

## The Role of Women's Autonomy on Voting Behavior

(A case study of village Chhwind, Tehsil Malakwal of Dist. M.B.Din)

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**Abstract:** The study sought to understand how women's autonomy influences their voting behavior. Qualitative methods, including in-depth interviews and content analysis, were employed to gather data from women in Chhwind village, Malakwal Tehsil, Mandi Baha-ud-Din district. My findings revealed a correlation between increased political knowledge and civic-engagement.

The researcher also observed that women's varying levels of political participation can impact their voting behavior. This research delves into the factors hindering women's voting participation and explores potential strategies to raise awareness about their political rights. Mass media platforms, such as television, newspapers, and online resources, play a significant role in shaping public opinion and influencing voters in the study area.

**Key Words:** Women's Autonomy Chhwind, Political,  
Voting Behavior, Civic-engagement.

### Introduction:

Voting behavior is the choice people make when deciding whether or not to vote. This choice is influenced by their personal beliefs and the social environment around them. In democratic systems, voting is a key activity. Many adult citizens in democracies see voting as a way to express their support or discontent with government actions, decisions and policies. Voting is a crucial process in a democracy, as the collective decision of the people can bring about changes in leadership. Essentially, voting serves as the foundation of the decision-making in democratic governance. (Ms. Deepika Gahatraj)

Women continue to face barriers to entry in politics, as traditional gender norms and stereotypes often position them outside the realm of political activity. This exclusionary environment limits their ability to influence policy and decision-making. (Cole & Sabik 2010). Deep-rooted societal biases and cultural norms can hinder women's participation in politics, as some individuals may hold outdated beliefs that associate political leadership with masculine qualities (Romer 1990, Henderson -king & Stewart, 1994, Rudman & Fairchild 2007). Smith et al. (2007) stated that voters tend to favor candidates with traditionally masculine qualities for certain political roles.

However, women running for office often encounter bias when stepping into careers typically viewed as masculine, such as politics. (Connell 2005, Heldman et al. 2005). Additionally, voters tend to expect politicians and leaders to display masculine traits rather than feminine ones. These masculine qualities are often seen as more necessary for holding higher-level positions. (Rosenwasser & Dean 1989, Huddy & Terkildsen 1993, McGinley 2009)

Historically, the low political involvement of women has been linked to gender socialization, both during childhood and adulthood. This is regarded as a key factor in influencing the extent of their political participation. (Rapoport 1981, Verba et al. 1997, Lovenduski 2005, Burns 2007). Women are often socialized into roles that emphasize being submissive, passive, and focused on private matters, whereas men are encouraged to take on leadership roles that are more public, independent, and self-reliant (Brownmiller 1984, West & Zimmerman 1987, Fox & Lawless 2004). Societal expectations and experiences often shape differing political perspectives between men and women. These early-formed beliefs, rooted in childhood, persist throughout life, leading to distinct political attitudes and behaviors. (Alwin et al. 1991, Hooghe & Stolle 2004, Kenny & Fridkin 2007). This gendered socialization can contribute to lower levels of political participation among women (Rapoport 1981, Atkeson & Rapoport 2003).

### **Objectives:-**

Specific objectives of the present Research are outlined below:-

1. To find out the status of women in political activities.
2. To find out the causes of less participation of women in voting behavior.
3. To find out the possible ways to enhance the awareness level in women regarding to their political rights.

### **Material and Methods:-**

Locale of the present research was village Chhwind, union council No. 63, Tehsil Malakwal of District Mandi BahaudDin, Punjab, Pakistan (Tasawar, Mehwish ., & Imran, Z.). This study employed qualitative methods, specifically in-depth interviews and content analysis, to gather and analyze data from women in the research area. 20 respondents were selected by using purposive sampling.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted in Urdu and translated into English for analysis the interviews focused on respondent profiles, political awareness and voting behavior (Iqbal, S., Idrees, B., & Mohyuddin, A. 2014).

Interviews were conducted in June and July 2024 with informed consent from participants. Discussions were open-ended, allowing for in-depth exploration of voting behavior. Detailed notes were taken and transcribed for analysis.

### **Data Analysis:-**

To accurately assess the correlation between women's autonomy and voting patterns, it is imperative to establish a comprehensive framework for measuring women's autonomy. This requires acknowledging the multifaceted nature of autonomy, encompassing economic, social, and political dimensions. By developing robust indicators that reliably gauge these dimensions, researchers can conduct more precise analyses. For example, indicators such as women's employment rates, educational levels, and decision-making authority within households can serve as valuable proxies for measuring women's autonomy.

