

Women's leadership and gendered contentions in enabling social and political action for empowerment and accountability

***Under what conditions does women's social and political action
contribute to the strengthening of women's empowerment and
lead to accountability outcomes that promote gender equity in
fragile and conflict-affected contexts?***

Women and Protest Politics in Pakistan

Conceptual Framing of the Research

Fragility and conflict: social, political, economic environment & security; linked with closing civic spaces (OECD 2018).

Contentious politics: Protests develop into collective action, how episodes repeat and change over time, leading to new forms of social organization and evolving demands (Tilly 2008)

Empowerment: greater voice, choice (social/pol/econ), & control over own lives (Green 2016), gendered (eg Kabeer, Rowlands, Cornwall, Eyben and others).

Accountability: the process of holding actors responsible for their actions against formal standards or thru sanctions/remedies for transgressions (Fox 2007)

RESEARCH QUESTION

- Have the constraints posed by gendered norms, fragility & conflict and closing civic spaces provided new opportunities for women to exercise leadership through collective action?
- If so, what can we learn about how women exercise leadership during their collective action?

METHODOLOGY

- Media search (formal, social media, online) to identify protests in public domain with women participants over last two years (2018 & 2019).
- Women play role as leaders in the protests.
- Claims-making linked wholly or partially to gender equity issues.
- Key Informant interviews with 20 women leaders
- Participant observation of protests, analysis of public speeches.

Claims-making for rights, justice, accountability and security



AURAT WOMEN'S MARCHES 2018-20: FEMINIST



HAZARA PROTESTS 2011-2019:
ANTI-SECTARIAN/ETHNIC 'GENOCIDE'



PASHTUN TAHAFFUZ
MOVEMENT: ETHNIC & RIGHTS-
BASED, POST-CONFLICT 2018



CHILD SEXUAL
ABUSE
PROTESTS
2018-19

LADY HEALTH WORKERS'
PROTESTS 2010-2019



Collective Action Constraints

- Double fear factor for women participating in protest action: from private and public spheres
- Securitization and Islamization of public discourse increases impunity and risk
- Policing of women's bodies during protests even by male allies
- Gender not forefront in each protest, gains or loses traction over time
- Strong backlash from media, society, intelligence agencies and religious extremists

Strategies and Opportunities

- Contention is triggered by grievances but episodic nature comes through extensive [women's] mobilisation
- New claims-making empowers women to enter public domain
- Protest as performance
- New voices emerge through online activism & social media
- Protests as route to formal politics
- Contentious episodes interlinked

Bushra Gohar: 'We have to be everywhere'



-Development practitioner

-Women's rights activist

-VP of political party ANP

- Former Parliamentarian

-PTM supporter

Well you see men tend to compromise and they are also into power politics - hard core power politics. Whereas ... when women enter politics they bring different dimensions. I mean mine was really human rights based politics. I used to constantly say that I am not here for traditional politics really but, I am here to push the limits a little.

- Hazara Protests



Leadership: Feminist Activists from older generation [Women's Action Forum] and next generation [Aurat March]

- PTM



Formal Politics: Legislators/Party Members

Contentious Politics

- Aurat Marches



Government Body: National Commission on the Status of Women, ministries

- Child Sexual Abuse Protests





Feminist Leadership in contentious politics in fragile, conflict-affected & highly patriarchal Pakistan: identify as feminist, strategically employ informal and formal political voice to achieve goals, & engage in multiple protest types – to demand rights & entitlements from the state.