

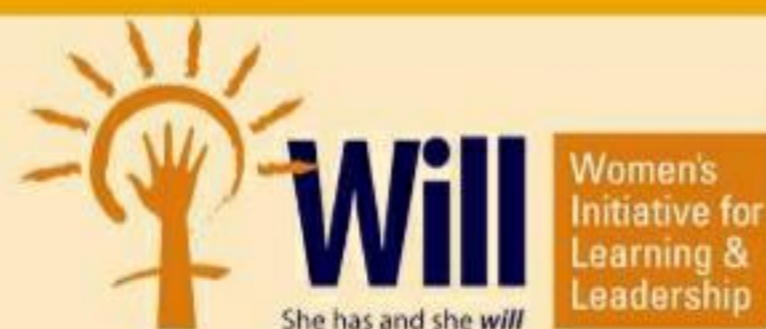
STRENGTHENING
WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION
AND
LEADERSHIP
FOR EFFECTIVE DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE IN PAKISTAN

A BASELINE RESEARCH STUDY



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Abbreviations/Acronyms

ECP	Election Commission of Pakistan
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas
FDG	Focus Group Discussions
KII	Key Informant Interview
KPK	Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa
MPA	Member of Provincial Assembly
NSCW	National Commission on the Status of Women
SFCG	Search for Common Ground
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

Executive Summary

Search For Common Ground (SFCG) is an international organization which aims to replace the contentious ways of dealing with conflict via participatory decision-making and consensus building through mediation and dialogue. The organization has its presence across continents where it strives to engage various stakeholders for the promotion of peace and tolerance. In 2011, SFCG Pakistan was awarded the project entitled “Strengthening Women's Political Participation and Leadership for Effective Democratic Governance in Pakistan” by the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL). The project was named as WILL (Women's Initiative for Learning and Leadership) and it intends to mainstream the women politicians in the realm of political leadership, good governance, and policy reforms. The project also engages relevant stakeholders to facilitate the integration of women in decision-making processes for effective democratic governance in Pakistan.

As part of WILL's program activities, SFCG Pakistan commissioned this baseline study to assess the specific needs of Pakistani women politicians (elected women parliamentarians and former and aspiring women councillors) for their leadership development within the socio-political, cultural and economic context of Pakistan. The findings of this study will further be used to design training and capacity building activities of women politicians. The

results will also help in developing training material, hand-outs, tool kits, and training of the trainers for the project.

The present study strives to identify the strengths and challenges related to the political leadership of women MPs and district level women politicians in all four provinces as well as Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) Pakistan. The aim is to discern the attitudes of relevant stakeholders towards women's leadership and to ascertain the stereotypes that couch such attitudes. The research work consists of two primary steps: i) an extensive desk review on women's political participation in Pakistan, and ii) primary data collection to identify issues and bottlenecks which impede women's participation in politics and democratic governance.

Objectives of the Study

The main focus of the study was to gather information in six areas to assess women politicians' needs regarding their: i) enhanced ability to run for elections; ii) equal opportunity to run for elections; iii) support from party leaders for women to take positions within their parties; iv) support from male counterparts for women at all levels of electoral and government structures, including constituencies and legislative bodies; v) establishing operational relations with government officials in line departments for alleviating the public grievances; and vi) increased media engagement to portray women politicians as effective leaders and decision-makers in Pakistan.

Methodology

In order to have a holistic understanding of the issue under study, a mixed methods approach, comprising of a perception survey, key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs) was used. The perception survey was designed to cover the Punjab and Sindh provinces. A cross-section of 200 respondents from all four provinces and FATA was purposively sampled. The respondents represented the current women and men MPAs, former and aspirant women district councillors, and government officials of line departments.

Qualitative data was collected from all over the country. For this purpose, 75 KIIs and 15 FGDs were conducted. The participants were current male and female MPAs, former women and men district councillors, male government officials, and media persons. Due representation was given to the political parties and geographical areas while selecting women and men MPAs.

Salient Findings

The salient findings of this study include:

- i. Women politicians were perceived to be quite competent in establishing connectivity with voters and running election campaign;
- ii. Women possessed reasonable level of knowledge and skills needed for making legislation and policies. Nevertheless, government officials of line departments had negative views about women politicians' ability in this area;
- iii. Women politicians were perceived to be constrained in establishing political alliances with local influential leaders;
- iv. Some of the respondents considered that women were a less popular choice of voters as political leaders;
- v. Political family background was considered a significant determinant of women's ability to run for election. Family support -- especially from the male elders -- was reported to be an important factor in enhancing women's political participation;
- vi. Constitutionally and legally, women have been guaranteed equal rights to participate in politics but deep-rooted gender inequality was perceived to be a significant factor inhibiting women politicians from equal political participation;
- vii. Male political leaders were perceived to be supportive of women in terms of engaging them for party organization, mobilizing women voters and other such activities. However, male political leaders were reluctant to assign leadership role to women within the party hierarchy;
- viii. Male politicians generally appreciated their female colleagues' political performance and facilitated them in performing political activities. Nevertheless, they were less likely to share their political influence by giving due credit to their (women's) services/ contributions.

- ix. Women politicians well understood the importance of effective working relationship with government officials to perform their political role. Nonetheless, many women politicians were found to be constrained to interact with functionaries in male-dominated government departments;
- x. Women politicians were well aware of the importance of media coverage in the advancement of their political career. Nonetheless, some of them showed reluctance to interact with media persons keeping in view the gender sensitivities of the situation;
- xi. The networking ability of women politicians' across the party lines was perceived to be poor, which ultimately diluted their political strength.

Women politicians' needs for effective participation in politics

Based on the findings of the perception survey conducted in Punjab and Sindh and the qualitative data collected from KIIs and FGDs from all over the country including FATA, key areas of women politicians' needs for their effective participation in democratic governance have been identified. The key areas by specific needs are:

1. Women politicians' ability to run for election

- i) Getting support from male family members to participate in politics
- ii) Enhancement of ability to make political

alliances with local influential leaders

- iii) Increasing acceptance of women's role in politics
- iv) Enhancing knowledge and skills for policymaking and legislation
- v) Enhancing ability for greater visibility in public
- vi) Developing capacity for organizing and running election campaign
- vii) Enhancing connectivity with voters through public contacts

2. Women politicians' equality of opportunity to run for election

- i) Ensuring implementation of laws for women's equal opportunity to run for election
- ii) Increasing cultural admissibility for women's equal opportunity to run for election by changing patriarchal mind-set discouraging women's role in politics

3. Women politicians' support from political leadership

- i) Increasing engagement of women politicians in party organization
- ii) Encouraging women politicians by assigning leadership roles within the party
- iii) Enhanced consideration of women politicians for awarding party tickets to run for election at all levels
- iv) Enhanced involvement of women politicians in decision-making

- v) Enhanced political patronage to women politicians from union council level to national level

4. *Women politicians' support from male counterparts*

- i) Helping women politicians in building networks across the multiple tiers of political leadership
- ii) Sharing political influence with women politicians (especially the women councillors)
- iii) Encouraging women politicians' participation in decision-making

5. *Women politicians' working relations with government officials*

- i) Enhanced knowledge about functions and procedures of government departments
- ii) Enhanced skills for participation in legislation and policymaking
- iii) Building trust-worthy relations among women politicians and government officials
- iv) Regular institutionalized engagement of women politicians with government officials by making them members of relevant committees

- V) Enhanced access of women politicians to senior government officials as public representatives for addressing public problems

6. *Women politicians' engagement with media for their portrayal as effective political leaders*

- i) Enhanced access of women politicians to media persons
- ii) Reducing apprehensions of women politicians about their likely exploitation by the media persons in portraying their image in media
- iii) Improved communication skills and knowledge about current affairs by women politicians for their effective portrayal as leaders
- iv) Enhanced media coverage of the political activities of women politicians especially of the district level councillors and political workers

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are offered:

1. *Political Parties*

- i) Currently, there is no arrangement for providing formal training to the political parties' workers, men and women, for handling the day-to-day affairs of the electorate. Given the Pakistani socio-cultural milieu, women are either completely left out or just lag behind. Such training can enhance the abilities of party workers, especially of women, to have meaningful participation in the political affairs of the country. Therefore, it is recommended that party workers, both men and women, should be provided rigorous training periodically in handling the routine issues of the electorate.
- ii) Post-elections training facilities for legislators for running the affairs of the country are minimal. Comparatively, the civil servants -- who run the administration of the country -- get rigorous and continuous training, which provides them confidence to handle their jobs. Possibility of such training may be visualized for the law makers at different levels. Such a possibility is highly likely to meet the deficiency needs of women politicians for strengthening their political participation and leadership for effective democratic governance in Pakistan. SFCG's on-going WILL program is a successful

Example of such critically important and required interventions.

- iii) Political parties may be educated and encouraged through civil society and non-governmental organizations to give more proactive roles to their women politicians.
- iv) Capacity building of women politicians is necessary for women's sustainable role in political processes, and political parties can provide opportunities for on-the-job training for political participation and leadership. Therefore, it is recommended that the Election Commission of Pakistan may encourage the political parties to mandate in their party manifestos that women get important positions in their party hierarchy.

2. *Government Departments/Bureaucracies*

Working relationships with government officials are an important indicator of success for politicians in their various capacities, particularly in alleviating the concerns of their electorate. Government officials can be made to respect women public representatives through training and regulations. Nevertheless, the environment is still perceived to be less than "women politician friendly". Therefore, let us make women politicians as part of the system. Hence, it is recommended that the possibility of involving women politicians in various forums/committees of government departments at all levels may be explored.

3. *Portrayal of Women Role Model Leaders*

Grooming of young girls for taking up roles as politicians has to start early. Education institutions can be highly instrumental in this respect by providing learning opportunities as part of co-curricular activities as well as by portraying achievements of prominent women political leaders in the textbooks. Many successful and charismatic women leaders have secured their place in the history of Pakistan. The qualities and achievements of such women leaders may be projected through textbooks and media so that the younger generation could understand the crucial historical role of women's leadership.

4. *Legislative Measures*

Despite the constitutional and legal guarantees for equal opportunity, women face many bottlenecks and hindrances undermining their ability to play an effective role as politicians. Therefore, it is recommended that i) electoral laws should be carefully reviewed to provide a level playing field for women; ii) subordinate judicial officers, attorneys and executive officials may be sensitized about the situations where women are disadvantaged; iii) legislative measures should be taken to involve women in decision-making in issues such as health, education, and settling of disputes in local forums.

5. *Implementation of Laws*

There are laws in Political Parties Act 1962, which require women to participate in party election at various tiers.

Amendment in 2002, 2004 and 2011 that make it mandatory for each party to hold periodic elections without having gender discrimination. But practically, such elections are not held regularly and women may not be given fair chance to compete for political office. Resultantly, one resource for grooming women politicians for their future role taking/playing remains dormant. Probably, it suits the present lawmakers who mostly use women politicians as their appendages. Therefore, it is recommended that laws relating to the holding of elections in the political parties may be implemented by providing opportunities to women politicians to participate in party election at various tiers.

6. *Women's Leadership Representation to Ensure Integration Across Tiers*

Though women's representation is ensured at various formal legislative forums, yet they have limited visibility in internal bodies constituted by political parties. As a result, women politicians do not get sufficient grooming opportunities for developing their political capabilities. It is, therefore, recommended that women politicians should be actively involved in different tiers of their political parties ranging from union council to the central executive committee.

7. *Media*

Media outlets need to be mobilized for proactively projecting the activities of women politicians, especially those at the district level. Educational institutes and universities may play a

Role in sensitizing upcoming journalists about issues of gender in politics. Legal measures may be taken to restrict the intrusion of media in private lives of women politicians.

8. *Development of Women's Leadership at the grassroots level*

Society needs to train and groom women leaders at the grassroots level. For this, leadership training opportunities should be provided to women and girls in educational institutions, workplace and civil society organizations. It may be noted that seemingly minor and insignificant leadership roles may groom future women leaders for high profile roles.

9. *Behavioural Change in Patriarchal Mind-set*

The role of family is crucial in enabling women to participate in politics and successfully contest elections. It is recommended that the top leadership of political parties be sensitized for allocating more general seats to women political workers from modest backgrounds. At the

societal level, negative stereotypes regarding women's political competencies need to be debunked by projecting scientific evidence about gender-equality in terms of competencies and capabilities through media, educational institutions, mosque, and public discourse.

