The Role of Gender Norms in Shaping Political Leadership: A Critical Analysis on Bangladesh Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Gender norms play a crucial role in shaping the dynamics of political leadership across the world. This study examines the role of gender norms in shaping political leadership in Bangladesh, focusing on the representation and participation of women in political institutions, the challenges posed by gender norms, the impact of gender equality policies, and the comparison of leadership styles between male and female leaders. Using a qualitative approach, the study relied on secondary data sources, including policy reports, academic literature, and historical documents. The analysis focuses on content analysis of the evolution of gender norms and their impact on political leadership, as well as the effectiveness of gender equality initiatives. The findings reveal that, despite progress in women's representation, traditional patriarchal norms continue to limit women's full participation in political leadership. Male leaders typically adopt an authoritative, transactional leadership style, emphasizing power and control, whereas female leaders tend toward a more inclusive, transformational style, focusing on social welfare and long-term policy planning. women face significant barriers, including societal scrutiny and the expectation to conform to both leadership and traditional gender roles. Gender equality policies, while present, have had limited impact due to deeply rooted societal norms and structural challenges. This study highlights the need for more effective policies and initiatives to address these gender-based barriers, encouraging a more inclusive political landscape and contributes to the broader discourse on gender and leadership, offering insights into how gender norms shape political leadership in developing countries like Bangladesh.

Keywords: Gender norms, political leadership, women's representation, leadership styles.

INTRODUCTION

Gender norms profoundly affect women's political leadership, frequently establishing obstacles that impede their involvement in decision-making processes.(UN women, 2024). Despite global initiatives to advance gender equality, women continue to be underrepresented in political arenas globally, comprising merely 26% of parliamentary positions as of 2023(IPU, 2023). In India, conventional gender stereotypes exacerbate women's political participation, confining their roles to familial and communal obligations(Chaudhuri, 2023). Although initiatives such as the Panchayati Raj Act have enhanced women's representation, prevailing social prejudices continue to provide obstacles, as demonstrated by the insufficient representation of women in senior political positions(Fiona Mackay & Radhika Govinda, 2020).

The interplay between gender norms and political leadership in Bangladesh significantly influences the nation's democratic framework. The historical origins of gender norms in Bangladesh can be attributed to both colonial influences and indigenous practices that perpetuated patriarchal attitudes. These standards, together with religious interpretations, have historically relegated women to an inferior status to men, confining their tasks to the domestic domain of family and home duties(Sharmina Afrin & Bina Akter, 2023). This has cultivated a climate in which women's political ambitions are frequently regarded as subordinate to their responsibilities as spouses and mothers. Conventional perspectives have been sustained by society norms, religious tenets, and governmental frameworks, which persistently present substantial obstacles to gender equality in leadership positions (Prodip, 2022).

In recent decades, Bangladesh has enacted numerous gender equality measures to enhance women's involvement in politics. Significant legislation, including the allocation of seats for women in municipal

governance and the national legislature, represent progress (Rahman, 2020). Nonetheless, the efficacy of these initiatives has been constrained. Women elected via these quotas frequently encounter supplementary hurdles, including marginalization in decision-making processes and seen as token representatives rather than as equal contributors to political discourse(S M Atia Naznin, 2020). Moreover, women who achieve success in politics frequently encounter a dual responsibility. They are anticipated to not only execute their responsibilities as political leaders but also to adhere to traditional norms of femininity and caregiving. This establishes a challenging equilibrium, because women are evaluated not alone on their professional competencies but also on their conformity to conventional gender roles. This dual norm can erode their political legitimacy, complicating their ability to exercise power in male-dominated political arenas(Chowdhury, 2004).

Research reveals that women in leadership roles frequently stress diversity and community engagement, resulting in more equitable government(J Health Soc Behav, 2021). Research indicates that women's viewpoints have a crucial role in policy formulation, especially in the domains of health and education(Chaudhuri, 2023). Moreover, efforts designed to augment women's political participation, like quotas and training programs, have demonstrated the capacity to empower female leaders and contest conventional gender stereotypes, so promoting a more inclusive political landscape(UN women, 2024). Despite significant progress in women's representation, deeply entrenched gender norms continue to pose formidable challenges to female political participation and leadership.

Furthermore, the political landscape in Bangladesh has seen the ascension of female leaders to the highest echelons, such as Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia; nonetheless, the entrenched obstacles that restrict women's access to political authority persist(Halder, 2004). These obstacles not only impact the quantity of women's representation but also affect the quality and efficacy of their leadership. Research demonstrates that gender norms, which prescribe socially acceptable behaviors for men and women, profoundly influence women's political participation and leadership approaches(Mahbub Alam Prodip, 2023). The comparative analysis of leadership styles between male and female politicians in Bangladesh demonstrates notable disparities shaped by gender norms, with female leaders frequently employing more collaborative and inclusive strategies(Mizanur Rahman, 2020).

