

Indian Political Scenario and women participation- an empirical study

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Abstract

In today's world, women are actively participating in different sectors such as IT, HR, Finance, Customer relationship management, etc., but it contradicts in case of politics.

Only 22.8 per cent of all national parliamentarians were women as of June 2016, a slow increase from 11.3 per cent since 1995. In Asia only 19.2 % women are actively into politics compared to Nordic countries where percentage is high & is 42%.

As the world celebrates the International Women's Day on 08 March 2016, statistics reveal that India lags behind many countries, including its neighbours Pakistan and Nepal, when it comes to women's participation in politics. With only 10.8 per cent of women representation in the Lok Sabha and 10.3 per cent in the Rajya Sabha, India ranks 98th country in the world, according to the data released by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), an international group that works for promoting Democracy, Peace and Co-operation in the world. India, the world's largest democracy, has now only 59 women representatives out of 545 members in Lok Sabha, while there are 25 female MPs in the 242-member Rajya Sabha. With 22.2 per cent women MPs in its Lower House and 17 per cent in the Upper House, Pakistan is placed 51 while Nepal is ranked 18, with 33.3 per cent of female MPs in its parliament, according to the IPU list released on January 31 this year.

Indira Gandhi –the only women

If we consider Indian political scenario, Indira Gandhi was the only woman elected as prime minister during the year 1966-1984. There is no other woman prime minister in India in past 33 years. Being only the woman in cabinet, she played a major role & took extremely influencing

decisions which shaped India in better way during pre-liberalization era.

Indira Gandhi was unable to focus on issues faced by women as many other threats were present at that time. But the times have changed now; today women have a voice and recognition. If India is represented by a woman prime minister in

current era, she will be able take decisions more independently, and can focus on Women's issues and empowerment. Indira Gandhi was born in the year 1917 & became PM in the year 1966 at the age of 49. Thus, we can comment that, for attracting active, young & powerful women leadership in politics the age criteria to become most powerful person in India i.e. Prime Minister of India needs to be changed & it should be reduced.

Hence this research article provides a highlight on encouragement of women participation in politics to fulfil the conference objective giving women equality to help improve national productivity and increase competitiveness.

Introduction

Gender equality is achieved when people are able to access and enjoy the same rewards, resources and opportunities regardless of whether they are men or women. Many countries worldwide have made significant progress towards gender equality in recent decades, particularly in areas such as education. However women continue to earn less than men, are less likely to advance their careers as far as men, & are more likely to spend their final years in poverty. At the same time men often find it more difficult to access family friendly policies or flexible working arrangements than women. The term

'political participation' has a very wide meaning. It is not only related to 'Right to Vote', but simultaneously relates to participation in: decision making process, political activism, political consciousness, etc. Women in India participate in voting, run for public offices and political parties at lower levels more than men. Political activism and voting are the strongest areas of women's political participation. To combat gender inequality in politics, the Indian Government has instituted reservations for seats in local governments.

Women turnout during India's 2014 parliamentary general elections was 65.63%, compared to 67.09% turnout for men. India ranks 20th from the bottom in terms of representation of women in Parliament. Women have held the posts of president and prime minister in India, as well as chief ministers of various states. Indian voters have elected women to numerous state legislative assemblies and national parliament for many decades.

The Constitution of India establishes a parliamentary system of government, and guarantees its citizens the right to be elected, freedom of speech, freedom to assemble and form associations, and vote. The Constitution of India attempts to remove gender inequalities by banning discrimination based on sex and class, prohibiting human trafficking and forced labour, and reserving elected positions for

women. India has a federal form of government, with devolved powers. The electorate votes to elect a national parliament as well as state assemblies. In 2012, India had a minimal percentage of 10.9% women elected representatives in the national parliament, which is, but relatively higher than Hungary (8.8%), Brazil (9.6%), China (9.1%), and Malaysia (9.8%).

A broader measure of political participation includes number of women candidates who compete for elections and women in state assemblies. According to World Economic Forum's annual global gender gap index studies, which considers such a broader scale, India has ranked in top 20 countries worldwide for many years, with 9th best in 2013 - a score reflecting more women's participation in India's political process than Denmark, Switzerland, Germany, France and United Kingdom.

Objectives:

1. To understand gender equality in political scenario
2. To analyze reasons behind less women's participation in politics
3. To provide ideal suggestions for increasing participation

Research Data:

Primary Data:

We have collected this data using questionnaire tool. Sample size is 53 & selected randomly.

Secondary Data

These data has been collected with the help of internet.

Advantages:

- ✓ Reduction in age criteria will lead to increase in women participation.
- ✓ As president or PM is considered to be first citizen of the country many women will be influenced.
- ✓ A young PM or president can actively deal with various current issues such as safety, inequality, women violence etc
- ✓ Can easily adapt with current trends
- ✓ Can easily cop up & implement latest technologies in government

Disadvantages:

- ✓ Lack of experience
- ✓ Chances of wrong decisions
- ✓ Ineffective management
- ✓ Load of pressure, Frustration.

Challenges to women's participation:

The level and forms of women's participation in politics is largely shaped

by cultural and societal barriers in the form of violence, discrimination and illiteracy.

Sexual violence:

Sexual violence in India is exacerbated by issues of education and marriage. Women are sexually abused. Child marriage, domestic violence and low literacy rates have lowered Indian women's economic opportunities and contributed to sexual violence in India.