10. *Resilience of Women Politicians*

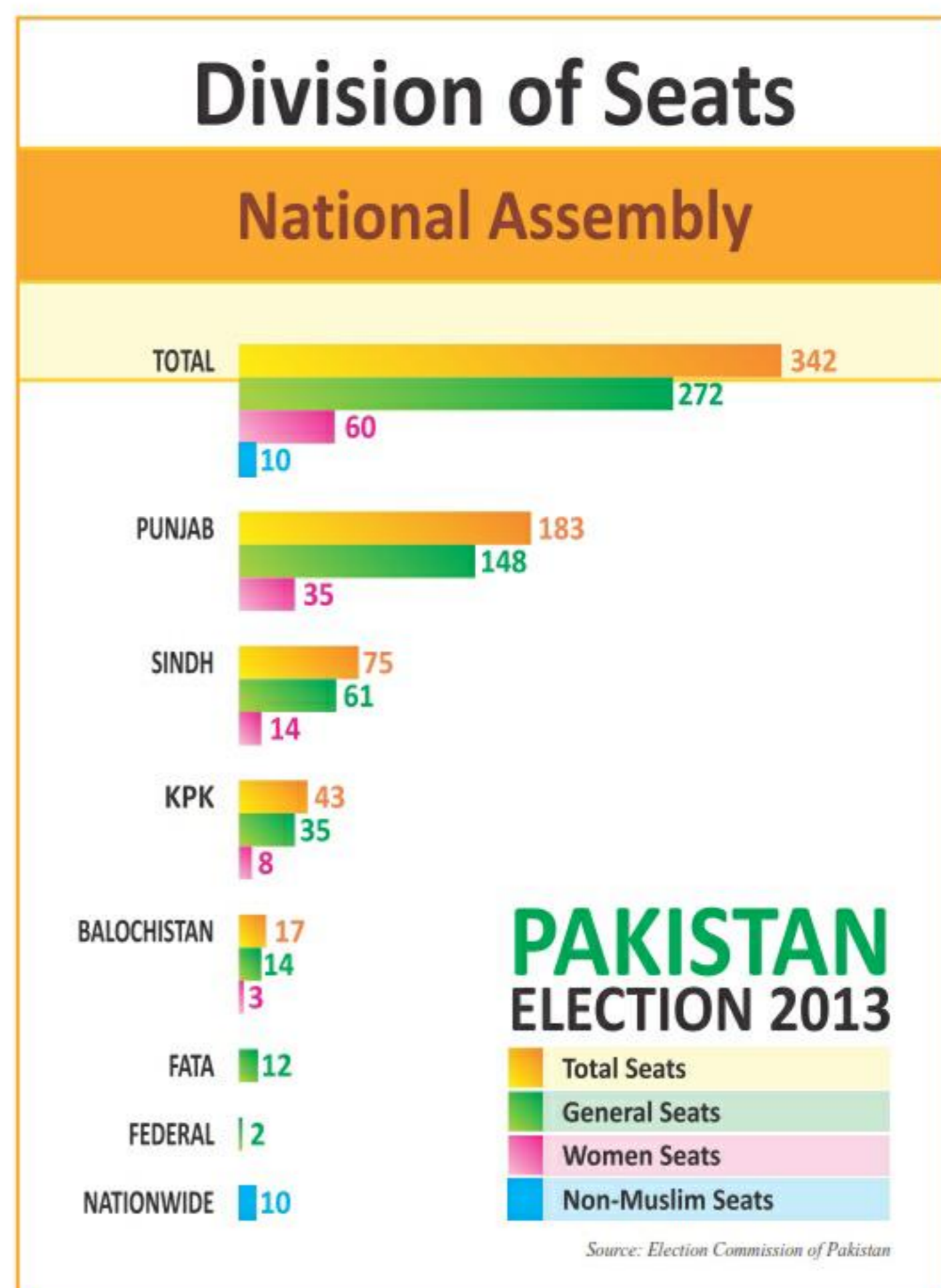
The qualitative data showed that women politicians have developed a lot of resilience to face the challenges and bottlenecks in achieving political objectives. The challenges alluded to in the in-depth interviews and focus group discussions may simply be a tip of the iceberg needing its identification and thorough analysis. It is, therefore, recommended that a separate study may be conducted to identify the areas providing challenges to women's political ascendancy and where women's resilience could be increased so that they may effectively participate at different levels in the political culture and democratic governance of Pakistan.

1. Introduction

1.1 Context analysis

Right from the freedom struggle of the country, women in Pakistan have been actively participating in political activities in a number of ways. They have organized campaigns, raised funds, mobilized other women during the independence movement, and subsequently made valuable contributions through civil society activism for promoting human rights and consolidating democratic rule in the country. However, for much of Pakistan's turbulent political history, women have rarely been given party tickets for contesting elections. Their quota for reserved seats remained negligible. Legally, at the provincial and the federal legislative forums, women were given nominal representation by providing a few reserved seats. For instance, up till 1988 women had only 10 reserved seats in the national assembly, and 5 seats in each of the provincial assemblies. During 1988-2000, this number was reduced to 3-4 reserved seats in the national and each of the provincial assemblies (NCSW, 2005).

From the year 2001 onwards, the legal framework has made space for absorbing a greater number of women into mainstream electoral politics. Beginning with the Local Government Ordinance (2001) that granted a 33% quota to women for contesting elections at the district, tehsil and union council levels, progress on women's political representation was further enhanced in 2002 when 17% of the seats in the national and provincial assemblies were reserved for women.



For the first time in the country's history, 40,000 women councillors were occupying local government seats at different levels (UNDP, 2005). Though enhanced legal facilitation resulted in the participation of an unprecedented number of women at the local government level, the direct election of a substantial number of women to general seats of the national and provincial legislatures did not take place. For instance, in the 2008 general elections, only 10 women got directly elected to the four provincial assemblies, and that number only increased to 12 in the 2013 general elections. The socio-cultural and economic constraints barring women from

active political participation has in fact undermined their access to equal opportunities given by the law.

Around the turn of the century, the visibility of Pakistani women in different spheres of public life has been on the rise, though their equal access to political and economic opportunities has remained largely uneven. In 2013, among the 148 countries ranked by UNDP's Gender Inequality Index, Pakistan was placed at 123. Being placed at the bottom one-fifth of ranked countries is indicative of the extent to which Pakistan loses potential human development due to persisting gender inequalities. Constraints imposed by socio-cultural and economic factors keep the bulk of Pakistani women from elevating themselves to influential public roles (Jabeen and Jadoon, 2009). Therefore, the continuing struggle of Pakistani women for enhancing their political prowess merits in-depth analysis that can help in streamlining the current policy and practices.

Keeping in mind the complex dynamics of Pakistani society, the present baseline study considers a wide range of factors that influence women's equal and effective political empowerment. Women's electability is evaluated in terms of their socio-economic background, ability to form political alliances, connectivity with voters, capacity for election campaigning, extent of public visibility, and their appeal to popular voters' choice. The legal and gender equality sought by women can be gauged

from the progress made towards women empowerment through enacting constitutional and legal provisions, and positive changes in societal attitudes that create gender specific hindrances. Women's chances to excel in their political career depend on their ability to participate in their party organizations, to be nominated for party ticket, and to acquire a leading position in the party. Likewise, women's capability to perform an effective political role is established through the recognition of their contributions by party leadership and male counterparts, and the help they extend to women by sharing political influence. Moreover, women's operational interaction with government officials is linked with their capacity to participate in legislation and policy formulation as well as the possession of relevant knowledge and skills required for carrying out legislative and policy making tasks. Finally, women's effective interaction with media for projecting their positive image depends on their ability to access and engage media persons and channels as well as their communication skills and knowledge of current affairs.

Politicians contest elections to secure positions of power, whereas party leaders prefer awarding nominations to electable candidates in order to maximize their party's representation in parliament and in the treasury. The voters' choice may depend on the extent of getting political patronage for access to the state and community resources and services. Similarly, government

officials and media persons may cooperate with politicians to the extent that they can foresee the relevance of their interests with the power position of politicians. Depending upon the extent of their bargaining power in this complex and intricate network of power relations, political actors try to find their role in politics (Abramovitz, 1989). Women, as recent entrants in the arena of elected politicians, have to make their place in the relatively less friendly but certainly challenging political environment.

1.2 The Project

Search for Common Ground (SFCG) is an international organization which aims to replace the contentious ways of dealing with conflict with participatory decision making and consensus through dialogue. The organization has its presence across continents where it strives to engage various stakeholders for the promotion of peace and tolerance. Currently, SFCG operates in 34 countries including Pakistan. Given its mandate as a peace building organization, one of its fundamental goals is to increase the participation of women in active citizenship and leadership. SFCG believes that women's active involvement in the political sphere will result in an environment of negotiation and collaboration. With this view, the organization aims to enhance the capacities of female politicians with an ultimate objective of strengthening their participation in democratic governance.

In 2011, SFCG was awarded the project,



Capacity building of women leaders in policymaking and leadership skills; WILL implementing partners and beneficiaries during a networking session.

“Strengthening Women Parliamentarians in Pakistan for Effective Government” by the U.S. State Department, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL). The project was named as WILL (Women's Initiative for Learning and Leadership) and it intended to mainstream the female politicians in the realm of policy reforms. The project called on stakeholders to facilitate the integration of females in decision making processes. Under this project, SFCG proactively worked to build the capacity of women political leaders and provided continued leadership development for current and former women parliamentarians at the provincial levels, as well as for politicians at the district level. Various training courses, workshops and seminars were organized to foster an interactive environment where women could not only learn from their colleagues but also from civil society organizations, mass media, and academia. In addition to the efforts directed towards

performance enhancement of female politicians, SFCG also mobilized the popular media for a nationwide campaign for the advocacy of societal attitudes supportive of women empowerment and enfranchisement.

Consequent upon the success of the project and positive feedback received from the women politicians, SFCG initiated the second phase of the project. This phase aimed to foster the leadership potential of women parliamentarians (MPs) in the Provincial Assemblies so that they may be able to contribute effectively towards governance and decision making. In this regard, SFCG builds on its extensive networking across Punjab and Sindh provinces as well as on the wealth of its international experience in developing support systems for greater women empowerment and gender mainstreaming. Additionally, SFCG strengthens the outreach and capabilities of its local partners in an attempt to propel community based interventions. Under the WILL second phase SFCG focuses on the policy reforms and their implementation for promoting the role of women politicians in democratic governance in Pakistan. The project approach of SFCG aims to achieve this through its trademark 'Common Ground Approach (CGA)'. This approach denounces confrontation and emphasizes the democratic principles of dialogue and negotiations for peaceful coexistence.

The specific objectives of project WILL phase-I were to:

i) increase leadership skills of women



Honorable Chief Guest and former Speaker National Assembly Dr. Fehmida Mirza delivering inaugural speech at National Networking Summit on Women's Leadership in Islamabad on August 28, 2013.

parliamentarians (MPs) for effective policy-making and reform,

ii) facilitate the creation of policy mechanisms that enable women parliamentarians (MPs) to collaborate across party lines with their male counterparts and government officials, and

lii) build positive public perception around the role of women parliamentarians (MPs) as effective leaders and decision-makers through media sensitization.

These objectives were based on the assumptions of the “theory of change” as follows:

i) If women MPs strengthen their leadership skills and confidence levels, they can increase their role in policy-making;

ii) If women MPs-supported by enabling environment-proactively collaborate with each other across dividing lines and create mechanisms at all tiers for that collaboration which brings them into contact with their male counterparts and government officials, they can increase their influence in

policymaking; and

- iii) If the positive contributions of women leaders in policy-making are highlighted in the media, then the public perception of their role as effective leaders and decision-makers will increase.

Given this backdrop, SFCG needed to assess the specific needs of the women politicians (elected women parliamentarians and former and aspiring women councillors) for their capacity building within the current local context. For this purpose, SFCG commissioned this baseline study for the need assessment of the target women politicians. The findings of the study will be used to design training and capacity building activities including developing training material, hand-outs, tool kits, and training of the trainers for the second phase of the WILL project.

The second phase of WILL was started in October, 2013 and SFCG considers it important to empirically establish the benchmarks to operationalize the objectives and to gauge the expectations from the project. The present study, as an effort towards this direction, strives to identify the strengths and challenges related to the political leadership of women MPs. The study aims to discern the attitudes of relevant stakeholders towards women leadership and to ascertain the stereotypes that couch such attitudes. The study consists of two primary steps, i) an extensive desk review on women's political participation in Pakistan and ii) primary data collection to identify issues and bottlenecks which impede women's participation in politics and democratic governance. The findings of the study



Syed Shamoan Hashmi, Joint Secretary, National Assembly of Pakistan, conducts a session during training of trainers in second phase of WILL on April 10-14, 2014 in Islamabad.

will guide SFCG and its implementing partner to target critical areas relevant to the main objective. Additionally, the study will outline the project's desired change and will provide baseline measures of specific indicators to measure progress against each objective.

1.3 Objectives of the study

Given the background of the issue, the main focus of the study was to gather information in the following six areas to assess women politicians' needs regarding their:

- i. Enhanced ability to run for elections;
- ii. Equal opportunity to run for elections;
- iii. Support from party leaders for women to take positions within their parties;
- iv. Support from male counterparts for women at all levels of electoral structures and government structures, including constituencies and legislative bodies;
- v. Establishing operational relations with

government officials in line departments for alleviating the public grievances; and

- vi. Increased media engagement to portray women politicians as effective leaders and decision makers in Pakistan.

2. Methodology

2.1 Mixed Methods Approach

A mixed methods approach comprising of both quantitative and qualitative techniques was used to carry out this study. For collection of quantitative data, perception survey was used while, for qualitative data key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted.

2.2 Population and Sample Size

This countrywide baseline study covered all of the four provinces of Pakistan and FATA. The target population comprised of the male and female members of provincial assemblies, male and female district level councillors (former, sitting or aspiring), media persons, and government officials. These categories of the population were divided into two separate groups for the purpose of conducting a structured perception survey and qualitative study (KIIs and Focus Group Discussions).

For perception survey the population comprised of the current male and female members of provincial assembly, former female district councillors, and government officials of line departments (e.g. education, health, social

welfare, revenue government departments) from Punjab and Sindh provinces.

For qualitative study the population consisted of current male and female members of provincial assemblies, former male and female district councillors, media persons, and government officials of line departments from all of the provinces (Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan and KPK) and FATA.

Sample size for structured perception survey

The structured perception survey was conducted in two provinces of Punjab and Sindh. The sample size for this survey was 200 respondents. From both the provinces, 50 current women MPAs and 20 men MPAs, 100 ex-women district councillors, and 30 government officials were selected. Former women district councillors were selected from three districts of Rawalpindi, Lahore, and Multan of Punjab and two districts of Karachi and Hyderabad of Sindh.

Ideally, a probability sampling procedure should have been followed for the study. During the reconnaissance about the feasibility of the survey, it emerged that it will be very difficult to reach the specific sampled politicians due to their busy schedule and due to security concerns, particularly those of the members of the provincial assemblies. Because of this limitation, the respondents were selected on convenience, subject to the accessibility and availability of the individuals concerned. The distribution of the selected cases for each category of the

respondents is given in table 1. To calculate the required sample size for quantitative study, the following formula was used:

$$n = \frac{Z^2 p (1-p)}{d^2}$$

Where:

n=required sample size

Z=Z value (e.g. 1.96 for 95% confidence level)

p=Expected proportion

1-p=Probability of failure

d=degree of precision (width of confidence interval)

$$n = \frac{(1.96)^2 0.15 \times 0.85}{(0.25)^2}$$

$$N = 196$$

With assumed 5% nonresponse rate, the sample size was 205 before going to field.

Except for the men MPAs, the sample representation for each category of population was well above one third of the total, which appears to be good size representation of each cross-section of the population. Since the major focus of the study was on a needs assessment for women politicians, they therefore had the highest representation from amongst the MPAs and women ex-councillors. A small number of male MPAs were sampled just to get their perceptions.