Although there is an expanding corpus of scholarship regarding women's political participation in Bangladesh, a significant portion emphasizes the obstacles encountered rather than the fundamental gender norms that influence these difficulties. Furthermore, there is a paucity of study comparing the leadership styles of male and female politicians within the framework of these standards, despite indications that women frequently choose more collaborative and inclusive leadership approaches. This gap in the literature underscores the necessity for additional research on the influence of gender norms on political leadership in Bangladesh, specifically on women's access to political power and their leadership styles while in office. A limited amount of work has been conducted on the topic. However, we may not discover a substantial number of works pertinent to our objectives.

Basically, through the study we have examined main three questions like a) What is the current representation and participation of women in Bangladesh's political institutions, and how do gender norms influence this? b) What are the key barriers and challenges posed by gender norms that limit women's political leadership in Bangladesh? C) How effective are the gender equality policies and initiatives in promoting women's leadership in Bangladesh? d) What are the differences in leadership styles between male and female political leaders in Bangladesh, and how are these influenced by prevailing gender norms? The paper critically examined these issues through a comprehensive analysis of secondary data, focusing on how these norms have evolved over time and their ongoing impact on political leadership in Bangladesh. By addressing these challenges and exploring potential solutions, the review aims to contribute to the broader discourse on gender equality and political leadership in Bangladesh.

STUDY DESIGN AND METHOD

The nature of the study is a qualitative research design based on the analysis of secondary data to explore the historical evolution of gender norms in Bangladesh and their influence on political leadership. The study employed a descriptive and analytical methodology, drawing upon existing academic literature, governmental

reports, NGO publications, media stories, and historical texts as primary data sources. The data was rigorously collected from reputable sources including Google Scholar, JSTOR, and institutional repositories, as well as from governmental entities like the Election Commission of Bangladesh and international organizations such as UN Women. The emphasis was on locating pertinent materials that discuss gender norms, women's political participation, and leadership styles within the Bangladeshi setting.

Data analysis have conducted recurring patterns and themes related to gender norms and political leadership. The examination addressed obstacles encountered by women in political leadership, historical changes in gender expectations, and the depiction of female leaders in public discourse. Content analysis was utilized to investigate the representation of gender norms in policy papers and media, providing insights into social opinions toward male and female leadership. I concentrate on content analysis as it is a suitable tool for examining secondary data, especially for studies on gender norms and political leadership. Content analysis enables a systematic approach to identifying and analyzing recurring patterns and themes within textual data. When examining documents, speeches, or policies related to gender and politics in Bangladesh, content analysis allows the researcher to extract relevant information about how gender norms influence political leadership. This method is particularly useful for highlighting how gendered language or biases are embedded in political discourses, providing clear insights into societal perceptions of male and female leaders(Krippendorff, 2018).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Gender norms and political leadership in Bangladesh provides a complex picture of the ways in which long-standing societal and cultural expectations affect women's political engagement and representation. The results show that long-standing gender stereotypes still affect women's access to leadership positions and the trajectory of their political careers, even though there has been improvement in gender equality initiatives. In this part, we offer the study's findings, which investigate topics like the number of women in political institutions, the challenges they encounter, the effects of equality policies, and the ways in which male and female politicians differ in their leadership styles. To offer a thorough grasp of the connection between gender standards and political leadership in Bangladesh, these findings are examined within the framework of current literature and theoretical models.

Women's Representation and Participation in Political Institutions

The representation and involvement of women in political institutions are critical concerns in the wider discussion on gender equality. In Bangladesh, substantial progress has been achieved in enhancing women's representation through many initiatives; yet, the extent of their involvement and the power they exert inside these institutions remain debatable. The presence and participation of women in Bangladesh's political scene, framed within national developments and global trends. In recent decades, Bangladesh has had a significant rise in women's representation within political institutions, partly attributable to the establishment of gender quotas. The Constitution of Bangladesh allocates 50 seats for women in the 350-member Parliament, with analogous provisions at the local government level(Sultana, 2023). This program has resulted in a significant rise in the representation of women in politics, positioning Bangladesh as a prominent example in South Asia, where women's political involvement has traditionally been constrained. Nonetheless, although the statistical representation of women has enhanced, it is imperative to recognize that these progressions do not inherently translate to substantial impact in decision-making processes. Globally, analogous patterns of representation have surfaced in other contexts. Countries like Rwanda and Sweden have attained remarkable female parliamentary representation—60% and 46%, respectively—through extensive gender equality programs that surpass simple quotas(Missault, 2022). These nations not only promote women's political engagement but also cultivate an environment that enhances their leadership capabilities. Conversely, although Bangladesh's quota system has enhanced women's visibility in political positions, the persistent cultural and institutional obstacles continue to diminish their meaningful political influence

