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“A Study On Political Participation Of Working Women Of Vadodara City”.

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the political participation of working women in Vadodara City, examining the extent and nature of their engagement in political activities, the challenges they face, and the socio-cultural and economic factors influencing their participation. Using a mixed-methods approach that incorporates both quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, the study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of women's political involvement. The research findings reveal that while working women recognize the significance of political engagement, they often encounter barriers such as gender discrimination, time constraints, work-life balance issues, and lack of political awareness. The study highlights the importance of policy interventions, awareness campaigns, and institutional reforms to enhance women's participation in the political sphere.

Keywords: Political Participation, Working Women, Vadodara City, Gender and Politics, Women's Empowerment, Socio-Cultural Barriers, Electoral Engagement

INTRODUCTION

Political participation is a fundamental aspect of democracy, ensuring that all citizens have a voice in governance and decision-making processes. Women's participation in politics has gained significant attention in recent years due to its implications for gender equality and social justice. Despite increasing global awareness, women in many regions, including Vadodara City, continue to experience systemic barriers that limit their political involvement. This study aims to analyze the participation of working women in Vadodara City, identifying key challenges and proposing measures to bridge the gender gap in politics.

Historically, women in India have played crucial roles in political movements, from the freedom struggle to contemporary governance. However, their representation and engagement remain disproportionately low compared to men. Structural and cultural factors have perpetuated gender disparities, making it difficult for women, especially working professionals, to actively participate in politics. While legal frameworks such as the Women's Reservation Bill have sought to enhance women's political representation, their actual engagement at the grassroots level remains a pressing issue that needs further exploration.

Additionally, societal expectations and traditional gender roles often limit the extent to which women can exercise their political agency. The dual burden of professional responsibilities and domestic duties creates significant challenges for working women aspiring to engage in political discourse. The lack of mentorship and political support networks further exacerbates these challenges, discouraging women from considering political leadership roles. This research delves into these barriers, analyzing their impact on working women's participation and offering policy-based solutions to foster a more inclusive political landscape.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Chattopadhyay, Raghabendra and Esther Duflo, 'Women as policy makers: evidence from a randomized policy experiment in India.' *Econometric*, 72(5), 2004, work is based on political reservations for women in India to study the impact of women's leadership on policy decisions. Using a dataset collected in 265 Village Councils in West Bengal and Rajasthan they compared the type of public goods provided in different Village Councils. Some of those village councils were reserved for women and some were not. They concluded that the reservation of a council seat affects the types of public goods provided. According to them women elected as leaders invest more in the public goods that are closely linked to women's concerns like drinking water and roads.

A comparative study, in Dahlerup, Drude 2006 (ed): *Women, quotas and politics*, London: Routledge), frustration among elected women due to lack of control over financial resources, dependence on support from males (Hust E., *Women's political representation and empowerment in India: a million Indiras now?*, Manohar Publications, New Delhi, 2004) a risk for a high rate of drop out of elected women during their term in office (Sivakumar Sowmya Kerbert & Madhuresh: *Study of 97 women elected chairpersons in Bihar's Panchayati Raj: Summary of findings*, for The Hunger Project, March 2006) and attitudes that women are not supposed to participate in the public sphere (Mahanta Upasana and Sinha Samrat, 2007, 'The political empowerment of women through panchayati raj institutions: a critical assessment of India's experiment with affirmative action', Paper Prepared for The Third International Congress of the Asian Political and International Studies Association)

Concerning the theories about the factors that restrain the entry and participation of women in political field several studies have identified these obstacles. One of them is Shvedova Nadezhda: "Obstacles to Women's Participation in Parliament," in Ballington, Julie & Karam, Azza 2005 (eds): *Women in Parliament: Beyond numbers*, revised edition, Stockholm: International IDEA Publications. Shvedova has created a framework

of socio-economic obstacles, psychological/ ideological obstacles and political/ institutional obstacles where she discusses about the masculine model of politics, a dual burden of domestic chores and professional obligations, lack of support from party and a lack of confidence and self-esteem. However, according to Matland Richard E.: 'Women's Representation in National Legislatures: Developed and Developing Countries'. Legislative Studies Quarterly. Vol. 23, no. 1, 1998, this research has some flaws for example it has not completely argued about the way these obstacles can be valid in a context of low economic development. Matland argues that one of the most important features of the society connected with women's representation levels, is a country's state of development. Hence development leads to a weakening of traditional values, decreased fertility rates, increased urbanization, greater education and labor force participation for women, and attitudinal changes. According to Matland's assumption when women are different from men in levels of literacy, workforce participation and university education and thus not equal to men in the social spheres - they are less likely to be seen as men's equals in the political sphere.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

OBJECTIVES OF STUDY:

- 1: To find out socio-economic profile of Women.
- 2: To find out reasons for not participating in politics.
- 3: To find out political knowledge of women.

