Women Leadership in Indian Politics: an Empirical Study of the Challenges, Progress and Prospects

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Abstract

Through this paper, the authors aim to delve into the reality check of such claims by examining into the challenges, progress and prospects for women leadership in India as without exploring these three dimensions the study of political leadership of Indian women would remain incomplete. To fill this vacuum, the authors have tried to make sincere efforts in this regard through this paper. Two types of data were gathered for this study: primary and secondary. To better understand the challenges and progress of women's leadership in India's political arena, primary data from 120 respondents has been gathered. In the Charkhi Dadri district of Haryana state, an interview schedule is employed to collect primary data. In conclusion, an empirical investigation of women's political leadership in India reveals a complex structure that is characterized by obstacles, progress, and bright futures.

Keywords

Challenges, India, Leadership, Politics, Women.

Introduction

Women in India are moving forward in every sector whether it is political, economic, educational or any other. In the 21st century, women are proving their worth through their dedication, hard work and caliber. With the changing times, politics is also changing from being male-dominated one to being gender-balanced one. Politics of today is usually based on the concept of gender mainstreaming where women and men both are equally promoted at every level. The eras of gender biases seem diminished in the educated and technological society of contemporary times. "The active participation of women, on equal terms with men, at all levels of decision-making and political involvement is essential to the achievement of equality, sustainable development, peace and democracy." (Mlambo & Kapingura, 2019)

Even in the political arena, women are advancing as "India is ranked 18th in terms of political empowerment in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2020." (Sharma,2019) But behind this golden and shining face of Indian politics there is a hard reality where women are still trying hard for the equal representation in the assemblies.Through this paper, the authors aim to delve into the reality check of such claims by examining into the challenges, progress and prospects for women leadership in India as without exploring these three dimensions the study of political leadership of Indian women would remain incomplete. To fill this vacuum, the authors have tried to make sincere efforts in this regard through this paper.

Rationale of the Study

Several ongoing studies have been conducted on this subject so far. Although there are factual facts, there is no explanation of the challenges, progress and prospects. In this case, the writers have gone a step further and are eager to close this vacuum in the literature by investigating the women's Leadership in India. We cannot disregard the women in the national, state, or local politics if we want to advance at the global level. The author's primary concern is on the tactics, difficulties, and importance of the women's leadership in India's political system.

Objectives

- To shed light on the challenges to Women's Leadership in Indian Politics.
- To study the progress in regard to Women's Leadership in Indian Politics.
- To explore the prospects of Women's Leadership in Indian Politics.

Research Methodology

Data Source

Two types of data were gathered for this study: primary and secondary. To better understand the challenges and progress of women's leadership in India's

political arena, primary data from 120 respondents has been gathered. In the Charkhi Dadri district of Haryana state, an interview schedule is employed to collect primary data. The data gathered based on the responses provided by the respondents was then examined. The study was carried out between July 1 and August 15, 2023. At their homes, we personally met the responders. Where appropriate, secondary data drawn from a variety of books, journals, websites, and other pertinent sources is added to the primary material.

Research Design

The research design is empirical in nature where primary was also collected for the analysis of data.

The Sampling Frame Work

The present study is conducted only by the respondents in Charkhi Dadri tehsil of Charkhi Dadri district of Haryana. For the purpose of the present study, the respondents who are above 18 years old are selected based on the purposive sampling method.

Data Analysis Procedure

Categorization and tabulation have been used to analyze the data that have been collected. To further get the real data, the simple percentage approach is employed in the tabulation presentation. The data is also presented using a Likert scale method.

Limitation

The ability to generalize the results of the current study is constrained by the time constraints, sample size restrictions, and geographic coverage limitations of the two researchers.

Analysis of Data

The analysis of data based on both primary and secondary sources as per the objectives of the paper is done below:

- Challenges to Women Leadership in Indian Politics

There exist many hindrances to the women's leadership in Indian politics and the data gathered for the majority of them are presented below in the table:

Table: Challenges to Women Leadership in Indian Politics

Challenges	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
Limited Resource	4%	30%	12%	45%	9%
Biased	16%	10%	14%	45%	12%
Patriarchal set-up	10%	20%	28%	30%	12%
Lack of internal democracy	1%	10%	42%	40%	7%

Less Representation	3%	12%	37%	30%	18%
Fragmented Attitude	3%	39%	33%	15%	10%
Fewer Opportunities	4%	12%	32%	40%	12%

