



Legislative Responses and Political Party Roles in the Sociopolitical Empowerment of Christian Women in Lahore: A Comparative Review of PTI and PML-N (2013–2022)

Laiba Khan ¹ Dr. Shafique Qurban ²

¹ M. Phil Political Science, University of Management and Technology, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan.

² Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science and International Relations, University of Management and Technology, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan.

Email: shfique.qurban@umt.edu.pk

Corresponding Author: liba.khan0269@gmail.com

Vol. 4, Issue 1, 2025

Article Information

Received:

2025-03-23

Revised:

2025-05-22

Accepted:

2025-06-20

ABSTRACT

Christian women in Lahore face multiple sources of marginalization due to discrimination based on gender as well as being a religious minority. Even though there are some legislative safeguards and constitutional guarantees, the real lives of such women reveal that they are vulnerable in a social, economic, and political sense. In this review article, the author identifies and critically analyses the country's efforts of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) governments, 2013-2022, in terms of legislating, policy, and institutions. It has drawn on secondary literature only and explores the sociopolitical issues that plague Christian women, the extent and execution of significant legislative actions, and impediments to effective empowerment. This review is premised on constructivist theory, hence providing a synthesis of reforms regarding the same and pointing out the traces of barriers to participation and inclusion, and the necessity of progressing to more valuable intersectional and contextually considerate legal and policy solutions that would enable the substantive empowerment of Christian women in Lahore.

Keywords: *Political Parties, Christian Women, Minority Identity, Sociopolitical Empowerment, PTI Government.*

Citation: APA

Khan., L & Qurban, S. (2025). *Legislative responses and political party roles in the sociopolitical empowerment of Christian women in Lahore: A comparative review of PTI and PML-N (2013–2022)*, *Journal of Climate and Community Development*, 4(1), 311-323.



1. Introduction

Lahore, the capital of Punjab province, is not only a city famous for its historical and cultural heritage, but also is one of the cities where the Christians constitute a religious minority. According to the latest year's statistics, Lahore is home to one of the largest urban concentrations of Christians in Pakistan, with 368,000 Christians inhabiting the city (Statistics, 2023). Most of the Christian community resides in neighborhoods such as Yuhana Abad, Joseph Colony, Marian Colony, Nishat Colony, and Bahr Colony, which are used by this community for residence. These locations, although existing forcefully in their way, are also where the vulnerabilities of Christian women are experienced the most.

Christian women, constituting 1,632,476, are still one of the most underprivileged populations in the city (Statistics, 2023). They have experienced discrimination both in virtue of their being women in a very patriarchal society and as religious minorities in a Muslim majority society. The consequences of this so-called double jeopardy are poor access to education, restricted economic prospects, inability to take part in politics, and poorly presented legal protection. The nature of social attitudes towards them is reflected in the fact that they are often framed as the others, as those who do not belong to the mainstream history of the nation and religion, which enhances their invisibility in the social and political setting.

The structural disadvantages suffered by Christian women are not necessarily due to some grievous misbehavior of some individuals or even some isolated acts of discrimination, as they are deeply entrenched in institutional, legal, and cultural systems that contribute to this marginalization. Though the Constitution of Pakistan accords minority and women seats in the legislative bodies, which is a mechanism designed to create inclusion and political representation, yet the actual representation of Christian women is terrible. To a great extent, it can be attributed to exclusionary nomination procedures that are monopolized by party hierarchies and Patriarchal norms that govern access to these arenas (Latif, 2023).

The past two tenures (2013-2018, 2018-2022) have seen the PML-N and PTI governments

initiate legislative and policy measures that sought to answer some of these issues. However, examination of these interventions reveals numerous loopholes between the stipulations in the law and the practice of Christian women in Lahore. This paper provides a thorough examination of these legislative measures, discussing their advantages and shortcomings, and highlights the significant work that remains to be done to achieve radical empowerment. It also employs a constructivist theoretical approach to understand how constructs of parties, societal norms, and institutional practices reinforce and perpetuate the marginalization of Christian women. It aims to create evidence-based criticism and provide guidance on future improvements.