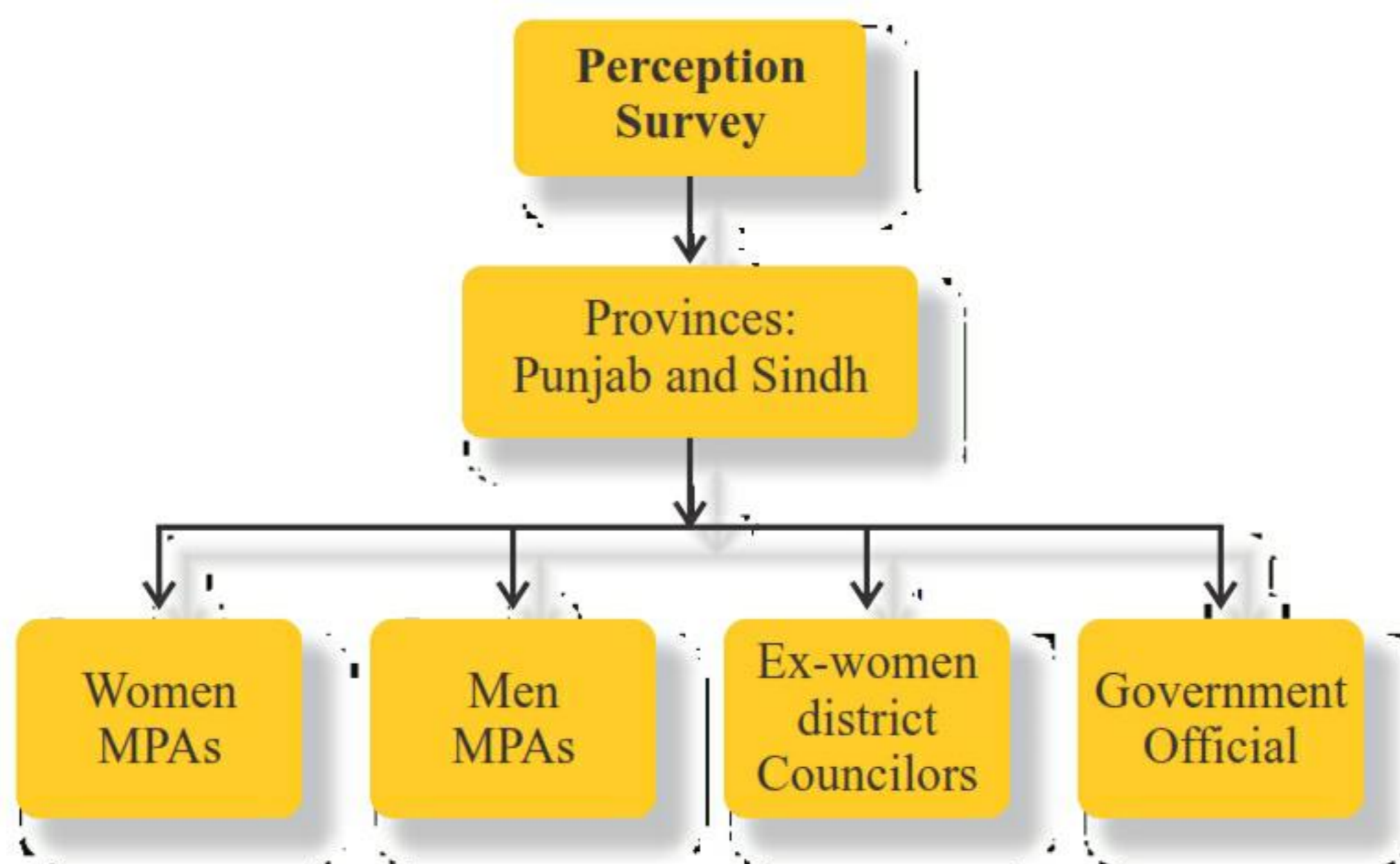
Table 1 Population and sample size for structured perception survey

Population Category	Population /Sample Size	Punjab	Sindh	Total
Women MPAs	Population	76	31	107
	Sample Size	30 (40%)	20 (65%)	50 (47 %)
Men MPAs	Population	369	168	537
	Sample Size	12 (3%)	08 (5%)	20 (4%)
Ex-Women district Councillors	Population	157*	79**	236
	Sample Size	60 (38%)	40 (50%)	100 (42%)
Govt. officials from line departments	Population	39	32	71
	Sample Size	18 (46%)	12 (38%)	30 (42 %)
Total	Sample Size	120	80	200

*From three selected sample districts of Punjab

**From two selected sample districts of Sindh

Figure 1: Quantitative Data Collection from Punjab and Sindh with Respondents Categories



Sample size for qualitative survey

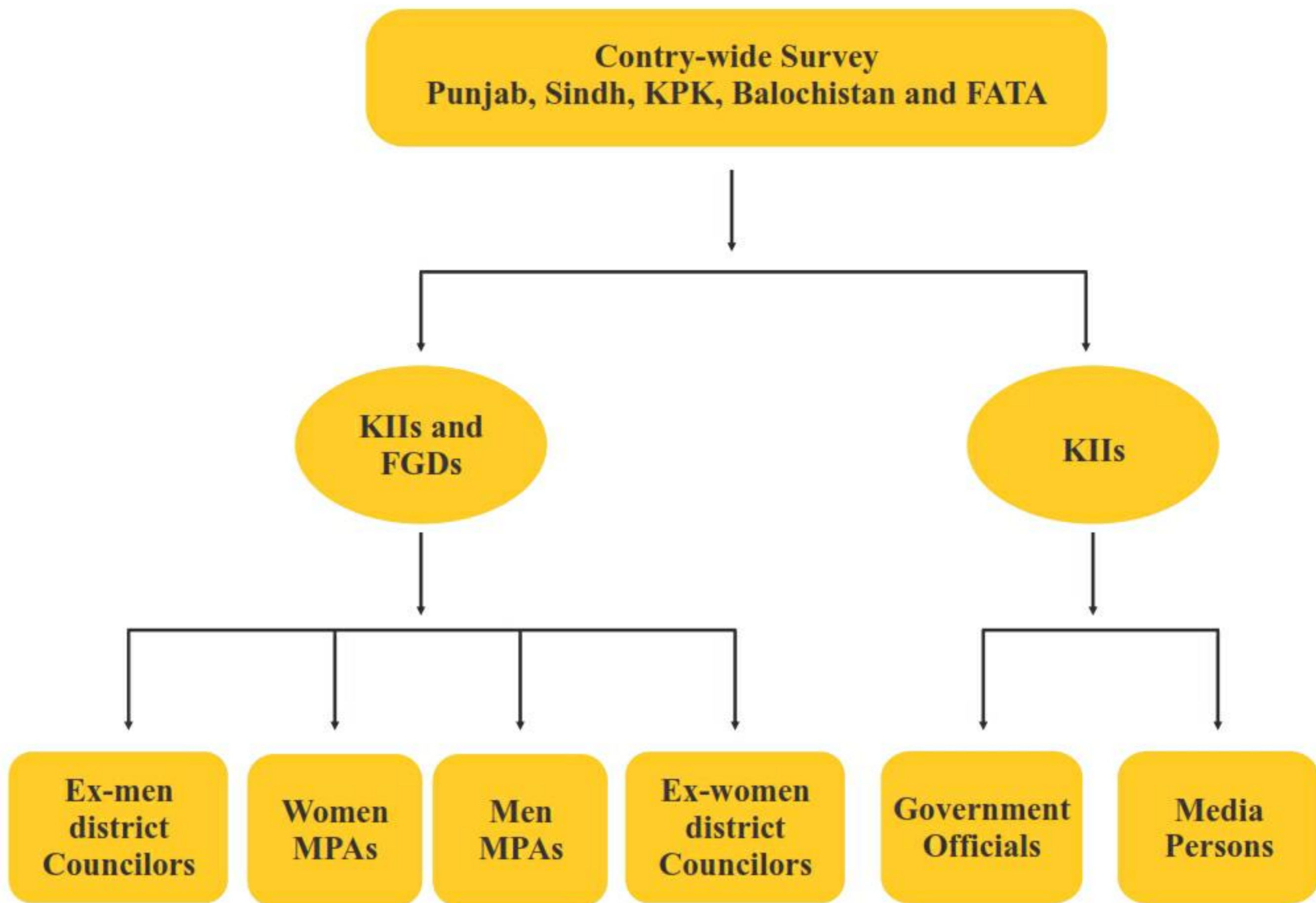
A qualitative study was carried out in all of the four provinces and FATA by conducting 75 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and 15 focus group discussions (FGDs) with the respondents selected from all of the categories of the population included in the qualitative study group. Due representation was

given to the political parties in the sample of the members of provincial assemblies (both men and women) in proportion to the numerical strength of its sitting members in the respective assemblies. The detail of the respondents for conducting KIIs and FGDs is presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Sample size for qualitative study (KIIs and FGDs)

Population Category	Punjab	Sindh	Balochistan	KPK/ FATA	Total
	Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)				
Women MPAs	6	5	3	6	20
Male MPAs	2	2	1	3	8
Ex-Women District Councillors	6	2	2	5	15
Ex-Men District Councillors	2	2	1	2	7
Media Persons	4	3	3	5	15
Male Govt. Officials	4	2	2	2	10
Total	24	16	12	23	75
Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)					
Women MPAs	2	1	1	1	5
Male MPAs	1	-	1	-	2
Ex-Women District Councillors	2	1	1	1	5
Ex-Men District Councillors	1	1	1	-	5
Total	6	3	4	2	15

Figure 2 - Qualitative Data Collection



2.3 Tools of Data Collection

Keeping in mind the objectives of the study, need assessments of women politicians were looked from six dimensions. Each dimension was operationalized in terms of its indicators. For purposes of the perception survey, statements on the listed indicators were formulated as shown in the

structured questionnaire given in annexure-I. For KIIs, interview guide was developed for each category of respondents (Annexure-II). Nonetheless, for the purposes of probing, some questions were added during the process of interviews. Similarly, a FGD guide was developed for each category of respondents (Annexure-III). Matrix for this whole exercise is presented in table 3.

Table 3 Matrix of women politicians' needs to participate in effective democratic governance

S. No.	Objectives of the study	Themes for needs assessment of women politicians	Indicators of measurement
1.	Enhanced ability to run for election	Electability of the aspiring candidate	Factors influencing electability: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socio-economic background • Political alliances • Connectivity with voters • Competency for running election campaign • Visibility in public • Popular voters' choice
2.	Equal opportunity to run for election	Legal and gender equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constitutional and legal provisions • Gender-based preferences
3.	Support from political leadership	Excellence in political career	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging in party organization • Assigning leadership role • Nomination as party candidate
4	Support from counterparts	Performing effective political role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appreciating performance • Facilitating in political activities • Sharing political influence • Building political networks
5	Strong relations with government officials of line departments	Participation in legislation, policy formulation and its implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge about functioning legislative bodies and government departments • Skills for participation in legislative activities, policy formulation and its implementation
6	Effective engagement with media	Positive portrayal of political image through media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to media • Relations with media persons • Use of media channels • Knowledge and Communication skills

2.4 Strengths and Limitations

Like all studies in behavioural and social sciences, this study has certain limitations. The field work was conducted in a time period when country's political situation was highly volatile and many politicians were genuinely concerned about their security. In such an environment, trust was eroded and politicians avoided giving appointments for interviews. That may be the reason our interviewers faced unexpected cancellation of appointments for interviews and, sometimes, interviews were terminated abruptly. This caused considerable loss of our team's energies and resources. Resultantly, it delayed the timely collection of data. Secondly, at the time of data collection, there were no elected union councillors in office and the available list of ex-councillors was not updated in terms of addresses and contact information of the respondents. Hence, it was difficult to approach the eligible respondents. Third, allocation of resources was limited and the study relied on small sample size of the population under study which compromised its generalizability.

Despite these limitations, the study has some strengths: i) its findings are based on primary data collected through mixed methodology, hence provides a holistic view of the subject under study, and ii) the interviewers were recruited from the respective regions and were rigorously trained about the objectives and aims of this study. In this way, the local cultural and linguistic sensitivities were taken care of and, at the same time, uniformity and consistency of data was ensured.

3. Findings

The data was collected for capturing the perceptions of the respondents on the following six themes explaining women politicians' needs for strengthening their political participation and leadership in effective democratic governance:

- i. Ability to run for election;
- ii. Equal opportunity to run for election;
- iii. Support from political leadership to excel in political career within party;
- iv. Support from male counterparts at all levels of political activities;
- v. Strength of relations with government officials of line departments for policy formulation and its implementation; and
- vi. Engagement with media for positive portrayal as effective political leader.

Salient findings of the survey on these six themes have been presented in the light of the perceptions of each of the categories of the respondents.

