

# Role of Media in Portraying Gender Biasness in Indian Politics: A Review Based Study

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**Abstract:** *The role of women in various field is always considered as an important area of discussion and gains significant attention among all the feminist writers and scholars. Some of such studies have signified the role of women on the basis of their work efficiency, performance and participation in all the spheres of an economic development. However, women are still unable to shake their stereotyped perception that they are less valuable than males. The objective of this study is to identify the factors that contribute less prevalent political press coverage of women politicians than that of men. Media has also contributed their part in portraying negative image of women through different mediums: print, electronic and digital media. Many - a - times media has challenged the work life balance of women and moreover, some of the media houses even created the image of women as sex symbol, merely as a commodity. In the current situation, the media, particularly in the domain of Indian politics, has portrayed women as being less competent and effective in terms of their work, dominance, quality of work and knowledge they share in comparison to male. However, women in all diversion are at equivalent portrayal as men. Additionally, advancement rates for women surpass those for men. This research points at increased participation of women in politics as 'crucial' and 'pre - requisite' for human existence. Further it indicates that female politicians successfully recognize work - related difficulties for women and can offer workable and rigorous solutions. It can therefore be concluded that involvement of women within political environment need to be embraced and emphasized by media alike. This paper is based on an in - depth study carried out to understand how gender discrimination in Indian politics is covered in the media and the real reasons behind it.*

**Keywords:** Gender Biasness, Politics, print media, electronic media, Feminist Women Approaches

## 1. Introduction

(India to become third - largest economy by 2027: Report 2022) The Nation observed 75years of Independence and was celebrated all over the country following the theme of Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav& it is said by 2027, India is expected to have the third - largest economy in the world according to survey by Morgan Stanley.

India has more work to do before being considered a developed nation; the country needs to address a number of issues, such as population, illiteracy, poverty, political situation & others in order to advance. (Women representation in the Temple of Democracy 2021) According to statistics collected by the Inter - Parliamentary Union, Indian women make up 14.44% of all Lok Sabha members and India is the member of the same.

The need for greater representation of women in democratic institutions, and political debate must be emphasised as the nation is developing. Women still belong to marginal section in politics around the Nation. This must be altered. The Election Commission of India's website claims (ECI) most recent data: 10.5% of the Parliament's total MPs are women in October 2021. With a poor ratio of only 9% national average for MLAs, serving as a woman in a state legislature, the situation with women in Indian political issues is more regrettable.

With the time, Political participation has gained a fairly broad definition. In addition to the right to vote, it also pertains to a person's participation in political activity, action and political awareness programmes. In India, women cast

more ballots than men, run for public office and join not so famous political parties at smaller level.

Mainly there are two major areas for women's participation in politics, which can be called as the two pillars for women's political participation - voting and political activism. (The global gender gap report 2012) The Indian government carried out some seat reservation policy for women in the states to address orientation dissimilarity in legislative issues till when it comes to the women representation in Parliament, India is 20th from the bottom.

State and municipal governments in India were given instructions to advance equivalent opportunities by class, orientation, and status including equivalent compensation for all, free lawful help, better work space and maternity leave, the option to work and upgrading the way of life. women played a significant role in the campaign for India's independence in the 20th century. Historically speaking, women have not participated much in politics, although gender equality was brought near around independence in the form of different rights given in constitution.

## 2. Literature Review

Verba, S., Burns, N., & Schlozman, K. L. (1997). **Knowing and Caring about Politics: Gender and Political Engagement. The Journal of Politics, 59, 1051 - 1072**

Since women are more knowledgeable, more efficient at work but are less politically active and effective than men, the aim of this research paper is to understand how gender disparity in political engagement affects political

participation. When gender differences on the basis of knowledge, skills, interest and efficiency are taken into consideration, it is observed that there is relatively little gap in it. The researcher found that the gender disparity in political engagement can only be partially explained by certain differences like education & work life which are related to women's involvement in politics. Moreover, these differences on the basis of gender in political direction appear to be political - explicit as opposed to be an impression of general personality characteristics.

**Dolan Kathleen, January 2011. Do Women and Men Know Different Things? Measuring Gender Differences in Political Knowledge, The Journal of Politics, Volume 73, Number 1,**

Political science research consistently observed that women are not much politically aware comparative to men in India. Researcher have worked in the area to look into whether the content formation of political information test influence how women trust themselves to be proficient. Researcher test several measures based on gender related political knowledge to see if broadening the definitions of what considers "information" may assist with better comprehending the clear orientation gap in political knowledge. This is an effort to add to the conversation about the reasons why there are gender differences in knowledge. The results demonstrate that the anticipated gender disparities disappear when respondents are asked about some information about the level of women in the public government.

