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TOEHOLD TO FOOTHOLD- EMANCIPATING GENDER DISPARITY FROM POLITICS

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ABSTRACT

Adequate representation of women in the field of politics is an objective of a truly representative democracy.¹ The main indicator of the degree of gender parity in politics is the amount of women candidates serving in the national parliament of the state. Women's involvement in representative governments has hardly changed over the past few decades, irrespective of its growing prevalence worldwide. At the close of September 2022, only 30 women held elected positions as head of state or government in 28 different countries (out of 193 total member states), according to UN Women.² This is amidst of recent concerted and sustained efforts to enhance women's empowerment and gender equality. India, the world's largest and most resilient parliamentary democracy, with 662.9 million women³, renders for an important case study. The paper begins by emphasizing the necessity of gender parity in political representation and outlines the legal obligations that must be met nationally and internationally to achieve it. It then looks at the convergence between institutional, social, cultural and economic variables that impede the women's representation in parliament greatly. Finally, it concludes by outlining the specific institutional reforms that could help enhance the representation of women in politics.

(Keywords: gender equality, women empowerment, women in politics, democracy, vote)

¹ Barbara J Nelson and Najma Chowdhury (eds) *Women and Politics Worldwide*. London: Yale University Press, 1994

² "Facts and figures: Women's leadership and political participation" UN Women. [Facts and figures: Women's leadership and political participation | UN Women – Headquarters](#)

³ "Gender ratio in India", *Statistics Times*. [India sex ratio 2024 - StatisticsTimes.com](#)

INTRODUCTION

“Women are the builders and moulders of a nation’s destiny. Though delicate and soft as lily, she has a heart, far stronger and bolder than that of a man...she is the supreme inspiration for man’s onward march...She is, no doubt, her commanding personality, nevertheless is grimly solemn”.

-Rabindranath Tagore⁴

Empowerment means developing an enabling atmosphere in which individuals may fully use their ability to take back control of their lives. Women are no exception to this. Creating a suitable atmosphere for women to employ these talents to address society's core challenges on par with their male counterparts will culminate an equal platform for women. Women are not adequately represented in all levels of politics in India, as they are in many other nations throughout the world, despite comprising half of the population. In a representative democracy, all segments of society should have a say in policymaking, because women legislators make different decisions than men legislators. Women's advancement in all spheres, especially politics, is essential to the development of a society that prioritizes gender equality. A real democracy with substantial public involvement in development and administration are impossible without the equal and proportionate participation of men and women at all levels of decision-making. In the course of human development, women have contributed just as much as males have. In actuality, the standing, employment, and tasks that women perform in society can potentially be used to measure a nation's overall success. If women are not engaged in national matters, then a country's social, economic, or political progress will come to a standstill.

In actuality, reservation serves as a tool of protective discrimination against the weak, especially women, by providing backdoor admission to the less capable. As a way of advancing the less fortunate class of people-who by definition are "special"⁵ and require more room, care, and attention-it should be applauded. Since the "Modern Women of The Millennium" have shown to be capable, strong, and courageous, it is now time to give the "women" more authority by providing them equal opportunity by the means of reservations for them in all spheres of society, including state legislative assemblies and parliament.⁶ It has been believed that giving women seats in politics is a means of promoting women's equality and empowerment in the realm of politics. Women should know their own strength along with what they can do for themselves, their

⁴ D. Syamala Devi,G. Lakshmi, “Political Empowerment of Women in Indian Legislature:A Study”,The Indian Journal of Political Science,Vol. 66,No.1(Jan-March,2005),pp. 75-92(18 pages)

⁵ Piyush Mathur,“Women Reservation is Women Empowerment”Times of India,Nov. 26, 2019.

⁶ Ibid.

households, and their nation, and men need to acknowledge the power of women. They are the cornerstone upon which countries are constructed.