On the other hand, research suggests that women in politics often encounter a "glass ceiling" effect, where their abilities and contributions are undervalued compared to their male counterparts(Sultana, 2023). This issue underscores a significant deficiency in the efficacy of quotas alone; in the absence of concurrent cultural

transformations and supportive legislation, women's participation may remain cosmetic. Numerous women encounter substantial obstacles arising from conventional perspectives that designate males as the principal decision-makers(Aktar, 2021). Female politicians frequently express feelings of marginalization inside party frameworks and parliamentary dialogues, constraining their ability to impact policy and decision-making. This finding aligns with studies from other developing regions, where cultural norms frequently assign women subordinate positions in politics. Research in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) area indicates that women may have formal political positions yet lack the requisite backing to wield significant influence inside their parties(Bozena C. Welborne, 2022).

Furthermore, the patriarchal political culture in Bangladesh imposes further obstacles for women attempting to establish their authority and influence. Female politicians frequently encounter an environment that is conventionally antagonistic to their involvement. Reports reveal that women often experience gender prejudice from male colleagues, who may regard their contributions as less legitimate or authoritative(Fardaus Ara, 2020). This bias not only diminishes women's roles in political institutions but also reinforces preconceptions that portray women as inferior leaders. Worldwide, the issues of gender prejudice inside political institutions are extensively recorded, with numerous women encountering doubt about their abilities purely due to their gender(Daphne Joanna Van Der Pas et al,. 2022).

The hierarchical organization of political parties frequently marginalizes women, confining them to subordinate jobs, such as secretarial positions, instead of enabling them to take leadership on critical topics. This scenario reflects global research indicating that political party dynamics substantially affect women's political participation. Research indicates that in the absence of supportive party structures, women may encounter difficulties in achieving leadership roles, hence constraining their overall influence on policy and governance(Sultana, 2023). Empowerment initiatives, such as training programs and leadership workshops, have arisen to facilitate women's political participation and provide them with the requisite tools to establish their influence(Reza & Yasmin, 2019). The international experience underscores that focused assistance can improve women's political engagement. Programs in nations such as Canada and Norway have shown that mentorship and training can markedly enhance women's political efficacy and confidence, hence elevating their propensity to seek leadership positions(UN women, 2024). This comparative perspective illustrates the potential for similar initiatives in Bangladesh to foster a more inclusive political environment.

In Globally, women's representation in national parliaments averages around 26%(Women in Parliament, 2024). See the Table 1. In Bangladesh, women's representation in parliament is roughly 20%, with the majority of these seats assigned under a reserved quota system rather than through free elections(Hossain, 2019). At the local level, 22% of global government seats are held by women(UN women, 2024), while in Bangladesh, this representation drops to around 14%, again primarily through reserved seats(Reza & Yasmin, 2019). Despite initiatives aimed at improving local political participation, Bangladesh remains deficient, underscoring persistent structural impediments. Women occupy senior leadership roles in merely 10% of countries worldwide(UN women, 2024). Bangladesh exemplifies a distinctive scenario, having sustained a female prime minister for almost two decades. Nevertheless, this exceptional leadership has not resulted in broader gender equity in other executive or ministerial positions(BRAC University Report, 2018). In Bangladesh, women's participation in political parties ranges from 15% to 18%, predominantly occupying subordinate roles, which reflects their restricted influence inside party structures (Party Reports). This constraint indicates that gender equality in party frameworks is still an area requiring enhancement.

Table 1; Comparison of Women's Representation and Participation in Political Institutions: Global vs. Bangladesh Context

Political Representation Area	Global Average	Bangladesh	Observations	Source
National Parliament Representation	Approximately 26% of parliamentary seats held by women	Around 20% of parliamentary seats held by women, with	Bangladesh lags slightly behind the global average;	IPU (2023); Hossain & Islam (2019)

globally (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2023)	most through reserved quotas	reserved seats contribute to this representation	
Local Government Representation	Women represent 22% in local government globally (UN Women, 2022)	14% of local government seats are held by women, largely through reserved seats	Local representation of women in Bangladesh is lower than the global average	UN Women (2022); Khan (2020)
Executive Leadership Roles	Limited globally; 10% of countries have a female head of government (UN Women, 2022)	Bangladesh has had a female Prime Minister for over 20 years, a unique case in South Asia	Bangladesh is exceptional with female leadership at the highest levels, yet this hasn't translated to broader gender equality	UN Women (2022); BRAC University Report (2018)
Political Party Participation	Women make up around 20% of political party members globally (Paxton & Hughes, 2017)	Around 15-18% in Bangladesh, with women often holding secondary roles within party structures	Party participation in Bangladesh is slightly below global averages, with limited influence in key party roles	Paxton & Hughes (2017); Party Reports

Barriers and challenges that gender norms pose to women's political leadership in Bangladesh

