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Batch #751

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Topic:

The Evolving Role of
women in leadership
and decision-making;

Progress, challenges, and
way forward.

"Brain Storming"

1) Historical context: from
marginalization to participation

2) Progress in women's leadership
global & local perspectives

3).

Barriers to women's leadership

4).

Benefits of women in leadership

and decision-making.

5). way Forward: Strategies for Empowerment.

Outline

1 Introduction

a) Hook

b) Background

c) **Thesis statement:** while women have made significant strides in leadership and decision-making, systemic barriers persist; empowering women in those roles is essential for inclusive and sustainable development.

2) Body

1) **Historical Context: From Marginalization to Participation**

a) Traditional gender roles confined women to domestic spheres (in Pakistan)

b) Key milestones (for example,

Suffrage movements, first female leaders like Indira Gandhi, Benazir Bhutto)

c)

Early resistance to women in leadership (cultural, religious, and societal norms)

2). Progress in women's Leadership (Global and local perspectives)

a) Political Leadership:

i) Examples: Angela Merkel, Jacinda Ardern, Samira Marin Kamala Harris (first female US VP).

2) Rising number of women in Parliament (for example, Rwanda 61% female representation).

3) First female Supreme Court Judge: Justice Ayesha Malik.

b) Corporate Leadership:

i) More female CEOs (e.g. Mary Barra - GM, Ginni Rometty - IBM).

2) Studies showing companies

with women leaders perform better
(McKinsey reports).

c) Grassroots & Community Leadership:

i) Women in NGOs, social activism
(Malala, Greta Thunberg).

3)

Barriers to women's Leadership

a) Structural Barriers:

i) Glass ceiling, wage gap,
lack of mentorship.

b) Sociocultural challenges:

i) Stereotypes ("women are too emotional to lead").

2) Family-work balance expectations.

c) Institutional Hurdles:

Lack of political quotas,
corporate gender biases.

4) Benefits of women in leadership & decision-making

a) inclusive policies:

women prioritize education, healthcare, and social welfare.

b) Economic growth:

Gender-diverse companies are 21% more profitable (Harvard Business Review).

c)

Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding:

women's participation leads to more sustainable peace (UNSC Resolution 1325).

5) The way Forward: Strategies for Empowerment

a) Policy interventions:

- i) Gender quotas in legislatures and corporate boards

- 2) Stronger enforcement of anti-discrimination laws.

b)

Cultural Shift:

Encouraging male allyship,
media representation of female
leaders.

c) Education & mentorship:

Leadership training, scholarships
for women in STEM/management.

D) Workplace Reforms:

- 1) Flexible hours, parental
leave anti-harassment policies.

b) Conclusion:

Essay:

"women hold only 28% of managerial positions globally" (UN Women). Women's political participation is critical for a well-functioning democracy. Their inclusion is a matter of justice and a key factor in creating more effective governance. Having more women in policymaking has shown to help advance legislation on crucial issues such as health, education, child care, infrastructure and ending violence against women and serve as an inspiration for girls to pursue higher education and career opportunities. Yet, women's voice are missing from decision-making in every region of the world. The most significant gap in women's political representation is found at the highest levels of power. Today only 27 countries are led by a woman a modest increase from just 13 countries a decade ago,

and 17 countries have never had a woman leader. Globally, representation of women in Parliament stand at 28% and parity is not expected to be achieved for another 39 years. At local level, women constitute 35.5% of elected members as of this year. In Pakistan representation of women in parliament 17% which include both National and Assembly and Senate. Mexico and Rwanda are the only two countries with 50% and 68% of seats held by women. While women have made significant strides in leadership and decision-making, systemic barriers persist. Empowering women in these roles is essential for inclusive and sustainable development.

In Pakistan, a woman's primary identity is often tied to her roles as a daughter, wife, and mother rarely as an

independent individual. Despite progress in women's rights, deep rooted gender roles in Pakistan countries to limit women's participation in public life, reinforcing their confinement to domestic spheres through societal expectations, economic dependency and institutional barriers. Pakistan ranks (118th) in the political empowerment. (Gender Gap Global report 2025).

traditional. The Suffrage movement, which fought for women's right to vote, had many influential female leaders long before figures like Indira Gandhi (India's first female prime minister) and Benazir Bhutto (Pakistan's first female prime minister) emerged in politics. These leaders built upon the work of earlier suffragists who fought for women's political participation.

In other hand, Early resistance to women in leadership

stemmed from deeply ingrained cultural, religious, and societal norms that viewed governance and authority as inherently male domains. Many traditional societies believed in strict gender roles where women were confined to domestic duties, while men controlled political, religion, and public life. Religious text and interpretation often reinforced that positioned men as natural leaders. In some cultures, myths and folklore portrayed women in power as unnatural or dangerous, fueling fears of social disorder.

In the other hand, The rise of female political leaders like Angela Merkel (Germany), Jacinda Ardern (New Zealand), Sanna Marin (Finland), Kamala Harris (USA) and Maryam Nawaz Pakistan reflects both progress

and persistent challenges in women's leadership. Historically, politics was dominated by men due to cultural, religious, and institutional biases, but these leaders broke barriers through resilience, policy expertise, and public appeal. Maryam Nawaz (Pakistan's first female chief minister of Punjab, 2024 election) represents a shift in conservative South Asian politics, though dynastic politics and gender biases remain hurdles. Despite their achievements, these leaders often face harsher scrutiny, sexist double standards, and stereotypes. From media focus on their appearance to questions about "emotional" decision-making. Their successes, however, inspire future generations, proving that leadership has no gender.