STATEMENT OF RESEARCH PROBLEM

The research aims to examine the impediments contributing to the gender disparity in Indian politics and explore potential strategies to increase female representation in decision-making positions in politics. Moreover, the problem of gender disparity in Indian politics persists also due to ineffective legislative procedures, leading to minimal progress in achieving gender equality in politics.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVE OF RESEARCH

The paper aims to examine the National and International initiatives in the form of legislations with regard to the participation of women in politics. Moreover, the paper throws light on the existing gender disparity in politics and the reasons behind such disparity. Lastly, the paper provides recommendations to make certain that the participation of women in politics is ensured.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 1) How Gender Disparity is persisting in the realm of the politics?
- 2) Whether the participation of women in politics is effectively ensured through the means of national and International legislative actions?
- 3) What are the impediments that lead to low level of participation of women in politics?
- 4) What further changes can be made by the means of affirmative action to ensure substantial inclusion of women in politics?

LITERATURE REVIEW

How to Close the Gender Gap in Political Participation: Lessons from Matrilineal Societies in Africa. British Journal of Political Science, 51 , 68 – 92, (2019), Robinson, A., & Gottlieb, J..⁷

The study provides insights into the factors contributing to the gender gap and the potential strategies for addressing this disparity.

⁷ Robinson, A., & Gottlieb, J..(2019).How to Close the Gender Gap in Political Participation: Lessons from Matrilineal Societies in Africa.British Journal of Political Science,51,68-92 <http://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123418000650>

Path-Breakers: How Does Women's Political Participation Respond to Electoral Success?. Public Choice: Analysis of Collective Decision-Making eJournal, (2013), Bhalotra, S., Clots-Figueras, Irma., & Iyer, Lakshmi.⁸

It studied how women's political participation responds to electoral success, providing valuable insights into the impact of legislative changes on women's participation in politics.

Governance and Women's Economic and Political Participation: Power Inequalities, Formal Constraints and Norms. The World Bank Research Observer, (2017), Milazzo, A., & Goldstein, Markus.⁹

This study delves into the governance and women's economic and political participation, emphasizing power inequalities, formal constraints, and norms that affect women's engagement in political processes.

A Century of the American Woman Voter: Sex Gaps in Political Participation, Preferences, and Partisanship Since Women's Enfranchisement. NBER Working Paper Series, (2020), Cascio, Elizabeth U., & Shenhav, N..¹⁰

This study examines sex gaps in political participation, preferences, and partisanship, providing a comprehensive understanding of the various dimensions of gender disparity in political engagement.

Do Government Positions Held by Women Matter? A Cross-National Examination of Female Ministers' Impacts on Women's Political Participation. Politics & Gender , 13 , 132 – 162, (2016), Liu, Shan., & Banaszak, Lee Ann.¹¹

In this study a research was conducted with the aim of cross-national examination of female ministers' impacts on women's political participation, emphasizing the significance of government positions held by women in influencing overall political participation.

⁸ Bhalotra, S., Clots-Figueras, Irma., & Iyer, Lakshmi. (2013). Path-Breakers: How Does Women's Political Participation Respond to Electoral Success?. Public Choice: Analysis of Collective Decision-Making eJournal <http://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2350805>

⁹ Milazzo, A., & Goldstein, Markus. (2017). Governance and Women's Economic and Political Participation: Power Inequalities, Formal Constraints and Norms. The World Bank Research Observer <http://doi.org/10.1093/WBRO/LKY006>

¹⁰ Cascio, Elizabeth U., & Shenhav, N.. (2020). A Century of the American Woman Voter: Sex Gaps in Political Participation, Preferences, and Partisanship Since Women's Enfranchisement. NBER Working Paper Series <http://doi.org/10.3386/w26709>

¹¹ Liu, Shan., & Banaszak, Lee Ann (2016), Do Government Positions Held by Women Matter? A Cross-National Examination of Female Ministers' Impacts on Women's Political Participation. Politics & Gender , 13, 132-162 <http://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X16000490>

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To address research questions, the paper uses several methods such as doctrinal research and action in law method, therefore, study will be descriptive in nature.

INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVES

Global interest in the topic of women's political empowerment has expanded. Women deserve the human right to participate in politics. In addition to voting in legitimate, recurring elections with secret ballots and universal suffrage, citizens also have the ability to participate directly in public affairs management and through representatives. This was an assertion included in both the 1948 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).¹² Women's political participation was included in the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which was passed by the UN General Assembly. Article 7 requires the state parties to guarantee that men and women have equal rights to vote, to be eligible for holding public office, to participate in the development and implementation of public policy, and to join non-profit organizations in order to put an end to discrimination against women in the social and political realms. However, CEDAW was not entirely implemented until the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1975, when it recognized women's access to power and decision-making as one of the Platform of Action's twelve critical areas.¹³ The Platform of Action requires states to make a commitment and take action to build up and ensure a gender balance in government bodies and organizations, public administrative entities, and the judiciary by setting specific targets and implementing strategies that significantly raise the number of women in order to achieve a balanced representation of men and women.

A goal of 30% female participation at decision-making levels was agreed by the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in 1995.¹⁴ The Southern African Development Community (SADC) suggested that the African continent adopt an institutional structure and gender policy. The SADC Heads of Government adopted these suggestions in November 1997 in Blantyre and they were subsequently published in the "Declaration on Gender and Development."¹⁵ Gender equality was acknowledged as a fundamental human right in the Declaration, which also

¹² Universal Declaration of Human Rights ,art. 21 and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights , art. 25.

¹³ The effect of women's representation in parliament and the passing of gender sensitive policies, [American Economic Association \(aeaweb.org\)](http://www.aeaweb.org)

¹⁴ United Nations Equal Opportunities Commission, "United Nations targets for proportion of women in leadership and decision-making positions." Information Paper 556 (2003).

¹⁵ Ibid.

committed to have thirty percent of women in political decision-making bodies by 2005. The United Nations enacted the Convention on the Political Rights of Women in 1952, which grants equal political rights to females. Under this Convention, states must ensure that women have equal access to participate in elections, get elected to public bodies, and hold public office. When exerting these rights, women deserve to be treated equally.¹⁶ The UN has held four World Conferences on Women. The fourth one took place in Beijing in 1995. It states that equal participation of women in decision-making is not only a demand for basic fairness or democracy, but may also be regarded as an absolute prerequisite for the interests of women.¹⁷ It went on to say that women should occupy at least 30% of decision-making roles.¹⁸ Women's political engagement has grown in value, as seen by its inclusion in Millennium Development Goal 5, which states that gender equality and empowerment for all women and girls should be attained.¹⁹

CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS ON GENDER EQUALITY

Gender equality is given prominence in the Preamble, fundamental rights and duties, and directive principles of state policy. The Indian Constitution not only protects women's equality but also gives governments the authority to pass laws that favor discrimination against women. All people of India are guaranteed equality, freedom of opinion, and social, economic, and political justice under the Indian Constitution. It ensures women's equality and calls on the governments to work to remove the barriers that women face in the areas of politics, education, and socio-economic status.²⁰ Women's empowerment has come to be seen as the primary factor in defining the status of women in recent years. Article 14 deals with equality and equal protection of the laws, whereas Article 15 forbids discrimination based on particular grounds. Article 15 (3) includes protective discrimination for the benefit of women and children. Article 16 guarantees equal opportunity for state positions without discrimination on several grounds. Furthermore, Article 39 (a) mentions adequate means of livelihood for every citizen. The provision of equal pay for equal work under Article 39 (d), while not a fundamental right, can still be frequently applied to conclude that there is no gender pay gap between men and women who work at the same level. Article 39(c) requires the state to ensure the fitness and health of workers, including men and women. Article 42 also guarantees maternity leave and fair and humane working conditions to all

¹⁶ Convention on the Political Rights of Women, Adopted by the Seventh Session of the General Assembly, December 20, 1952, 7 University of Wisconsin Press 173-75 (1953).

