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“Women in Politics: A Comparative Analysis of Gender Quotas in India and Pakistan”

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Abstract:

This research paper provides a comparative analysis of gender quotas in India and Pakistan, focusing on their historical evolution, legislative measures, implementation challenges, and effectiveness in promoting women's political representation. Gender quotas are a critical policy tool aimed at addressing the underrepresentation of women in politics and fostering gender-inclusive governance. Drawing on a range of sources including legislative documents, scholarly articles, and empirical studies, this paper examines the similarities and differences in the implementation and impact of gender quotas in India and Pakistan. Despite facing persistent challenges such as patriarchal attitudes, political resistance, and weak enforcement mechanisms, gender quotas have contributed to significant advancements in women's political representation in both countries. The findings of this study have important implications for policy and practice, highlighting the need for comprehensive legislative measures, socio-cultural interventions, and electoral reforms to enhance the effectiveness of gender quotas and promote gender equality in politics.

Keywords: Gender quotas, women's political representation, India, Pakistan, comparative analysis, legislative measures.

Introduction:

A gender quota is a tactic used by governments and political parties to boost female participation in legislatures. Women are substantially underrepresented in parliaments, with a global average of 25.8%. As of November 2021, 132 nations have implemented gender quotas. Quotas are enforced differently across the world and at different stages of the election process, resulting in three sorts of quotas: legal candidate quotas, voluntary party quotas, and reserved seats. Regardless of their prominence, they are a contentious metric, resulting in arguments over their detrimental and good

effects.

Types of quota systems:

Drude Dahlerup defined quotas in two dimensions. The first investigates whatever level of the political recruitment process the quota targets. They might seek to raise the number of women who have contemplated running for office, the number of female candidates running, or the number of women in office. The second aspect is enforcement, as quotas might be mandated by law or voluntary, depending on which parties opt to execute them. Based on these variances, there are three types of gender quotas utilised across the world: aspirant quotas, candidate quotas, and reserve seats.

Aspirant quotas:

Aspirant quotas, the least common type of quota, ensuring that certain women are nominated for candidature by a political party, increasing the number of women who go from being eligible to run to aspirants. In single-member district systems, aspirant quotas are freely implemented on a party-by-party basis. These initiatives include all-female shortlists in the United Kingdom and primaries.

Legislated candidate quotas:

Candidate quotas, which are common in nations that use proportional representation, aim to smooth the transition from aspirant to candidate by mandating parties to include a set number of women on their candidate lists. Candidate quotas are either mandatory or voluntary. Legislated candidate quotas force all parties to follow the rules and are widespread in Latin America, such as the Argentine quota legislation. Thérèse Mailloux, Chair of the Board of Directors for the Groupe Femmes Politique et Démocratie, noted that around 25 of the top countries in the Inter-Parliamentary Union have gender quotas in their constitutions or laws.

Voluntary party quotas:

Voluntary party quotas allow individual parties to set standards for how many women are included on party lists. These quotas are most commonly seen in Europe, where they are implemented in systems with a liberal political culture and left-leaning parties. Voluntary party quotas, like statutory candidate quotas, are best suited to proportional representation systems. Because the policies are not legally binding, their efficacy varies widely according on party success and adherence to the policy. South Africa is an example of a successful voluntary party quota, with the African National Congress agreeing to a quota and maintaining strong representation in parliament.

Reserved seats:

Reserved seat quotas ensure the presence of female lawmakers in the legislature by allocating a specified percentage of seats to women. Within reserved seat rules, seats might be awarded through directed elections or appointments. These policies are being applied across the Middle East, Africa,

and Asia.

Theoretical Framework:

Conceptualising Gender Quotas:

Gender quotas are a policy instrument that basically addresses the imbalance in political representation among men and women by imposing a certain percentage of turnover to be occupied by women among elected representatives. One of the main objectives is to redress the historical and structural discrimination of women against the political backdrop with equal access for women to policy decisions. Representation through prominent positions can be achieved in different forms, including legislative ones, party ones, reserved ones, or similar.

Legislation people quota mandate a minimum number of seats to be filled by women in legislative by either constitutional or statutory means. Political parties do not follow phrase-quotas, meaning political parties nominate only female candidates in elections as opposed to male. Reserved seats refer to a specific number of seats reserved particularly for women representing different sectors, general population or the election results.

Gender quotas: theories and perspectives:

The female quota system is reinforced by several theoretical approaches that look at the issue from a different perspective. Another position concerning this is the descriptive representation theory, which argues that as women take political positions, their interests and perspectives are advanced even more. Substantive representation is determined by applying gender quotas equaling the critical number of women in elected bodies.