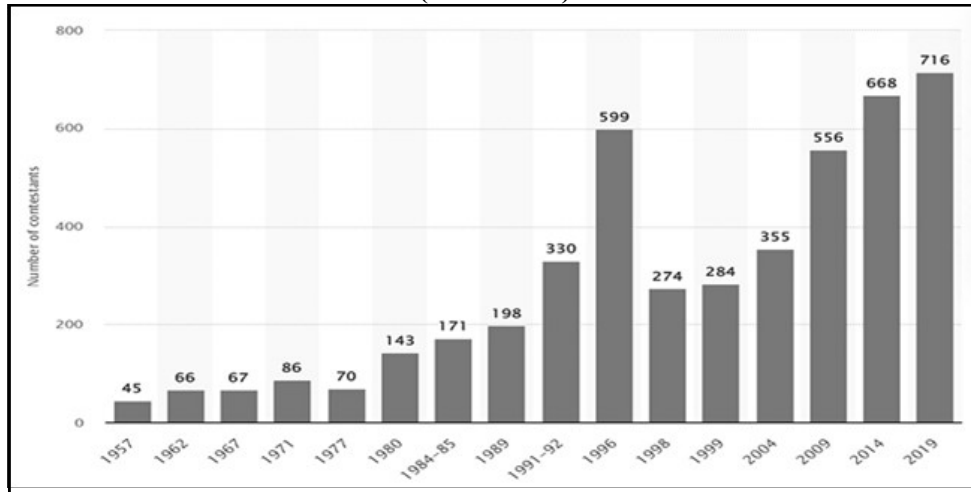Source: Interview Schedule (The data in parenthesis denotes the percentage)

Based on Table 1, it can be inferred that the majority of the 45% of respondents replied that limited resources are actually a challenge to the women's leadership in Indian Politics followed by 45 % of respondents who replied that they felt that there is a biased attitude in Indian politics where male are preferred at every juncture. Similarly, 30 % of respondents replied that they felt that there is a patriarchal set-up of Indian politics where males are everywhere from the ground to the top positions followed by 40% of respondents who said that there is a lack of internal democracy in Indian politics where the voice of women remained unheard many times, majority of the 37 % respondents remained undecided about the less representation question regarding women leadership in Indian politics. Likewise, 39% of respondents replied that they disagreed with the question that there is a fragmented attitude towards women's leadership in Indian politics and 40% of respondents replied that there existed fewer opportunities for women's leadership in the political sphere of India. In other words, there are "multiple issues ranging from responsibilities for family and children, traditional gender division of labor, socialization processes, the role of political parties, religious and cultural doctrines, and financial barriers as major obstacles to women's political participation."(Ara,2019)

Progress in regard to Women Leadership in Indian Politics

"Women's leadership in political spheres is shown to be socially beneficial (World Economic Forum, 2017), and is a matter of women's right to equal opportunity and access." (Social Development Policy Briefs, n.d.)

Women's leadership has progressed immensely in Indian politics where more women are seen in various levels of politics and the majority of them are discussed below in this section. If we look at the women candidates in the Lok Sabha elections then, the numbers are increased significantly and the details of the same are presented below in the figure1:

Figure 1: Number of Women Candidates in the Lok Sabha Elections (1957-2019)

Source: Statista.com (taken from https://www.orfonline.org/research/womens-representation-in-indias-parliament/)

Based on Figure 1, it could be said that women contestants has increased from being 45 to 1957 to 716 in the year 2019. This clearly indicated that more women are coming into politics despite all the hurdles.

If we gaze upon women's representation in Lok Sabha then, the data has also shown improvement which is presented below in the Table 2:

Table 2: Women's Representation in the Lok Sabha

Year of Election	Number of Women Representatives	Percentage of Women Representatives (%)
1951	22	5
1957	22	5
1962	31	6
1967	29	6
1971	28	5
1977	19	4
1980	28	5
1984	43	8
1989	29	6

1991	39	7
1996	40	7
1998	43	8
1999	49	9
2004	45	8
2009	59	11
2014	66	12
2019	78	14

Source: *Election Commission of India (Taken from* https://www.orfonline.org/ research/womens-representation-in-indias-parliament/*)*

Based on the above table, it could be said that women's representation has become better in the year 2019 with 78 number of women representatives.

- Prospects for Women Leadership in Indian Politics

There are many prospects to promote women's leadership in Indian politics and major of them are discussed below:

- o Equality: It should be promoted as a Step towards Equality in the politics where women's representation should be preferred.
- o Winds of Change: There is an urgent need for the Cultural Shifts and to bring a concept of Gender Equality in the true sense.
- o Youth Participation: Youth is generally considered as the Forward-Looking Generation and they should help in bringing more women into the politics.
- o Economic Empowerment: It could act as a Leadership Catalyst where financial resources would not be a problem for women.
- o Overcoming Obstacles: Women should try to their own Way to Equality for more positive change in Indian politics.

Conclusion

In conclusion, an empirical investigation of women's political leadership in India reveals a complex structure that is characterized by obstacles, progress, and bright futures. The pathway to gender parity has seen considerable advancements for women in Indian politics where there is increasing representation at various levels of government, but there is still a long road to travel in this regard. The full realization of women's leadership potential is still negatively affected by various obstacles including gender bias, patriarchy, socio-cultural conventions and many others. Though a positive shift towards greater gender equality in politics can be

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seen, the existence of more female leaders as the candidates, shifting cultural attitudes, and women's representation in Lok Sabha are encouraging signs.

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