

**Women's Political Empowerment at National and Local Levels  
through Quotas: A Case Study of Pakistan and Bangladesh**

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## **Abstract**

The introduction of gender quotas has been increasingly viewed as an important policy measure for promoting women's access to decision-making bodies and power structures at national and local levels around the globe, especially after the Beijing Platform for Action 1995. This thesis examines the introduction and implementation of political quotas for women in Pakistan and Bangladesh where women have been subjected to various forms of socio-economic and political discrimination. This thesis traces the processes leading to the introduction of political quotas, examines the roles of various governmental and non-governmental actors towards the adoption and implementation of quota policies, and finally evaluates the intensity of women's empowerment in both countries as a result of quota measures.

Academic work on gender quotas and women's empowerment in Pakistan and Bangladesh has been scattered both in time and focus of concern. The thesis assembles this disparate research to provide a holistic account and analysis of the introduction, implementation and impact of gender quotas in politics in Pakistan and Bangladesh. This facilitates understanding of the overall processes associated with gender mainstreaming through quotas located in the social, cultural economical and political contexts of both countries. This research looks at women's political empowerment through quotas at both national and local levels in Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Comparison is made between Pakistan and Bangladesh to identify similarities and differences in their experiences with political gender quotas. The research assists in identifying key factors that explain how a policy works or does not; how it can be interpreted; and how it can be enacted and implemented in different ways by different actors. By adopting a historical

institutionalist perspective, the countries' adoption of gender quotas is given a temporal dimension, an essential requirement for understanding the present situation and how it has been reached.

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## **List of Abbreviations and Acronyms**

ADAB	Association of Development Agencies of Bangladesh
ADF	The African Development Forum
AF	<i>Aurat Foundation</i> (Pakistan)
AL	<i>Awami League</i> (Bangladesh)
ASF	Acid Survivors Foundation (Bangladesh)
BBS	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
BDHS	Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey
BDP	Bureau for Development Policy
BDT	Bangladeshi Takka
BMP	<i>Bangladesh Mahila Parishad</i>
BNP	Bangladesh Nationalist Party
BPFA	Beijing Platform for Action
BRAC	Bangladesh Rehabilitation Assistance Committee
CCHR,B	Coordinating Council of Human Rights, Bangladesh
CEDAW	Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
DAC	Development Assistance Committee (OECD)
DGHS	Directorate General of Health Services (Bangladesh)
DTCE	Devolution Trust for Community Empowerment
ECLAC	(UN) Economic Commission for Latin America and Caribbean

FWCW	Fourth World Conference on Women
GAD	Gender and Development
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNI	Gender Inequality Index
GNI	Gross National Income
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
GoP	Government of Pakistan
HBF	Heinrich Boll Foundation
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMS	International Media Support
JI	<i>Jamat-i-Islami</i> (Islamic Party Pakistan)
JIB	<i>Jamat-i-Islami</i> (Bangladesh)
JP	<i>Jatiya Party</i> (Bangladesh)
JPGMC	Jinnah Post Graduate Medical Centre (Pakistan)
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MoWD	Ministry of Women Development (Pakistan)
MNA	Member of National Assembly
MPA	Member of Provincial Assembly
MP	Majority Plurality (Electoral System)
MP	Member of Parliament
NCSW	National Commission on the Status of Women (Pakistan)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation



NSC	National Standing Committee
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OSCC	One Stop Crisis Centre (Bangladesh)
PDO	Pattan Development Organisation (Pakistan)
PKR	Pakistani Rupees
PM	Prime Minister
PML	Pakistan Muslim League
PML(N)	Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz)
PML(Q)	Pakistan Muslim League (Quaid-i-Azam)
PPP	Pakistan Peoples Party
PR	Proportional Representation (Electoral System)
Rs	Rupees (Pakistani Currency)
SIGI	Social Institution and Gender Index
Tk	Takka (Bangladeshi Currency)
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNESC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
WAD	Women and Development
WAF	Women's Action Forum (Pakistan)
WB	World Bank

WC	Working Committee
WEF	World Economic Forum
WFP	World Food Program
WID	Women in Development