Discrimination:

Although the Constitution of India removed gender inequalities among caste and gender, discrimination continues to be a widespread barrier to women's political participation. Discriminatory attitudes manifest in the limitations presented to Indian women including low access to information and resources. Women rely on receiving information from family or village members, typically men. Women also lack leadership experience due to the fact they are burdened with household duties. The burden of household duties is a significant reason why many Indian women do not participate.

Illiteracy

India has one of the largest illiterate populations. In January 2014, the United Nations reported 287 million adults in India are illiterate. Literacy among Indian

women is 53.7%, which is much lower than literacy among men reported at 75.3%. Illiteracy limits the ability of women to understand the political system and issues.

Hence for increasing participation following barriers needs to be overcome-

Overcoming barriers to participation:

- ✓ To overcome issues of discrimination and violence, women's organizations have focused on the empowerment of Indian women.
- ✓ Empowerment is tied to the support of family and improved status within the household, which is undermined by the threat of domestic and sexual violence.
- ✓ Socio-economic conditions, such as poverty and illiteracy, prevent the entrance of women into running for public office, and even voting.
- ✓ Empowerment of Indian women can also occur through "bridging gaps in education, renegotiating gender roles, the gender division of labour and addressing biased attitudes."
- ✓ Women can also be empowered to participate by family, and when

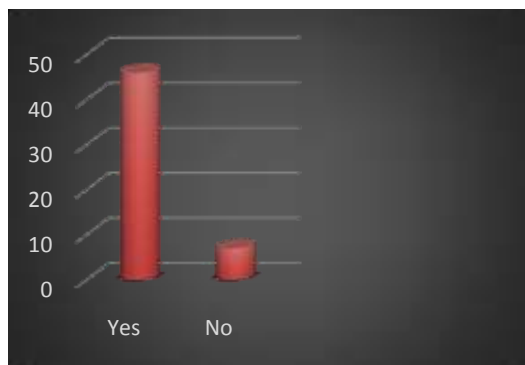
familial support is present they are more likely to run for office.

Data Analysis & Interpretation:

With the help of primary data, we have tried to understand & analyse respondents opinion regarding woman participation in political scenario.

1) Do you think if age criteria to become PM or president is reduced then women will actively participate

a) Yes b) No



2) Which of the following are the reasons for less women participation in Indian political scenario?

- a) Marriage at early age
- b) Traditional orthodox beliefs
- c) Less ruling authority
- d) Not enough presence at high ranks



- ✓ Women's participation in political parties remained low in the 1990s with 10-12% membership consisting of women.
- ✓ Indian women have also taken the initiative to form their own political parties, and in 2007, the United Women Front party was created, and has advocated for increasing the reservation of seats for women in parliament to 50%.
- ✓ Women only govern four of India's political parties. From 1980-1970, 4.3% of candidates and 70% of electoral races had no women candidates at all.
- ✓ As of 2013, it has been reported of the members of parliament 11% were women in Lok Sabha and 10.6% in Rajya Sabha.

Findings:

87% women has opinion that age criteria to become president or PM of India needs to be reduced

✓ In case of other countries across world minimum age for PM is as follows:

- Germany 18 above
- Canada: No restriction
- UK- 18 above
- Japan 25 years above

✓ Min age for President is:

- Argentina: 30 years
- Bangladesh: 25 years
- Columbia: 30 years
- France: 18 years.

➤ In India, now has an only 59 women representative out of 545 members in Lok Sabha, while there are 25 female MPs in the 242-member Rajya Sabha. With 22.2 per cent women MPs in its Lower House and 17 per cent in the Upper House, Pakistan is placed 51 while Nepal is ranked 18, with 33.3 per cent of female MPs in its parliament, according to the IPU list released on January 31 this year.

➤ Indira Gandhi elected as prime minister during the year 1966-1984. There is no women prime minister in India in past 33 years.

➤ In case of president, only Pratibha Patil played role during year 2007-

2012. Thus, there is no women president since 1947 up till 2007.

- William Pitt the Younger became youngest PM of UK at age of 18. As he was young contributions for formation & stability of UK was abundant. Some of them are:
- a) The Industrial Revolution
 - b) Imperial expansion
 - c) Economic growth and prosperity

Suggestions & Conclusion:

1) The age criteria should be reduced for increasing participation of women.

2) If young dynamic women are leaders then they can more easily adapt with trends & development & deal with issues faced by women as well.

3) As politics is male dominated currently, having a young & dynamic leader can certainly influence women from all age groups.

References:

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Annexure:

Questionnaire:

Q.1 Are you aware about politics?

a) Yes b) No

Q.2 Are you interested in participating in politics

a) Yes b) No

Q.3 Do you see politics as your career?

a) Yes b) No

Q.4 Do you feel women's are currently actively participated in politics?

a) Yes b) No

Q.5 Do you feel politics is dominated by males as compared to women?

a) Yes b) No

Q.6 which of the following are the reasons for less women participation in Indian political scenario?

a) Marriage at early age

b) Traditional orthodox beliefs

c) Less ruling authority d) Not enough presence at high ranks

Q.7 Do you feel if a women is PM or president for a country like India will increase women participation?

a) Yes b) No

Q.8 what reasons do you feel for no women becoming president or prime minister in India after Indira Gandhi?

a) Age criteria b) high experience

c) political background d) Traditional beliefs

Q.9 Do you think if age criteria to become PM or president is reduced then women will actively participate

a) Yes b) No

Q.10 If yes can we see a women as PM or president in coming future in India?

a) Yes b) No

Q.11 Any suggestions.....