3.1 Ability of women politicians to run for elections

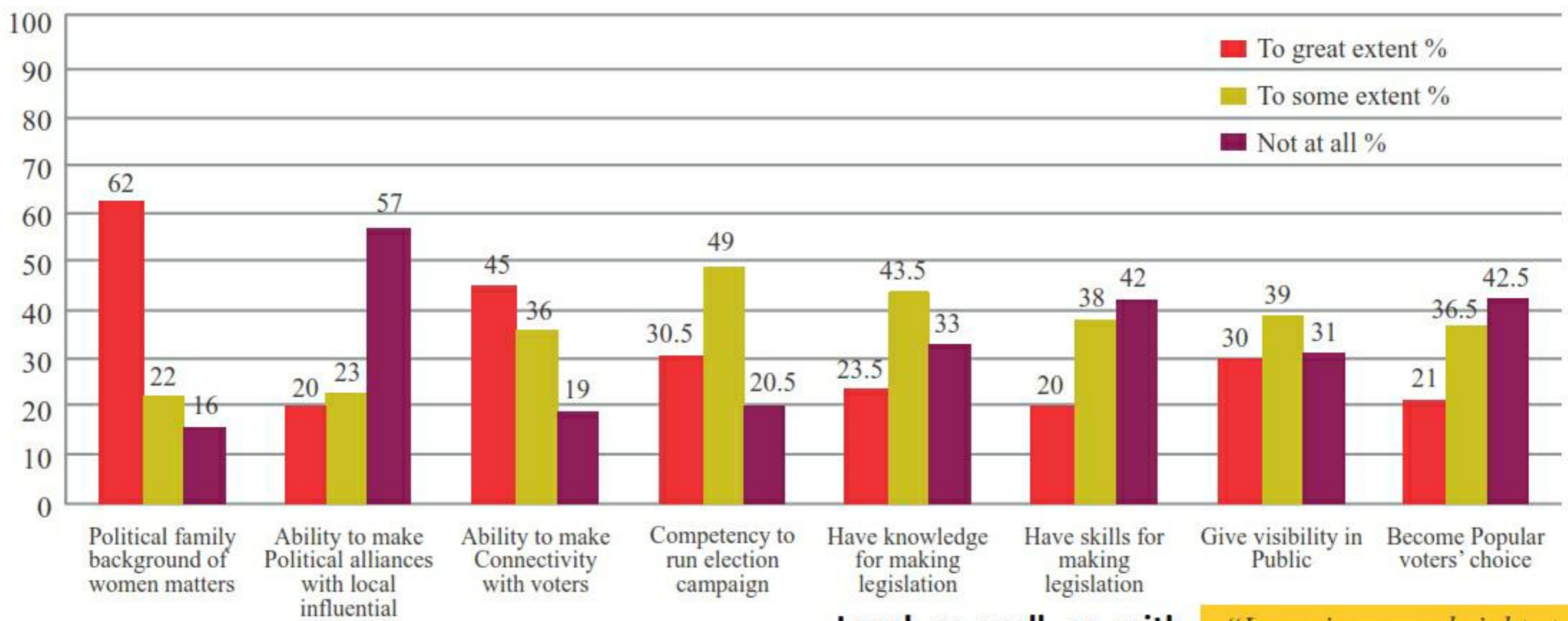
Survey data presented in Figure 3 shows a varied picture of respondents' perceptions about the women politicians' ability to run in the elections. There were eight items that were thought to have bearing on the issue. In fact, each of these items reflected the need of the women politicians to be able to step into the political arena.

Both quantitative and qualitative data collected through perception survey, key informant interviews

(KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs) had revealed that family background of women politicians was of paramount importance in determining their electability. Almost two thirds of the respondents of the survey (62%) were of the view that political family background had been a strong predictor of women's electability in elections. During the focus group discussions and

Women totally unable to build political alliances with influential locals, whereas only one-fifth (20%) of them found the women politicians strongly capable of making political alliances at local level for expanding their vote bank. Qualitative data revealed that senior male politicians, preferably the male family members, remain the chief actors for negotiating with the influential political groups and

Figure 3: Extent of Perceived ability of women politicians to run for election (N=200)



The majority of the participants also endorsed this perception. They argued that the twin factors of political and financial strength of the family significantly contributed in enhancing the prospects of a female politician to run for election. According to them, social and political networks of families have been a great source of introducing women politicians in public. Women's abilities to make political alliances were perceived to be considerably less than men's. A majority of

Level as well as with party leaders. Qualitative data (27 of 35 KIIs and 4 of 6 FGDs)

“Law gives equal rights to women for politics but family and society do not...”—A woman MPA from KPK

Suggested that in KPK, FATA and Balochistan women's role in local level political alliance building had not been expected at all. In these regions the 'jirga system' had been reported as a traditionally dominant institution for settling local level issues

The male notables of the different tribes and political groups predominantly had been the key stakeholders who had also been the members of the local 'jirgas'. Since women had no role in Jirga system, they had therefore not been expected to participate in local level alliance building. Furthermore, women belonging to the leading political families of these regions had been considered to be an exception. Nonetheless, the situation had not been all pervasive; somehow women politicians had been seen more likely to play a supportive role in political alliance building.

“To balance responsibilities As politician and homemaker is a tough job.” — A Woman councillor from Punjab

The ability of women politicians to establish connectivity with voters and to actively participate

in election campaigns had been widely acknowledged. It was found that majority of the respondents

“We can better run election campaign than men as we can just open the door and enter The house.” — A woman councillor from Sindh

were convinced that women politicians were from some extent (36%) to a great extent (45%) skilful in establishing connectivity with voters. Similarly, for majority of the respondents, women had been able to run election campaign from some extent (49%) to great extent (30%). Qualitative data also substantiated the ability of women for establishing connectivity with voters and running effective election campaign. A significant majority of the participants of both KIIs (65 of 75) and FGDs (11 of 15) rated women politicians as capable of greater penetration into households at the grass-

roots level as compared to their male counterparts. As such, the cultural norms did facilitate women to women contacts throughout the country.

Women politicians were expected to have sufficient knowledge and skills for making legislation and policy formulation. An overwhelming majority of the respondents (77%) in the survey said that women had insufficient knowledge about making legislation and policy formulation. According to majority of the male participants of FGDs (5 of 7)

and Key Informant Interviews (29 of 40) from all over the country, women's ability to participate in

“One should not underestimate women's capacity to comprehend things. But sometimes they remain silent to avoid confrontation.” — A male MPA from Punjab

the process of making legislation was not on par with the competence of their seasoned male counterparts. Nevertheless, the women participants did not completely agree with this perception.

Though they accepted their relatively deficient knowledge and skills in making legislation, but this was attributed to the limited opportunities of formal training available to them. Some of the women politicians (participants of KIIs and FGDs) explained that they acquired necessary skills for effective participation in legislation from their own experiences as parliamentarians or from getting occasional training programs organized by some of the NGOs working for women empowerment.

During election campaigns, a candidate's visibility in public mattered significantly in mobilizing potential voters. An overwhelming majority (70%) of the respondents believed that women had limited visibility in the public sphere. Various reasons for the minimal public visibility of women politicians came to surface during the focus group discussions and key informant interviews. For majority of the participants of KIIs and FGDs, in KPK, FATA, Balochistan and the rural areas of Sindh and Punjab, 'pardah' (veil) appeared to be one of the most cited reasons inhibiting women's contacts with public. Contrarily, in urban settings, women were found to be more risk averse of any likely intimidation in public as compared to their male counterparts. A number of participants stated that people gave special attention to the image presentation of female politicians. Consequently, women politicians ran a high risk of getting scandalized due to any unforeseen incident in the public. Few women politicians (8 of 35 KIIs) also disclosed that their family pressed them not to give

"Politics needs patience, persistence and pragmatism. Women have these qualities more than men." — A male councillor from KPK

visibility in public. Otherwise, they would not be allowed to run for elections or to continue

politics. It was also noted during the key informant interviews that mostly the male political workers dealt with the public sphere of electioneering process on behalf of female politicians.

A sizeable proportion (42%) of the survey respondents (both male and females) opined that

women were not acceptable as political leaders. However, a little more than one-third (36%) of them were convinced that women had been a popular choice of voters to some extent but only one-fifth (21%) of the respondents rated women politicians as highly acceptable elected leaders. Qualitative data (63 of 75 KIIs and 9 of 15 FGDs) reflected inter-regional variations with respect to the perceived

"Politics is a messy business for women. People ignore mistakes of men but Not of women." — A woman MPA from Balochistan

popularity of women politicians among voters. In KPK, FATA, and Balochistan, women politicians were perceived to be the less popular choice among voters. In Punjab, during FGDs (5 of 6) and KIIs (19 of 24), the participants observed a gradual rise in women's popularity. Some of the participants referred to a few cases of women politicians who contested elections on general seats against the established and leading male politicians and bagged a significant chunk of votes.

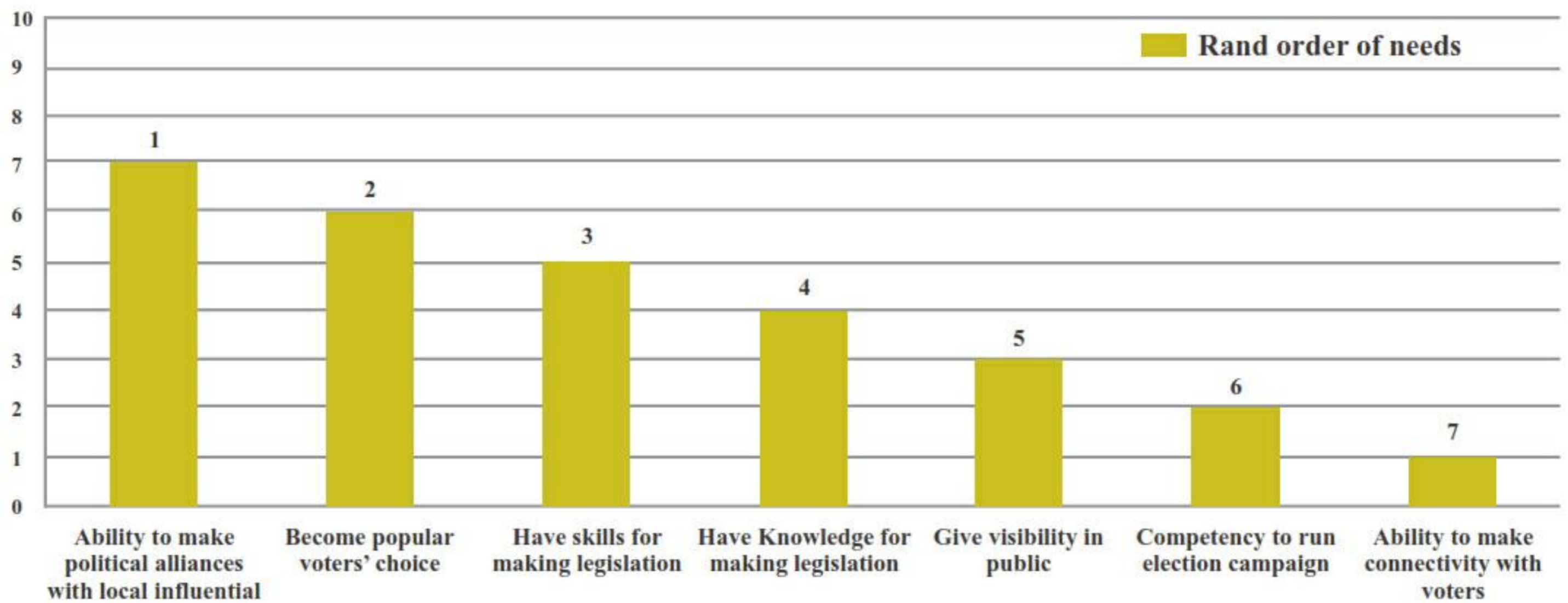
On the whole, findings of the qualitative data collected from Punjab and Sindh and the KIIs and FGDs conducted in all of the four provinces and FATA led to conclude that women politicians were found to be competent enough in establishing connectivity with voters and running election campaign. However, they were not perceived to have reasonable knowledge and skills needed for making legislation in assemblies. Additionally, they were perceived to be constrained in establishing political alliances with local influential leaders and being

sufficiently visible in public. Women were also The disadvantaged because men were a more popular choice as political candidates. In particular, a woman's political family background was considered to be a significant determinant of her ability to run for election.

There were certain attributes perceived to influence

Figure 4 shows that “becoming popular choice of voters” and “having skills for making legislation” were at second and third in the rank order of the needs of women politicians for enhancing their ability to run for elections. Their need to “have knowledge for making legislation”, “ability to give visibility in public”, and “competency to run election campaign” were at fourth, fifth, and sixth place in the rank order respectively. Women politicians were

Figure 4: Rank order of women politicians’ perceived needed abilities to run for election



Electability of women politicians in election. In terms of potency of electability, seven factors were indicated and rank ordered in Figure 4. This rank order of attributes is based on the quantitative data collected from perception survey conducted in Punjab and Sindh. In the rank order, women's need to develop capacity for making political alliances at local level appeared to be on the top.

Considered to be quite capable of establishing their connectivity with voters; need to enhance their ability to “make connectivity with voters” was the last need deficit in the rank order

“Women are generally more sincere and serious about their work. But, sometimes they are trapped by men.” — A male MPA from Punjab

3.2 Equal opportunity for women politicians to run for elections

Quantitative data presented in figure 5 showed that an overwhelming majority of respondents (80%) were of the view that legal provisions had provided equal opportunities to women politicians against their male counterparts.

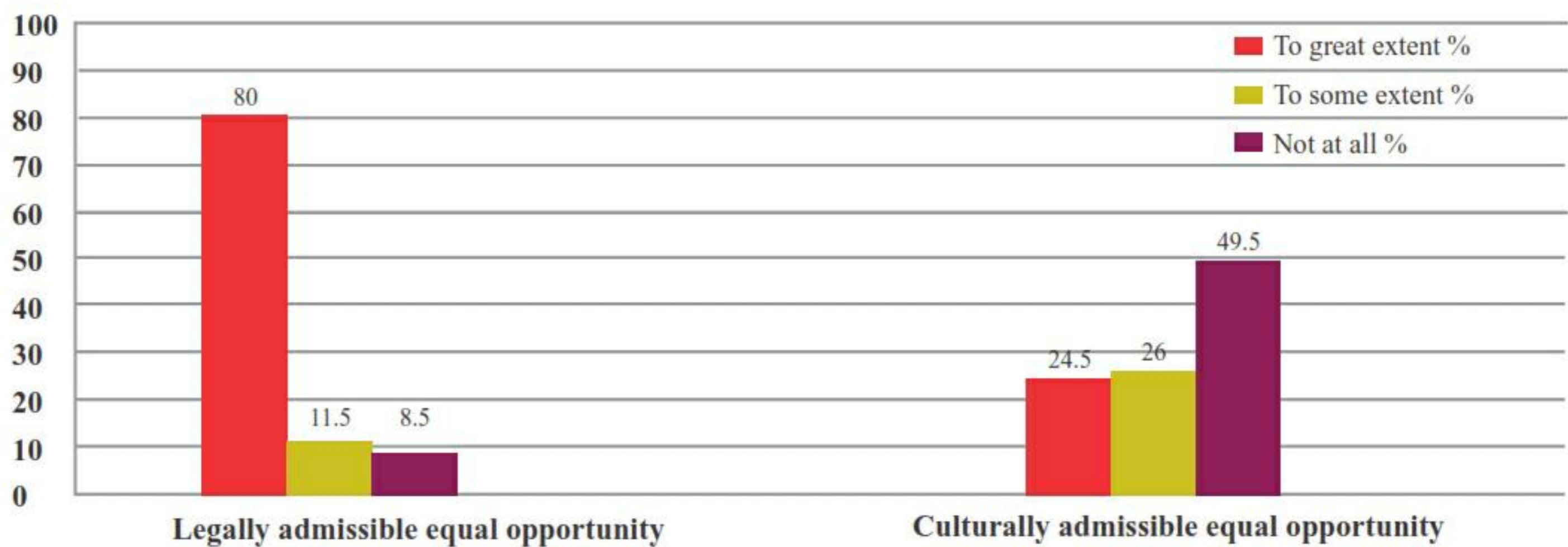
Findings from the focus group discussions (10 of 15 FGDs) also revealed that the issue of women's political participation was not a legal issue, but it was

“Women politicians should not beg for respect: They must earn it.”— A woman MPA from KPK

linked with the patriarchal mind-set. Usually, women have to seek

permission from male elders of their family for participation in politics. On the other hand, male family members had been preferred for pursuing politics as a career. Women participants were of the view that family members only supported women to run for election if any of the male family members could not be eligible for contesting election. They referred to some of the cases of women politicians who were for the first time allowed to run for election against general seats. It was possible in the backdrop of the condition of having graduation level education to qualify to run for election which made some male politicians ineligible to contest election. Given this situation, families with political background preferred to field their women family members as alternate candidates to run for election.