The political environment in Bangladesh exhibits an intricate interplay of progress and challenges concerning women's political leadership. Notwithstanding substantial advancements in women's representation via initiatives like gender quotas, the enduring obstacles and challenges presented by ingrained gender stereotypes considerably impede women's political leadership. Table 1 indicates that Traditional Gender Norms are entrenched in Bangladeshi society, where cultural expectations frequently restrict women to home tasks, diminishing their political aspirations to subordinate importance. Hossain (2020) asserts that these conventions perpetuate the belief that men are the principal decision-makers, leading to a cultural framework that diminishes women's contributions to political discourse. This issue is not exclusive to Bangladesh; analogous cultural frameworks in numerous Middle Eastern nations frequently constrain women's political participation(Gamze Çavdar, 2022). The global persistence of traditional gender roles reflects a systemic issue that transcends borders, illustrating the need for a collective effort to challenge these norms. On the other hand, the Political Culture in Bangladesh is predominantly male-dominated, which creates a hostile environment for women seeking leadership positions.

Table 2: Barriers and Challenges

Barrier/Challenge	Description	Global Context
Traditional Gender Norms	Cultural expectations dictate women's roles as primarily domestic, undermining their political ambitions.	Similar norms in many regions (e.g., Middle East) limit women's participation in politics.
Political Culture	Male-dominated political environment fosters biases against women's leadership capabilities.	Countries like India and Pakistan also have male-dominated political cultures affecting women.
Lack of Support Systems	Insufficient mentorship and training programs for aspiring female leaders limit their development.	Sweden's mentorship programs illustrate effective support systems that boost women's leadership.
Socioeconomic Barriers	Economic dependency on men and limited access to resources hinder	Socioeconomic factors in various regions affect women's political

	women's political engagement.	participation similarly.
Violence and Intimidation	Harassment and threats faced by women deter their participation in political activities.	Women politicians globally often face violence, which deters their engagement in politics.

A study underscores how political parties frequently perpetuate gender prejudices, constraining women's access to leadership roles and decision-making positions. This phenomenon is reflected in other regions, where female politicians in nations such as India and Pakistan also face ingrained prejudices inside male-dominated political environments(Aaldering & Van Der Pas, 2020). A substantial obstacle exists due to the absence of support systems for women seeking political leadership. In Bangladesh, numerous women express sentiments of loneliness due to insufficient mentorship and training programs(Reza & Yasmin, 2019). The lack of strong support systems is a significant deficiency that hinders the advancement of women's leadership. Conversely, nations such as Sweden have effectively established mentorship programs that promote women's political engagement, illustrating that focused assistance can markedly improve women's leadership capabilities(UN women, 2024).

Nonetheless, socio-economic barriers further intensify the obstacles women encounter in politics. The economic reliance on male relatives frequently constrains women's autonomy, hindering their capacity to participate effectively in political processes(Fardaus Ara, 2020). Access to resources—such as education, financing, and political networks—remains inequitable, fostering a climate in which women find it challenging to compete on equal terms with their male counterparts(Rashid & Islam, 2023). This phenomena is not unique to Bangladesh; analogous socioeconomic restraints are seen in diverse worldwide contexts, where women's financial autonomy and resource availability substantially influence their political engagement(Gamze Çavdar, 2022). The widespread threat of violence and intimidation constitutes a significant obstacle for women engaged in politics. Numerous female politicians in Bangladesh have reported experiencing harassment and threats, which not only dissuade their participation in political activities but also perpetuate the notion that politics is a male-dominated sphere(Huq, 2016). The obstacles encountered by women in Bangladesh exemplify wider global concerns related to gender and politics. The interrelation of traditional norms, political culture, support networks, socioeconomic issues, and violence indicates a systemic issue for extensive, multiple solutions.