¹⁷ The United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/decision.html>

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal5>

²⁰ M. Ameen Nisha & Dr.D. Vezhaventhan, "Political empowerment and participation of women in India" 120 International Journal of Pure and Applied Mathematics 4721-4736 (2018).

individuals. Article 42 is consistent with Articles 23 and 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Articles 325 and 326 provide political equality, equal participation in political activities, and the right to vote. Despite the aforementioned constitutional provisions and government directives to achieve social and economic equality, women's political involvement has remained relatively low.²¹ Certainly, more female participation in the legislature will not change women's standing overnight. However, continuous work in this area will help her achieve political equality one day.

SCENARIO OF GRASSROOT LEVEL RESERVATION – INDIA

Women's reservation in Panchayati Raj institutions (PRIs) marked the beginning of India's democratic path towards granting them the right to participate in politics. Although women have certain qualms about the political structure of today's municipal authorities, and some have misused this by forcing women to serve as proxy candidates where decision-makers are the men. It is vital to investigate this de facto male domination structure and treat women in PRIs with the respect they deserve.

It is commonly understood that women cannot participate in state or national politics unless they are involved in grassroots politics, often known as Panchayat Raj. The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts of 1992 granted constitutional standing to local governments, often known as Panchayath Raj and Nagarapalika Systems. These Amendment Acts constructed two new Schedules to the Constitution, the XI and XII Schedules. They reserved 33% of local government seats for women. It included Articles 243(D) and 243(T) of the Constitution. Essentially, giving women representation in Panchayati Raj Institutions could be viewed as a key planning strategy for reducing people's traditional perceptions of the status of women in our society, particularly in terms of keeping women under men's control, imposing restrictions and other forms of gender inequality on them.²²

With the advent of implementation of PRIs in India, women now have the substantive opportunity to demonstrate their value as administration, decision-making, and leadership positions. In this context, the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992 marks as a major turning point in history. It provides women the opportunity to speak up their stance. It must be noted that engaging highly

²¹ “Constitutional Law: Constitutional and Charter Provisions: Right of Women to Vote.” 16 Michigan Law Review 125.

²² Ajit Pal Singh “Women’s Participation at Grass Root Level :An Analysis”,47 Mainstream (2009).

qualified women in the local Panchayats from the beginning of the institution's functioning in rural areas would be a critical step in the planning process for boosting women's social standing and empowering them. In our country, women constitute about half of the population. In the world's greatest democracy, it is our responsibility to support and encourage women. The government, non-governmental organizations, and universities must all perform important responsibilities in ensuring that women have an appropriate status.

WOMEN RESERVATION ACT OF 2023 FOR ACTION

Gender-deficient democracy is caused by a variety of restrictions and limitations that hinder women from participating in the election. With the transit of the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam (NSVA) 2023 (128th Constitutional Amendment Bill), also known as the Women Reservation Act, 2023, which promises women's reservation in India's Parliament, Indian women have entered an era of stronger national representation and agenda-setting power. For more than 37 years, resistance to enacting the Women's Reservation Bill has resulted in great unfairness to women representatives and the country's democratic process. Despite commitments found in their manifestos to set up reservations for women, the majority of political parties are reluctant to provide seats to female candidates. Given the gender gap in democracy, it is critical to increase women's ability to contest in the legislative assemblies in states and union territories, as well as the national parliament. The NSVA guarantees 33% reservation of seats to women in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies. The Act reserves one-third of the seats in the Lok Sabha, State Legislative Assembly, and Delhi Assembly respectively. This act will also apply to seats designated for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) in the Lok Sabha and the state legislatures. The statute specifies that one-third of the seats allotted for SCs/STs will be reserved for women on a rotating basis. The NSVA established Article 332A, which requires women to be represented in every state Legislative Assembly by reservation.²³ The Women's Reservation Bill was tabled in the Lok Sabha as the 81st Amendment Bill in September 1996 by the Deve Gowda-led United Front government. Despite being proposed multiple times in Parliament, the measure was not debated or voted on. Successive governments had delayed it under the guise of 'lack of political consensus'. India's presidency of the G20 and the main motto of 'women-led development', together with the 27 years of perseverance combined with commitment by the women's rights movement, have resulted in a historic triumph in India's parliament. This paves

