FEMALE LEADERSHIP IN REGIONAL CONTEMPORARY POLITICS IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Women's political engagement has always been seen as a critical part of all forms of development. After India's independence in 1947, there has been countless efforts to improve women's political participation, and as such decentralisation of power through local self-government institutions and women's engagement in local administration set the inclusive development discourse in India. However, existing gender bias, unfair labour division, societal attitudes, and election structure continue to create hurdles and oppress women and limit their participation in public life. The low presence of women councillors in key decision-making positions in regional and local government, is of critical concern across India, resulting in the marginalisation of women's interests and issues from public policy. This paper looks at historical trajectory of women's condition in India after Independence and analyse how various factors affected their political participation and what are the current issues and challenges that persist impeding women's political representation in India.

KEYWORDS: Women's political representation, Empowerment, Women's Rights, Political participation, democracy,

I.INTRODUCTION

"Woman is the companion of men, gifted with equal mental capacity. She has a right to participate in the minutest details in the activities of men, and she has an equal right of freedom and liberty with him" – Mahatma Gandhi

Any nations development is solely dependent on how women are treated in society. Women make up half ofworld's population that is 50 % but they have always suffered in our male dominated culture. "Gender equality is not only a basic human right, but its achievement has

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enormous socio-economic ramifications. Empowering women fuels thriving economies, spurring productivity and growth" (UNIFEM, 2011). Female Leadership had been a significant topic for discussion. Gender is one such variable that needs to be examined regarding leadership efficaciousness.

"Leadership is people-driven and the ability to inspire people helps to achieve the set goals of an organization". (Daft& Kendrick & Vershinina , 2010). As a result, one of the current and ongoing studies that interest the curiosity of many people is the role of femaleleadership.This topic of female leadership in regional contemporary politics in India needs a sympathetic consideration because of professional, political and personal realities of twenty first century. Being a feminist and revolving around the feminist literature, there are approaches to acknowledge the dissimilarity between a male and a female in the field based on opportunity as well as equality. In order to be a leader both men and women must have their unique voice or perspective, according to norms of society that should be influenced, it is possible to argue that the unique traits may tend to set up dichotomies between men and women.

As we know that the society accept women as to be more caring, more commutative, and cooperative and men to be aggressive, abusive, tough the role of leading in the world become biased.Hence women are expected to change themselves and are supposed to act in societal manner (Heiskanen,2013).The equality in the world of leadership has always challenged women to do as men. Female constitute approx. 50 % of the population in this worldhowever they face the problem of equality in each and every aspect or field. As my research is focused on leadership here i in general see that women face the problem for leadership because society has always thought that a female could not be a good leader or a manager but at the domestic level men always accept the women work as the work designed for them and they even have a mindset that they are only good for this work.Looking at women empowerment there are many studies I came across. Scholars like(Kabeer 2001), (Devika&Thampi 2007), (KB 2005), and (Menon,2009) looked that there has always been a structural bias between women and men in the political ground specifically in the field of reduced departmental and decision-making authority.

The society has always discriminated women not only at societal level but also at home level, where gender inequality in leadership has been missed.Different stereotypes of women and men's characteristics and roles in the societystill exist strongly. (Piha,2006).Looking at

leadership men are seen and even selected over female for particular position, giving men more challenging duty and women loose out.

When there is a lack of support in the family or by surrounding there is a conflict with career demands which lead to delay in advancement of management or executive position.

If we ask a random woman whether they faced or experienced a harassment the most of the answer to it would be they have. It might be in the form of abusive language or any kind of intimidation. These experiences highlight how opposition and harassment could lead to a compromise of their duty and a position in leadership. In the field of leadership to find a recognition mostly women need to work an extra in order to be noticed. They not only work but try to perceive and encourage more women to seek position in leadership. One of the most prominent barriers in the field of leadership is the age. Most of the women obtain administrative position when they hit a certain age and thenminimal opportunities are available to women in the field. There are claims that most of the time due to gender women receive lower ranking position. There are times when men counter parts do not approve women holding higher positions than them thesame way it patterns up as a hierarchical structure.(Aaltio–Marjosola ,2001)

Women are favourably treated less than men on performance estimation and receive. For those who have made into leadership, gendered barriers do not vanish. They have faced it daily, and have witnessed conflict from the society that impact their position in leading world. There are times when women are harassed, discriminated against and the societal doubts lead women to compromise on their duties. We must strengthen ourcountry 's woman socially, economically, mentally and politically and we must inform a country 's male about the wrongdoing. Woman's positions are consistent around the world. On the one hand India a country where women are goddess are mistreated, repressed , Stifled and exploited by the male dominated society on the other side .

