COMPARING THE REPRESENTATION AND IMPACTS OF FEMALE POLITICIANS IN SOUTH ASIAN COUNTRIES

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ABSTRACT

This article provides a critical analysis of female politicians, their portrayal and their experience in the social cultural, legal and institutional contexts in South Asian nations. This paper argues that even though South Asian women have greatly improved their political engagement and participation, they face challenges such as gendered violence, culture, legally enforced constraints, and low political standing. This article overviews the past and the present situation with the females' political participation in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Afghanistan, their achievements and challenges. Specifically, while some countries like Nepal have gained considerable progress by ways of quotas in increasing the number or representation of women in the politics, many countries, including Pakistan and Bangladesh, experienced slow progress Amin (2016) Though the presence of political yearn has been increased slowly in the Parliament and politics of Pakistan and Bangladesh, patriarchal politics and political instabilities obstruct the overall political participation of females. The article also investigates details the part played by women in political leadership, gender proportions in political systems, female leadership initiatives, as well as measures being taken to counter embedded gender prejudices. It ends by revisiting the theme of women politicians adapting to and remaking governance and policy even where structures remain hostile. The paper leverages findings by highlighting the need for legal changes, quotas for women, and institutional encouragement for the improvement of women's political authority in South Asia and demanding changes that would create fair conditions for women in politics.

Keywords: South Asian Women, Women Political Leadership, Political Instability, Political Systems, Policy and Governance, Gendered Violence, Institutional Barriers.

Introduction

The political system of South Asian countries has been filled with gender- based issues where women were consistently marginalized from the political power despite holding more than half of the population of the country. Nevertheless, these countries have experienced various changes in women political activities and voting over the years. Taking Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh India, Pakistan, and Bhutan together it has been seen that in the current scenario, women's political participation is a key determinant to affect policies, governance, and sustainable development. Gender, culture and politics in these countries have put women's challenges into multi-facets in political arenas where traditional cultural practices mix with new political realities. (Jeffery & Basu, 2012)

Challenges in relation to cultural diversions, legal hurdles, and apparently inadequate access to political capital does not entirely write off political activation of women in Southern Asia as it has made some strides. Bangladesh and Sri Lanka provide good examples of low and gradual advancement in achieving women's political rights. For example, the political status of women in Bangladesh has been improving over the period, and by 2021 women constituted only 20% of the parliament (Hossain & Jamil, 2023). On the other hand, Sri Lanka's leaders such as Sirimavo Bandaranaike and Chandrika Kumaratunga have done well; though the representation of women in the parliament remains low today at 5 % in 2021 (Peiris, 2021).

Till recent past many years, India had a women president nonetheless there are limited quantities of women in the parliaments which are present in India today. As of 2021, women from India formed only 14% of the lower house (Khan, 2025). Likewise, the political leaders of Pakistan including Benazir Bhutto have had a big role to play in framing this nation. Still, the percentage of women in Pakistani parliament is low; women have 10% of seat share in lower house. Hussain, M. (2022).

However, Nepal is exemplary because of the astonishing progress it has made in the region where the government has spared one third of the parliamentary seats for women (Adhikari & Gellner, 2016). This affirmative action has placed Nepal ahead of many countries within South Asian region as far as women political empowerment is concerned. Nevertheless, the political representation remains un concomitant with that of male members of the given countries; women are still discriminated against at the political level due to the diverse roots based on the overall rates of patriarchal provision in these states.

This means categories of laws relating to female political participation differ in the South Asian region. For instance, some countries are using gender quotas or having the reserved seat to enhance the seats of the females while in other, such laws are a

bit hard to be implemented because of political barriers and cultural and social reluctance Kumari, N., & Shah, S. R. (2024).

Altogether, various challenges affect the women in their participation in the political, particularly in South Asia but what this analysis shows is resilience and ability to transform the face of politics and governance. When it is explored not only the achievements of women in these countries but also problems which they meet these issues related to the active participation of women in leadership and the gradual process of changing the situation in South Asian political context.