²³ Thakkar, Usha and Gawankar, Rohini. 2004. Women in Panchayat :March towards Empowerment, One India One People-Special Number on Women in Politics.

the path for our long-term campaign for political equality.²⁴

The women's rights movement is dissatisfied with the fact that the NSVA simply states that it will come into force only after an exercise of delimitation is conducted for this purpose, following the release of the necessary numbers for the first Census made after the NSVA's implementation. It does not identify the election cycle through which women will get their fair share. Another point of contention is that the NSVA does not allow for women's reservations in the Rajya Sabha and State Legislative Councils. The Rajya Sabha currently has a smaller proportion of women than the Lok Sabha. Women's groups argue that representation is an ideal that should be mirrored in both the Lower and Upper Houses. They emphasize that the NSVA also drew from Article 334 of the Indian Constitution, which required the parliament to examine reservation restrictions 70 years after they were enacted. However, in the instance of women's reservation, the NSVA called for a 15-year sunset clause after which the reserve measures for women would be revisited by parliament.

IMPEDIMENTS RESTRAINING PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN POLITICS

The elements that impede or promote women's political engagement differ according to their socioeconomic status, region, culture, and political system. Women are not a homogenous group; there are significant distinctions among them depending on class, color, ethnicity, cultural background, and education. The absence of women from decision-making positions reduces the opportunities for establishing democratic ideals in a society, stifling economic development and impeding progress toward gender equality. According to the Millennium Development Goals, women's equal involvement in power and decision-making is part and substance of their fundamental right to participate in politics, which is vital to gender equality and women's empowerment.²⁵

Women must be proactive participants in defining objectives for development. Women who desire to enter politics often find the political, public, cultural, and social environments unfavorable, if not hostile. In this section, we take an initial step toward boosting women's representation in parliament and effectiveness by recognizing typical impediments that women confront. We divide

²⁴ Jain, Devaki. 2000. *The Vocabulary of Women's Politics*. Fredrich Ebert Stiftung, Delhi.

²⁵ 'Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women', Millennium Development Goals, available at <http://www.developmentgoals.org/Gender_Equality.htm>.

the issues into the following categories:

1) **Cultural and Social Norms:**

- a) **Patriarchal Mindset:** Deeply ingrained patriarchal views and cultural standards frequently prohibit women from actively engaging in politics. Women are generally expected to prioritize household responsibilities over public activity.²⁶ Furthermore, political life is structured around masculine norms and beliefs, and in certain circumstances, male lives. For example, politics is frequently built on the concept of 'winners and losers', rivalry, and conflict, rather than systematic collaboration and accord, particularly across party lines. It is common for women to reject politics entirely or male-style politics. Thus, whenever women do join in politics, it is usually in limited numbers.
- b) **Gender Stereotypes:** Stereotypes about women's leadership qualities and duties as caregivers might harm their standing as political leaders.²⁷ Furthermore, they must fulfill the socially assigned caring roles of a mother, wife, sister, and grandmother. Currently, most legislative programming and session periods have not been altered to account for women's dual burden. Many female MPs struggle to integrate family life alongside the responsibilities of employment, which can include late hours, extensive travel, and limited amenities.

2) **Educational and Economic Disparities:**

- a) **Education:** 'It is quite challenging for women to speak, debate, and advocate for their problems. How can we empower women to speak and express themselves? The solution is education. Education has inspired many women in my community to join politics or engage in political activity. Education is perhaps the most effective means of persuading women to speak up. Women's political knowledge and confidence suffer when they lack access to decent education, particularly in rural regions²⁸
- b) **Economic Independence:** Economic dependency on male family members limits women's capacity to participate in political activities on their own.²⁹

²⁶ Desai, S., & Tamsah, G. (2014). Women in Indian Politics: A Long Road Ahead. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 4(8), 1-7.