As we know second most populated country in the world is India. The country represents half of female as its population thus it's important to increase the female position which is belowrepresentation. There have been a variety of reasons why women in Indian society are underrepresented in politics, the most common being that they are represented through orthodox,religion, race, and family position. The existence of a patriarch even now prevents women from gaining political authority, particularly in political system whena male is a

leader and females have a lower probability of becoming the most powerful leader because of the absence of equal opportunity.There have been measures that were taken to attain equal gender status in order to have women representation a committee was set up which was named (CSWI). The report suggested female involvement in political parties as grass root level needed with the reservation of seats for women (GOI ,1974)

Females' engagement and involvement in the election process are crucial indicators of a country's democratic maturity. It may be characterised as a state of equality and liberty in which women and men share political authority. Despite many constitutional requirements, women in the Indian subcontinent remain underrepresented in legislatures at both thelevels.Not just in India women around the world find themselves underrepresented in parliament and kept far away from decision making process / levels.(Shvedova,2005).

Women representing at the LokSabha and at the centre is below 20%, indicating a gender disparity from participation in electoral and representation equality across the country. The engagement of Indian female in electoral politics is mostly due to political party competition, since national and geographically political parties in India differentiate not just in case of seat allocation, however in case of party position and file and que of command. This is a significant giver to the Indian political party rivalry structure, which is dominated by natural male supremacy and a patriarchal worldview that keep out a woman from the election process.

 "Participation of women in public policy making through membership of elected bodies is thus seen as a step towards gender empowerment."(Chakrabarty and Agarwala,2006)Women's political participation is a buzzword in today's society. India is dedicated to women's emancipation as a nation. Since independence, the government has worked to eliminate different disparities. The globalisation of social, economic, and political knowledge has resulted in a plethora of concerns, among which gender impartiality and women's empowerment are prominent."Women's participation in democracy through politics is without doubt an important step towards social equality, economic development and national and international peace." (Kumari & Kidwani, 1998). Women's empowerment looks upon to a variety of activities that improve female social status by providing better food, education, property, eradicating poverty, and ensuring equal rights in numerous areas.

Malnutrition among mothers, child marriage, illiteracy among women, and female unemployment are all concentrated in a few countries, one of which is India. Once a female politician in India overcomes these barriers and runs for office, she will almost certainly encounter harassment and slanderous assaults, making it nearly impossible to continue. When it comes to campaign engagement and interactions with public authorities, women are less involved. On average, female candidates had less education and experience than male candidates. Political leaders of different genders also have varied societal expectations."Structural social work questions the legitimacy of institutions and systems, suggesting that real advances in social welfare cannot be achieved without fundamental changes to the way in which global society Organises the distribution of resources and power" (Gray and Webb, 2008).

Gender imbalances must be eliminated and women must be empowered in order to fulfil development goals, as progress is required in every society. The 73rd and 74th Amendment Acts were issued in 1993 and 1994, occupied 1/3 of seats in the Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI) for women in order to ensure equitable political participation. Although most states have approved Panchayati Raj Acts, Female not representing in the federal and state legislatures is a major source of dissatisfaction.

II HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:Femaleleadership since independence

The present is always rooted in the past. As a result, the rationale of a law relating to women's political involvement can only be properly analysed by looking at the system's prior history. Examining the history of women's political participation at both the national and global levels can offer some light on the issue. Womenin history of India had a long history of misery and ill treatment. Female were always continued to be prey of exploitation andhad been subjected to a lot of forms of ill treatment, violence, and torture both physically and mentally not just in the male-dominated society, but also at their own homes by her families, disrupting the social balance.

