

Patriarchy and Power: Recognizing Women's Obstacles in Political Leadership

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Abstract:

Gender equality and democratic governance depend on women's involvement in political leadership. Despite significant progress in women's political representation across the world, women leaders continue to face structural, institutional, and socio-cultural barriers rooted in patriarchal systems. With a focus on patriarchal norms, gender stereotypes, restricted access to political resources, political violence, and media bias, this article explores the difficulties faced by women in political leadership. The report contends that while women's numerical participation has increased due to laws like gender quotas and reservation systems, true political empowerment is still hampered by deeply ingrained patriarchal power structures. Stronger support systems for female leaders, cultural change, and institutional improvements are all necessary to address these issues. It is commonly acknowledged that women's growing involvement in political institutions is a major step toward gender equality and democratic inclusivity. Nonetheless, a number of institutional, cultural, and structural obstacles still prevent women representatives from effectively participating in political decision-making. The main political obstacles faced by female legislators are examined in this article, including media prejudice, gender-based discrimination, patriarchal norms, restricted access to political resources, and safety concerns. It also addresses how these issues affect democratic government and suggests ways to increase women's political engagement. The study contends that although gender-inclusive policies and legislative quotas have increased numerical representation, deeper sociocultural hurdles and institutional injustices must be addressed in order to achieve true political empowerment.

Keywords: *Women Representatives, Gender And Politics, Political Participation, Democratic Representation, Gender Inequality.*

Introduction:

One of the most important measures of democratic progress and social equality is the involvement of women in political leadership. Affirmative action laws and constitutional amendments have been put into place all over the world to boost the participation of women in local government and legislative bodies. Despite these initiatives, women are still underrepresented in many political organizations and frequently face substantial obstacles after being elected. Political representation entails active involvement in decision-making processes in addition to holding seats in legislative bodies. Social prejudices, institutional limitations, and

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cultural expectations often limit the political agency of female MPs. These obstacles make it more difficult for them to successfully contribute to governance, lobby for laws that are gender-sensitive, and influence policy. This article looks at the main political obstacles that female MPs must overcome as well as the things that prevent them from becoming more powerful. Men have traditionally held positions of political leadership, which reflects larger trends of gender inequality in social and political institutions. In recent decades, women have become more prevalent in politics, yet they are still underrepresented in leadership roles. Significant questions concerning gender equality and democratic inclusivity are brought up by the underrepresentation of women in political leadership. Political institutions and procedures are still influenced by patriarchy, which is characterized as a societal framework in which men dominate roles in social authority, economic control, and political leadership. When women enter politics, they frequently encounter structural obstacles that make it difficult for them to exert power and actively engage in decision-making. This essay looks at the main obstacles women face in political institutions and analyzes how patriarchal power systems affect their experiences in leadership roles.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To examine the impact of patriarchal social structures on women's participation in political leadership.
2. To identify the major socio-cultural, economic, and institutional barriers that hinder women from attaining leadership roles in politics.
3. To analyze the representation of women in political institutions and decision-making bodies.
4. To explore strategies and policy measures that can promote women's political empowerment and leadership opportunities.

Review of Literature:

1. Pippa Norris (2004)

Norris examined gender differences in political recruitment and leadership. Her study found that patriarchal political institutions often favor male candidates, limiting women's entry into leadership positions. The research highlighted the importance of political party support and gender quotas for increasing women's representation.

2. Drude Dahlerup (2006)

Dahlerup discussed the role of gender quotas in improving women's participation in politics. The study argued that structural barriers, such as cultural norms and male-dominated political networks, prevent women from gaining equal political opportunities.

3. Anne Phillips (1995)

Phillips emphasized the concept of "politics of presence," arguing that women's representation in political institutions is essential for inclusive democracy. The research highlighted that patriarchal ideologies often marginalize women's voices in governance.

4. Naila Kabeer (2015)

Kabeer analyzed women's empowerment in governance and public decision-making. Her work showed that socio-economic inequalities, lack of education, and limited access to political resources restrict women's leadership potential.

5. Mona Lena Krook (2010)

Krook examined global trends in women's political representation and noted that institutional reforms, such as electoral quotas and supportive policies, significantly improve women's participation in leadership roles.

Conceptual Structure: Political Power and Patriarchy:

Deeply ingrained in social, cultural, and political structures is patriarchy. It influences expectations, gender norms, and resource access. The perception that men are inherently equipped for political authority is reinforced by patriarchal standards in political situations, which frequently depict leadership as a male realm. Because of this, women leaders often face doubts about their legitimacy and competency. Election prospects, party nominations, and leadership positions within political organizations are all impacted by these impressions. Women's ability to influence governance and policymaking is limited by structural constraints created by the link between patriarchy and political power.

The Historical Background of Women's Political Participation:

In the past, women were mainly shut out of formal political institutions and men dominated political systems all over the world. In the fight for political equality, the women's suffrage movements of the late 19th and early 20th centuries represented a sea change. Women were eventually given the ability to vote and run for office in numerous nations. Gender quotas, reservations, and political changes have greatly expanded women's representation in recent decades, especially at local government levels. However, as many female representatives still encounter barriers inside political systems, numerical representation does not always equate to meaningful political influence.