2. Theoretical Framework: Constructivist Analysis

Interpretation of marginalization of the Christian women in Lahore necessitates getting beyond materialist or legalistic explanations and considering the critical understanding of how social identities, norms, and interests are maintained and built. Such an analysis can be effectively conducted through constructivism, especially as presented by Alexander Wendt. Wendt views realities of the social world as not inherent, not fixed, but produced by social interactions, language, and shared practices, and constantly repaired in the process. (Wendt, *Quantum Mind and Social Science: Unifying Physical and Social Ontology*, 2015).

The identity of the Christian women in Pakistan as a minority and as a woman is negotiated all the time, and yet it derives very much from the agenda of the majority, the nation, and the Society. Constructivist theory implies that the adverse conditions that these women have not escaped are not a necessary consequence of their demographic realities but are results of historical, social, and political processes that have given meaning to such categories as Christian, woman, etc. To mention an example, in the whole discourse of Society, Christian women are culturally positioned within a less significant social category, the members of which can be excluded due to their inability to contribute to political, economic, and cultural life (Wendt, *Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics*, 1992).

An essential source for these narratives is provided by political parties, particularly through their manifestos, legislative initiatives, and the rhetoric they use in front of the crowd. PML-N and PTI have both at one point or another projected themselves as fighters for the minority and women's rights. However, the extent to which their policies have threatened or maintained existing discrimination is supported by the degree to which their reforms have been linked to the powers of exclusionary structures. In that way, constructivist analysis can provide a sophisticated approach to whether the legal and policy actions are any genuine efforts to rebuild the social realities or just a form of symbolism (Nisa, 2024).

What is more, the constructivism lens that uses an intersectional approach enables an analysis of how various identities, both a woman and a religious minority member, may interact to create novel forms of marginalization. Christian women in Lahore do not merely exist as a consequence of their gender and religious affiliation. Still, their realities, too, are a product of the construction and perception of these things in the bigger picture. This framework is, thus, instrumental in gauging the approach and effects of legislative and policy interventions in the last decade.

3. Sociopolitical Challenges Facing Christian Women in Lahore

3.1. Social and Economic Marginalization

The Christian women in Lahore do not share fairly in all occupations and tend to be underrepresented in most of the high-wage, regulated, and non-stigmatized labor. Most of them choose to work as sanitation workers, domestic helpers, or brick kiln labourers; all of which provide little job security, minimal legal rights, and zero prospects of advancement. As far as it is a cause and a consequence of the deep-seated social prejudice, such occupational segregation cannot be the issue of men and women alone. Individuals who even reach a higher education level face difficulty since they are not often eligible to get mainstream jobs as employers still hold stereotypes and discrimination towards them (Raina, 2014).

Most of the women who are Christian live in poor neighborhoods with poor houses, sanitation, and access to clean water, healthcare, as well as social amenities. Their neighborhoods can be described as both geographically and symbolically

marginalized, as they are considered "other" within mainstream societal discourse. In the informal economy, there is no legal safeguard and no union, which further contributes to them becoming vulnerable to exploitation and abuse (Mohsin, 2013).

The economic deprivation and social exclusion are interwoven with each other and result in a cycle of poverty that cannot easily be broken. In most societies, daughters are often passed on the same occupation as their mothers, and due to the stigma associated with this work, they are relegated to even more limited roles. Further, Christian women also report unequal pay between them and other Muslim women despite being engaged in similar labor opportunities, which also highlights the intersectional aspect of the disadvantage (Concern, 2023).