Local bodies (self-government)had existed in India since before independence. This is vividly described in the Vedas, Puranas, Smritis, and literature on statecraft and religious scriptures. If we look in the past the "Panchayati Raj system" that has been limitedin resolving social issues with the support of just 5 village elders known as 'Panchas.' 2 Many females

participated in the national freedom movement, demonstrating that they are capable of displaying outstanding leadership qualities. " Sarojini Naidu", " Kamala Devi Chattopadhaya ", "Sucheta Kriplani ", "Aruna Asif Ali", "Kasturba Gandhi", as well as "Kamala Nehru" were some of the important women who fought throughout the freedom war. They are notable for their ability to lead.

Sarojini Naidu, who fought throughout the freedom war had also led a delegation of Indian womenin 1917 just before the British Parliament. It was the driving force behind the demand for women's voting rights. According to the(ReformsAct,1921) Female were granted the to vote as a right but only under specified conditions like if she was a wife, she owned a property or she was educated.Finallyin 1950, the Constitution of India granted all everyone equal political and legal rights.Women have held many preciouspositions like that of in political and administrative work as well in portfolios since independence, including governors, chief ministers, and ministers in cabinet and state governments, presiding officers of legislative bodies, supreme court and high court judges, and secretaries to the Government of India.

India had one of the first head of state and the head of governmentas compared to the rest of the world.In Indiafemale were granted the right to equal political involvement, including the ability to vote, considerably earlier than in most Western nations. Several laws, legislations, and changes have aided women in gaining equal political participation in the country. The Panchayati Raj system, like the 73rd Amendment Act, allows for Thirty three percent reservation for women in all three levels. It's a step toward ending women's inequity and incapacity at all levels of government. The 73rd Amendment is a watershed moment in women's history because it marks a huge step in women involvement at ground level.

Regionally, a few women have emerged as splendid leaders in their own states, such as Mayawati representing Uttar Pradesh, Jayalalitha representing Tamil Nadu, Mamata Banerjee in West Bengal, and Sheila Dixit in New Delhi. These women have made a significant impact on Indian politics. But it is important to remember that these leaders entered into politics and came to positions of power due to their propinquity to men.

IIIFemale in Indian politics – Issues and challenges

If we look at women representation in Parliament, India is ranked 20th from the lowest.

Women make up 14.44 % of the total members of the Lok Sabha, according to figures compiled by the (Inter-Parliamentary Union) of which India is a member.

According to the latest figures from the Election Commission of India (ECI), women make up 10.5 percent of the total members of Parliament as of October 2021.

The situation for women Members of Legislative Assemblies (MLAs) in India's state legislatures is much worse, with a national average of only 9%.

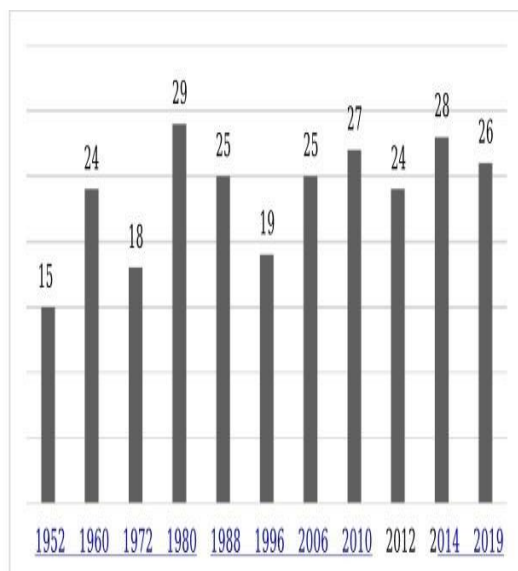Women's involvementin the Lok Sabha has not even increased by 10% in the last 75 years of independence.

Fig.1. **Number of women members in Rajya Sabha (Council of States)**

Source: Women Members in Rajya Sabha

The proportion of women in the Indian Parliament is seen in Figure 1. The Panchayat Raj Institutions Act, however, did not result in considerable progress or political engagement at the national level following its establishment and execution. This is primarily due to patriarchal attitudes and barriers to women in northern India, which has resulted in a decrease in the overall percentage of women in Parliament, which is the primary reason for the lack of statistical significance between the pre- and post-implementation of Panchayat Raj institutions. The issue of Female in politics may be traced back to several levels, including history, culture faith, custom, patriarchal political institutions, gender social group, and the country's democratic and wellbeing systems, to mention a few.