We highlighted many critical areas where women encounter challenges in political engagement. Refer to Figure 1, which delineates the principal obstacles and constraints that gender norms impose on women's political leadership in Bangladesh. Social Expectations constitutes the foremost barrier (85), indicating the significant societal constraints that hinder women's participation in politics. Family and Domestic Responsibilities (80) and Political Violence & Harassment (75) present considerable challenges, underscoring the twin burdens of conventional familial obligations and security threats. Resource Scarcity (70) and Insufficient Institutional Support (65) illustrate how limited resources and inadequate structural backing impede women's political engagement. Collectively, these obstacles illustrate the widespread influence of gender norms on female leadership in Bangladesh.
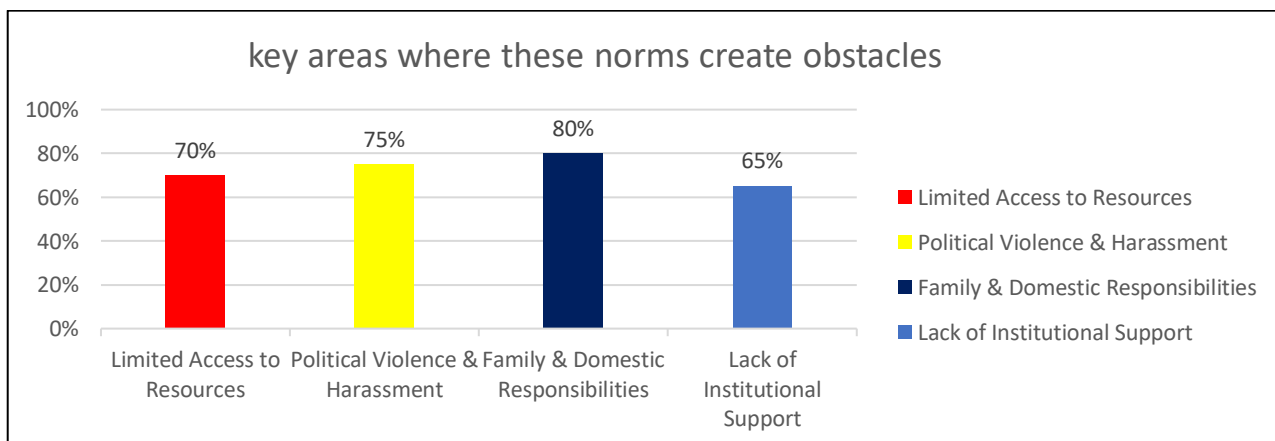

Figure 1; key areas where these norms create obstacles

Gender Equality Policies and Initiatives on Political Leadership:

In recent decades, numerous measures have been implemented to improve women's representation and involvement in politics, with the primary objective of attaining gender equality in leadership positions. Table 2 presents a detailed summary of diverse gender equality policies and initiatives in Bangladesh, emphasizing their descriptions, effects on women's political leadership, and pertinent worldwide settings. The Women's Reservation Act of 2000 establishes a quota system for women's representation in local government bodies, leading to a notable increase in the proportion of women in local administration, currently at around 33% (BBS, 2022). Despite this advancement, the act has encountered criticism for frequently resulting in tokenism, wherein women's positions are predominantly symbolic rather than substantive, hence constraining their genuine impact in decision-making processes(Nazrul, 2024).

This mirrors global patterns observed in countries like India, where similar quota systems have increased representation but failed to translate into meaningful participation(Bozena C. Welborne, 2022). The National Women Development Policy of 2011 seeks to empower women via education and vocational training, acknowledging that skill development is essential for augmenting women's political participation. This method mirrors practices in other countries, such Rwanda, where extensive training initiatives have significantly enhanced women's political engagement, illustrating that empowerment tactics can produce favorable results(Bozena C. Welborne, 2022).

Table 3: Key Policies and Initiatives on Women's Political Leadership

Policy/Initiative	Description	Impact on Women's Leadership in Bangladesh	Global Context
Women's Reservation Act (2000)	Mandates a quota system for women's representation in local government bodies.	Increased the number of women in local government to approximately 33% (BBS, 2021); however, often results in tokenism (Khan, 2021).	Similar quota systems in countries like India have increased women's representation, but real influence remains low (Bettina, 2019).
National Women Development Policy (2011)	Focuses on empowering women through education and vocational training.	Improved skill development and confidence among women, enabling them to engage in politics (Hossain, 2020).	Countries like Rwanda show success in training programs that enhance women's political participation (Mina, 2021).
CEDAW Commitments	International commitments to eliminate discrimination against women.	Provides a legal framework for gender equality, yet enforcement and implementation remain challenges (Islam, 2020).	Many countries struggle with CEDAW implementation; effective enforcement is critical for real change (Rahman, 2020).
Mechanisms to Address Violence	Initiatives to combat harassment and violence against women in politics.	While some mechanisms exist, violence and intimidation continue to deter women's participation (Khan, 2020).	Globally, women in politics often face violence; countries need protective measures to ensure safety (Bettina, 2019).

Bangladesh's obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) constitute an essential legal framework for advancing gender equality. Although these commitments offer crucial frameworks for policy development, their efficacy is frequently compromised by difficulties in enforcement and execution. Numerous nations worldwide encounter analogous challenges in implementing CEDAW requirements, highlighting the necessity for effective methods to ensure that legal

frameworks result in tangible change(Fardaus Ara, 2020).Despite the establishment of certain protective mechanisms, ongoing violence and intimidation remain substantial obstacles, deterring women's participation in political processes (Khan, 2020). This issue is not exclusive to Bangladesh; worldwide, women in politics often face threats and harassment, highlighting an urgent necessity for robust protective measures to guarantee their safety and participation in political discourse

Compare the leadership styles of male and female political leaders in the context of Bangladesh's gender norms:

The leadership styles of male and female political leaders in Bangladesh embody both global trends and local gender norms, affecting their exercise of power, interactions with constituents, and policy implementation. In Bangladesh, gender norms are entrenched in cultural, social, and historical contexts, resulting in pronounced disparities between male and female leadership styles