3.2. Educational Disadvantage

Education is one of the most imperative channels through which the feeling of empowerment can be brought to fruition. Still, access to quality education is less prevalent among Christian women in Lahore. The rate of literacy amongst Christian women is low in comparison to the national statistics, which could be as low as 19 % (Concern, 2023). There are several reasons why this educational difference persists. Christian girls may be alienated right at the beginning by the discriminatory curricula that do not reflect the history and cultures or the religious values of the minorities. In particular, the textbooks in a few instances are overtly prejudicial and contribute towards affirming negative prejudices and reducing the feeling of belonging among Christian students (Mohsin, 2013).

The lack of prompt action strategies or minority girls' scholarship makes their chances even more restricted. With several Christian families struggling with economic issues, they cannot afford to send their children to private schools, and most of the schools in low-income areas have low incomes. Such drawbacks accumulate over time, and Christian women lack educational opportunities and access to high-level jobs and management (Ispahani, 2017).

3.3. Political Exclusion

Christian women are highly underrepresented in political decision-making, though there are

constitutional provisions of reserved seats to minorities and women in the legislative assemblies. The kind of representation caused by filling up of these seats is controlled by party leaderships who, in most cases, nominate individuals based on their loyalty or political convenience as opposed to real community representation. Consequently, even the Christian women who become officeholders may lack agency or voice in their parties and cannot represent their communities (Anwar, 2022).

There is also low grassroots political participation amongst Christian women since they are not given a proper avenue to participate in politics. The lack of National Identity Cards (NICs), limited understanding of the political scene, and social stigma are among the structural barriers that deter voters and potential candidates. People who tend to engage in participation are often met by intimidation, harassment, or even violence (Gill, 2022).

3.4. Exposure to Violence and Intimidation

Christian women in the city of Lahore are a targeted group about gender-based violence. Criminal cases of domestic violence, sexual harassment, honor killing, and targeted attacks based on religious affiliation are the new normal. The issue of forcible conversions and kidnapping of Christian girls, usually with abuse in different forms, has become a subject of growing concern for local as well as international activists (Anees, 2023)

A culture of impunity facilitates such acts of violence, ineffective enforcement of the law, in addition to an unwillingness on the part of the authorities to vigorously pursue cases involving minority victims. This violence also acts as a

strong deterrent against taking an active role in the life of Society and therefore makes sure that Christian women are socially and politically invisible (Patras, 2019)

3.5. Stigma and Social Attitudes

This built-in stigma is the most longstanding problem that Christian women have to overcome. The existence of social attitudes, which identify them as untouchables or a person with questionable morals, is a formidable barrier to integration and participation. The stigmas are supported by the media, community, and even the education literature. The overall result is to cut off Christian women to public places, reduce their movement and areas of discussion, as well as damaging their self-worth and sense of agency (Patras, 2019)

There is a patriarchal criterion and religiously permitted intolerance that exist alongside each other to propagate such negative beliefs. Attempts to dismantle unquestioned roles, such as pursuing a job outside their designated area, studying, or entering the political arena, may also be met with opposition, doubt, or even aggression, both within and outside the Christian community.

4. Legislative and Policy Frameworks (2013–2022)

Over the last ten years, the PML-N and PTI governments have come up with several legislative and policy proposals to enhance the situation of women and minorities in Pakistan. The use of policy reforms by major stakeholders is summarized graphically below, focusing on the policy reforms addressing issues affecting minority women, especially Christian women, in Lahore.

Table 1: Comparative Policy Chart: PTI vs PML-N Legal Reforms for Minority Women (2013-2022)

