Pakistan's democracy is still rather new. In 2000, General Pervez Musharraf promulgated the Local Government Ordinance 2000, which introduced 33 percent gender quotas for women in the local government. On April 8, 2010, under the 18th amendment to the 1973 Constitution of Pakistan, the provincial governments were empowered to introduce local government reforms independently and per their needs and contexts. Thus, the provincial assembly of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) passed the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Local Government Act 2013 on October 31, 2013. Local elections were subsequently held on May 30, 2015. Many women joined the local government as councilors in KP. At the same time, Pashtun society in KP follows a set of informal institutions called Pakhtunwali that may affect
women councilors’ substantive representation and civic participation in local
democratic processes.

The aim of this study is to assess women councilors’ substantive
representation as a process and their civic participation in local democracy in
the three selected districts (Peshawar, Mardan, and Swat) of Khyber
Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. This study tests a total of five hypotheses on the
interaction between formal and informal institutions and its impact on
women’s substantive representation and civic participation. Furthermore, the
independent variables of political parties, civil society, and the media are also
hypothesized to assess their effects on the dependent variables.

This study uses a case study approach. Triangulation is applied for
confidence and verification purposes. The primary research methods used
are qualitative individual in-depth interviews and observation. A total of 63
individual interviews, 60-90 minutes per session (one session per participant)
are conducted with respondents. The study participants include female and
male councilors from 12 local councils of the three selected districts.
Moreover, experts (academics), civil society activists, and journalists are also
included as part of the interview respondents. Additionally, two newspapers
are selected to collect news items to do content analysis. The research
methods of narrative review, content analysis, and statistical analysis are also
used to enhance the internal validity of this research.