4.1) Socio – Culture factors

4.1.1) Culture

In terms of how female ishandled in Indian society, it has one of the poorest records. "Patriarchal and oppressed society with a violent caste structure founded on religious beliefs, which has traditionally projected masculine dominance, malnutrition, ignorance, brutality, and discrimination against women" (Anonymous, 2009). Women's standing remained poor and undervalued far into the twentieth century, despite modernity. This does not, however, imply that they have strayed from their conventional roles as wife and mother. At home, they must still play the subservient role, serving their husbands and in-laws. It implies that, if ladies are permitted to pursue a profession, particularly in positions of control, they are not permitted to serve as political officials. They are still largely associated with female-dominated professions such as teaching and nursing. The patriarchal society continues to dominate the majority of people's thinking structures, it's not easy for women to take on the difficult duty of managing for office, campaigning, performing community service to gain popularity, moving around with male party members to learn the ropes, and so on. In many instances, it is still frowned upon for a woman to undertake any of the following.

4.1.2) Domestic responsibilities Of a Female

Orthodox gender roles of male andfemale are not reflected in a nation's cultural ideology. They are not bounded by culture or country and this has resulted in the formation of feminist perspectives. All throughout the globe Gender roles are specified tasks or behaviours, according to feminist philosophy. gendered norms that apply to males and females. Gender roles can be difficult to manage since they necessitate a lot of effort. "People must fit into their roles in order to avoid being labelled as outcasts" (feminist theory).As(Shvedova,2007) pin point froma women perspective, "Men dominate the political arena; men formulate the rules of the political game; and men define the standards for evaluation. Furthermore, political life is organized according to male norms and values, and in some cases even male lifestyles"

Gender stereotypes, which are commonly linked with women, are a component of traditional gender norms. Female councillors emphasised how social norms limit their participation by defining what kind of subject they are going to look after. For example, female won't be given a land issue problem in India as brought up, as male are traditionally the ones to handle such matters.In this approach, feminism calls attention to and criticises the assumption of male dominance, as well as how men and masculine are held up as the ideal of politics. (Bourque & Grossholtz , 1998)

4.2) Political Factors
4.2.1) Parties Ideologies

The debate over socio-cultural-traditionalist perspectives extends to political parties as well. On one hand, ideology of a party may be biased toward female , as that have been noticed in some parties of India that they don't allow women to enter in their party while on the other side , it may allow someone who has political background such as Indira Gandhi who was appointed as Prime ministerin case of the Indian National Congress (Kumari and Kidwai, 1998) .

Even when looking at parties with gender equality as a priority, female in such parties face bias ness , as one activist with some years of experience from India explains: "There is no universal attitude of men toward women within the party; each individual brings his or her own tradition, culture, and value systems to the party, which are often patriarchal and feudal." This would lead to the problem at the individual level. However, the party makes no attempt to influence the attitudes of male and female who attend the party or to who can make them more gender conscious. Female politicians also figure out that women are rarely seen in senior roles within political parties.

As Sushma Swaraj, a member of parliament with extensive political experience, put it " "It is very difficult for a woman to make up her mind to enter politics. Once she makes up her own mind, then she has to prepare her husband, and her children, and her family. Once she has overcome all these obstacles and applies for the ticket, then the male aspirants against whom she is applying makeup all sorts of stories about her. And after all this, when her name goes to the party bosses, they do not select her name because they fear losing that seat" . (Sushma Swaraj)

Within political parties, female are discriminated for the selection and the nomination process , as "male characteristics" are looked up and frequently become the criterion for selecting candidates. Prejudices and a "old boys club" atmosphere discourage and stop politically active ladies from participating in their own party's work. As a result, those who fund political campaigns underestimate women as politicians, making it worse for ladies to be nominated. Women are frequently placed on party lists in order to prevent them from being elected if their party receives inadequate amount of votes in an election. This technique is used to entice voters.

When there are reservations for female participation, it is more likely to be realised.

4.2.2) Electoral system

Following British control, India has continued to follow British administration practises, and hence has preponderance electoral system in which whoever receives a majority of votes is chosen, even if the majority is only 30% or less at times. Because the people are less likely to vote for a woman, the majoritarian election system is generally perceived as an institutional barrier in which mostly men are nominated as their candidates .