Literature Review

Historical Context

While women have always had marginal access to politics in South Asia it has been important in the formation of the modern political scene. The first women political leaders came to leadership power in early 20th century especially in India where such leaders as Sarojini Naidu and Indira Gandhi prepared the ground for women to f engage actively in politics. In the same year, other giant movements of women in political leadership occurred in Pakistan where Benazir Bhutto emerged the first female Prime Minister in a Muslim nation and Sirimavo Bandaranaike became the first female head of state in the whole world and in Sri Lanka, respectively. Women of Bangladesh like Khalida Zia and Haseena Wajid also have contributed to the political leadership in the country, and this shaped their political engagement.

Nevertheless, such round numbers of women for a long time remained a mere appendage to the political process until the second half of the twentieth century. Most South Asian countries did not systematically empower women to engage in politics and run for the office until quotas and electoral reforms at the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first centuries. To this date, there are still several nations where women are marginally represented in the political decision-making processes at all levels. [Rizvi, L. J., & Hussain, Z. (2022)].

Current Trends

According to the study, the status of women in politics across South Asia has changed for the better over the last few years but there is still a long way to go. According to the recent statistics, women have been improving their positions in national parliaments and local councils, though the process is not equal in all countries of the region.

- **India:** India has witnessed a gradual increase in the aspect of women in politics. Women are poorly represented in Parliament, as they constituted only 14.4 per cent of the Lok Sabha with a gender quota for local polls (Rajput & Thakkar, 2023).

- **Pakistan:** Pakistan has passed the progressive gender quotas coupled with reserved seats, that is why the country has a relatively larger number of females in the parliament. Currently, women comprise of 20% of the National Assembly members, but their political power is limited by political leaders or party politics (Gazdar & Mallah, 2024).
- **Sri Lanka:** Women's rights in Sri Lanka have seen some improvements, especially in terms of women's access to political power in Sri Lanka where women control about 5% of the parliament. However, women's representation in leadership positions is still quite low (Perera & Sewwandi, 2024).
- **Bangladesh**: Currently, women are held 30% of the parliamentary seats in Bangladesh due the reserved seats for women. However, the national political leadership is headed by females such as Sheikh Hasina, but the politics is still very much skewed male dominated (Samad, 2021).
- **Afghanistan:** Twenty years later, Afghanistan is still one of the worst countries in the world in terms of the role of women in politics. While there was an improvement in women's political representation in the country after 2001, the Taliban's return in recent years has substantially limited the civil and political liberties of women (Ahmed-Ghosh, 2003).
- **Nepal:** Nepal has however registered some progress, with inclusive representation in the national and local elections being helped by gender quotas. At the federal level, women have a representation of 33% in the federal parliament and to achieve gender equality in the local councils, a quota system is in practice (Sharma, & Mishra, 2021).
- **Maldives:** This representation is still low compared to some of the other South Asian nations where women are participating more actively in politics. Women are underrepresented in the parliament as they account for less than 10% of the total parliamentary seats and political activities are still a social and cultural affair (Mahmood, 2004).

Barriers to Representation

In general, while there has been some progress within the last decade the women continue to face hurdle in becoming active and equal participants in the political process in South Asian countries.

a. **Cultural Norm**s: Despite the cultural transformation where women are supposed to be at home attending to their families instead of going out to contribute to policy making, they remain a weak link to political activity. For the women in politics within the South Asia region, they are a threat to traditional maleness, and thus this hinders their capacity to be in leadership position or affecting policies (Bacchi, 1999).

b. **Gender-Based Violence**: Physical violence, verbal harassment, and threats have also remained a serious problem for female politicians all over the region. It has been evidenced that most of these occurrences dissuade women from participating in politics or compel those who are already in leadership positions to quit. This point has been evidenced by the assassination of Benazir Bhutto, a former prime minister of Pakistan as well as other female politicians in Pakistan and Afghanistan which remains a significant risk (Kapoor, 2000).

c. **Party Politics**: The political party system remains one that is almost completely patriarchal, and aspiring female politicians face significant obstacles when it comes to climbing the ranks of political parties. About women's representation, political parties often fail to consult them in decision-making processes, and they are inclined to be denied an android to politically connected opportunity of vying for an office or securing a senior political position (Hussain, 2022).

d. **Electoral Systems**: The electoral systems in many South Asian countries especially firstpast the post electoral system are not conducive to the election of women. The countries where the competition between political parties is keen and controlled by regional war lords of the political arena as is the case in India witness less women being nominated to contest in elections. On the other hand, those countries which have implemented quota system (for instance, Bangladesh and Nepal) have observed relatively some progress in the cause of women representation (Azam, Kausar, & Abbas, 2022).

e. **Institutional and Political Challenges**: While many countries in South Asia have following gender quotas, these do not go very far in addressing gendered problems such as corruption, patronage networks, and internal party politics that work to undermine women in politics. Further, gender differences are likewise a persistent issue as women in politics are socially confined to parliamentary seats but are denied upward mobility to executive positions while in government (Horowitz, 2009).