Figure 5: Extent of perceived equal opportunity for women politicians to run for election (N=200)



In addition, gender based stereotypes were also perceived as inhibitions for women's participation in politics. A number of female participants commented that the people expected women politicians to follow the traditional role as homemakers. Despite facing the gender specific odds, some participants (24 of 75 KIIs and 6 of 15 FGDs) argued that women politicians have gained considerable space in the public sphere and have initiated a transformation of traditional mind-sets. Accordingly it has been a gradual process whereby women have been able to alter the public perceptions with their performance as well as by showing resilience towards conservative forces in society. In the rank order of women politicians' needs for equal opportunity to run for election is presented in Figure 6. Need for culturally admissible equal

For equal opportunity to run for election is based on the quantitative data collected from perception survey conducted in Punjab and Sindh.

3.3 Support from political leadership to Women politicians

Engagement in party organizations, assigning leadership roles to women, and party nomination for contesting elections have been used as indicators of support from party leadership to women.

“Women politicians must have their own constituencies even if they are elected against reserved seats: there is no power without people.” — A Woman MPA from Punjab

Figure 6: Rank order of women politicians' needs for equal opportunity to run for election



opportunity for women politicians to run for election appeared to be on the top, followed by the legally guaranteed equal opportunity to participate in election. This rank order of women politicians' needs

Data presented in Figure 7 demonstrated that an overwhelming majority (80%) of the respondents were of the view that the party leadership

was considerably supportive of women politicians for participating in party organization activities. However, 39% of the survey respondents opined that the party leadership was least considerate to women politicians for assigning them leadership role. Furthermore, a little over one half of the respondents (51%) believed that party leadership did not favour women politicians at all as a nominee for their party's election ticket.

Qualitative data (40 of 75 KIIS and 9 of 15 FGDs) revealed that women had been usually taken on board for organizing and running election campaigns and canvassing. But they had rarely been consulted in important matters like deciding party nominations or to represent party at national level political forums. Women's ability to approach the female populace and going door-to-door were therefore seen as amply utilized, but they were rarely awarded party nominations to run for election against general seats. The preferences of political parties' leadership in assigning important political roles were gender biased.

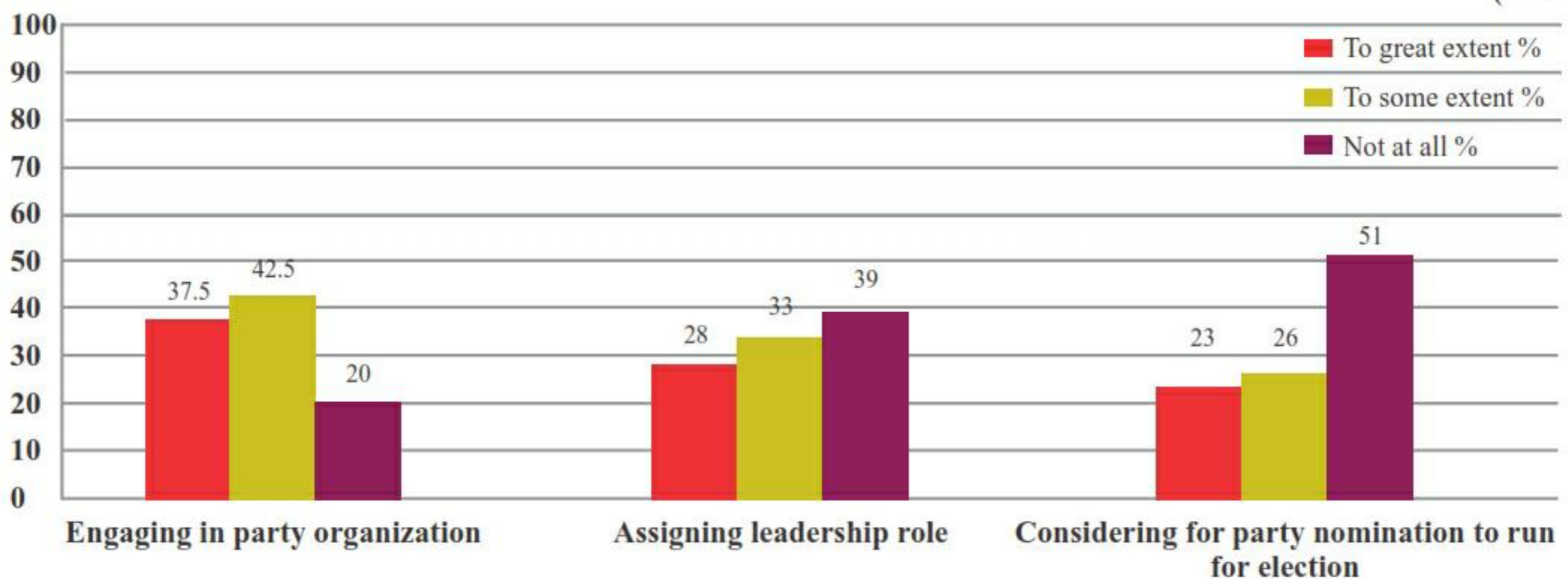
Some participants stated that the perceived chances of a candidate to winning election were perhaps the most important consideration in such decisions and gender differences did not matter. Contrarily, some of the participants stressed that the

“Sometimes our male colleagues take us for granted in Assemblies; but we can prove our worth...” — A woman MPA from KPK

argument of electability is a two-edged sword since electability of females may not increase if they were not provided the chance to run for election. However, this is not to say that there was a glass ceiling for women in politics. Though there have been few in number, women political workers have been able to attain leadership positions in mainstream political parties.

A participant referred to the results of the previous general elections where aspiring women candidates were awarded nominations and won elections on general seats.

Figure 7 : Extent of perceived support from political leadership to women politicians for taking positions within party (N=200)



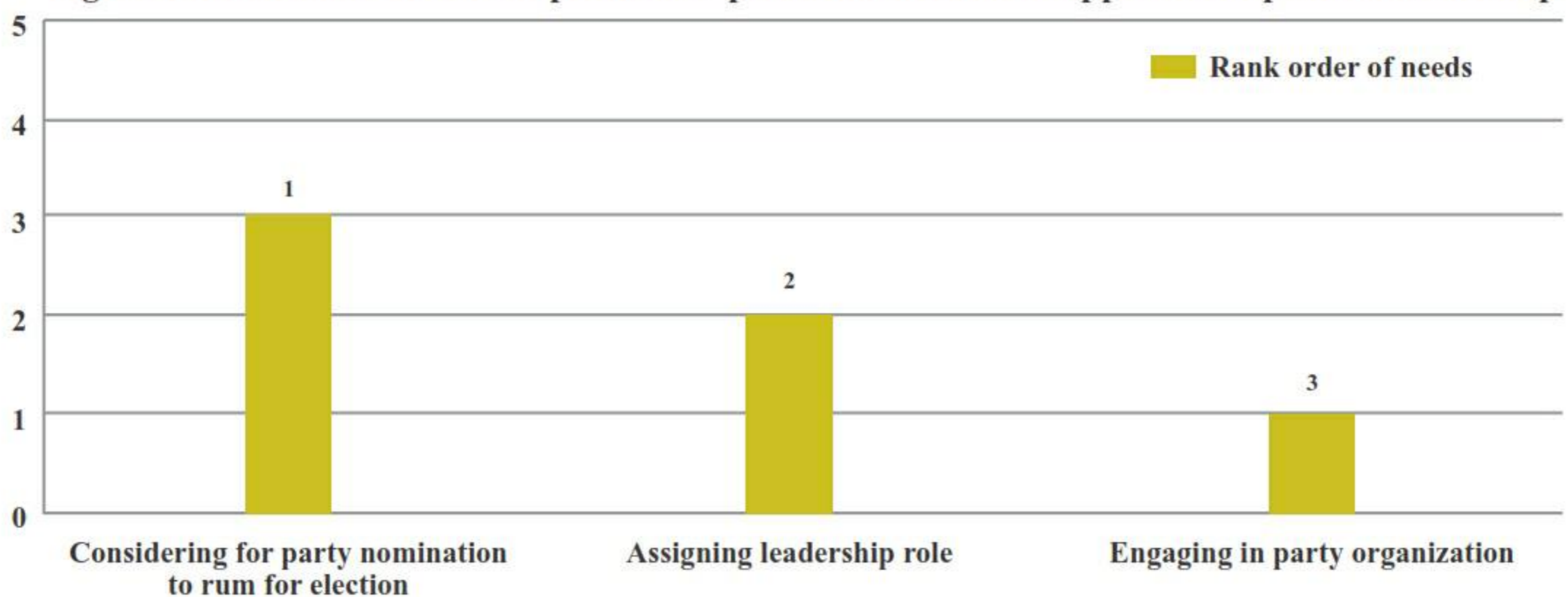
Across regional divides and political affiliations, women participants (20 of 35 KIIs and 4 of 10 FGDs) hinted about a tendency of unequal treatment of men and women by the party leadership. Women were generally required to be fully competent in order to compete for general elections, whereas, the same was not expected of their male counterparts. By the same token, women were awarded party tickets when the likelihood of their success was very high. On the other hand, males were invariably given preference when a stiff competition was expected.

“I fought for getting funds and installed a water filter plant. People pray for me and my party.”
—A woman councillor in Punjab

The data suggested that the presence of women in parliament was by and large a product of the constitutional requirement for women representation.

Support from party leadership was limited to the spheres which were less desirable for men. Despite some legislative milestones to ensure women's political participation in letter and spirit, the attitude of male dominated political parties had not changed in integration of women in electoral process. A majority of the women participants (29 of 35 KIIS and 7 of 10 FGDs) opined that the role of women parliamentarians selected on reserved seats was found to be restricted and they were not made part of major party decisions. The quantitative data collected from perception survey conducted in Punjab and Sindh was used to rank order women politicians' needs in terms of getting support from political leadership. Accordingly, the Figure 8 presents that women politicians' need for party nomination to run for election appeared to be the first in the rank order, followed by assigning leadership role, and then by engaging women politicians in party organization.

Figure 8: Rank order of women politicians' perceived needs for support from political leadership



3.4 Support from male counterparts to women politicians

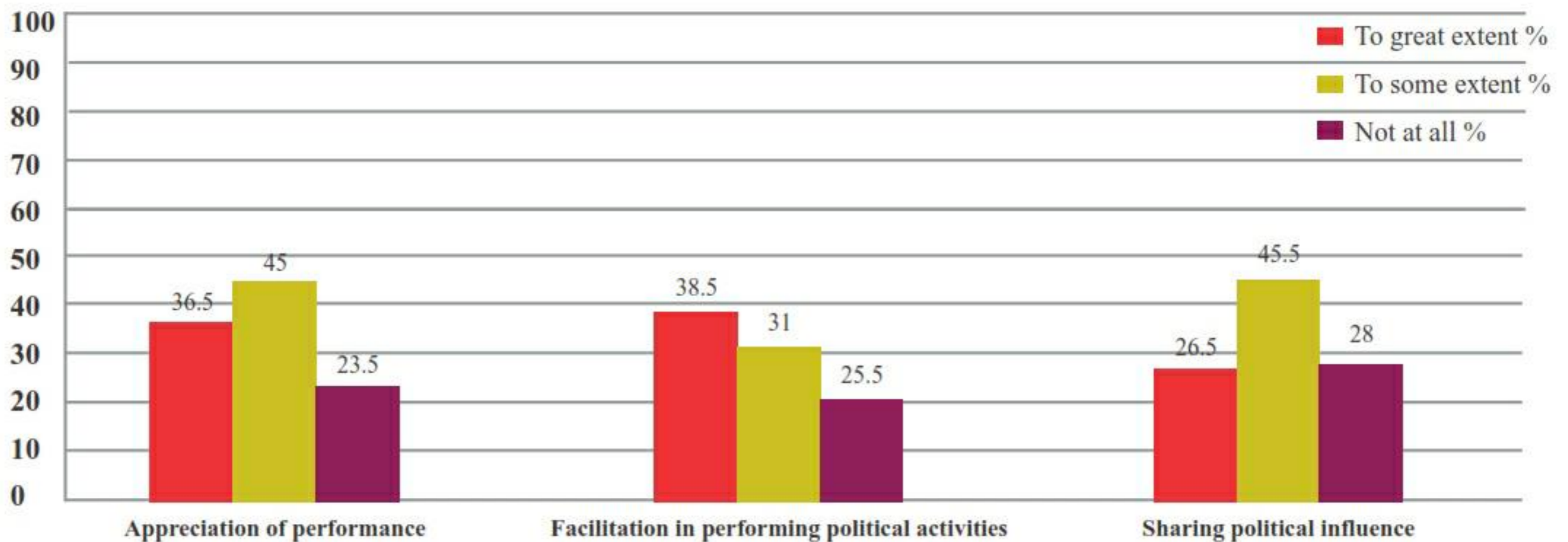
Male politicians' support to women politicians was measured by i) men's appreciation of women's political performance, ii) men's facilitation to women politicians in performing political activities, and iii) men's sharing of their political influence with women politicians. Data presented in Figure 9 showed that a substantial proportion of respondents (42.5%) opined that male counterparts were moderately supportive of women politicians by appreciating their political performance.