4.3) Socio – economic factors

4.3.1) Education

The first step is education as to make women aware of the issues they face in society and how these issues might be addressed for their benefit. Education, on the other hand, is not only necessary , as it is regarded as a 'class' status in India. Often a woman's educational qualifications determine how far she can advance in politics. If we look that an example according to a case study conducted in India, 32 of the 39 women MPs in the lower house had postgraduate qualifications, while 14 of the 17 women in the upper house were graduates. These women's social class may be more relevant than their caste in determining their educational levels.

Lone one of the seven lower caste women MPs did not have a bachelor's degree, while the woman of a lower caste who is a MP in the upper house had a master's degree. These women's professional profiles mirror their educational backgrounds. For example, 30% of ladies who are member of parliament in the Rajya Sabha were attorneys, while 25% of women MPs in the lower house were teachers or lecturers. Women's confidence, as well as people's confidence in them, can be affected by having little or no education. They may not be welcomed anywhere if they lack schooling, even if they have excellent leadership qualities and a significant quantity of experience

In these circumstances, becoming a member of parliament may be deemed a full-time job at the third no . Women ideas emphasise the disparities in the allocation of resources such as money , ideas ,, time, and information. The fact that the distribution of economic resources is unequal to the disadvantage of women is an agreeable assertion. Liberal feminism promotes equality and justice strives for gender equality, notably in the workplace and pay. As previously said, women do not have appropriate resources such as money and time to attend meetings, host meetings, travel for community service, and so on. Women in rural India must forego a day of paid work in order to attend a conference, which has a significant impact on their lives.

As Drudee Dahlerup, says "men in countries like India often argue that women are not sufficiently qualified and we will get non-qualified women leaders if they are giving fair

chances, but I just want to pose a question about how qualified are the men in politics?" (Mohanty et al, 2004)

4.3.2) Lack of ambition and confidence

Many of them are hesitant to speak up and are unsure if they will even be heard. Women are discriminated against not just because of their gender, but also because they come from rural communities, different religions, and diverse castes. This refers to low self-esteem, which makes them afraid to take on higher position'swomen lack political ambition, which is accurate. At times, it is necessary to drag capable women to come and run for office. It's as if they'd want to live a normal life.

4.4) Security

Last but not least, the most dangerous obstacle confronting women in the workplace is their safety. Women need to master the art of self-defence as more and more incidences of physical assault and abuse are publicised in newspapers and news channels. Many companies have hired specific security services to assist their female employees in returning home late at night. Every girl should arm herself with defence mechanisms and approach the challenge with a swaggering sense of self-assurance

IV Powerful leaders in Indian politics
Indira Gandhi
Indira Gandhi was a prominent member of the Indian National Congress and a politician from India. She was the 3rd prime minister of India , as well as the country's first and only female leader. Jawaharlal Nehru , had a daughter named Gandhi who was the first prime minister of India She first served from January 1966 to March 1977, and then again from January 1980 to October 1984. She served the nation as the second longest prime minister after her father. Indira Gandhi political intransigence and unparalleled centralisation of power made her a household name throughout her time as Prime Minister.
In an online vote conducted by the(BBC , 1999) Indira Gandhi was selected "Woman of the Millennium."

Sushma Swaraj

Sushma Swaraj came up as Indian lawyer, politician, as well as a diplomat who famously served as India's first Minister of External Affairs from 2014 to 2019 . She became the second woman to manage the job after Female prime minister . She became one of the top leaders of the Bhartiya Janata Party. She was elected seven times as a Member of Parliament and as 3 times as the member of legislative assembly . She was the youngest cabinet minister of the Indian state of Haryana at the age of 25 in 1977. Swaraj served as Delhi's 5th Chief Minister for a brief period in 1998, becoming the city's first female Chief Minister.

Pratibha Patil

Pratibha Patil came up as lawyer and than as a politician who served as India's 12th president from July 25, 2007 to July 12, 2012. She became the country's first and only female president till now . She belongs to the Indian National Congress. She was even the governor of Rajasthan from 2004 to 2007 .

During her time in the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly Patil took a lot of portfolios in cabinet , as well as official positions in both the Rajya Sabha and the Lok Sabha.