Table 4: Comparison of Leadership Styles in Bangladesh

Aspect	Male Leadership Style	Female Leadership Style
Approach	Transactional, authoritative, top-down	Transformational, inclusive, participative
Policy Priorities	Economic development, national security	Social welfare, education, healthcare
Influence of Gender Norms	Reinforces traditional patriarchal roles	Balances empathy with authority, faces societal resistance
Challenges	Lack of inclusivity in policy-making	Scrutiny over balancing assertiveness with nurturing roles

A study indicates that, traditionally, male leaders in Bangladesh have predominated in political arenas, exhibiting leadership styles that are more traditional, hierarchical, and authoritative. Male leaders frequently conform to entrenched patriarchal frameworks, characterized by centralized decision-making and a top-down distribution of power. This style has been significantly shaped by Bangladesh's political past, characterized by male leaders dominating nationalist movements and state-building initiatives. In Bangladesh, male leaders typically employ a transactional and authoritarian leadership style. This method prioritizes short-term objectives, employs a hierarchical decision-making process, and concentrates on sustaining political authority. This approach is frequently bolstered by the patriarchal traditions common in Bangladesh and analogous civilizations, where leadership has always been linked to masculinity and power(Hossain, 2019). This tendency corresponds with global findings, especially in patriarchal civilizations such as those in the Middle East and South Asia, where male leaders frequently participate in competitive and power-oriented politics(Eagly & Johnson, 1990).

Conversely, female leaders in Bangladesh tend to embrace a transformational leadership style, distinguished by inclusivity, engagement, and long-term policy formulation, particularly in domains such as social welfare, education, and healthcare. This leadership style embodies the global trend of female leaders prioritizing social issues

(Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001). and the societal expectation in Bangladesh that women embody nurturing and community-oriented traits(Kabeer, 2005). Worldwide, female presidents in nations such as Rwanda and the Nordic countries have similarly emphasized welfare-oriented measures, indicating a wider trend of transformative leadership among women(Burnet, 2008). Male leaders in Bangladesh frequently perpetuate conventional patriarchal roles, highlighting power and authority, whereas female leaders are compelled to balance assertiveness with compliance to established conventions of femininity. This dynamic presents extra hurdles for female leaders, who encounter heightened scrutiny and must frequently exceed mere demonstrations of competence to navigate these gendered expectations. Worldwide, analogous obstacles are evident in areas where patriarchal norms are deeply rooted, constraining women's leadership capabilities(Paxton et al., 2020).

The challenges encountered by male and female leaders in Bangladesh differ substantially. Male leaders, despite their predominance in the political arena, frequently encounter challenges with inclusivity, as their emphasis on political power may marginalize certain groups, especially women. Female leaders encounter problems associated with public scrutiny on their capacity to balance authority with empathy, frequently necessitating greater effort to attain approval and legitimacy(Hossain, 2019). These tendencies align with global research indicating that women in leadership positions, especially in areas with strict gender norms, face additional challenges such as tokenism, aggression, and exclusion (Meijer et al., 2021). The table provides a systematic comparison that elucidates the leadership dynamics in Bangladesh while linking these insights to extensive global research. The investigation highlights the enduring impact of gender norms on leadership styles and the obstacles female leaders encounter in challenging societal expectations, both in Bangladesh and globally