Area/Theme	PML-N (2013–2018)	PTI (2018–2022)
Women's Safety & Protection	Punjab Safety of Women Against Violence Act (2016); Women Protection Authority Act (2017)	Protection of Religious Minorities Act (2020); Criminal Law Amendment (2021)
Harassment at Work	Protection against Harassment of Women in the Workplace (Amendment) Act (2014)	Legal Aid and Justice Authority Act (2020)
Institutional Support	Punjab Commission on the Status of Women Act (2014); Punjab Women Empowerment Packages (2014, 2016)	Punjab Women Development Policy (2018)
Representation	Punjab Fair Representation of Women Act (2014); Reserved seats for women/minorities in assemblies	Continued reserved seats, but focused on minority-specific legal reform
Gender-based Violence	Criminal Law (Amendment) (Offence in the Name or on the Pretext of Honor) Act (2016); Violence Against Women Centers	Punjab Enforcement of Women's Property Rights Act (2021)
Property Rights	Women-on-Wheels program (mobility); Daycare, maternity leave, entrepreneurship incentives	Enforcement of Women's Property Rights Act (2020)
Minority-Specific Legislation	Punjab Vigilance Committee Act (2016) for hate speech; Amended Pakistan Penal Code for forced marriages in minorities	Protection of Religious Minorities Act (2020)
Implementation Mechanisms	Violence Against Women Centers (VAWCs), commissions for minorities	Prevention of Trafficking of Persons Act (2018), continued policy focus

Analysis of Legislative Evolution

The PML-N government (2013-2018) put a strong focus on the establishment of women's empowerment at large. The laws including the Punjab Safety of Women and Police Against Violence Act (2016) and the establishment of the Punjab Women Protection Authority (2017) tried to focus on the range of violence against women.

In contrast, the Punjab Commission on the Status of Women Act (2014) was to help observe and promote the rights of women (Nawaz, 2018). Women-on-Wheels and the establishment of day care centers were among the efforts made to empower women, enabling them to access economic opportunities (Nawaz, 2018).

Among minority women, PML-N has a historical

achievement, such as the Punjab Vigilance Committee Act (2016), which aimed at tackling hate speech and checking the communal tensions. On the one hand, these programs were comprehensive to every extent. On the other hand, the focus did not seem to accurately cover the most pressing needs and the areas of vulnerabilities among Christian women, especially religious discrimination and the ways that Christian female workers could be put on the periphery in terms of hiring and employment (Women, n.d.).

With the PTI government (2018-2022), the priorities changed to the minority-specific legislative interventions. The Protection of Religious Minorities Act (2020) became the direct response to the forced marriages, religious conversions, and hate speech against religious minorities (Pakistan, 2021). Other reforms included the enactment of the Criminal Law Amendment (2021) and the Enforcement of Women Property Rights Act (2020), as well as an even more explicit statement on women's rights in the Punjab Women Development Policy (2018) (Pakistan, 2021).

The implantation of these reforms was not done consistently, though this approach was more controlled than before. It was not always the case that symbolic legislation brought real change to the ground, as institutional inertia, delay of bureaucratic procedures, and opposition of conservative forces turned out to be the limiting factor of new laws. Both governments created the new institutions and mechanisms, but since social stigma and the poor representation of Christian women in them persisted, the most marginalized people could remain silent (Pakistan, 2021).

5. Review of Legislative Impacts

Both the PML-N and PTI administrations proposed an array of laws and policy ideas that, at least on paper, tried to make the lives of women and minorities better. Analysis of legislative impact reveals a somewhat complicated picture: In contrast to other Countries of the HRA, there is substantial progress on the policy level, but very little progress in transforming policies that affect the lives of Christian women in Lahore.

The change of institutions like the Punjab Commission on the Status of Women and Violence Against Women Centers made them

give a lot more aid to the victims of violence and discrimination. These institutions also made it easy to access legal services, counseling, and rehabilitation.

The Protection of Religious Minorities Act (2020), introduced by PTI, was in itself a milestone in recognizing the plausibility of the perils that minority women endure, specifically, inclusive of forced conversions and hate speech.

The two parties broadened the policy spectrum, shifting their focus from violence to concerns about the right to property, representation, and economic empowerment, thereby adopting a more comprehensive approach to their policies.