*“Male politicians need support of women politicians and women need theirs.”
— A male MPA
from KPK*

Similarly, about two fifths of both male and female respondents of the perception survey perceived that male counterparts were supportive to women politicians in performing political activities. However, a greater proportion (45%) of the respondents reported that male counterparts were moderately supportive to women politicians by sharing their political influence. By and large, male counterparts were found moderately to highly supportive to women politicians for performing their different political activities.

“Politics needs hard bodies, thick skin and fat mind. Not all women have such qualities.” — A male ex-councillor from Punjab

Figure 9 : Extent of perceived support from male counterparts to women politicians in performing political role (N=200)



Qualitative data explained the reasons of the supportive behaviour of male counterparts of women politicians. A majority of the women participants of KIIs (27 of 35 KIIS) expressed that cooperation of their male counterparts was not always free. Their male colleagues facilitated them with the expectations of their help in running election campaigns and mobilizing women voters.

“Male politicians use women political workers: After election they forget them.” — A woman councillor From Punjab

Women from strong political family backgrounds were at an advantage since they got dual support

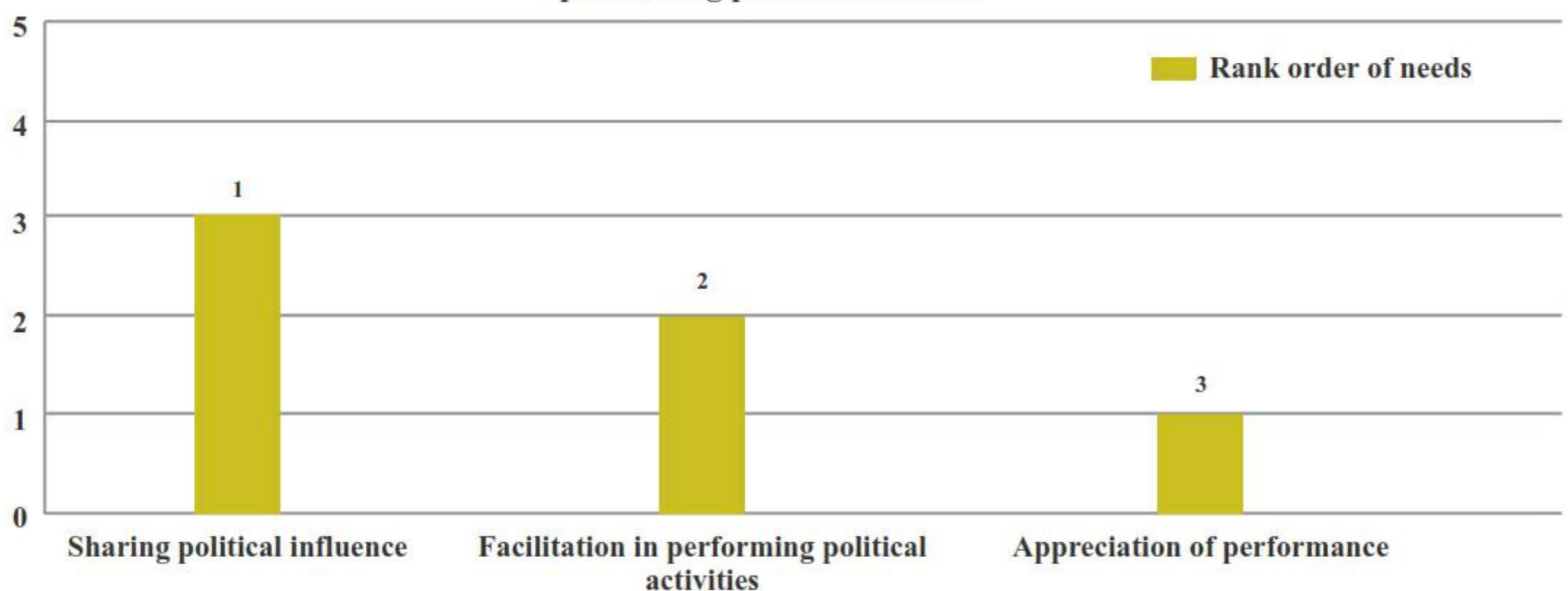
t h e m a l e p o l i t i c i a n s e x p r e s s e d t h a t t h e y w e r e i n f a v o u r o f s u p p o r t i n g t h e i r f e m a l e

“ Women are not well versed about technicalities of official matters: they just keep on complaining.” — A male Government official

counterparts. They also contended that women's participation in politics was also helpful for them. Women politicians' needs for getting support from their male counterparts have been rankordered on the basis of the quantitative data collected from perception survey conducted in Punjab and Sindh.

According to this rank order of needs presented in Figure 10, women politicians' need for sharing the political influence of their male counterparts was

Figure 10: Rank order of women politicians' needs for support from male counterparts in performing political activities



from family as well as from within their parties. Women councillors found their male counterparts a Relatively less supportive to them. On the contrary, all

identified as the most important need followed by facilitation in performing political activities and then by appreciation of their political performance.

3.5 Establishing operational relations with government officials for alleviating the public grievances

Three items were used to measure the strength of women politician's working relations with government officials of line departments. These included women's need for regular contacts, confidence in interaction, and trust in their working relations with government officials. Direct access and contacts with government officials of line departments were considered crucially important for women politicians.

*“We know women's voices are heard: how can a government employee ignore them?”
— A male government official*

Data presented in Figure 11 revealed that 60% of the respondents believed that there was a strong need for

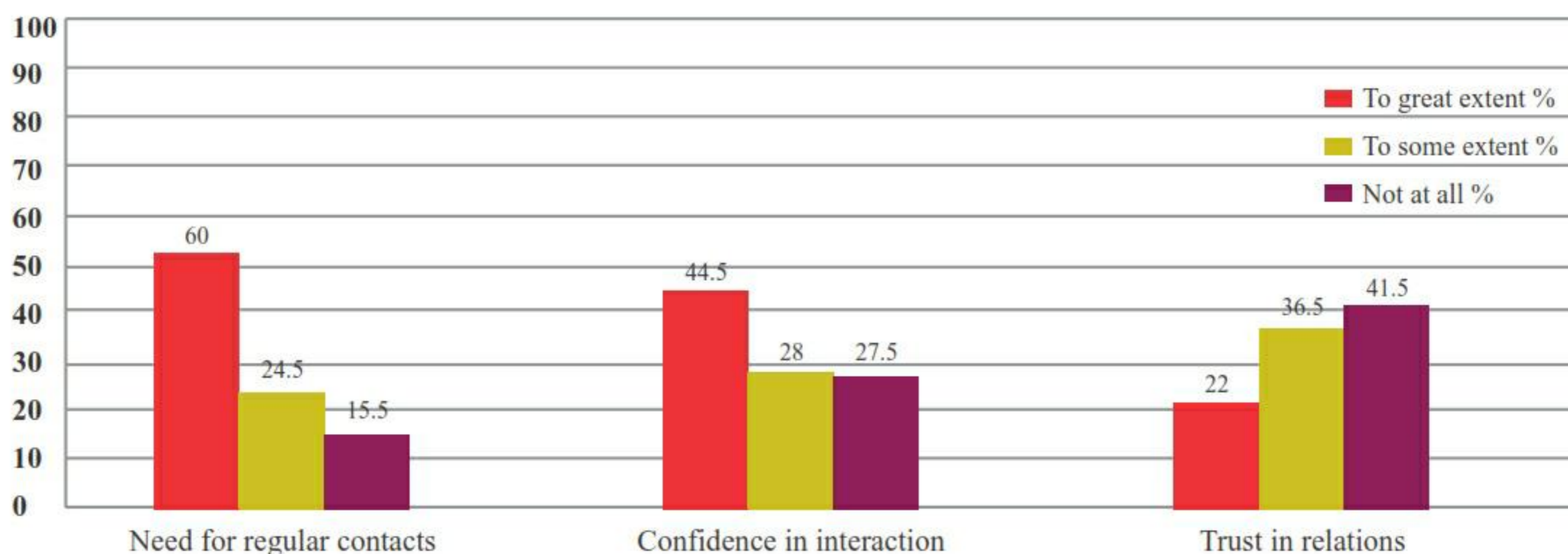
women politicians to maintain regular contacts with the government officials,

whereas 44% of the respondents believed that women were highly confident in dealing with government officials. However, more than two-fifth (42%) of the respondents were of the view that women did not trust at all in the government officials. Many of the participants of FGDs and Key Informant Interviews perceived that women politicians needed regular contacts with government officials to effectively perform their political role.

Nonetheless, a number of female participants were found pessimistic about getting encouraging response from government officials.

Some of the participants shared that they were able to manage working relations with some bureaucrats but it was difficult to approach senior bureaucrats holding important positions. In such cases, mostly they had to use reference of their senior party leaders or ministers for approaching the senior officials

Figure 11: Women politicians’ operational relations with government officials for alleviating the public grievances (N=200)



They further elaborated that given the existing politico-administrative nexus between male politicians and bureaucrats, women found it difficult to enter into such male-dominated social networks. A majority of the women participants (28 of 35 KIIS and 7 of 10 FGDs) reported that they found the office environment of government departments unfavourable for women. According to women participants, there was lack of facilities such as reception desk, separate waiting rooms for ladies and designated staff for facilitating the women visitors.

A number of women participants (24 of 35 KIIs and 6 of 10 FGDs) reported that in most of the situations, bureaucrats were found least courteous while dealing with women politicians, especially the women councillors. Nonetheless, there were regional variations such as in comparison with Punjab and Sindh, the behaviour of government officials in KPK and Balochistan was generally more cordial and facilitative. Moreover, women politicians

had not been offered membership of any of the departmental committees of the government

“In government offices, women are offered tea and long chat but their work is lingered on.” — A Woman MPA from Sindh

departments for implementing development projects or even to address problems/grievances of public. It transpired that in some cases, government officials did not address the issues highlighted by women politicians in their constituency despite making commitments to them.

The strength of women politicians working relations with government officials was measured in the perception survey by using three dimensions. These dimensions included: i) women's trust in working relation with government officials, ii) women's confidence in interaction, and iii) women's need for maintaining regular professional contacts with government officials.

Figure 12: Rank order of women politicians' needs for engagement with media

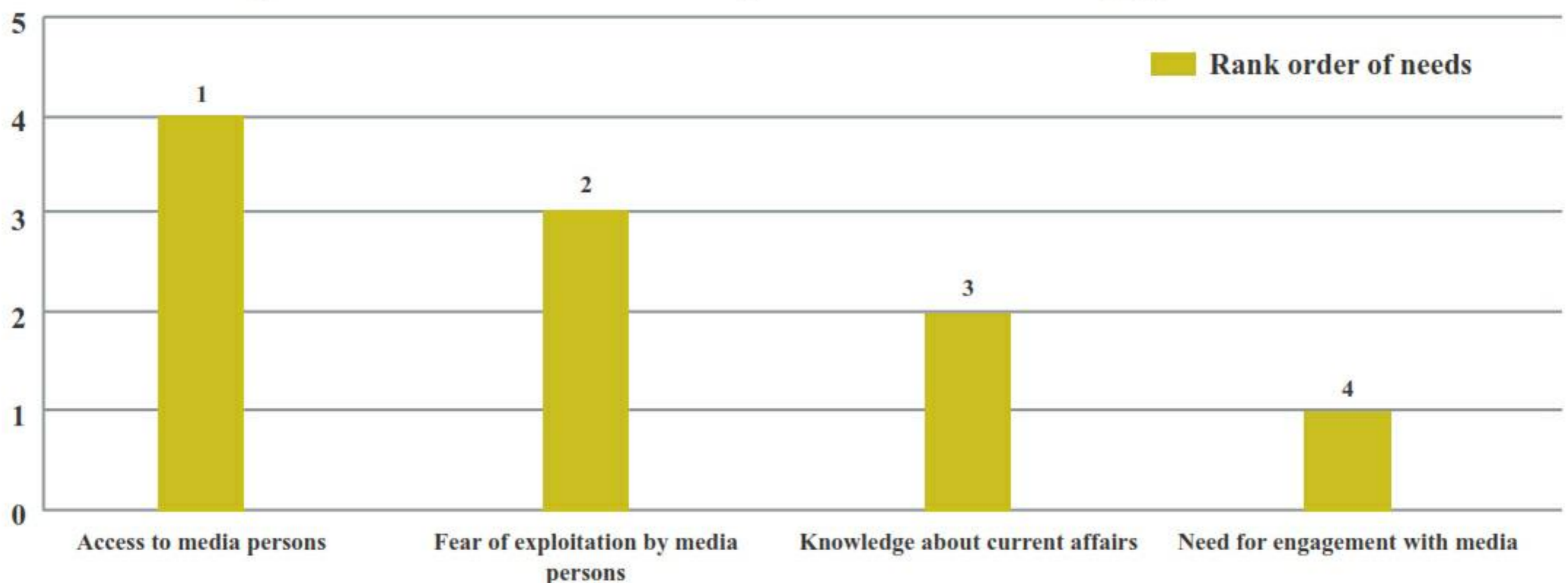


Figure 12 shows that regular operational contacts of women politicians with government officials of line departments were perceived as the most pressing need followed by the need to increase trust in working relations of women with government officials. The need to enhance the level of confidence of women politicians in dealing with the government functionaries was ranked third.