Figure 1 illustrated the distinctions in leadership styles between male and female political leaders in Bangladesh, with each gender conforming to characteristics shaped by society gender standards. Male leaders exhibit significantly elevated scores in Authoritative (80) and Public Communication (85) qualities, indicating conventional expectations for men to establish dominance and lead with decisiveness. These ratings correspond with data indicating that male leaders worldwide, including those in South Asia, generally employ more directive and overtly assertive strategies(Paxton et al., 2020). In contrast, female leaders score significantly higher in Collaborative (80) and Emotional Intelligence (75) traits, which are encouraged by societal norms that favor women's involvement in interpersonal and cooperative roles. Research indicates that this collaborative style aligns with broader trends where women prioritize inclusivity and empathetic communication in leadership(Schuler & Nazneen, 2018). For Decision-Making traits, male leaders are slightly more decisive, with a score of 70, compared to 65 for female leaders. However, female leaders often exhibit a more consultative decision-making style, aligning with their collaborative approach(Hossain, 2019).
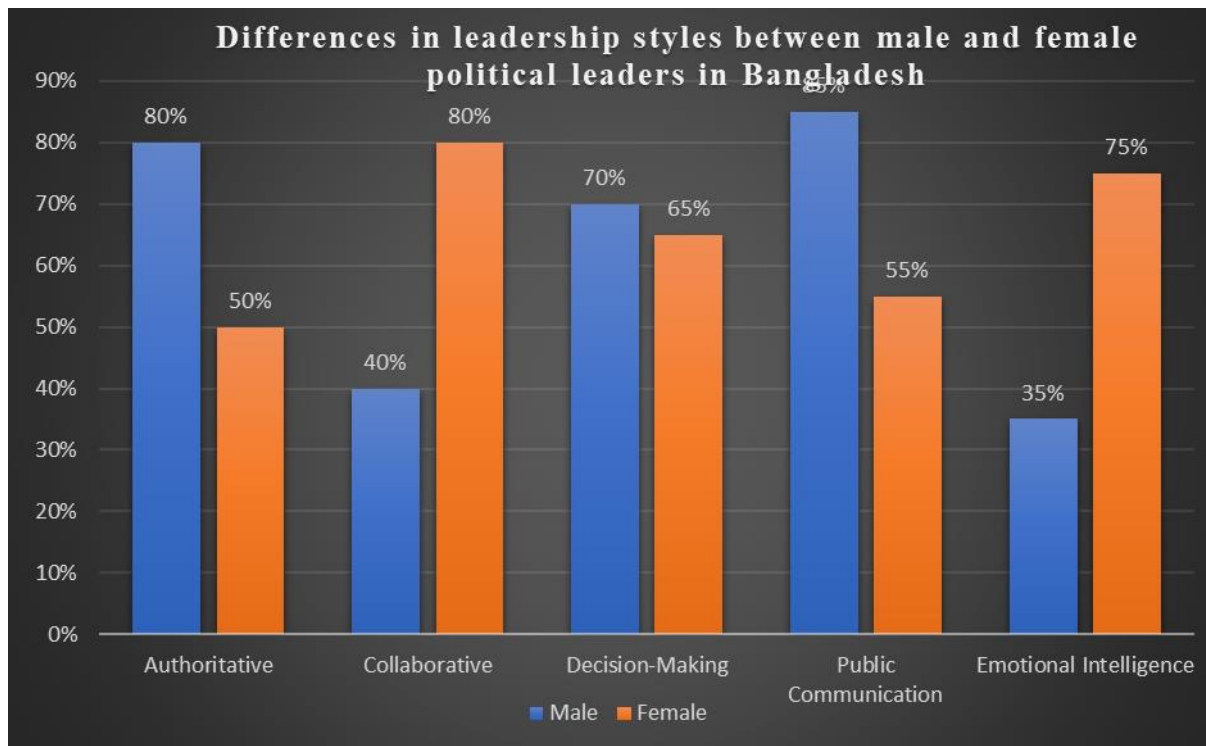

Figure 2: differences in leadership styles between male and female political leaders in Bangladesh

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE POLICY FORMULATIONS

Strengthen Quota Systems Beyond Numbers

Although Bangladesh has advanced women's political representation via quota systems, the effect is predominantly symbolic rather than substantive. Extending quotas to include leadership positions and

guaranteeing that women possess substantial influence in decision-making processes can reconcile the disparity between representation and genuine empowerment

Address Cultural and Institutional Barriers

Entrenched gender stereotypes and a male-dominated political culture inhibit women's leadership potential. Implementing initiatives to alter cultural perceptions of women in leadership, coupled with institutional reforms that confront gender prejudices within political parties, is essential for fostering a more inclusive political environment.

Table 4: Integrates Key Recommendations with Their Impact, as Well as the Attainable SDGs related to Gender Development.

Recommendation	Description	Goal/Impact	Attainable SDGs for Gender Development
Strengthen Quota Systems Beyond Numbers	Expand quotas to include leadership roles and ensure women have meaningful influence in decision-making processes.	Transition from symbolic representation to substantive leadership roles for women in politics.	SDG 5: Gender Equality
Address Cultural and Institutional Barriers	Implement programs that challenge entrenched gender norms and male-dominated political culture.	Foster an inclusive political landscape by shifting cultural attitudes and reducing institutional gender bias.	SDG 5: Gender Equality
Enhance Mentorship and Leadership Training	Establish mentorship programs and leadership training for women in politics, modeled after successful global examples.	Equip women with skills and confidence to assume leadership positions and increase political efficacy.	SDG 4: Quality Education SDG 5: Gender Equality
Combat Violence and Intimidation in Politics	Strengthen legal frameworks and protective mechanisms to address violence and harassment against women in politics.	Ensure the safety and active participation of women in political processes without fear of intimidation.	SDG 5: Gender Equality SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions
Expand Economic Support for Women Politicians	Provide financial support, education, and resources to women in politics to reduce socioeconomic barriers.	Increase women's political independence and ability to compete on equal footing with male counterparts.	SDG 1: No Poverty SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth SDG 5: Gender Equality
Strengthen Enforcement of Gender Equality Policies	Establish monitoring systems for the effective implementation of gender equality frameworks like CEDAW.	Ensure gender equality policies are enforced, leading to real-world improvements in political participation.	SDG 5: Gender Equality
Encourage Transformational Leadership	Promote leadership styles that focus on inclusivity, social welfare, and long-term	Support equitable governance and policy-making that benefits broader society through	SDG 5: Gender Equality SDG 10:

planning, especially among female politicians.	transformational leadership.	Reduced Inequalities
Address Tokenism in Women's Representation	Ensure that women in political roles have real decision-making power, beyond filling quotas.	Move from mere symbolic presence to substantive influence in political decision-making processes.	SDG 5: Gender Equality
Promote Gender Sensitization in Political Parties	Introduce gender sensitization programs within political parties to reduce internal biases and promote women's leadership.	Create a more balanced political environment by challenging patriarchal structures and promoting equitable leadership opportunities for women.	SDG 5: Gender Equality
Build Global Alliances for Gender Equality	Leverage international alliances and learn from global initiatives to promote women's political leadership, such as training programs in Rwanda.	Accelerate progress in achieving gender parity in political leadership through global collaboration and shared knowledge.	SDG 5: Gender Equality SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals

Enhance Mentorship and Leadership Training Programs

The absence of support mechanisms for women in politics constitutes a substantial obstacle to their leadership advancement. Implementing mentorship and leadership training programs, like to those well executed in Sweden and Norway, can provide potential female leaders with the requisite skills and confidence to traverse the political landscape.

Combat Violence and Intimidation in Politics

Violence and harassment consistently impede women's participation in politics, perpetuating gendered power structures. Enhancing protective measures and legal frameworks to combat violence against women in politics is essential for guaranteeing their secure and active involvement in political processes.

Expand Economic Support for Women Politicians

Socioeconomic obstacles, such as financial dependency, restrict women's political participation. Offering focused financial assistance and resources, including education and political networks, can bolster women's autonomy and engagement, fostering a more equitable environment for female politicians.

Strengthen Enforcement of Gender Equality Policies

Although Bangladesh's legislative obligations to gender equality via frameworks such as CEDAW, enforcement continues to pose an issue. Implementing comprehensive monitoring methods to guarantee the efficient execution of these rules can enhance accountability and facilitate tangible advancements in gender equality in leadership.

Encourage Transformational Leadership

In Bangladesh, female leaders frequently employ a transformational leadership approach that emphasizes inclusivity and sustainable social policy. Promoting this leadership model, particularly in sectors such as education and healthcare, can enhance equitable governance and policy formulation that serves the broader community.

Address Tokenism in Women's Representation

The existing quota system has augmented the representation of women in political positions, although it has not effectively facilitated substantial engagement. Combating tokenism by granting women genuine decision-

making authority, rather than merely satisfying quotas, is essential for attaining meaningful gender equality in politics

Promote Gender Sensitization Programs in Political Parties

Political parties in Bangladesh frequently perpetuate gender biases, impeding women's access to leadership positions. Gender sensitization initiatives inside these parties could facilitate the challenge of patriarchal norms and foster women's leadership, thereby establishing a more equitable political landscape.

Build Global Alliances for Gender Equality

Bangladesh's experience with gender norms and political leadership corresponds with the global issues encountered by women leaders. Forging partnerships with international organizations and drawing insights from effective global initiatives, such as Rwanda's training programs, can facilitate Bangladesh's advancement in enhancing women's political leadership.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of gender norms and political leadership in Bangladesh uncovers a multifaceted interplay in which advancements in women's political representation are obstructed by entrenched cultural and institutional obstacles. Although gender quotas have augmented the representation of women in political institutions, these progressions frequently fail to confer substantial influence upon women in decision-making processes. Cultural norms, including conventional gender roles and male-centric political spheres, persist in inhibiting women from realizing their full leadership potential. Furthermore, obstacles such as insufficient mentorship, socio-economic limitations, and violence against women in politics exacerbate these issues, constraining women's political engagement and leadership in Bangladesh.

The solutions tackle these obstacles by highlighting the necessity for more extensive measures that extend beyond quotas, including leadership training, economic assistance, and enhanced protection systems against violence. Efforts to alter social perceptions of gender roles, together with institutional reforms in political parties, are crucial for cultivating a more inclusive political landscape. Furthermore, international instances of effective mentorship programs and leadership initiatives demonstrate that these interventions can markedly improve women's political efficacy and self-assurance, empowering them to assume leadership positions. Enhancing the implementation of gender equality programs, such as CEDAW, is essential for ensuring that legal frameworks result in substantive change.

In summary, attaining gender equality in political leadership in Bangladesh necessitates a comprehensive strategy that tackles both cultural and institutional obstacles. By executing the suggested solutions, such as enhancing the quota system, offering mentorship, and guaranteeing a secure environment for women in politics, Bangladesh can strive for significant and enduring advancement in women's leadership. These initiatives not only correspond with global gender equality objectives but also further the overarching growth of inclusive government that serves society collectively.

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