter of local government.
- The political differences within family are forging the disturbance in the joint family system, therefore, initiate on the gross-root level with engaging the women in discussion which can differentiate the political and family life in order to avoid the future breakup in family values.
- The religious norms of limited women engagement with men section of society, women limitation on unnecessary movement and contradicting opinion on woman role as a leader have played its part to hinder the women participation in local government elections, 2021.
- Culturally, the women traditional role as housekeeper, gender stereotype in financial matters, conservative norms of society considering women as wives and mothers only and misuse of women's concept of 'social honor' have further contributed to the less women's participation in the local government elections, 2021.
- Lack of political know-how, information regarding the power and functions of local government authorities and knowledge of general essence in terms political administration are certain factors in which Tehsil Jamrud is lacking which have directly affected the women's active participation in 2021 local government elections.
- There is need of political awareness to educate the general masses regarding the democratic politics on national level and on domestic/local level and how it can play different specific roles. In this regards, the electronic media, social media and print media can play a vital role.
- Socially, the school and college teachers and student can play important role in reducing the social gap between the Pakhtun social norms in realm of women participation politics and the democratic norms of local government.
- Distribution of government facilities on equal basis can play the role of minimizing the dominant influence of few families which have gained the overall control of political matters in the Tehsil Jamrud.
- Government programmes which can increase the role of general masses by actively engaging them on root-level can also be helpful for reducing the role of dominant political figures which have controlled the political sphere mainly due to their political and economic power.
- Jirga can be helpful for decreasing the gap between different ethnicities and their active enmity in political affairs. There is a need to arrange Jirga at tribal level engaging almost all tribes to understand the political affairs out of ethnicity context and to normalize the relations between through political forum instead of using political forum as a catalyzing agent.

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