²⁷ Kishwar, M. (2005). Gender Stereotyping in Indian Media: Implications for Women in Politics. *Journal of South Asian Studies*, 28(3), 541-565.

²⁸ Pande, R. (2005). Can Mandated Political Representation Increase Policy Influence for Disadvantaged Minorities? *Journal of Public Economics*, 89(8), 1535-1558.

²⁹ Agarwal, B. (1997). "Bargaining" and Gender Relations: Within and Beyond the Household. *Feminist Economics*, 3(1), 1-51.

3) **Barriers within Political Parties:**

- a) **Lack of Party Support:** Political parties frequently overlook female candidates, giving fewer resources and chances than their male counterparts.³⁰ When it comes to selecting candidates for Legislative Assemblies or parliamentary seats, all political parties ignore women foot soldiers who have dedicated 20-30-40 of their best years of their lives to party work, including mobilization on regional or national issues, doorstep to doorstep campaigning for political rallies, public assemblies and demonstrations, day-to-day organizational activities, community work, and networking.
- b) **Internal Party Dynamics:** Male-dominated decision-making procedures inside parties marginalize women and restrict their access to critical posts.³¹ The selection and nominating process inside political parties is similarly skewed against women, as 'male traits' are stressed and frequently become the basis for picking candidates. Furthermore, women are frequently overlooked for winning spots on party lists.

4) **Legal and Institutional Barriers:**

- a) **Lack of Reservation:** Delays with the implementation of the Women's Reservation Bill prevent women from holding reserved parliamentary seats.³² Furthermore, the delay perpetuates gender inequality and limits India's ability to practice inclusive and representative government.
- b) **Inadequate Implementation:** Existing laws advocating for women's participation in politics suffer from inadequate implementation³³ owing to lack of will among stakeholders, socioeconomic and cultural barriers, and deficiencies in existing legislation can hinder women's political participation.

5) **Violence and Harassment:**

- a) **Political Violence:** Women candidates often face threats, harassment, and violence during election campaigns, deterring them from participating actively.³⁴ Criminal elements with resource and influence unfairly compete against women candidates, making it harder for

³⁰ Duflo, E., & Topalova, P. (2004). Unappreciated Service: Performance, Perceptions, and Women Leaders in India. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 39(48), 5135-5144.

³¹ Newman, K. L. (2012). Gender, Political Ambition, and the Decision to Run for Elective Office. *American Journal of Political Science*, 56(3), 498-510.

³² PRS Legislative Research. (2021). *The Women's Reservation Bill: A Comprehensive Guide*. Retrieved from [PRS Legislative Research](<https://www.prsindia.org>).

³³ International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance. (2020). *Strengthening Women's Political Participation Through Grassroots Initiatives*. Retrieved from [International IDEA](<https://www.idea.int>).

³⁴ Centre for Social Research. (2021). *Violence Against Women in Politics: A Global Review*. Retrieved from [CSR](<https://www.csrindia.org>).

them to campaign effectively or gain public trust. Moreover, weak enforcement of laws against criminal politicians and societal acceptance of their presence in politics disproportionately affect women's participation and safety.

6) **Media Representation and Public Perception:**

- a) **Media Bias:** Biased press coverage may perpetuate gender stereotypes and have a negative impact on the public's opinion of women in politics³⁵ by providing unequal coverage of women's political campaigns and achievements, framing news negatively, and applying double standards, making it more difficult for women candidates to gain support and triumph elections.