Mayawati

Mayawati is an Indian politician who was born on January 15, 1956. She has been the chief minister of UttarPradeshfor 4 times . She represents as a national president of her party that is Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), that promotes a social change for "Bahujans " that is known as Other Backward Castes, Scheduled Castes, and Scheduled Tribes, as well as converted minorities from these castes. She worked for the Dalit and for their rights . She even launched many agendas for the welfare of the OBC , SC, ST .

Jayalalitha

Jayalalitha served the country as politician, actress, and philanthropist who was Tamil Nadu's chief minister for more than 14 years, from 1991 to 2016. She became the general secretary of the "All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam" (AIADMK) from 9 February 1989, a Dravidian party whose cadre referred to her as "Amma" (Mother) and "Puratchi Thalaivi" (Mother). She joined the "AIADMK" , the party that M.G.R. established, in 1982, while he was chief minister. Her political climb was quick; she became the AIADMK's propaganda secretary and was elected to the Rajya Sabha, India's upper legislature, in just a few years.

Mamata Banerjee

Didi, as Mamata Banerjee is affectionately known, was born on January 5, 1955. Mamata is a complete self-made woman with no political ancestors. She lost her refugee father when she was nine years old. Mamta is politician who has been the ninth and current chief minister of West Bengal, India, since May 20, 2011, making her the first woman to hold the position.After splitting from the Indian National Congress in 1998, she created the All-India Trinamool Congress (AITC or TMC) and became its first chairman. 'Didi' is a nickname for her.

Nirmala Sitharaman

Nirmala Sitaraman (born August 18, 1959) is ab economist and a politician who now serves as India's Minister of Finance and Corporate Affairs. She has been a member of Rajya Sabha, India's upper legislature, since 2014. Sitaraman was formerly India's Defence Minister, making her the country's second female defence minister and the country's second female finance minister after Indira Gandhi, as well as the first full-time female Finance Minister. She has served as a Minister of State for Finance and Corporate Affairs in the Ministry of Finance as well as an independent Minister for Commerce and Industry.

Sitaraman was placed 37th on " list of the worlds 100 most powerful women in 2021". Nirmala Sitaraman was named India's most powerful lady by Fortune magazine. Under her reign, India's economy grew to $3.1 trillion .

V Conclusion

Women should be ethically and financially supported by their male counterparts. Women who participate in decision-making with their new ideas and perspectives will make a significant change in the political system and contribute to society's development. Women's participation is required for every development because they are the key steps in every developing process. Women are thought to be the only ones who can understand and solve women's concerns, which is why women in decision-making positions are so important. Women should be encouraged to participate in politics in greater numbers. Women are thought to be anti-corruption because they wish to see development for women as a whole and reforms in the political system.

Women can only understand and address women's issues and challenges, hence they must play an active role in politics. Despite the fact that women play an important part in campaigning, they are rarely observed in decision-making processes.One of the reasons why women struggle to win elections is the lack of financial support available to female candidates. Female engagement in politics is hampered due to the lack of a women's leadership training system and a lack of self-confidence. Women should have confidence in themselves and reject the notion that they are inferior to males. Women who are confident can reach the highest goals in the political system as well as bring about changes and progress in society. Women frequently believe that politics is a nasty game in which they should not participate; this is due to the conventional patriarchy system, which is deeply ingrained in their brains. Women's participation in decision-making shows a different picture in politics.

The major obstacles that women encounter and that prevent them from involving in the election process must be changed as soon as possible. Increased political involvement by women in all areas of politics will ensure political equality as well as parity with men. Women's rights have sparked attention all around the world as a result of growing public awareness. Government and civil society actions should be advocated and encouraged in order to increase women's political engagement.

Equality will only develop when men and women share equal power, have equal financial resources, and have equal opportunities in education, among other things. Empowerment provides women with the strength to break free from oppression, to make decisions about their own lives, and to be capable in their skills. Women's empowerment entails learning about, accepting, and respecting women all around the world.Women have a crucial role in the development process, and progress cannot take place without them. Women desire equality from men because they are deprived of what they require, and this includes the ability to make decisions. Women are more likely to vote in elections when they are empowered, and they are also more likely to fight for their equality with males in society. Equality, on the other hand, refers to fairness in terms of livelihood, health, socioeconomic status, education, and political participation. Gender inequalities, on the other hand, are exacerbated by customs, power, and authority .

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