Political Participation and Female Leadership Approaches in South Asia

Some of the countries in South Asia has female political leaderships although the way get to these positions differs due to cultural, socio-political or even structural aspects. Distinct leadership styles among women leaders in South Asian countries reflect a blend of cultural influences, personal experiences, and the unique challenges they face within patriarchal societies. Here are some key characteristics and themes observed in their leadership approaches:

1. **Collaborative Leadership**

When South Asian women lead, they prioritize team building approaches while including as many members as possible. Female politicians displayed this leadership

style during emergencies like the COVID-19 pandemic when working together with medical personnel and residents to organize effective disaster relief efforts. Their leadership involves both open communication and group collaboration for the purpose of handling community requirements. (Sugandha Parmar, Akhil Neelam-2020)

2. Empathetic Leadership

Women who lead in the region show special aptitude in empathetic behavior. Female political leaders dedicate themselves to grasping the needs of their people and administrate with mercy to mend social problems. Their empathetic stance helps them create personal connections with people which builds trust while receiving their support.

3. **Resilience and Adaptability**

Women who lead display outstanding resilience when they encounter the problems brought by persistent male authority structures and traditional gender rules. Women leaders maintain their leadership positions despite obstacles because of their flexibility to handle new situations or community needs or political changes. Women leaders need this special skill to succeed in environments that constrain traditional gender norms on women's involvement. (Hartwig Schafer- 2019)

4. Focus on Social Issues

Dechen Wangmo represents Bhutan's leadership by focusing on health problems and female reproductive care along with community health programs thus demonstrating political dedication to women's needs. Female leaders make social issues their priority point which sets them apart from traditional male officials who follow different leadership agendas.

5. Navigating Patriarchal Structures

Women leaders work within systems of patriarchy whose structural elements affect their way of leading. Some women use standard procedures that achieve acceptance but a select group fights against traditional norms through advocacy for gender equality alongside women's rights support. Female leadership dynamics in South Asia exist as a dual force because women simultaneously perform tasks for patriarchy despite their efforts to advance progressive movements. (Allia Bukhari- 2021)

6. Building Networks and Alliances

Political influence grows for female leaders through their creation of women's networked relationships and alliances. Political influence grows stronger when women leaders join forces with organizations serving women and civil society groups to get behind gender equality policies. The formation of political networks plays a vital role in helping women broke through established gender barriers in predominantly male political domains.

These are the various positions held by women across South Asia, namely, as prime ministers, presidents, parliamentarians, and governors, although these vacancies exemplify progress as still entrenched within structural issues within the region.

In India, women have also conducted high offices of the government with Indira Gandhi being the Prime Minister of India for more than fifteen years and presently it has been seen that politicians like Sonia Gandhi are deciding the direction of Congress party. Women have also been seen occupying positions in the state assemblies and local governments more so given the fact that several legislations have been passed on quota system to enhance women representation in politics. Nevertheless, the women leaders in India work under deeply patriarchal setting where their political power may be trapped and limited by party politics and gendered biasness (Steinberg, 2005).

In Pakistan, during 1980s and the 1990s, Benazir Bhutto had the honor of being the first female in the region to head a national government as the Prime Minister. However strong in her leadership, her tenure in the position was marred by political instability and a rather questionable ousting; nevertheless, her ascent and rule reinforced the theme on women's ability to attain the highest political post in South Asia. Though, she had a successful run as a president, her time also exposed such powerful women to struggle in highly masculine political systems (Fleschenberg, 2013).

Sri Lanka has also seen women in leadership roles like Sirimavo Bandaranaike who became the first woman in the world to lead her nation as prime minister in 1960 and Chandrika Kumaratunga who became the president of the country in the later part of the nineties and up to the early part of the new millennium. Sri Lankan leadership positions are also an example of a patriarchal political culture as positions are dominated by families/ dynastic politics where women are finally coming through the ranks especially those outside the aristocratic families, but these powerful women are yet to challenge the existing patriarchal systems (Wickramasinghe & Kodikara, 2012).

In Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina the incumbent Prime Minister of Bangladesh and her deceased father Sheikh Mujibur Rahman the first president of Bangladesh are significant political leaders. Despite hailing from a politically prominent family and having opposition tenaciously challenging her, Hasina has managed to steer Bangladesh through several tenures addressing economic growth and development coupled with gender biasness at work (Hasina), (Akhtar & Khondaker, 2021).

Like other countries, Afghanistan too has had female political leaders, albeit in what could be described as far less secure positions. A woman named Mehri Shams was a deputy minister, and women were actively involved in government after the Taliban regime. Nonetheless, the political environment is still unstable, and the Taliban have

significantly limited women's political representation and decision-making power (Rumman & Hanieh, 2017).

Distinct Leadership Styles Among Women Leaders

Currently, women demonstrate different leadership styles in South Asian countries depending on their access to previous experience, party affiliation, and the hostile political culture. These differences are especially visible when considering their governing principles and the systems through which they are implemented.

They also revealed that female leaders such as Indira Gandhi who was the Prime Minister of

India preferred strong central tent in leadership particularly during crisis. The 1975-77 decisiveness Emergency that was under Indira Gandhi's leadership is particularly remembered for its, and even authoritarianism, where it can be seen how women who ascend to leadership positions might be forced into behaving in ways that militate against traditional femininity in the process of leadership (Shandilya, 2012). While leaders like Indira Gandhi and Modi have always been in control of their political tactics and have a kind of personalized style of leading, the other leaders like Sonia Gandhi and Mamata Banerjee have depended more on negotiations and accommodations and have brought their political strategies in harmony with the regional and social networks.

It can be studied from Benazir Bhutto, the first female Prime minister of Pakistan who had to face dynastic politics and being a female in a dominated male world. Many saw her as a realistic leader who could fulfill her populist campaign slogans, but at the same time able to engage with the military as an undeniable factor in the political system of Pakistan. Bhutto's term in office saw her begin dealing with economic problems coupled with political instability that included military rebellions and family succession (Ghafoor & Haider, 2018).

It is noteworthy that women leaders in Sri Lanka such Sirimavo Bandaranaike and Chandrika Kumaratunga were particularly focused on social welfare and development aspects during their respective presidencies. Their leadership was rich in family bonds and political dynasties which sometimes proved beneficial as well as disadvantageous to them because they received stern opposition and were expected to adhere to gender stereotype by male rulers. For example, Kumaratunga was able to afford a relatively more pluralistic leadership approach in managing interethnic and religious relations (Svare, 2025).

In Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina's administration is characterized by assertiveness in the defense of its sovereignty and the promotion of its economy, but the government's authoritarianism has been criticized, particularly for its violent handling of media freedom and the voices of the opposition. She is typically described as a pragmatic,

even nationalist leader who has sought to maintain both economic growth and social welfare programs for the country (Bhuiyan, 2021).

However, one aspect that has emerged as a theme that runs through many women leaders in South Asia is the need to assert power and operate within and against the dominant patriarchal systems. This often leads to stereotyping where women leaders are viewed through the lens of their perceived ability to embody the characteristics of a man leader, that is decisiveness and strength as well as the feminine characteristics of a caring mother or women who has concern for society.

Electoral System and Gender Quotas

Electoral systems and gender quotas have been used successful to determine the position of women in the political arena in South Asian countries. Currently, gender quotas have been adopted in countries such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh as well as Sri Lanka due to low representation of women in politics.

India has integrated gender quotas to enhance the chances of women when election to local government bodies and there has been a marked improvement especially at the Panchayati raj or village level. Such quotas, which require female candidates to be filled a specific number of percentages in decision-making positions have helped women get political experience and recognition. Nevertheless, the national parliament is still largely dominated by male representatives, and there is still much controversy regarding the efficacy of the quota system in promoting genuine gender parity (Jayal, 2006).