Strengths

- **Institutionalization of Women's Rights:**
 - The change of institutions like the Punjab Commission on the Status of Women and Violence Against Women Centers made them give a lot more aid to the victims of violence and discrimination. These institutions also made it easy to access legal services, counseling, and rehabilitation (Pakistan, 2021).
- **Legal Recognition of Minority Issues:**
 - The Protection of Religious Minorities Act (2020), introduced by PTI, was in itself a milestone in recognizing the plausibility of the perils that minority women endure, specifically, inclusive of forced conversions and hate speech (Women, n.d.).
- **Broadening Policy Scope:**
 - The two parties broadened the policy spectrum, shifting their focus from violence to concerns about the right to property, representation, and economic empowerment, thereby adopting a more comprehensive approach to policy (Pakistan, 2021).

Limitations

- **The Impossibility of an Intersectional Prioritization:**

The law and practice gap has been one of the most scandalous barriers. The laws that were enacted by the assemblies were neither enforceable nor effective. Even if the reforms were well-intended, the bureaucratic stasis, indenture on politics, and resource constraints decreased their power

(Zubair, 2018).

- **The antagonism in the Society**

Although the contents of the laws covering women and minorities increased, there was minimal emphasis on the intersectionality that Christian women face (both as women and religious minorities (Muhammad Arsalan, 2021).

- **Aggression in the antagonism of Society**

Nevertheless, institutional mechanisms and reserved seats did not help Christian women get a better representation in the decision-making processes. Becoming an appointee to a commission or assembly was more of a ritual and could not be used to ensure true advocacy by the community (Muhammad Arsalan, 2021).

- **Societal violence in Society**

Conservative forces in and out of politics would usually be opposed to progressive change in the legislative arena. This refusal could be complicated by ignorance or a skills deficit on the part of law enforcers and judicial officers (Zubair, 2018).

Case Examples

- The Punjab Safety of Women Against Violence Act (2016) established Violence Against Women Centers (VAWCs) in selected districts. While these centers have provided valuable services, outreach in Christian-dominated localities has remained limited, and many women were unaware of available resources. Similarly, the Protection of Religious Minorities Act (2020) has been slow to show results in curbing forced conversions or targeted violence due to weak enforcement mechanisms (Pakistan, 2021).

Overall, the legislative landscape has evolved significantly, but the benefits have yet to be felt equitably by Christian women in Lahore.

6. Key Barriers to Political Participation of Christian Women

6.1. Exclusionary Party Nomination Processes:

The nature of party nominations can be attributed to one of the significant challenges facing Christian women in Pakistan. When it comes to choosing candidates, the party leadership has broad power. This influence can include reserving

a seat for women and using minorities as tools to expand their networks and raise households. The quota system has increased the number of females, but women remain underrepresented at the highest political levels. The elites in control exercise their authority in nominating individuals who override the voices of the grassroots, as pointed out by Begum (2023). This system automatically fails those women who do not have good relations with their families or have not demonstrated any loyalty towards party leaders, and this, in effect, keeps most Christian women out of politics.

In minority groups, it is even more significant where Christian women are not likely to enjoy the political networks that have become entrenched by Muslim women who belong to influential political families (Naheed, 2021). The strong association between political capital and patronage networks and kin in Pakistan makes women, in marginalized religious communities that do not have a history of their family being involved in politics, not viable candidates. Such embedded nepotism compounds inequality in the party system and results in a chicken-and-egg situation where only those politically well-connected rise through its ranks.

Moreover, despite the nomination of Christian women, they are usually held in token roles with limited power and influence in legislative agendas. All this tokenism can be seen as the so-named descriptive but not substantive representation described by Rubab (2020) because the number of women in the assemblies is rather symbolic and does not affect anything (Rubab, 2020). Consequently, when the problems related to their lives are considered in policy circles, the opportunities of religious discrimination, socio-economic marginalization, and gender-based violence are not given sufficient consideration.