3.6 Engagement of women politicians with media

Women politicians' extent of engagement with media was measured with the help of the four indicators which included: i) need for engagement with media; ii) knowledge about current affairs; iii) access to media persons; and iv) apprehensions of being exploited by media persons. Data presented in figure 13 showed that a majority of the respondents (58.5%) were convinced about a dire need for women politicians to engage with media. Possessing sufficient knowledge about current affairs enables politicians to face media confidently. Given this context, one third of the survey respondents

believed that women had sufficient knowledge about current

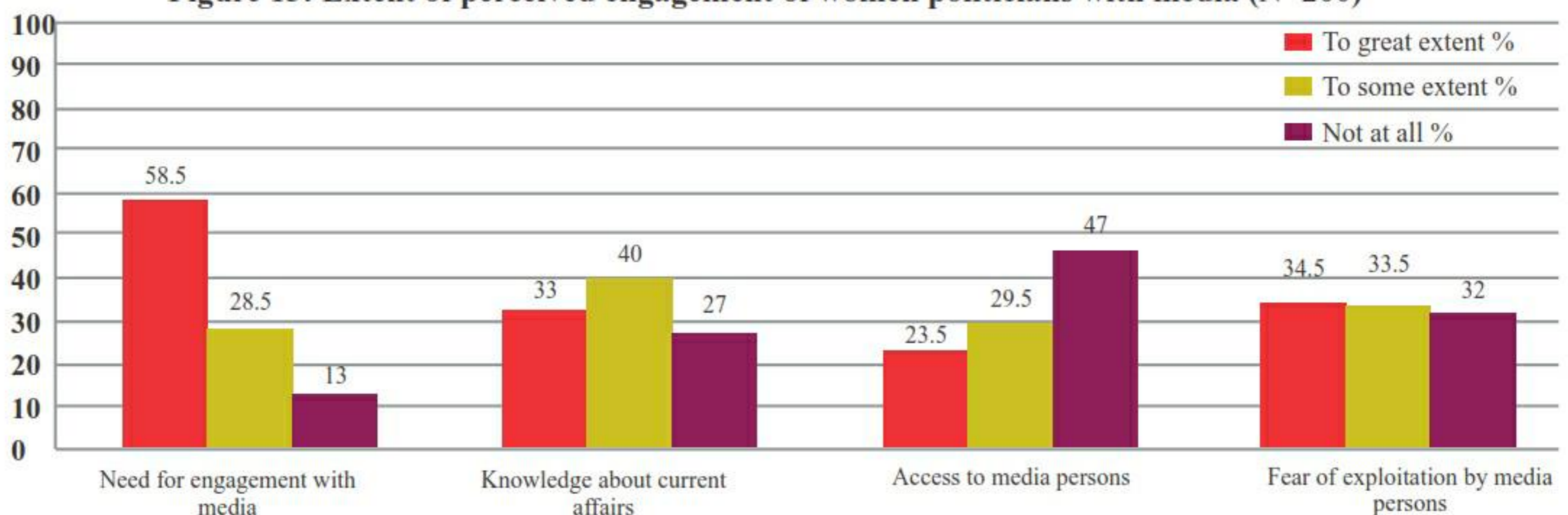
*“I am not fond of going to TV talk show; it is more about ‘showing face’ and talking loud.”
— A woman MPA from Balochistan*

affairs. However, more than one-fourth (27%) of the respondents perceived that women politicians had been totally deficient in knowledge about current affairs.

The main determinant of a politician's ability to get media coverage is his/her personal access to media personnel. Almost one half (47%) of the respondents believed that women had no access to media persons at all. A little more than two-thirds (68%) of the respondents were of the view that women politicians feared exploitation by media persons.

“I am not fond of going to TV talk show; it is more about ‘showing face’ and talking loud.” — A woman MPA from Balochistan

Figure 13: Extent of perceived engagement of women politicians with media (N=200)



The findings from qualitative data (both KIIS and FGDS) showed that the participants had mixed opinions about women politicians' knowledge of current affairs. Participants from the media community were strongly convinced that women had been unable to participate in informed discussions on current affairs. However, a majority of the women participants denounced this perception.

*“TV people go for glamour, power and wealth. Common political worker cannot access them.”
— A Woman Councillor from Sindh*

Participants of focus group discussions (6 of 10 FGDs) were of the view that media persons

preferred to hold discussions on controversial issues in order to increase their ratings. They further said that it was not about being knowledgeable; instead it

“Media is ‘flammable’: they can make hot stories out of nothing. How can a woman afford it?” —A woman MPA from KPK

was the belligerent nature of discussions on talk shows that

discouraged them from participating. Nonetheless, media persons were of the view that women politicians were generally not confident in facing the camera. They contended that the women politicians who were more expressive were regularly covered by the media.

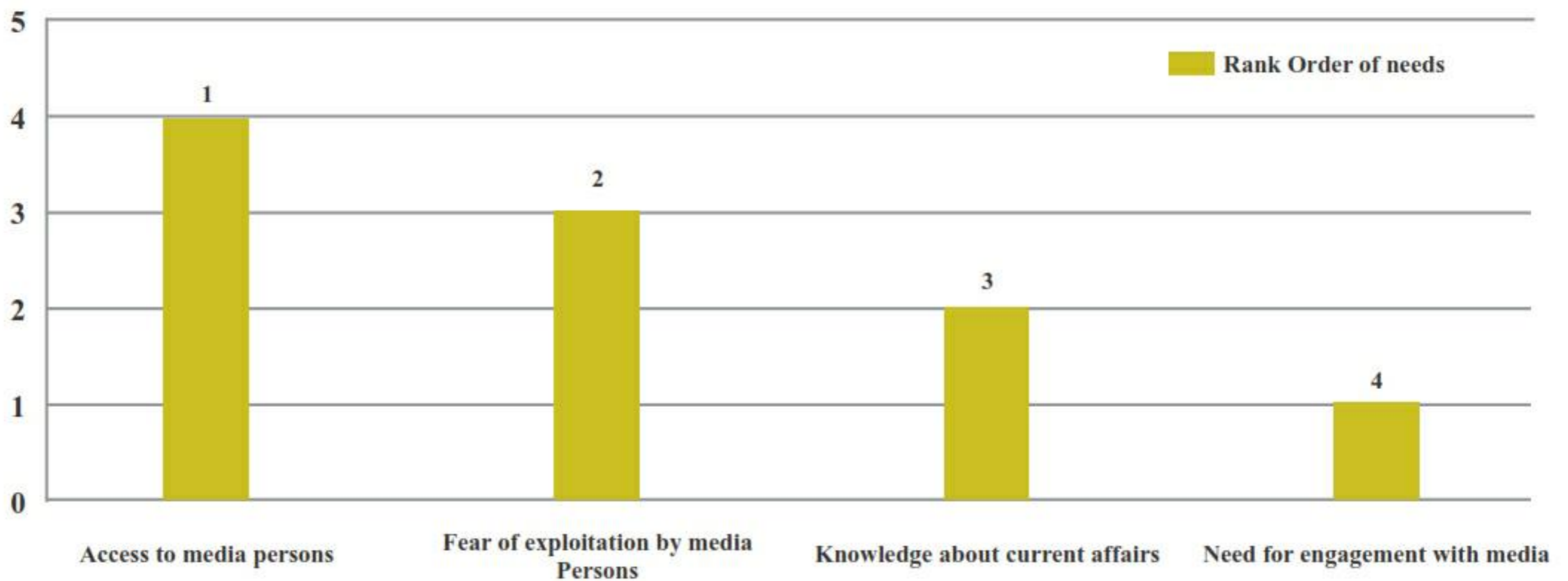
A number of female participants (17 of 35 KIIs and 5 of 10 FGDs) reported that they had reasonable access to print media journalists but media persons from television channels were relatively unapproachable. They argued that only a handful of female politicians

were repeatedly called on media and rest of them were largely ignored. Another important aspect of the accessibility to media was reported to be between provincial level and district level politicians. Women politicians participating in district level governance reported that media persons did not contact them for coverage. They further expressed that the activities of women councillors have rarely received any significant media attention.

During the course of key informant interviews and focus group discussions, female participants frequently reported their apprehension about the unruly ability of media to build or destroy the image of women politicians. Few of the participants cited this factor as the foremost reason for their avoidance of media. It transpired that women politicians from KPK, Balochistan, and interior regions of Punjab and Sindh were more likely to fear exploitation by media and therefore avoided greater media coverage. Nonetheless, a majority of the participants argued that mass media had attained so much importance in recent times that it was not possible for them to avoid it. They were confident that they would be able to draw media attention by enhancing their performance.

Data from the perception survey revealed that women politicians' need for engagement with media appeared at the top of the rank order, followed by women politicians' fear of exploitation by media persons (see figure 14). The need for enhancing their knowledge about current affairs came at third place in rank order followed by their need for engagement with media.

Figure 14: Rank order of women politicians' needs for engagement with media



3.7 Summary of the findings

Of late, women's participation in electoral politics has conspicuously increased because of intense competition among political parties to capitalize on women's vote bank. For this purpose, political parties have been trying to engage increasing number of women in politics, especially in running electoral campaigns. Despite this encouraging trend, women's participation in political processes is still low, because women do face various challenges and bottlenecks in performing autonomous and proactive political role.

The communal affiliations are an important component of the political landscape in Pakistan. Political alliance building across communities and groups plays a vital role in electoral politics at local and national levels. Data showed a pervasive perception that women politicians had limited ability to build political alliances with local influential political leaders/groups. The study determined that most people view Pakistan's entrenched and seasoned male politicians and family elders to be highly instrumental in expanding political networks

and outreaching the vote bank. Data revealed that some of the women politicians could not perceivably engage in this process effectively whereby this limitation was considered to be an impediment to their political autonomy and activism.

The family institution is central to the social fabric of Pakistani society. Data exhibited that family background was an important factor for women to excel in a political career. The study also concluded that for women politicians, the political clout of their families has a greater impact on their electability and ability to win reserved seats than their personal abilities. This may be the reason that, sometimes, women politicians are considered to be politically subservient to their family "godfathers." Similarly, women's knowledge and skills for making legislation and policy formulation was considered quite adequate but not on par with the competence of their male counterparts.

Despite some negative stereotypes, women did reportedly possess some strength in political arenas. For example, women can be quite effective in running election campaigns because of their easy

access to ladies at the household level and their upshot ability to establish connectivity with women voters. Women were also said to be resilient and skilful in dealing with difficult situations where patriarchal norms restrict their mobility and public outreach, and thereby they had the ability to carve out intelligent solutions to survive politically. Data showed that male politicians generally appreciated and acknowledged women politicians' abilities in running election campaigns.

The politico-administrative nexus is vital for effective service delivery to citizens. Data showed that women politicians were well aware of the need for maintaining working relations with important government officials. It was reported that some women politicians had the necessary skills to successfully deal with government bureaucracy. Nonetheless, given the male dominated environment of government departments, it was sometimes difficult for women politicians to get the intricate jobs done as efficaciously as their male counterparts could do.

In Pakistan, the huge expansion of media-mediated political space has implications for political practitioners. Women politicians were well aware of the importance of media coverage in the advancement of their political career. Nonetheless, they were conscious as well as careful about their appearance in media to avoid unnecessary invasion of their private life. Media people generally perceived that women were not well-versed in national and international affairs. Therefore, they were more likely to engage women politicians in discussions focusing on social welfare or family related matters. Nevertheless women politicians, by and large, considered the Pakistani media as gender

biased. There was a strong perception among the district level politicians that media mostly focused on members of national and provincial assemblies. The activities of women councillors rarely received any significant media attention.

It emerged from the study that the big challenges undermining women's participation in politics were: gender inequality at societal level; perceived limited chances of women's electability and perceived lack of skills in building political alliances. Therefore, despite legal and constitutional equality, political parties were often reluctant to nominate women to run for election as well as to engage them in strategic decision making. This mind-set tended to discourage women political workers from participating, thereby slowing down the process of their upward political mobility.

The data showed a conflicting scenario which allowed more political space for women while concurrently putting restrictions on their freedom in public sphere. It was revealed that discriminatory attitudes towards gender mainstreaming have been gradually losing strength as voices of women in politics could be heard both in public and in the parliament. The male participants of the study had well realized the importance of giving space to women in politics and to provide them a chance to participate in the volatile and turbulent domain of power politics. Women politicians resolved to do away with their soft image and affirmed to adopt a bold, courageous, and proactive approach for performing their due role in politics. The key findings of the quantitative and qualitative data collected from all of the four provinces and FATA have been presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Region-wise Overview of the Key Findings of Women Politicians' Capabilities for their Effective Participation in Democratic Governance

Perceived capabilities of women politicians	Level of perceived capabilities of women politicians				
	Punjab	Sindh	Balochistan	KPK	FATA
Extent of women politicians' perceived ability to run for election					
Ability to make political alliances with local influential leaders	**	**	*	*	*
Be a popular choice of voters as political leaders	**	*	*	*	*
Having knowledge and skills for making legislation	**	**	*	*	*
Ability to interact with public	**	**	*	*	*
Competency to run for election campaign	***	**	*	*	*
Ability to make connectivity with voters	***	***	**	**	**
Extent of perceived equal opportunity for women politicians to run for election					
Awareness about legal admissibility of equal opportunity	***	***	**	**	**
Culturally admissible equal opportunity	**	**	*	*	*
Extent of perceived support from political leadership to women politicians by:					
Engaging in party organization	***	**	**	**	*
Assigning leadership role	**	**	*	*	*
Considering for party tickets to run for election	**	*	*	*	*
Extent of perceived support from male counterparts to women politicians by:					
Appreciating women politicians' performance	***	***	**	**	**
Facilitating in performing political activities	***	***	**	**	**
Sharing political influence with women politicians	**	**	*	*	*
Extent of women politicians' operational relations with government officials in terms of:					
Women politicians' need for maintaining regular contacts with government officials	***	**	**	*	*
Women politicians' confidence for interacting with government officials	**	**	*	*	*
Women politicians' trust in relations with government officials	**	**	*	*	*
Extent of perceived engagement of women politicians with media in terms of:					
Women politicians' need for maintaining regular contacts with media persons	***	***	*	*	*
Knowledge about current affairs	**	**	*	*	*
Access to media persons	**	**	*	*	*
Apprehensions of exploitation by media persons	**	**	***	***	***
Legend: *** High; ** Medium; * Low					

3.8 Inter-regional variation in the perceived issues and challenges faced by the women

This study covered the following six areas for identifying the perceived issues and challenges faced by the women politicians across the four provinces of Pakistan including FATA:

- i. Ability to run for election;
- ii. Equal opportunity to run for election;
- iii. Support from political leadership to excel in political career within party;
- iv. Support from male counterparts at all levels of political activities;
- v. Strength of relations with government officials of line departments for policy formulation and its implementation; and
- vi. Engagement with media for positive portrayal as effective political leader.