In Pakistan, Gender quotas have been applied both at the local level as well as in the lower house of the parliament. Pakistan's political system does not accurately reflect the critical role which female residents maintain within both its economic framework along with its social structures. The Reserved Seats for Women in the National Assembly and Provincial Assemblies can be seen as a proportional representation of women even though there are certain critiques linked to this system as it tends to be only symbolic action and not associated with efficient changes of the representation of women's rights in terms of the power (Bano, 2009). In the context of Pakistan, the features of the electoral system, namely lists and reserved seats, have facilitated females to be more involved in politics, but without decision-making possibilities.

In Bangladesh, gender quotas have been important for the representation of women in the Parliament of Bangladesh. Currently in Bangladesh women are accorded 50 seats of the house under the constitution, hence the country has more women in parliament than many other countries in the region. However, some sections of the population like the opposition argue that these quotas marginalize women by making them mere tokens with minimal influence over political processes (Halder, 2004).

Sri Lanka also uses gender quotas in the local government elections and yet for the national elections Sri Lanka has a first past-the-post electoral system that has not encouraged women Candidates at the parliamentary level. Engagement of women in politics in Sri Lanka has remained low despite the quotas it has implemented to enhance women representation; this has remained a cause for concern over their capacity to shape policies and policies and governance in the country (Vijeyarasa, 2020).

Research Methodology

The study requires both qualitative research method and quantitative research methods to examine different aspects that influence South Asian women's political leadership and participation. Integrating qualitative and quantitative approaches will produce an extensive understanding about women's circumstances in South Asian political spaces along with how legislative changes together with socio-cultural transformations affect their political rights and leadership development.

Qualitative research methods supply deep understandings about female politicians' personal stories and cultural elements affecting their political involvement as well as the role of women politicians for national policy decisions.

Quantitative research methods enable statistical evaluation of gender quota implementation along with legislative reform impact on political office representation of women.

Research Questions

a. What factors threaten women's political leadership rights in South Asia?
  b. To what extent has the legislative and gender quota impacted politics in South Asian countries?
  c. To what extent have female political leaders influenced national policies and gender issues in the South Asian countries?
  d. How do socio-cultural factors influence women's political participation?

Objectives of Study
   • To identify and analyze the barriers which prevent women from attaining political leadership positions through both legal systems and institutional structures and cultural barriers.
   • To evaluate how well gender quotas together with legislative approaches drive women's involvement in political processes.
   • To examine how much position power enables female leaders to direct policy change specifically for gender equality and women's rights programs.

- To assess how the role of societal norms, cultural expectations, and traditions in either facilitating or hindering women's involvement in political processes.

Significance of Study

Comparative Study of Representation and Impacts of female leadership in South Asian Countries is highly significant research topic. By examining the female leadership in South Asia, Researchers identify the analytical, importance of this research because it sheds light on women's complex political leadership tendencies in South Asia toward comprehensive social aims. The research contributes to present-day global and regional dialogues about gender equality while concentrating on female presence in political decision structures. This research investigates how women in leadership roles handle the political landscape of areas where democratic systems exist but are influenced by military forces and patriarchal structures to generate fresh insights regarding their challenges and experiences. The research identifies crucial obstacles and benefits which will help build essential perspectives for ongoing political support and public perception changes regarding female politicians in South Asia. The study provides valuable data for gender equality advocates and activists working within South Asia, offering a more nuanced understanding of the factors influencing women's participation in politics. **Data Collection Technique**

A combination of qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques would be ideal to provide a comprehensive analysis. South Asian research on female political leadership in South

Asia becomes more extensive as the study adopts multiple primary and secondary data collection methods. The improved methods help researchers record the complex experiences of female politicians alongside community-wide perspectives on women in leadership positions. A combination of in-depth qualitative techniques (such as interviews, focus groups, and case studies) and quantitative techniques (such as surveys and statistical analysis) will establish a complete understanding about the present situation and obstacles facing women in regional politics.

The study relies on surveys while incorporating interviews as well as focus groups and ethnographic fieldwork and case studies as primary data collection methods. Conduct interviews with a diverse set of stakeholders which should include present and past female political leaders, government officials, gender activists, academic researchers and media representatives to determine their opinions about women's presence in political leadership roles. National or regional surveys should examine how the public views female political leadership. Survey questions must evaluate

gender quotas and public perceptions of female leader competence as well as voting drivers for female candidates. The survey must include assessment questions about gender quotas together with perceptions of female leadership ability and elements that affect voter choice for women candidates.