6.2. Party Cultures

Much of the internal culture of political parties in Pakistan is strongly patriarchal. It does not encourage real inclusion, even though the commitment to gender equality is a matter of formal record. Behind the party rhetoric that may promote diversity and female strength, in reality, informal norms and a male-dominated power structure confine female power. Such internal cultures can take the form of implicit rejection of women through dismissive responses to their

policy recommendations, their unwillingness to allocate to women any leadership position, and confining them to so-called soft portfolios, as stated by Khan (2024).

Also, Christian women face these barriers, further complicated by religious identity. Christian women experience discrimination based on gender as well as religious affiliation in a society that is mainly Muslim, and most of the time they are treated like outsiders in their parties. Since religious minorities are a combination of gender and religious minorities (Naheed, 2021), it leads to the effect of marginalization due to gender and due to the representation of minority rights when they speak out in favor of the latter.

Intra-faith relations also contribute to these exclusionary cultures. Some conservative Christian circles also encourage women not to take on leadership positions, fearing that they may incur a social backlash or allegations of moral depravity. It implies that they can be deprived of strong networks of support even among representatives of their faith, thus being isolated in a conservative and extremely competitive political landscape in which they are not only women but also Christians.

6.3. The illiterates and the ill-informed:

One of the most significant barriers to political participation among Christians is low literacy and political perception among women. As Begum (2023) points out, illiteracy has a direct impact on misunderstanding political procedures, interpreting laws, and facing difficulties in navigating the Bureaucracy to vote or become a candidate. This political illiteracy is resulting in a situation where many Christian women do not know that they have the right to reserved seats, how to contest elections, or even whether they can conduct advocacy effectively.

Lack of literacy compounds a sense of alienation to formal politics as well. In the absence of available political education projects, the Christian women might regard politics as a field of elites that is far-fetched and has nothing to do with their day-to-day predicaments. Such a perception is further enhanced by the absence of visible role models within their community who participate in politics and thereby point to upward mobility. Rubab (2020) points out that the lower voter turnout of women who possess marginalized

backgrounds has been commonly associated with the belief that participation in voting would not have a substantial impact on altering their socio-economic welfare (Rubab, 2020).

Also, due to the lack of specific civic education activities in the minority population, the political parties usually do not put much effort into mobilizing the Christian female voters. The party's strategy is to primarily focus on constituencies where they believe they can gain more political rewards, while marginalized groups often lack the necessary outreach to be effective.

6.4. Threat of Violence:

The risk of violence is a common obstacle to the political participation of women in Pakistan. In the case of Christian women, this threat is also compounded by both gender and religious discrimination. Naheed revealed that women in politics usually face intimidation, harassment, and even physical violence until they threaten the power structures of the establishment. The danger that affects minority women can be characterized by directed hateful speech, kidnapping-related threats, as well as false blasphemy charges, a matter of law, which has highly adverse implications in Pakistan (Naheed, 2021).

According to Rehman (2019), such a climate of fear pushes Christian women away in terms of joining politics or promoting their rights more vocally. The political arena is especially threatening at times when elections are held, where fierce competition arises and thus the minority candidates are seen as a competition to the majority rule. Violence is not some form of randomness in these circumstances, but is, in many cases, a strategic act to ensure that the marginalized voices do not get power (Rehman, 2019).

Furthermore, the threat of backlash also exists in the personal lives of women, as family members can prevent them from engaging in political activity due to safety concerns. It results in a self-censoring effect, causing possible Christian female leaders to stay quiet or perform visibility-constrained tasks. Rubab (2020) points out that, until institutional systems put in place sound mechanisms that keep the realm of politics violence-free to female politicians, the political arena will remain hostile to minority women and will lead to their constant underrepresentation

(Rubab, 2020).