WAY FORWARD- RECOMMENDATIONS

Women's participation in politics is critical for guaranteeing their positions in society, allowing them control over their fate, and establishing a genuine and long-lasting democracy. Their individualism will be bolstered, opening the way for social and economic empowerment. There is a greater need to increase the proportion of women in politics. Without more women in leadership roles at all levels of the political structure, no substantive policy change will be possible. Increasing women's political engagement in India involves a multifaceted strategy that addresses social, economic, and institutional hurdles. Here are some suggestions and recommendations:

1. **Political Representation Quotas:** Implement and impose quotas for women in municipal, state, and national legislatures. This can be accomplished by means of reserving seats in Panchayats, Municipal Corporations, and Parliament, as required by the Constitution (73rd and 74th Amendments), as well as examining options for reservation at higher levels.³⁶
2. **Political Parties' Internal Reforms:** Political parties should commit to internal reforms that advance gender equality. This involves ensuring that women have a specified amount of party posts, nominations in candidature, and leadership responsibilities.³⁷
3. **Education and Awareness:** Encourage women to get involved in politics at a young age through education and awareness initiatives. This might include activities in schools and communities to teach students about democratic processes and the value of political involvement in order to ensure gender equality in politics.³⁸

³⁵ Jain, P. (2018). Gender Bias in Media: A Study on Women Politicians in Indian Media. *Media Asia*, 45(2), 112-125.

³⁶ Impact of Reservation Quotas on Women's Political Participation in Local Governance" (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2020)

³⁷ Political Party Mechanisms for Women's Political Participation" (National Democratic Institute, 2020).

³⁸ "Educational Campaigns and Women's Political Representation" (Gender and Development Journal, 2018).

4. **Financial Support and Resources:** Provide financial assistance and resources to female candidates, such as campaign money and training programs in public speaking, leadership, and campaign administration.³⁹
5. **Women's Empowerment Programs:** Implement initiatives that empower women both socially and economically, boosting their confidence to enter and stay in political positions. This covers financing, entrepreneurship, and vocational training.
6. **Legal and Policy Support:** Strengthen the legislative systems that protect women from political discrimination and violence. Ensure the efficient execution of legislation such as the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act, 2013.
7. **Media and Public Perception:** Encourage good depictions of women in politics through media outreach and public debate. Challenge the prejudices and biases that prevent women from joining politics.
8. **Support Networks and Mentorship:** Establish support networks and mentorship programs for women in politics. This includes connecting aspiring female politicians with experienced mentors who can provide guidance and support.
9. **Role of Civil Society:** Civil society groups may play an important role in pushing for women's rights and gender equality in politics. They can also offer training, networking opportunities, and forums for women to express their issues.
10. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Regularly monitor and assess the success of programs and activities aimed at promoting women's political involvement. Change plan based on feedback and data to achieve ongoing improvement.⁴⁰

CONCLUSION

Ultimately, women's representation in politics is an important and developing worldwide subject. Despite advances in certain locations, there are still gaps in female leadership and participation within legislative bodies. The present research identified numerous significant variables impacting women's representation in politics, including socio-cultural hurdles, institutional prejudices, and structural inequities. Legislative quotas, policies promoting affirmative action, educational efforts, and advocacy campaigns targeted at increasing gender equality in politics have all been used to solve these difficulties. While these methods have had different degrees of effectiveness, sustained

³⁹ "Funding Challenges for Women in Politics in India" (Centre for Social Research, 2021).

⁴⁰ "Monitoring Women's Political Representation: Frameworks and Tools" (International Development Research Centre, 2019)

commitment and planned interventions are required to achieve meaningful and long-term change. Furthermore, the empirical data given in this research demonstrates the benefits of higher female presence in politics, such as more effective governance results, greater legislative sensitivity to gender-specific concerns, and increased social fairness. These advantages highlight the need of continuing to focus and invest in measures that enable women to fully and effectively engage in democratic decision-making processes. Moving forward, further research and policy innovation shall prove to be critical in expanding women's political representation, assuring that it represents the variety and inclusion required for strong democratic government. By accepting these difficulties and possibilities, society may go closer to fulfilling the entire potential of women's leadership in crafting a more equal, just, and prosperous future for all. Various worldwide initiatives demonstrate a conviction that women deserve equal treatment in all aspects of life. Political empowerment will serve to level the playing field in the country's political affairs.

