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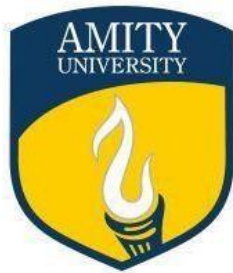
AMITY INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCE

SUMMER INTERNSHIP PROGRAM REPORT

WOMEN IN POLITICS

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ABSTRACT

This report explores the evolving role of women in politics, examining their participation, challenges, and impact on political landscapes worldwide. Over the years, women have made significant strides in breaking gender barriers, contributing to policy-making, leadership, and advocacy at local, national, and international levels. However, despite advancements, the political sphere continues to be dominated by men, and women often face systemic barriers, including gender discrimination, unequal access to resources, and cultural norms that restrict their political engagement.

The report delves into the factors influencing women's political participation, including education, socio-economic status, and the influence of social movements. It also highlights key case studies of women leaders who have navigated these challenges to bring about change in their respective regions. By analysing trends, policies, and global movements, the report aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the progress made and the obstacles that still need to be addressed in the quest for gender equality in politics.

DECLARATION

This is the Summer Internship Program declaration submitted by Abhinay Deep, Social Sciences, Amity School of Social Sciences, Amity University, contains only my general works and all references are mentioned in the text. The same or part of the work has not been sent to any university for any award in any subject.

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INTRODUCTION

The participation of women in politics has undergone significant transformation over the past century, yet it remains an area marked by both progress and persistent challenges. Historically, women were excluded from political spheres due to societal norms, legal barriers, and gender discrimination. However, over time, women have increasingly made their mark in various political roles, ranging from voters to political leaders, lawmakers, and activists. Despite these advancements, women continue to face numerous obstacles, including unequal representation, gender biases, and limited access to political resources.

This report explores the evolving role of women in politics, examining their contributions, challenges, and the impact they have had on policy-making and governance. It aims to analyze the factors influencing women's political participation, the barriers they encounter, and the ways in which women have navigated and overcome these challenges to create meaningful change. Through case studies and global perspectives, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the strides made and the work that remains in ensuring gender equality in political spaces.

BARRIER'S TO WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Barriers to women's political participation are multifaceted, stemming from social, cultural, economic, and institutional factors. One significant barrier is gender-based discrimination, where traditional gender roles often limit women's access to political power, portraying politics as a male-dominated arena. Societal expectations about women's domestic roles can discourage their involvement in public life, leading to a lack of confidence and support. Additionally, women often face challenges in accessing education and resources necessary to build a political career, resulting in fewer women with the skills and networks required for political leadership. Structural barriers, such as inadequate political representation, sexist policies, and the underrepresentation of women in political parties and decisionmaking positions, further marginalize their voices. Economic inequality and the burden of unpaid domestic labor can also hinder women's ability to run for office or engage fully in political activities. In many cases, political environments that are hostile, violent, or unsupportive of women's participation further exacerbate these challenges. Together, these barriers create a significant gap in women's political representation and influence.

Increasing Women's Representation

Increasing women's representation in politics is essential for achieving gender equality and ensuring that diverse perspectives are included in decision-making processes. One effective way to enhance women's representation is through the implementation of gender quotas, which mandate a certain percentage of women in political parties, electoral lists, or legislative bodies. These quotas help to address the underrepresentation of women and ensure that they have a seat at the table. Additionally, creating supportive environments that provide women with access to education, mentorship, and political networks can help equip them with the skills and confidence needed to pursue

political careers. Campaign finance reforms and financial support for female candidates can also level the playing field, as women often face economic challenges when running for office. Encouraging political parties to adopt inclusive policies and prioritize women's issues, along with fostering a cultural shift that challenges traditional gender roles, can contribute to more women entering politics. Ultimately, increasing women's representation leads to more equitable governance, better policy outcomes, and the empowerment of women in all spheres of life.

Achieving Gender Parity in Political Representation

Achieving gender parity in political representation is a critical step toward ensuring equal opportunities for all citizens, regardless of gender. This goal can be realized through a combination of legal, institutional, and cultural reforms. One of the most effective strategies is the introduction of gender quotas, which ensure that a certain percentage of political candidates or seats are reserved for women. These quotas help to break down structural barriers and encourage more women to engage in politics. In addition to quotas, policies that promote work-life balance, such as family-friendly legislation, can support women in balancing political careers with family responsibilities. Building a political culture that challenges gender biases and stereotypes, while also encouraging women's participation and leadership, is equally important. This includes addressing issues such as harassment, unequal access to resources, and the undervaluing of women's contributions. Furthermore, fostering an environment of mentorship, providing women with the tools and networks to succeed, and ensuring equal access to funding for political campaigns are crucial. Achieving gender parity not only promotes equality but also leads to more diverse, inclusive, and representative governance that better reflects the needs and perspectives of the entire population.

Women's Participation in Local vs. National Politics

Women's participation in local versus national politics often varies due to different social, cultural, and institutional dynamics. At the local level, women may find it easier to engage due to closer community ties, fewer financial barriers, and the opportunity to address more immediate, localized issues. Local politics can also offer a less intimidating entry point for women, as it may involve smaller-scale campaigns and more direct engagement with constituents. However, women at the national level often face heightened challenges, including more intense media scrutiny, larger political networks, and a greater degree of competition for leadership positions. National politics can also be dominated by entrenched power structures and gender biases, making it harder for women to break through. Despite these challenges, achieving political representation at the national level often brings more influence and decision-making power. While local politics can serve as a stepping stone, achieving greater gender parity at both levels requires systemic changes, such as more supportive policies, increased access to resources, and a shift in societal attitudes toward women in leadership roles. Both spheres are crucial, as local political participation can serve as a foundation for advancing women's involvement and representation at the national level.