6.5. Economic Deprivation

Another structural barrier that does not allow women to participate in politics meaningfully is economic deprivation, particularly among Christian women. Domestic work or sanitation is a common low-paying category in which many Christian women in Pakistan work and cannot afford many chances to be financially independent (Begum, 2023). Running a political campaign requires expenses in transportation, communication, and outreach, which a woman with limited economic resources cannot afford.

According to Nagra, the economic dependency strengthens the political dependency. The economically dependent women cannot afford to engage in political ambitions in situations where the ambitions interfere with the family interests, since they are dependent on the men. In these kinds of cases, the political participation cost is not simply financial but is relational because women can lose familial approval or recognition (Nagra, 2024).

The economic marginalization also implies that Christian women have decreased chances of being invited to party sponsorship or political mentorship. The parties tend to invest in candidates who can co-fund their campaigns, rather than those lacking independent monetary resources (Naheed, 2021). Consequently, other type of discrimination is multiplied by economic deprivation, and thus minority women remain strictly on the fringe of political life.

6.6. The legal and bureaucratic barriers

Acquiring a National Identity Card (NIC) is a prerequisite for voting and contesting elections in Pakistan, but for many Christian women, this is a significant hurdle. Anwar (2022) documents how bureaucratic red tape, discrimination at registration offices, and a lack of awareness delay or prevent NIC issuance, especially for residents of informal settlements. Without an NIC, Christian women cannot access political rights, welfare benefits, or government programs (Anwar, 2022).

Even when women have the required documentation, navigating the election process involves additional bureaucratic complexities such as nomination papers, fee submissions, and

compliance with electoral regulations. Begum notes that the absence of targeted legal assistance programs for minority women means they are more likely to make procedural errors, which can disqualify them from the political process altogether (Begum, 2023).

Furthermore, systemic biases within bureaucratic institutions reinforce these barriers. Naheed (2021) emphasizes that discriminatory attitudes among public officials — often rooted in religious prejudice — lead to subtle forms of exclusion, such as prolonged processing times or arbitrary documentation requirements for Christian women. This legal marginalization effectively disenfranchises an already vulnerable demographic (Naheed, 2021).

6.7. Social Stigmatization

Stigmatization is also a significant factor that ensures that the political invisibility of Christian women in Pakistan is still in force. According to Anees (2023), the minority politics of women is perceived as deviant in Society, as they are usually labeled or as politically insignificant, thus not encouraged to have community support. Such stigmatization is both external and internal, as Christian communities themselves discourage women at times against participation in politics, not only because they can get morally corrupted or face backlash (Anees, 2023).

According to Rubab (2020), the issue of stigma is a self-consistent cycle, with the lack of women in politics that undermines their legitimacy, justifying their ineligibility. Breaking this cycle is challenging without the prominent examples of success in leadership roles among minority women. The invisibility is also supported by the tendency of the media to underreport the political input of Christian women (Rubab, 2020).

Moreover, the stigmatization takes a toll on the mental well-being and personal efficacy of the women, which reduces the belief that women can contest elections or hold leadership positions (Nagra et al., 2024). Unless empowerment plans that address prejudice in Society and the personal image of the woman in and of herself are nurtured, Christian women will struggle to gain political representation (Nagra, 2024).

7. Synthesis

The obstacles hindering Christian women in

Lahore's political field are highly interrelated, forming a network of mutually robust disempowerment. Illiteracy decreases rights awareness and constrains the capacity to move within political and legal systems, which, in turn, enhances political marginalization (Begum, 2023). This blindness contributes to the fact that women can hardly oppose the patriarchal norms simply because, in most cases, they do not have the political language and venues as well as the knowledge of the law to defend themselves. In addition, due to the lack of civil education that would specifically target women in the minority, such women continue to be invisible and do not participate in political discussions (Naheed, 2021).

These inequalities are also deepened by economic dependence. Women are less empowered to oppose male-dominated politics, as Nagra et al. (2024) describe, because they often face financial dependence on male family members or sponsors within the political parties in question. Such reliance not only leaves them without agency but also hinders their ability to challenge discriminatory party cultures, driven by the fear of losing the little political space they have. Minority women remain on the fringes of politics since they cannot afford to fund political campaigns or go to networking sessions, among others (Nagra, 2024).