Intersectionality theory underlines the need to recognise that women from different social, economic, and cultural subgroups might have interlocking identities and backgrounds. It underlines the fact that a gender quota can be compounded with other forms of marginalisation, such as class, caste, ethnicity, and religion, influencing women's political power across different environments at varying levels.

Institutional theory focuses on the influence of both formal and informal institutions in imparting political behaviour and the results. The gender quota is understood as having an institutional role in the reshaping of political norms, practices, and power dynamics by institutionalising the principles of gender equality and annihilating the traditional gender roles in politics.

Moreover, feminist theory gives knowledge not only of the personal but also of the systematic and ideological part of women's subordination in politics. It examines gender quotas as methods of capitalising on gender's stereotypes and rather advocates for instruments that will change the roots of gender-based discrimination and marginalisation.

Factors Influencing the Effectiveness of Gender Quotas:

The efficiency of a gender quota system in realising women's political representation depends on many factors, such as the legal frameworks, types of electoral systems, party structures, and particular social contexts. The same goes for electoral systems that utilise proportional representation. They are more likely to incorporate gender quotas by allowing for the allocation of party lists or the proportional division of seats based on electoral results.

Parties' dynamics are of great significance since party commitment regarding gender equality and female empowerment is in direct correspondence with the foundations of quota regulations and the nomination of female candidates. Structures of the party, attitudes of the leaders, their grassroots mobilisation attempts, and so on create space among parties for women to move politically within the party.

The societal cultural norms and behavioural tendencies about male dominance and female leadership play a role in the attitude of society that leads to the acceptance or rejection of gender quotas in a society. Resistance from conservative quarters, backlash from those who perceive women having an edge over men, and stereotypes dealing with women's aptitude for political activities would present difficulties for gender quotas being achieved and efficacy.

On top of that, institutional design ergonomics, like quotation types (legislative or temporary), should also be taken into consideration. Different forms of parties' quotas, quota magnitude, and efficient tools influence the effectiveness of gender quotas. The determinants that influence policies and the implementation of gender quotas are the prevailing factors, which include historical contexts, socio-economic status, and the presence of women's movements and advocacy networks in India and Pakistan.

Gender Quotas in India:

Historical Context:

The historical records of gender quotas in India reflect a slow but continuous evolution that has fought for affirmative action for equal representation of both genders in politics. The Indian Constitution came into operation in 1950, and along with liberty and non-discrimination, this document did not specify gender quotas in the political institutions it formed. On the other hand, the Constitution provided three extra seats for reserved members, which are the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, in legislatures to ensure their participation.

The demand for women's political participation grew with the women's movement, which began in the 1970s and 1980s, and as a result, laws were enacted to enable women's participation in local governance. Women's reservation was therefore also supported by the 73rd and 74th Amendments of the Constitution of 1992 in local government, where women were to take one-third seats in commonly termed "Panchyati Raj" institutions and urban local bodies. These quotas were

structured to advance the female elite at the field level while giving them greater authority in decision-making.

Legislative Measures:

Aside from local quotas, India has implemented a number of legislative mechanisms to allow women to compete for national and state jobs. The chamber of the People Act of 1951 included provisions for the reservation of seats for SCs and STs in legislative assemblies and the Lok Sabha, the lower chamber of the Indian Parliament. However, it was not until the 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Constitution were adopted that women were granted formal quotas for local government elections.

And then came the Women's Reservation Bill, first proposed in 1996, but it was meant to be there for one-third of the Lok Sabha and state legislative assemblies to be obtained by women. Despite the bill being presented several times in parliament, it is facing the stiffest challenges from the opposition and has not yet been made into law. Nevertheless, some states have adopted the gender quota policy on their own, like the reservation of seats for women in local councils and legislative councils.

Implementation Challenges:

The introduction of gender quotas in India has confronted many hurdles due to the emerging political opposition, inadequate enforcement mechanisms, and the patriarchal ideology within political parties and thus society. The Woman's Reservation Bill is being held up in Parliament because of the opposition of male-dominated political parties to the bill and because of concerns over its effect on existing power dynamics.

In addition, compliance with gender quotas at the grassroots has been impeded due to several factors, like tokenism, proxy representations, and a paucity of resources for female representatives. Women representatives elected in reserved seats sometimes go through gender discrimination, marginalisation, and a lack of support from their colleagues and local authorities, and they also tend to lack the necessary capacity to convince the people of their agendas and influence the decision-making process.