The Future of Women in Political Leadership

The future of women in political leadership holds great promise, as global movements for gender equality continue to gain momentum. With increasing recognition of the need for diverse leadership, more women are rising to positions of power across various levels of

government. Initiatives like gender quotas, mentorship programs, and more inclusive political structures are creating pathways for women to enter and succeed in political roles. The growing visibility of female political leaders and activists serves as a source of inspiration, demonstrating that women can lead with both competence and empathy. However, challenges remain, including overcoming entrenched gender biases, addressing unequal access to resources, and dismantling systemic barriers that limit women's full participation. The future of women in political leadership will depend on continued efforts to create supportive environments, foster equal opportunities, and promote policies that address women's specific needs and concerns. As societal attitudes evolve and more women assume leadership roles, the hope is that political decision-making will become more inclusive, reflective of diverse experiences, and better equipped to address the complex challenges of the 21st century. Ultimately, a future where women are fully represented in political leadership would benefit not just women, but society as a whole.

Women in Politics and International Relations

Women in politics and international relations have increasingly become key players in shaping global policies, peace efforts, and diplomatic relations. Historically underrepresented in this field, women have made significant strides in recent decades, with female leaders and diplomats playing pivotal roles in addressing international conflicts, promoting human rights, and fostering international cooperation. Women such as Angela Merkel, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, and Jacinda Ardern have demonstrated leadership in both national and global contexts, advocating for policies that prioritize social justice, climate change, and global health. Women's participation in international relations also brings diverse

perspectives to global decision-making, ensuring that issues such as gender equality, maternal health, and education are prioritized on the international stage. Despite progress, women in international politics often still face significant barriers, including gender-based discrimination, limited access to leadership roles, and the challenge of navigating male-dominated spaces. However, their growing influence highlights the importance of increasing female representation in diplomacy, security, and international governance to create a more balanced and equitable world order. Women's involvement in politics and international relations is essential for fostering a more inclusive, peaceful, and sustainable global community.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, women's participation in politics is essential for achieving a more inclusive, equitable, and representative society. Despite the numerous barriers they face, including gender biases, limited access to resources, and societal expectations, women continue to break new ground in political leadership, challenging traditional power structures and driving meaningful change. The push for gender parity in political representation, along with policies that support women's participation at all levels, is crucial to ensuring that their voices are heard and their needs addressed. As more women enter political spaces, they bring unique perspectives and solutions that contribute to more comprehensive and effective governance. The future of women in politics is promising, but it requires continued efforts to eliminate the structural and cultural barriers that hinder their full participation. Ultimately, empowering women in politics is not just a matter of fairness; it is a necessary step toward building stronger, more resilient societies globally.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

• **Underrepresentation and Barriers**: Women remain underrepresented in political leadership, facing barriers such as gender-based discrimination, cultural norms, and limited access to resources and opportunities.

• **Progress through Initiatives**: Gender quotas and reforms within political parties have helped increase women's political participation, though more systemic changes are needed for true gender parity.

• **Impact on Policy**: Women bring diverse perspectives to politics, advocating for issues like gender equality, social justice, and sustainability, which enriches policymaking and governance.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

While significant progress has been made in increasing women's political participation, achieving true gender parity requires ongoing efforts to dismantle barriers, implement supportive policies, and ensure equal opportunities, ultimately enriching governance with diverse and inclusive perspectives.

ENDNOTES/FOOTNOTES

• **Gender Quotas**: The implementation of gender quotas in political parties and electoral systems has proven to be an effective strategy to increase women's representation in politics (Dahlerup, 2006).

• **Political Training Programs**: Women's access to political education and training programs plays a critical role in preparing them for leadership roles (Paxton & Hughes, 2015).

• **Cultural Barriers**: Traditional gender roles and societal expectations about women's place in the home and family still act as significant barriers to women's political participation (Inglehart & Norris, 2003).

• **Economic Challenges**: The financial cost of running for office disproportionately affects women, as they often face economic inequalities and limited access to campaign funding (Bjarnegård, 2013).

- **Role Models**: Female political leaders serve as role models, inspiring other women to pursue political careers and advocating for policies that address women's needs and rights (Wang, 2017).

- **Public Perception**: Public perceptions of women in leadership roles are often shaped by stereotypes, where women are seen as less competent or authoritative compared to their male counterparts (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

- **Violence and Harassment**: Women in politics often face gender-based violence and harassment, both online and offline, which can deter them from engaging in political life (UN Women, 2018).

- **Intersectionality**: Women from marginalized groups, including those based on race, class, and ethnicity, face additional challenges in accessing political power (Crenshaw, 1989).

- **International Influence**: The growing participation of women in international diplomacy and global governance is reshaping global politics by introducing diverse perspectives on peace, security, and human rights (Krook, 2010).

- **Positive Policy Outcomes**: Studies have shown that countries with higher female representation in politics tend to have more progressive policies on social welfare, health, and education (Chattopadhyay & Duflo, 2004).

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