Sample and Sampling Method & Data Collection

The study explores the experiences and challenges faced by working women in Vadodara city, Gujarat, specifically those engaged in the fields of education, small businesses, private-sector jobs, and political leadership. A non-probability sampling method was employed for this research, with the snowball sampling technique being utilized to identify respondents. This method proved effective in reaching participants who met the study's criteria, as referrals from initial respondents helped in expanding the sample pool.

A total of 57 women were selected for the study, and data collection was carried out through structured personal interviews. Each participant was interviewed face-to-face by the researcher, ensuring direct interaction and the opportunity to clarify responses where necessary. The interview schedule was designed to include a combination of closed-ended questions, which provided quantifiable data, and one open-ended question to allow respondents to share their perspectives in greater detail.

The face-to-face interview approach allowed the researcher to build rapport with the respondents, facilitating a more in-depth understanding of their professional experiences, challenges, and aspirations. The structured format of the interviews ensured consistency in data collection while also enabling the researcher to capture qualitative insights where needed. The findings of this study are expected to provide valuable insights into the socio-economic conditions, work-life balance, and career progression of working women in Vadodara city.

FINDINGS

The study reveals that the primary reason for working women not participating in politics is family responsibility, with 84.2% of women refraining from political involvement due to the need to manage household duties and care for family members. Additionally, 26.3% avoid politics due to fear of family disturbances, believing it may create conflicts at home, while 15.8% cite concerns about losing social prestige.

Lack of community support is another barrier, preventing 36.6% from participating as they fear negative societal reactions, and 7% are unable to engage due to time constraints. During their college years, 77.2% of women did not take part in student unions, prioritizing academics or fearing a lack of support, whereas 22.8% participated due to having adequate backing and the ability to balance both responsibilities.

Family support plays a crucial role in political participation, influencing 87.7% of women, followed by educational institutions (35.1%), political institutions (22.8%), mass media (33.3%), and peer groups (1.8%). Regarding membership in various organizations, 54% of women are associated with NGOs, 25% with cooperative societies, 30% with community centers, 52% with women's organizations, and 15% with professional associations, mainly due to awareness and perceived relevance.

Conversely, 3% are not part of NGOs, 32% are not in cooperative societies, 27% are not in community centers, 5% are not in women's organizations, and 41% are not in professional associations, either due to lack of awareness or considering it unnecessary. Furthermore, only 28.6% of women were members of student organizations during college, while 71.4% did not join.

CONCLUSION

There should be counseling sessions for working women to help them manage multiple responsibilities effectively. Ensuring their safety at workplaces and in business or other fields is essential. Family support is crucial, as without it, women face numerous difficulties. Women must raise their voices for their rights and support one another. More women should join politics to challenge injustices, create new policies, and implement laws benefiting women. They should engage with various NGOs, not just those focused on women's issues, as social work extends to all. Women should actively provide suggestions to the government for improvements and new initiatives that contribute to the country's progress. Awareness of women's rights is vital, and training sessions should be conducted to educate them on relevant laws and regulations. Proper safety measures should be in place for women involved in social work or any outdoor activity. Since family responsibility is a primary barrier to political participation, families should support and encourage women in their aspirations. Political development can be enhanced by addressing key sectors such as coalition governance in India, Indo-Pak relations, and the Pokhran test. While many women find politics interesting, they should recognize its broader benefits, such as skill development, societal improvement, and networking opportunities. Women of all religions should be encouraged to participate in politics, as it is not limited to any specific group. Age should not be a constraint; women can pursue politics, jobs, or business at any stage.

of life. Marital status—whether married, unmarried, divorced, or widowed—should not prevent them from pursuing their goals, as they have the right to work toward a better future. Women must challenge societal norms and family restrictions to achieve their aspirations. If society imposes judgments, they should confidently respond and assert their rights, discouraging further interference. Time management is essential for balancing responsibilities, and women should create and follow structured schedules to ensure efficiency in their work.

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