Therefore, the problems with the implementation of women's representation in elections are not limited to their participation. Even greater challenges are found at the subsequent stage of their empowerment in the areas of education, resources, and leadership opportunities. Traditional sociocultural customs and gender stereotypes are deeply ingrained biases that prevent women from joining political institutions and curtail the transformative effects of gender-quota policies.

Gender quotas in Pakistan:

Historical Context:

The historical backdrop of gender quotas in Pakistan is defined by a complex interaction of

socio-cultural norms, political processes, and legislative frameworks that influence women's political involvement. Following Pakistan's independence in 1947, the fledgling democracy struggled with ingrained patriarchal customs and orthodox interpretations of Islamic beliefs, which hampered women's political rights and possibilities for participation.

Over time, there has been a growing acknowledgment of the need to overcome gender gaps in political representation. Significant progress was achieved with the implementation of the Legal Framework Order (LFO) in 2002. This legislative initiative set a precedent by establishing reserved seats for women in the National Assembly and provincial assemblies.

Legislative measures:

Gender quotas in Pakistan are mostly implemented by legal means. The Legal Framework Order of 2002 ordered that 60 of the 342 seats in the National Assembly and an equal number of seats in provincial assemblies be reserved for women. These reserved seats are allocated to political parties based on their fraction of general seats gained in elections, providing proportionate representation of women in legislative bodies.

Furthermore, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) requires political parties in Pakistan to distribute a specified percentage of party tickets to female candidates running for general seats in elections. This dual method of reserved seats and party quotas seeks to increase women's representation through both direct election and party nominations, promoting gender-inclusive politics.

Implementation Challenges:

Despite legal measures, the performance of the gender quota in Pakistan is undermined by a number of bottlenecks. Political resistance, ineffective implementation mechanisms, and patriarchal attitudes in society and in political parties are important challenges. The set-aside seats system, by increasing the number of women in legislatures, is criticised as exhibiting tokenism and symbolic seating rather than promoting material empowerment.

Likewise, election manipulation, intimidating voters, and irregularities during elections target women candidates more, which affects their involvement in the process of the election and undermines the integrity of the electoral system. In particular, women politicians endure intimidation, threats, and aggression during electoral campaigns that discourage their participation in political processes and erode people's confidence in democracy.

Furthermore, society's social cultural norms and norms of gender roles serve as constraints on women's political participation, particularly in conservative rural areas where women's mobility and autonomy are restricted. Discrimination, social stigma, and marginalisation make women's acquisition of political power and the capacity to influence decision-making processes either difficult or impossible in the first place.

Comparative Analysis:

Similarities and Differences in Gender Quotas:

Both India and Pakistan have implemented gender quotas to address the underrepresentation of women in politics, albeit with variations in scope, implementation, and impact. In both countries, gender quotas have been introduced through legislative measures, including constitutional amendments and electoral laws. However, there are differences in the specific mechanisms and magnitude of gender quotas.

In India, gender quotas are largely concerned with reserved seats for women in local government organisations known as Panchayati Raj institutions and urban local bodies, as specified by the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments. These quotas seek to empower women at the grassroots and encourage their participation in decision-making processes. Furthermore, if passed, the Women's Reservation Bill will reserve one-third of seats in the Lok Sabha and state legislative assemblies for women, so increasing women's representation at both the national and state levels.

In contrast, Pakistan has adopted a dual approach to gender quotas, with reserved seats for women in the National Assembly and provincial assemblies, as well as party quotas for female candidates in general seats. The Legal Framework Order of 2002 introduced reserved seats for women in legislative bodies, while political parties are required to allocate a certain percentage of party tickets to female candidates, as stipulated by the Election Commission of Pakistan.

While both countries have implemented gender quotas to increase women's representation in politics, the effectiveness and impact of these quotas vary due to differences in socio-cultural factors, political dynamics, and implementation challenges.

Socio-cultural Factors:

Socio-cultural factors play a significant role in shaping women's political participation and the implementation of gender quotas in India and Pakistan. Both countries grapple with patriarchal traditions, gender stereotypes, and societal norms that limit women's access to political power and reinforce traditional gender roles.

In India, despite constitutional guarantees of equality and non-discrimination, women continue to face barriers to political participation due to deep-rooted patriarchy and caste-based discrimination. Women's mobility, autonomy, and decision-making authority are often restricted, particularly in rural areas. Socio-cultural norms dictate women's roles primarily within the household and community, posing challenges to their engagement in formal political processes.