**Khanna, M. (2009, January). Political Participation of women in India, The Indian Journal of Political Science, Vol.70, No.1 pp.55 - 64**

The protected arrangements permitted the women to pass on the overall quiet of the homegrown circle to enter the male - overwhelmed political circle, the association of women in governmental issues has been quite low key. With a reason for examining this complicated circumstance the article has characterized the elements into three classes - mental, financial and political variable.

It infers that the support of women is fundamental as an interest of basic equity as well as an essential condition for human life. This can be accomplished by expanding the numbers as well as by guaranteeing that women leaders really resolve the issues.

The acknowledgment of their own equity and trust in their capacity will go quite far in adjusting the political situation.

**Paxton, P., Kunovich, S., & Hughes, M. M. (2007). Gender in Politics, Annual Reviews, 33, 263-270.**

Women's political cooperation and portrayal shifted emphatically across the nations. This paper attempts to examine the survey of writing on the orientation of women in legislative issues. zeroing on women's formal political cooperation. Researchers talk about both conventional and current clarifications for women political cooperation and portrayal, like the need for women political leaders and their

participation in different roles, women interests and on the other hand about then job of worldwide entertainers and orientation equality, reservations of seats etc.

### 3. Background of the Study

This study demonstrates the decadal trends in women's political empowerment through their involvement in the election process at three extents: as a voter, as a candidate, and as a winner of election.

#### Voting Rights & Participation of Women

(Biswas, 2018) Unlike under British rule, who opposed allowing women to vote, women in India were allowed to cast a ballot from the main Lok Sabha elections after the country's freedom in 1947.

In 1917, the Women's Indian Association (WIA) laid out. It advocated for the right of women to vote and the ability to hold elected office on an equal footing with men. (Basu Aparna, 2008) One of the major political parties The Indian National Congress, supported these views. The Indian National Congress pledged for gender equality ahead of law and universal adult franchise at its Karachi meeting in 1931 because of the women's development's requests for equivalent political privileges and dynamic association in the opportunity warthe freedom war. The Free India Constitution upheld this vow. Educated and wealthy women of the society were given the right to vote in Madras in 1921 on the same conditions as males, and it was followed by all the other provinces, However, the native states did not.

The provincial parliament in Bengal rejected the proposal in 1921, but Southard demonstrated that a determined campaign led to success in 1921. Indian middle - class women, developed from a rapidly expanding urban elite, were essential to Bengal's success. (Southard, 1993) The women leaders in Bengal associated their goal to a patriot plan that can be moderate in nature by demonstrating how possessing voting rights would enable them to take part more completely in nation - building.

In Punjab, the Sikh community conceded women with equivalent democratic freedoms regardless of their poverty, educational background, and wealth, or in 1925.

In Madras, affluent and educated women received voting rights in 1921. In the year 1950, all Indian people above the age of 18 received the right to vote.

#### India's Women Voters: Trends over the Last Decade

(Sen, 1990) Amartya Sen coined the phrase "missing women" in 1990 after establishing that there is an alarmingly low proportion of women to men in many parts of the developing globe. In countries like China and India, the sex ratio has gotten worse, showing a significant disdain for women. He estimated that gender inequality was to blame for the disappearance of approximately 100 million women. India's gender disparity increased, yet there was little female involvement in political representation or decision - making.

(Corleto, 2018) In order to determine whether or not the gender gap has shrunk over time, it is crucial to examine

gender equality in democratic nation and accountability of women's role in it, as it is essential for civil and political rights.

As per Census 2021, More women than ever before are voting in elections today. As of 2022, there were approximately 1, 016 more men than for women on the planet. The source claims that this was the first time the gender balance in the nation was in favour of women.

The role of female voters in Indian politics is rapidly growing, women's active participation can be seen even outside the voting booths, surveys demonstrate that women are making multiple choices, ideologically and politically despite their still - limited presence in male - dominated institutions. Men were outnumbered by women voters by a margin of 0.17%. in 2019 general elections. To increase the number of voter outreach program, door - to - door voter registration was also done. The expansion in the number of women participations in elections in India is the main reason for increasing percentage of women voters.

ECI, after 2019 General elections, aims to promote female voter registration and participation, focusing more on outreaching women for few awareness programs, teaching women in education institutions. Rise in security facilities at the polling places is also linked with the rising participation of women voters. Women have turned up in greater numbers than men in two thirds of the recent state elections in India. This is a startling change of events in a society that is extremely patriarchal and conservative.

(World population prospects, 2019) In India, there are 108.15 males for every 100 females in 2021. In India, there are 669.44 million women and 723.97 million men. Males make up 51.96% of the population, while females make up 48.04%. voters are becoming aware of the fact that elections have repercussions, women's marginalisation makes voting and exercising control over their lives even more crucial. They have the power to decide what kind of lifestyle they want to lead. Voters also bring out the change and influence the policies too. Women have realised with the time that decisions will be made for them, if they will not cast their votes. Women support political parties and candidates if they know about particular agenda and specific issues that advocates for them like gender equality, child marriage, female exploitation, women safety and several more that women are facing in India. They have realised that they will not be listened, their voices will be suppressed if they will not vote and don't participate in elections because elections are determined by those who vote.