Government reports, academic papers, media sources, historical records, and statistical databases will be used as secondary data. An overview of media receptiveness toward female political leaders should include multi-national qualitative and quantitative analysis between various South Asian countries among state-operated and independent media sources. Official reports from election commissions together with international organizations (such as UNDP and World Bank) document the number of female politicians and their political advancement obstacles.

This study also examines observational data by conducting fieldwork, observing political events, rallies, and meetings to understand the role of women in political settings and how they are perceived and treated in these spaces.

Data Analysis

The research analysis of female leadership in South Asia requires combination of qualitative and quantitative techniques to thoroughly examine the collected primary and secondary data. This research will yield comprehensive findings about female political leadership in South Asia by using both quantitative methods (descriptive statistics and regression analysis and crosstabulation) alongside qualitative techniques (thematic analysis and content analysis and discourse analysis).

The research approach combines both data types through triangulation to validate the research findings. The analysis of female political representation through quantitative methods finds confirmation from qualitative research which collects personal statements from female politicians regarding quota effects on their professional development.

The research method of synthesis unites data points from qualitative approaches about thematic interview responses with quantitative analysis about voting trends and election outcomes to present a complete depiction of South Asian female leadership.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Summing up the changes that have taken place in political situation for women in South Asia the following can be stated: There are still many challenges that still prevent women from exercising political leadership in the region to the full. Whereas nations such as Nepal have achieved significant measures through the adoption of gender quotas and affirmative action, such countries as India, Pakistan,

and Sri Lanka continue to experience darkness in organizational cultures and traditions, political vagaries that hinder women's participation in political power decisions. Modern women in the region aspiring to political leadership roles must overcome several challenges because even as they rise to high leadership positions, they work hard within political systems that are still colored by male chauvinism. In this case, gender quotas have been helpful in enhancing women leadership but criticism on the efficiency of such measures for representation of women in true political power as well as equality is still a big issue.

However, issues like gender violence, party politics, and lack of political capital impact the formulation of policies and political participation, thereby limiting the involvement of women in policymaking and governance. Nevertheless, owing to factors such as education, experience and ability to fight and work hard, overcome all odds of wall barriers to leadership that continued to undermine their authority, women in South Asia have gradually gained further improved results of changes in their political status, with more numbers of female politicians in determining the policies of their respective countries, especially those that have to do with gender issues and women emancipation.

To enhance female leadership in South Asian countries, several policy recommendations can be made based on the findings from recent studies and reports. These recommendations aim to address the systemic barriers women face in political participation and to promote gender equality in leadership roles.

a. Establish Gender-Responsive Policies

Governments must create policies with specific attention to women's rights in economic matters and political engagement. This includes:

Governments must create and implement gender quotas in political institutions through both legislative bodies and political parties to establish minimum female participation. Government institutions should create policies that enable women's economic growth by establishing credit programs while offering land ownership opportunities and business education. (South Asian Women Development Forum (SAWDF)-Kathmandu,2016)

b. Promote Gender-Sensitive Education

The implementation of gender studies education at all educational levels transforms existing gender stereotypes into opportunities for equality promotion. This includes: A gender sensitization curriculum should educate both students and teachers to develop an inclusive learning system where diversity is valued. The research about women's leadership must be

encouraged for policy makers to use when creating governance frameworks and implementing governing practices.

c. Enhance Capacity Building Initiatives

Every nation requires substantial investment in building the skills of its women population. This includes research-informed, women-only leadership development. Women need opportunities to study doctoral degrees in addition to leadership development programs along with training systems and continuous professional enhancement programs and mentorship networks. professional development opportunities, mentorship programs and networks. (Professor Louise Morley and Dr Barbara Crossouard).

d. Engage Men as Allies

Society needs male involvement to reshape common beliefs about gender equality. Policymakers should:

Public initiatives should serve to encourage leadership roles of males who support women's rights and inclusive decision-making strategies. The implementation of discussions should focus on demonstrating how gender diverse leadership benefits societal development in total. (Farwa Aamer and Ambika Vishwanath-2024)

Implementing these policy recommendations can significantly enhance female leadership across South Asia, fostering a more inclusive political landscape that benefits society. By addressing systemic barriers, investing in women's development, and promoting cultural change, South Asian countries can unlock the full potential of their female population in leadership roles.

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