Although reforms introduced by the legislation to allow women an improved representation, such as reserved seats, have been put in place, the structural and cultural resistance that have been explored above have not been effectively addressed. According to Rubab (2020), unless the institutional changes are made more deeply, such as democratizing party nomination processes, enhancing the security of political violence, and heightening political literacy among the marginalized groups, there can be no transformational change as representation will always be symbolic but not substantive (Rubab, 2020). Thus, the Christian women in Lahore remain dispossessed (descriptively and procedurally), as well as limited in their political capacity due to the interplay of illiteracy, economic dependency, overt exclusion by the parties, and social stigmatization.

8. Discussion

There has been an improvement in the enactment

of laws and policies by PML-N and PTI over the past decade, although they still face constraints. The constructivist approach shows that official guarantees of the law are helpful, even though they are not enough alone to block social and institutional forces that drive individuals to the margins. The works of laws and policies are implemented in a broader society characterized by patriarchy, religious intolerance, and exclusionary party cultures. (Khushnood, 2024).

One of the significant findings is that the two parties presented substantial changes, but the PML-N model was more institutional and comprehensive, attempting to establish support for all women; however, it unintentionally neglected the unique challenges of minority women. In contrast, the PTI government more precisely outlined the minority rights in law; however, translating those rights into practice proved difficult due to the ability of strong conservative elements to make their voices heard, but also because very few Christian women are sitting on the organizations charged with overseeing the implementation of the new regulations. (Naseer, 2024).

The political parties do not only make the law. They are also gatekeepers, determining who will be involved in politics. Parties weaken the very laws that may be protecting the rights of inclusion by maintaining nomination systems that are closed to the grassroots. They are not keen on disrupting established patriarchal and majoritarian tendencies in party organizations either. (Kandawasvika-Nhundu, 2021).

The process of reform is most effective when we can alter our way of thinking and discard barren legislation. We require intersectional, situation-specific approaches that address the needs of marginalized women, ensure accountability, and tackle the underlying causes of marginalization. Reforms need to begin at the decision-making level of selecting leaders. Justice must be done in the nomination and selection procedures to ensure that women across the board can contest. We also require additional funds and initiatives on political literacy and economic empowerment among minority women. Lastly, we need to ensure that the legislation enshrining the rights of the minorities and fellow women should be implemented to the fullest. These need to be

supported by robust systems to monitor and take action in cases when these rights are abused. (Tooba Ahmad, 2023).

The advancement of Christian women will not be short-lived when those elected into positions remain dedicated and the civil society agencies exert pressure to the same direction. Such groups need to voice the interests of Christian women, develop systems of support, and monitor the government and political parties to ensure they fulfil the promises they make. (Tooba Ahmad, 2023).

9. Conclusion

Between 2013 and 2022, the governments of Pakistan, both federal and provincial, in Lahore, both the PTI and the PML-N, took up female and minority rights reforms. Still, even when having new laws, the Christian women in Lahore remain

lacking substantial power politically and socially. The factors that restrain them are the lack of parties in Society, patriarchal culture, economic dependence, violence, and Bureaucracy that still affects their inclusion and agency.

Much more than new laws will be necessary to make actual headway; what is required is an intersectional tactic that can contend with the numerous variations of Christian women's marginalization, changes that surpass any minimum character of representation, and forward movement to guarantee that political parties and state organizations are not only inclusive but also seem accountable. The possibility of sociopolitical empowerment can only be achieved by tackling the fundamental issue of exclusion and entrusting Christian women to realize their rights as full citizens. (Muhammad Arsalan, 2021).

Conflict of Interest

The authors showed no conflict of interest.

Funding

This research not received any funding.

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