### Reasons behind low representation of women in Indian Politics

- **Sexist attitudes:** Historically, Women have been tasked with managing home chores at most, women ought to be supported to step outside of their preconceived roles and take part in decision - making process also.
- **Competition:** Politics is a competitive field, just like any other field. Many male politicians are against female politicians, they worry and live - in fear that if there is a woman's reservation, their seats might be alternately

allocated for female candidates, denying them the opportunity to even run for office.

- **Need of Political education:** Social strength of female candidate is impacted by training. Formal training, for example, that presented at instructive organizations, cultivates initiative possibilities and imparts critical administration abilities. They know nothing about their fundamental rights and political privileges since they don't appreciate legislative issues.
- **Insufficient political network:** The absence of transparency has created difficulties for all the newcomers in political directions especially for women who face additional difficulties in politics because they often lack access to inside information and political networks.
- **Lack of resources:** Women in Indian politics are oppressed with many situations, hard for them to collect the necessary funds and support for them to take part in electoral process. Also, political parties do not provide women with enough funding to run in elections.
- **Social circumstances:** Mostly women comply with the rules that are imposed on them and carry the burden of societal pressure. public opinions, directly or indirectly not only influence female candidates in their decision - making process but to win them in election also.
- **Unfriendly Environment:** In general, political parties do not provide a supportive environment for women. Politics has become more violent recently, women are no longer active in politics because of significant expansion of wrongdoing activities, defilement and self - doubt weakness. Women have to fight hard and deal with a variety of challenges in order to have a place in the political parties.
- **Breaking stereotype:** Society needs to change the idea that women are just fit for homegrown work. People should understand the value of women and their contribution in the family, society, community and the state. They should address the needs of women by promoting equal opportunities in education, changing gender norms and combating prejudice.

Way ahead, in a country like India, the equal engagement of all segments of society in standard political activity is needed, and hence suitable steps should be taken to promote it.

### Feminist Approach in India

(Elizabeth Tusan, Michelle, 2003) In 1918, British empire ruling in India and Indian feminists collaborated to establish the feminist periodical Stri Dharma, which covered global news.

The 500 - decade old patriarchal system in India has been successfully challenged by feminism in the past 50 years. The primary accomplishments include challenging the male dominant society and eradicating violence against women. The feminist movement made a significant contribution in changing the world by understanding privilege and emphasizing the marginalised.

Government initiatives certainly create many opportunities for women to engage and to involve them in public life, though the outcomes of such engagement cannot be

precisely foreseen or rigorously controlled. However, Feminist politics must, be extremely watchful of the domestication of gender through government policy and clarity of false information provided by government regarding public statements about "women" and "women's empowerment." The cost of this lucidity is the consolidation of patriarchal systems and cultures that already exist.

This study looks at feminist approach in Indian politics and the different problems they have taken up. The Uniform Civil code and the allocation of seats for women in parliament, state legislative assembly and council are the two issues that separate women and prevent coalitions among women's movements. Perspective differences are not the only issue. It is more accurate to say that caste and religious issues prevails more and have surpassed women's issues as the focal point of feminist politics in India. The politics based on caste and religious identity undermine the interests of women and gender justice.

#### Causes for the increase in female voters

- **Increases literacy Rate:** This might be a contributing factor in the rise in voting turnout because the percentage of literate women has increased as well. Women are taking advantage of the increase in literacy by becoming more responsible for their rights.
- **Women's interest in politics:** It is generally accepted that metropolitan women, working women, women of higher social position or class, and women with more prominent degrees of schooling are bound to be keen on and engaged with governmental issues. According to studies, working women are more engaged in the voting process. They are more engaged in the electoral process than those who are governed by their families and peer groups because they tend to be more autonomous, use their agency in choosing who to vote for, and vote at higher rates. It is generally accepted that women living in metropolitan cities, women with good level of higher education working women, women representing good social status or class are more likely to involve in and take interest in politics, working women are more engaged in the voting process, they are also engaged in the electoral process as compared to those women who are dominated by their families and compeers because they tend to be more autonomous, as they use their opinion leader for choosing who to vote for, and vote for them at higher rates as suggested by family members and friends.
- **Digital Media:** In the past ten years people have witnessed enormous technical improvement in addition to an increase in literacy rate of the country, which has led to a major boost in media exposure in the nation. Media also contribute to a rise in political activity by spreading awareness of public rights and political issues, be it print media, electronic media and the digital age media including social media as it is the primary source of information for the people.
- **Continuous attempts of the Election Commission:** The Indian Election Commission runs various voter education and awareness programmes on media platforms in different forms. The Election Commission escalate participation of women in election by strengthening their safety at polling booths to prevent voter intimidation.