Similarly, in Pakistan, patriarchal norms and conservative interpretations of Islam constrain women's participation in politics and public life. Women's mobility and autonomy are curtailed, particularly in rural and conservative areas where traditional gender roles are strictly enforced. Women face discrimination, social stigma, and violence when challenging traditional norms and

seeking political leadership positions.

Despite these challenges, women in both countries have demonstrated resilience and determination in overcoming socio-cultural barriers and asserting their presence in politics. Gender quota policies provide women with a platform to enter political institutions and challenge traditional gender roles, contributing to gradual shifts in societal attitudes towards women's leadership and empowerment.

Political Dynamics:

Political dynamics play a crucial role in shaping the implementation and impact of gender quotas in India and Pakistan. Both countries have multi-party political systems with diverse political landscapes, electoral dynamics, and party structures that influence the implementation of gender quota policies.

In India, political parties vary in their commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment, with some parties actively promoting women's participation in politics and others displaying resistance to gender quota policies. The Women's Reservation Bill has faced opposition from male-dominated political parties, reflecting broader power struggles and vested interests within the political establishment.

Similarly, in Pakistan, political parties exhibit varying degrees of commitment to gender equality and women's rights, with some parties nominating a higher proportion of female candidates in compliance with party quotas, while others prioritize male candidates. The enforcement of gender quotas relies on the political will of party leadership and the commitment of electoral authorities to ensure compliance.

Electoral dynamics, including campaign finance, voter preferences, and electoral violence, also impact women's political participation and the effectiveness of gender quotas. Women candidates often face challenges in fundraising, accessing resources, and navigating electoral campaigns, particularly in competitive constituencies with high levels of polarization and electoral violence.

Despite these challenges, women in both countries have made significant strides in electoral politics, with increasing representation in legislative bodies and local government institutions. Gender quotas have provided women with opportunities to enter political institutions and challenge traditional power structures, contributing to greater gender diversity and inclusivity in politics.

Lessons Learned and Best Practices:

The comparative analysis of gender quotas in India and Pakistan offers valuable lessons learned and best practices for promoting women's political representation and gender-inclusive governance in South Asia and beyond.

Firstly, the adoption of constitutional amendments and legislative measures to mandate

gender quotas is essential for institutionalizing women's political representation and ensuring long-term sustainability. However, political will and commitment from policymakers are crucial for the effective implementation and enforcement of gender quota policies.

Secondly, efforts to address socio-cultural barriers and promote women's empowerment beyond electoral politics are essential for realizing the transformative potential of gender quotas. Investments in education, economic empowerment, and women's leadership development are critical for enhancing women's agency and participation in all spheres of public life.

Third, promoting conversation and collaboration among political parties, civil society organisations, and women's rights activists is critical to furthering gender equality and women's empowerment. Political parties play an important role in increasing women's political engagement and establishing a climate conducive to gender-inclusive governance.

Lastly, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are necessary for assessing the implementation and impact of gender quota policies and identifying areas for improvement. Regular data collection, analysis, and reporting on women's political participation and representation can inform evidence-based policymaking and strengthen accountability mechanisms.

Challenges and Opportunities:

Persistent Challenges:

Despite efforts to promote women's political representation through gender quotas in India and Pakistan, several persistent challenges hinder the effectiveness of these policies.

One significant challenge is the entrenched patriarchal attitudes and socio-cultural norms that perpetuate gender inequalities and limit women's access to political power. In both countries, women continue to face discrimination, violence, and social stigma when seeking leadership positions in politics. Deep-rooted gender stereotypes and traditional roles assigned to women as caretakers and homemakers hinder their participation in formal political processes.

Another challenge is the lack of enforcement mechanisms and political will to implement gender quota policies effectively. In India, the Women's Reservation Bill has faced opposition from male-dominated political parties, delaying its enactment into law. Similarly, in Pakistan, compliance with gender quotas varies among political parties, and enforcement mechanisms are often weak, leading to tokenistic representation of women in politics.

Moreover, electoral dynamics, including campaign finance, voter preferences, and electoral violence, pose significant challenges to women candidates, particularly in competitive constituencies. Women often lack access to resources, face intimidation and harassment during election campaigns, and struggle to navigate male-dominated political spaces.

Emerging Opportunities:

Despite these challenges, there are emerging opportunities to enhance women's political

representation and the effectiveness of gender quotas in India and Pakistan.

One opportunity lies in the growing recognition of the importance of gender equality and women's empowerment in sustainable development and democratic governance. International and domestic advocacy efforts have raised awareness about the need to address gender disparities in politics and promote women's leadership roles. This increased awareness has led to greater support for gender quota policies and initiatives to enhance women's political participation.