### **Women Autonomy and Voting Behavior.**

To fully understand the complex relationship between women's autonomy and voting behavior, it is essential to consider the intersectionality of gender with other social factors. Examining how women's autonomy interacts with socioeconomic status, race, and ethnicity can reveal nuanced patterns of political participation and policy preferences. Additionally, disaggregating data by race and ethnicity can shed light on disparities in women's engagement in the political process. Crenshaw, K. (1989).

One of the respondents said that (Name: Mehak Fatima, Age: 24, Gender: Female, Unmarried, and Socio-Economic Profile: Average)

*"All three factors (Status, race and ethnicity) play a deciding role probably it decides voter fate to which level voter chooses to vote in her own gloom of mental understanding."*

Socio-economic status, race, and ethnicity can all influence individuals life experiences and political perspectives. While higher socio-economic status may provide voters with greater resources and opportunities, factors like race and ethnicity can introduce additional challenges and biases. These intersecting identities can shape voters priorities and influence their choices at the ballot box.

Women's autonomy, the freedom to make independent choices without external pressures, is intricately woven into their voting behavior. Despite significant progress towards gender, cultural, societal, and economic factors continue to shape women's decision making processes. Research indicates that women's autonomy is a pivotal factor in their electoral participation. When women have greater control over their lives, encompassing education, employment, finances, they are more likely to exercise their right to vote. However, the connection between autonomy and voting behavior is not always linear. Societal norms, gender stereotypes, and limited access to resources can still hinder women's choices, even in ostensibly progressive societies. Moreover, the influence of women's autonomy on voting behavior may vary across different cultural and contextual settings. Kabeer, N. (2005). In conclusion, women's autonomy is a pivotal factor shaping their voting behavior. Despite significant progress towards gender equality, cultural, societal, and economic factors continue to influence women's decision making processes. By fostering

women's autonomy, societies can enhance their political participation and create more inclusive and equitable democracies.

### **Contextual Factors: Political Institutions, Culture, and Religion:**

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between women's autonomy and voting behavior, it is crucial to examine the broader context of political institutions, cultural norms, and religious beliefs. Electoral systems, party structures, and the level of political competition can significantly influence women's participation in the political process. Additionally, cultural and religious factors can shape women's attitudes towards politics and their willingness to exercise their voting behavior.

One of respondents said that:

*“Clearly, Culture cans intact voter autonomy along with the religion while making decisions on the behalf of the mentioned factors, & finally political institution vary”.*

These contextual factors interact in complex ways to shape social and political dynamics. Cultural norms, values, and beliefs can influence attitudes towards authority, social hierarchies, and gender roles, affecting how individuals engage in political processes. Religion, as a system of beliefs and practices, can provide a moral framework, shape social identities, and mobilize individuals around shared values, potentially impacting political outcomes.

Political institutions, culture and religion offer a multifaceted lens through which to examine the dynamics of power and decision-making within societies. Political institutions, such as electoral system, party structures and governance mechanisms, shape the opportunities for participation and representation. For instance, a democratic system with multiple parties and free elections can foster a wider range of voices and perspectives, while an authoritarian regime may restrict political participation and suppress dissent. Cultural factors, such as individualism versus collectivism, can shape the emphasis on individual rights or collective interests. Religion, as a system of beliefs and practices, can also play a significant role in shaping political discourse and religious beliefs can shape attitudes towards governance and social justice. The interplay of these contextual factors can create complex and diverse political landscapes, with varying levels of participation, representation, and accountability. (Huntington, S. P.(1993)). In conclusion, political institutions, culture and religion form a complex tapestry that shapes the dynamics of power and decision making within societies. These factors interact in intricate ways to influence the opportunities for participation, representation, and accountability. Understanding the interplay of these elements is crucial for analyzing political systems, promoting democratic governance, and addressing societal challenges.

### **Conclusion:**

Locale of the present research was village Chhwind, union council no. 63, Tehsil Malakwal of District Mandi Baha ud Din, Punjab, Pakistan. In this research paper, we discuss about the role of women autonomy in voting behavior. Women's autonomy is a crucial factor in shaping their voting behavior, influencing their political participation, decision making, and preferences. Autonomous women are more likely to vote independently, support candidates advocating for gender equality, and engage in the political process with greater confidence. Their access to education, economic independency, and exposure to diverse information empower them to make informed choices. Moreover, women with higher autonomy can challenge traditional norms and overcome barriers to voting, contributing to a more representative and inclusive political landscape. Ultimately, enhancing women's autonomy not only strengthens their individual agency but also promotes broader social and political change.

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