Ability to run for election

Generally, women's role in local level political alliance building was not expected in KPK, FATA and Balochistan. In these regions, male dominated traditional "Jirga system" had been a dominant institution for settling local issues. Normally, male notables have been the members of the "Jirga" and women have no place in this set-up. People might give lot of respect to their women in various capacities in the families but not as law makers and the adjudicators of justice. That ideal of women is all pervasive, except for odd cases like Naseem Wali

Khan, who might be organizing her own political party. As a result, women

"People give a lot of respect to women but not their vote in elections." — A woman MPA from KPK

politicians are unable to develop skills and competencies necessary for participating in dispute resolution and building political alliances. Resultantly, it has been difficult to compete with their male counterparts for expanding political influence in their respective constituencies. In order to cope with such deficiency, women politicians had to depend on support of their family especially their male elders for establishing local level political alliances.

Punjab and Sindh provide a relatively different scenario where women politicians have successfully contested elections against general seats and have given tough time to their male contenders. But mostly these are the odd cases emerging out of the families having political history anchored in feudalism. A woman from the masses may be able to cast her vote (though as guided by her male folks) but to contest election on the general seat is rare. It was the general perception that political parties have been betting on the winning candidates which happen to be men. Without political support women, whatever their background, cannot think of entering the political arena. Prima facie the situation for women politicians may look to be little different in Punjab and Sindh as compared to KPK, Balochistan, and FATA but in reality it is governed by same patriarchy and political family background scenario.

In Punjab and Sindh, district level women politicians were found to be more active participants in political activities as compared to those in KPK, FATA and Balochistan. But they could hardly foresee the chances of excelling in provincial and national level political career. Some of the major perceived reasons were: i) lack of financial resources, ii) lack of support from male elders of their family, iii) missing political networking at provincial and national levels, and iv) lack of patronage and encouragement by the top political party leadership.

Equal opportunity to run for election

Like other patriarchal societies, male dominated mind-set in KPK, FATA and Balochistan discouraged women to equally participate in politics. Though this mind-set was also prevalent in Punjab and Sindh yet women found some space and acceptability in politics, especially to run for election. During the previous general elections, more women politicians contested elections against general seats both in rural and urban areas and bagged considerably large number of votes. Majority of the respondents considered it a positive change with respect to increasing acceptance of women politicians' participation in electoral politics. Despite legally guaranteed equal opportunity to run for election, some women recorded their strong concerns about the gender-based discrimination which deny equal chances to run for election.

Support from political leadership to excel in political career within party

Qualitative data showed that male political

leadership usually took district level women politicians on board for organizing election campaigns because of women's unrestricted access to female voters. Despite this political strength of women politicians, they were rarely given a chance to participate in the process of political decision making. Women politicians were particularly ignored in awarding party nominations to run for election. Almost all levels of women politicians across the country had a feeling that political party leadership assigned them (women political workers) a subordinate role and seldom considered them for leadership positions. Generally, women political workers had a feeling of not being appropriately rewarded and compensated for their services to the party.

Support from male counterparts to women politicians in political activities

Across the country, it was reported that male politicians were not always supportive to women in their political endeavours. Despite tall claims of male politicians, women politicians especially the ex-councillors could not see most of their male counterparts as supportive in achieving their political goals. Some of the respondents reported that male politicians were selective in supporting women politicians; the selective support to women politicians depended on the peculiar demand of the situation and political skills of a particular women politician. Overall, the women respondents had an impression that they were dependent on their male counterparts to advance their political career.

Strength of relations with government officials for policy formulation and its implementation

Across the country women representation in public services was quite slim. Women politicians had to face male dominated culture and conduct in government offices. Interestingly, despite male dominance, the attitude of government officers

“Baboos (referring to bureaucrats) are trained to respect power and influence. It is not men or women; it is the power that matters for them.”

—A woman MPA from Punjab

towards women politicians was different in different provinces. It was reported that in KPK, FATA and

Balochistan the government officers were more respectful and courteous towards women politicians because of cultural values. But, in Punjab, women politicians found the senior bureaucrats relatively indifferent while dealing with them. Junior officers happened to be rather caring and supportive of women politicians.

Engagement with media for positive portrayal as effective political leader

Women politicians across the country were fully aware of the crucial role of media in image building (or destruction) of politicians. At all levels women were conscious and sensitive about their political, personal, and family reputation. With few exceptions, women respondents had a feeling that their exposure to media could be risky as possible misreporting or misquoting of their statements could cause more damage than benefit. There was also an impression among women politicians that media reporters could not be impartial and objective in

t h e i r professional activities. That was the reason women politicians were reluctant to appear in media.

“Media is a double edge sword. It pulls people from the abyss of anonymity to the heights of popularity. And then, on a minor mistake, it throws down to the earth; dealing with media is a risky game.”

—A woman MPA from Sindh

Women politicians from KPK, FATA and Balochistan reported that they often tried to avoid media because of family restrictions and strict cultural norms of pardha. Such restrictions were bit relaxed in Punjab and urban Sindh.

Inter-regional scenario provides gender biased picture of politics reflecting that politics is, by and large, job of the patriarchs. There is a general discrimination against women politicians. To start with a political career, women aspirants have to get the blessings of their patriarchs. This observation is equally applicable to the women politicians who might be cashing on their family's political background.

The operational scenario of women politicians in the field gives the impression that they experience lot of challenges in getting nominations for election, conducting election campaigns,, getting support from their counterparts, seeking help from officers working in the line departments in alleviating the issue of their electorates, and using media for projecting their achievements. For luring the female voters, the political parties definitely make use of their services. Despite all these hardships, women politicians have shown lot of resilience in their terrain of political careers.

4. Key Findings and Recommendations

4.1 Key findings

On the whole, the key findings of this baseline study are as follows:

- i. Women politicians were perceived to be quite competent in establishing connectivity with voters and running election campaign;
- ii. Women possessed reasonable level of knowledge and skills needed for making legislation and policies. Nevertheless, government officials of line departments had negative views about women politicians' ability in this area;
- iii. Women politicians were perceived to be constrained in establishing political alliances with local influential leaders;
- iv. Some of the respondents considered that women were a less popular choice of voters as political leaders;
- v. Political family background was considered a significant determinant of women's ability to run for election. Family support -- especially from the male elders -- was reported to be an important factor in enhancing women's political participation;
- vi. Constitutionally and legally, women have been guaranteed equal rights to participate in politics but deep-rooted gender inequality was perceived to be a significant factor inhibiting women politicians from equal political participation;
- vii. Male political leaders were perceived to be supportive of women in terms of engaging them for party organization, mobilizing women voters and other such activities. However, male political leaders were reluctant to assign leadership role to women within the party hierarchy;
- viii. Male politicians generally appreciated their female colleagues' political performance and facilitated them in performing political activities. Nevertheless, they were less likely to share their political influence by giving due credit to their (women's) services/contributions.
- ix. Women politicians well understood the importance of effective working relationship with government officials to perform their political role. Nonetheless, many women politicians were found to be constrained to interact with functionaries in male-dominated government departments;
- x. Women politicians were well aware of the importance of media coverage in the advancement of their political career. Nonetheless, some of them showed reluctance to interact with media persons keeping in view the gender sensitivities of the situation;
- xi. The networking ability of women politicians' across the party lines was perceived to be poor, which ultimately diluted their political strength.

4.2 Women politicians' needs for effective participation in politics

Based on the findings of the perception survey conducted in Punjab and Sindh and the qualitative data collected from KIIs and FGDs from all over the country including FATA, key areas of women politicians' needs for their effective participation in democratic governance have been identified. The key areas by specific needs are:

1. Women politicians' ability to run for election

- i) Getting support from male family members to participate in politics
- ii) Enhancement of ability to make political alliances with local influential leaders
- iii) Increasing acceptance of women's role in politics
- iv) Enhancing knowledge and skills for policymaking and legislation
- v) Enhancing ability for greater visibility in public
- vi) Developing capacity for organizing and running election campaign
- vii) Enhancing connectivity with voters through public contacts

2. Women politicians' equality of opportunity to run for election

- i) Ensuring implementation of laws for women's equal opportunity to run for election
- ii) Increasing cultural admissibility for women's equal opportunity to run for election by changing patriarchal mind-set discouraging women's role in politics

3. Women politicians' support from political leadership

- i) Increasing engagement of women politicians in party organization
- ii) Encouraging women politicians by assigning leadership roles within the party
- iii) Enhanced consideration of women politicians for awarding party tickets to run for election at all levels
- iv) Enhanced involvement of women politicians in decision-making
- v) Enhanced political patronage to women politicians from union council level to national level

4. Women politicians' support from male counterparts

- i) Helping women politicians in building networks across the multiple tiers of political leadership
- ii) Sharing political influence with women politicians (especially the women councillors)
- iii) Encouraging women politicians' participation in decision-making

5. Women politicians' working relations with government officials

- i) Enhanced knowledge about functions and procedures of government departments
- ii) Enhanced skills for participation in legislation and policymaking
- iii) Building trust-worthy relations among women politicians and government officials
- iv) Regular institutionalized engagement

- v) Enhanced access of women politicians to senior government officials as public representatives for addressing public problems
- 6. Women politicians' engagement with media for their portrayal as effective political leaders**
- i) Enhanced access of women politicians to media persons
 - ii) Reducing apprehensions of women politicians about their likely exploitation by the media persons in portraying their image in media
 - iii) Improved communication skills and knowledge about current affairs by women politicians for their effective portrayal as leaders
 - iv) Enhanced media coverage of the political activities of women politicians especially of the district level councillors and political workers

4.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are offered:

1. Political Parties

- i) Currently, there is no arrangement for providing formal training to the political parties' workers, men and women, for handling the day-to-day affairs of the electorate. Given the Pakistani socio-cultural milieu, women are either completely left out or just lag behind. Such training can enhance the abilities of party workers, especially of women, to have meaningful participation in the political affairs of the country. Therefore, it is

recommended that party workers, both men and women, should be provided rigorous training periodically in handling the routine issues of the electorate.

- ii) Post-elections training facilities for legislators for running the affairs of the country are minimal. Comparatively, the civil servants -- who run the administration of the country -- get rigorous and continuous training, which provides them confidence to handle their jobs. Possibility of such training may be visualized for the law makers at different levels. Such a possibility is highly likely to meet the deficiency needs of women politicians for strengthening their political participation and leadership for effective democratic governance in Pakistan. SFCG's on-going WILL program is a successful example of such critically important and required interventions.
- iii) Political parties may be educated and encouraged through civil society and non-governmental organizations to give more proactive roles to their women politicians.
- iv) Capacity building of women politicians is necessary for women's sustainable role in political processes, and political parties can provide opportunities for on-the-job training for political participation and leadership. Therefore, it is recommended that the Election Commission of Pakistan may encourage the political parties to mandate in their party manifestos that women get important positions in their party hierarchy.

2. Government Departments/Bureaucracies

Working relationships with government officials are an important indicator of success for politicians in their various capacities, particularly in alleviating the concerns of their electorate. Government officials can be made to respect women public representatives through training and regulations. Nevertheless, the environment is still perceived to be less than “women politician friendly”. Therefore, let us make women politicians as part of the system. Hence, it is recommended that the possibility of involving women politicians in various forums/committees of government departments at all levels may be explored.

3. Portrayal of Women Role Model Leaders

Grooming of young girls for taking up roles as politicians has to start early. Education institutions can be highly instrumental in this respect by providing learning opportunities as part of co-curricular activities as well as by portraying achievements of prominent women political leaders in the textbooks. Many successful and charismatic women leaders have secured their place in the history of Pakistan. The qualities and achievements of such women leaders may be projected through textbooks and media so that the younger generation could understand the crucial historical role of women's leadership.

4. Legislative Measures

Despite the constitutional and legal guarantees for equal opportunity, women face many bottlenecks and hindrances undermining their

ability to play an effective role as politicians. Therefore, it is recommended that i) electoral laws should be carefully reviewed to provide a level playing field for women; ii) subordinate judicial officers, attorneys and executive officials may be sensitized about the situations where women are disadvantaged; iii) legislative measures should be taken to involve women in decision-making in issues such as health, education, and settling of disputes in local forums.

5. Implementation of Laws

There are laws in Political Parties Act 1962, amendment in 2002, 2004 and 2011 that make it mandatory for each party to hold periodic elections without having gender discrimination. But practically, such elections are not held regularly and women may not be given fair chance to compete for political office. Resultantly, one resource for grooming women politicians for their future role taking/playing remains dormant. Probably, it suits the present lawmakers who mostly use women politicians as their appendages. Therefore, it is recommended that laws relating to the holding of elections in the political parties may be implemented by providing opportunities to women politicians to participate in party election at various tiers.

6. Women's Leadership Representation to Ensure Integration Across Tiers

Though women's representation is ensured at various formal legislative forums, yet they have limited visibility in internal bodies constituted by political parties. As a result, women politicians do

not get sufficient grooming opportunities for developing their political capabilities. It is, therefore, recommended that women politicians should be actively involved in different tiers of their political parties ranging from union council to the central executive committee.

7. Media

Media outlets need to be mobilized for proactively projecting the activities of women politicians, especially those at the district level. Educational institutes and universities may play a role in sensitizing upcoming journalists about issues of gender in politics. Legal measures may be taken to restrict the intrusion of media in private lives of women politicians.

8. Development of Women's Leadership at the grassroots level

Society needs to train and groom women leaders at the grassroots level. For this, leadership training opportunities should be provided to women and girls in educational institutions, workplace and civil society organizations. It may be noted that seemingly minor and insignificant leadership roles may groom future women leaders for high profile roles.

9. Behavioral Change in Patriarchal Mind-set

The role of family is crucial in enabling women to participate in politics and successfully contest elections. It is recommended that the top leadership of political parties be sensitized for allocating more general seats to women political workers from modest backgrounds. At the societal level, negative stereotypes regarding women's political competencies need

to be debunked by projecting scientific evidence about gender-equality in terms of competencies and capabilities through media, educational institutions, mosque, and public discourse.

10. Resilience of Women Politicians

The qualitative data showed that women politicians have developed a lot of resilience to face the challenges and bottlenecks in achieving political objectives. The challenges alluded to in the in-depth interviews and focus group discussions may simply be a tip of the iceberg needing its identification and thorough analysis. It is, therefore, recommended that a separate study may be conducted to identify the areas providing challenges to women's political ascendancy and where women's resilience could be increased so that they may effectively participate at different levels in the political culture and democratic governance of Pakistan.

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