Furthermore, advancements in technology and communication have created new avenues for women to engage in politics and mobilize support for their campaigns. Social media platforms provide women candidates with platforms to reach voters directly, share their messages, and build networks of supporters. Online activism and digital advocacy have enabled women's rights organizations to amplify women's voices and advocate for policy reforms.

Additionally, the emergence of women-led grassroots movements and civil society initiatives has empowered women to assert their rights and demand greater representation in politics. Women's organizations play a crucial role in mobilizing women voters, providing training and support to women candidates, and advocating for gender-sensitive policies and legislation.

Strategies for Enhancing Effectiveness:

To enhance the effectiveness of gender quotas and promote women's political representation in India and Pakistan, several strategies can be adopted:

1. Strengthening legal and institutional frameworks:

Both countries should enact comprehensive legislation to mandate gender quotas in legislative bodies and establish robust enforcement mechanisms to ensure compliance. Constitutional amendments and electoral reforms should prioritize gender equality and women's empowerment as fundamental principles of democratic governance.

2. Promoting women's leadership development:

Investment in women's education, leadership training, and mentorship programs is essential to equip women with the skills and confidence to pursue political careers. Political parties and civil society organizations should provide support and resources to women candidates, including access to campaign funding, media coverage, and legal assistance.

3. Addressing socio-cultural barriers:

Efforts to challenge patriarchal norms and stereotypes are crucial to creating an enabling environment for women's political participation. Public awareness campaigns, gender sensitization programs, and community engagement initiatives can challenge gender-based discrimination and promote inclusive attitudes towards women in politics.

4. Enhancing electoral integrity and security:

Measures to address electoral violence, voter intimidation, and electoral fraud are essential to

creating a level playing field for women candidates. Electoral authorities should ensure the safety and security of women candidates and voters, particularly in areas with high levels of political violence and insecurity.

5. Fostering cross-sectoral collaboration:

Collaboration among government agencies, political parties, civil society organizations, and international partners is essential for advancing gender equality and women's empowerment in politics. Multi-stakeholder dialogues, partnerships, and coalitions can leverage resources, expertise, and political influence to promote women's political representation and gender-inclusive governance.

Implications for Policy and Practice:

The findings of this comparative research have significant policy and practical implications for increasing women's political representation and improving the efficacy of gender quotas in India and Pakistan.

Policymakers should prioritize gender equality and women's empowerment as fundamental principles of democratic governance. Enacting comprehensive legislation to mandate gender quotas in legislative bodies and establishing robust enforcement mechanisms are essential steps to ensure compliance and accountability.

- Efforts to address socio-cultural barriers and challenge patriarchal norms are crucial for creating an enabling environment for women's political participation. Public awareness campaigns, gender sensitization programs, and community engagement initiatives can promote inclusive attitudes towards women in politics and encourage women to assert their rights and participate in decision-making processes.
- Investment in women's leadership development, including education, training, and mentorship programs, is essential to equip women with the skills and confidence to pursue political careers. Political parties and civil society organizations should provide support and resources to women candidates, including access to campaign funding, media coverage, and legal assistance.
- Enhancing electoral integrity and security is crucial to creating a level playing field for women candidates. Measures to address electoral violence, voter intimidation, and electoral fraud are necessary to ensure the safety and security of women candidates and voters, particularly in areas with high levels of political violence and insecurity.

Conclusion:

The comparative analysis of gender quotas in India and Pakistan reveals both commonalities and divergences in the implementation and impact of these policies. In both countries, gender quotas have been introduced through legislative measures to address the underrepresentation of women in

politics. However, the effectiveness of these quotas varies due to differences in socio-cultural factors, political dynamics, and implementation challenges.

In India, gender quotas primarily focus on reserved seats for women in local government bodies, mandated by the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments. These quotas aim to empower women at the grassroots level and promote their leadership in decision-making processes. The Women's Reservation Bill, if enacted, would further enhance women's representation at the national and state levels. However, the implementation of gender quotas in India faces challenges such as political resistance, lack of enforcement mechanisms, and patriarchal attitudes within political parties and society.

In contrast, Pakistan has adopted a dual approach to gender quotas, with reserved seats for women in legislative bodies and party quotas for female candidates. The Legal Framework Order of 2002 introduced reserved seats for women in the National Assembly and provincial assemblies, while political parties are required to allocate a certain percentage of party tickets to female candidates. Despite these efforts, challenges such as socio-cultural barriers, weak enforcement mechanisms, and electoral violence persist, hindering the effective implementation of gender quotas in Pakistan.

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