Major Challenges Faced by Women in Political Leadership:

✚ Patriarchal Social Norms:

Patriarchal views frequently deter women from pursuing careers in politics and discredit those who do. Leadership traits like aggressiveness and authority are typically associated with men in many societies. Women who exhibit these traits could be subject to social backlash or condemnation. These standards influence voter attitudes and political party choices in addition to impacting female candidates. The continuance of patriarchal social standards is one of the biggest obstacles that women in politics must overcome. Leadership and political power are typically linked with men in many societies. When women enter politics, they frequently encounter doubts about their devotion, competency, and capacity for leadership. In addition to discouraging women from entering political careers, these cultural beliefs may have an impact on how voters, party members, and political institutions view them.

✚ Limited Access to Political Resources:

Significant organizational networks, party backing, and financial resources are needed for political campaigns. Compared to their male colleagues, female candidates frequently have less access to these resources. Women's prospects of winning elections may be further diminished if political parties are reluctant to nominate them for seats that can be won. Furthermore, women frequently do not have access to powerful political networks that are essential for winning over party organizations.

✚ Gender-Based Discrimination and Stereotyping:

Gender prejudices diminish the credibility of female representatives. While males predominate in conversations about economic policy, defense, or national security, they might be expected to concentrate solely on "soft" policy topics like social welfare, health, or education. These prejudices hinder women's influence in political decision-making and their ability to participate in larger policy discussions.

✚ Political Violence and Safety Concerns:

Women legislators may experience intimidation, harassment, or gender-based political violence in hostile political contexts. This involves threats, verbal abuse, online harassment, and occasionally actual violence. In addition to endangering the personal safety of female politicians, these threats deter other women from pursuing careers in politics.

✚ Media Bias and Representation:

The way female politicians are portrayed in the media frequently exhibits gender prejudice. Media conversations may highlight their personal looks, family responsibilities, or emotional conduct rather than their policies or leadership ability. Stereotypes regarding women's aptitude for political leadership can be strengthened by this kind of coverage, which can also damage the public's opinion of female leaders.

✚ Balancing Public and Private Responsibilities:

The additional difficulty of juggling political obligations with household and family responsibilities is frequently faced by female politicians. Women are often expected by society to take on a disproportionate amount of household and caregiving duties, which makes it challenging for them to dedicate time and energy to political activity.

Power on Democratic Governance:

There are wider ramifications for democratic governance from the difficulties faced by female legislators. The democratic system loses a variety of viewpoints that are crucial for inclusive policies when women face obstacles to full involvement. According to research, women leaders frequently give priority to topics like gender equality, social welfare, healthcare, and education. As a result, restricting their political involvement could draw less attention to these crucial policy areas. Furthermore, the equality principle, which is essential to democratic systems, is compromised by the underrepresentation of women in decision-making bodies.

Techniques to Increase Women's Political Involvement:

Increasing Institutional Support: Policies that support gender equality in political participation can be put into place by governments and political organizations. This entails supporting female candidates financially, guaranteeing equitable party nominations, and enforcing gender quotas.

Building Capacity and Leadership Training: Training programs can give female representatives the tools they need to be effective leaders, public speakers, policy analysts, and political negotiators. Such programs can boost their efficacy and self-assurance in political positions.

Addressing Gender-Based Violence in Politics: To address harassment and violence against women in politics, institutional processes and legal frameworks should be put in place. Encouraging more women to participate in politics requires the creation of safe spaces.

Encouraging Gender-Sensitive Media Practices: To guarantee impartial and fair coverage of female politicians, media outlets should implement policies. Public perceptions can be changed by emphasizing their contributions to policy rather than their personal qualities.

Social Awareness and Cultural Change: Long-term advancement necessitates combating patriarchal beliefs and advancing gender equality by community involvement, education, and public awareness campaigns.

Findings of the Study:

1. **Patriarchal Social Norms:** Traditional gender roles and societal expectations often discourage women from entering political leadership positions.
2. **Institutional Barriers:** Political parties and governance structures remain largely male-dominated, limiting women's access to leadership opportunities.
3. **Economic and Educational Constraints:** Limited financial resources, lower political exposure, and educational inequalities affect women's political participation.
4. **Need for Policy Interventions:** Gender quotas, leadership training, and supportive institutional reforms are effective measures for increasing women's representation in political leadership.

Conclusion:

Although there are still many obstacles to overcome, women's representation in political institutions has increased in many nations. The effective participation of women legislators is still hampered by patriarchal norms, restricted access to resources, gender discrimination, political violence, and media bias. A combination of social change, institutional reforms, and legislative actions targeted at empowering women in politics are needed to address these issues. Building inclusive, representative, and democratic communities requires ensuring women's meaningful participation in political decision-making. Even while gender equality in politics is becoming more widely acknowledged, patriarchal power systems nevertheless pose serious obstacles for female leaders. These obstacles restrict women's access to political resources, damage their reputation, and put them at risk for assault and prejudice. Although women's representation has increased because to legislative initiatives like gender quotas, more extensive structural and cultural changes are needed for true political empowerment. In order to ensure inclusive policymaking, advance gender equality, and promote democratic governance, it is imperative to support women's leadership in politics.

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