Additionally, a separate line for women can be seen on election days, for the comfort of women voters.

Previous studies on gender disparities in political participation in India were mostly based on women's role in election, their political influence and its effect on social implications. This paper aims to fill those gaps. Previous studies, for instance, have shown a definite gender effect when female political leaders are in power and when they hold some positions in the government on the arrangement of public administrations and consumptions.

#### Impact of political portrayal of women in the media: Print and Electronic

The media has a crucial role to play in ensuring that our politics are more gender - representative and compassionate, yet it frequently falls short of achieving this goal. Unfortunately, there are only lesser research on how Indian media portrays women politicians, but based on the coverage of Indian media, there exist a gap.

The news media either ignores gender or, on occasion, falls victim to patriarchy and covers political news in a way that is extremely insensitive. Politics is mostly discussed, but rarely from a female perspective. Women's personal lives, appearances, and their clothing styles receive more attention than their professional life. Journalists frequently wind up asking or making sexist comments openly while interviewing female politicians.

However, this issue is not exclusive to few Indian states, there are numerous instances of how the media actively supports sexism in politics rather than denouncing it.

There is more work to be done, things have changed since Susan B. Anthony's quote from 1893 in terms of doing impartial reporting and achieving equal representation for women. At certain levels, there are more working women in journalism and politics. Women in such fields are facing many issues, when harassment is not stopped, it escalates into threats, which, in turn, result in violence and it is clear that when a threat is made against a single female politician, it doesn't stop there. Threats made against elected officials, particularly female lawmakers and government employees, are an attack on democratic system and should be directly handled by law authorities. It should be the media's responsibility to report on how law enforcement is handling the threats.

Civil society must work in response to the threats made against women in politics as well they should vote for candidates who will strengthen our democracy. Since media attention is a priceless electoral advantage but there is not much information available on how much attention men and female politicians receive in most nations but certainly media gives less recognition and interest in the matter of women politicians, which might undermine women's representation and participation.

Women politicians who have gained media coverage to some extent, seem to have put in a lot of effort to consider themselves deserving for publication. They need to be taught to deal with the media in order to improve the visibility and scope of coverage in the mainstream media as well as to deal

with the negative stereotypes, comments on social media. This will help them to develop their leadership skills to stand out as social leaders. Media should also promote more thorough, fair, precise, clear - cut coverage and issues of female candidates before, during, and after elections.

Politicians' public perceptions are increasingly shaped by the media. Through their behaviour towards women, or rather, gender in general, the media should serve as an agent of change rather than only serving as mirrors of social and cultural norms.

It is important to inform media professionals at all levels—reporters, editors, columnists & publishers that many stories that sell or try to sell often reinforce gender stereotypes that are harmful to the development of democracy.

Through training of how to organize a press conference, conduct interviews with the media, give interviews, writing a Press release, women politicians must gain a better understanding of the media and learn how to effectively communicate their messages.

Women need to promote their ideas and accomplishments with more confidence because, regardless of gender, the media frequently turns to people who stand up for themselves and believe in themselves. As opposed to portraying male politicians as political protagonists, the media is always seen portraying female politicians as objects and women. Media coverage of female politicians is less frequent than that of male politicians. When covering stories, journalists should take care to avoid interviewing only male politicians. Media coverage of the issues and accomplishments of female politicians is less favourable than that of their male colleagues.

Media, plays a critical role in the majority rule process, ought to endeavour disseminate this message inside and out if they believe that women's consideration in governmental issues reinforces democracy.

Governments should redesign their communication strategies to be more gender - sensitive and to promote a more equitable image.

#### 4. Conclusion

In a broader sense, Indian women reflect the aspirational India. If given the chance, they might uplift the stagnant politics and focus on addressing people and real issues faced by common people, providing them with the most basic needs—employment, livelihoods, health, and education. Equivalent association by people is important to work on the situation with women in the general public. This is a requirement for human existence not only for the sake of justice or democracy.

In general, female politicians receives stereotypical concerns, as well as more coverage of their personal life and appearance is prevailed in the Indian media. Furthermore, there could be a gender divide in media exposure on television as compared to newspapers in political news. Politicians' coverage of gender biasness in the media

confirms some widely held beliefs about how favourably the media presents the image of male politicians, while denying others.

The combined research demonstrates that, politicians tend to be portrayed primarily in light of the issues and traits that are unique to their gender. The confrontational behaviour of female politicians is always exaggerated, despite the fact that they receive more attention for their looks, attractiveness and for their personal affairs than their male colleagues.

The findings of this study thus provide acceptance to the claim that media coverage differs for male and female politicians. There's a good chance that the biasness against women in the media will distress the lawsuits of the society.

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