

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION (A CASE STUDY OF UTTARAKHAND)

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ABSTRACT

This research paper delves into the critical aspects of women's empowerment and political participation, with a special focus on the state of Uttarakhand, India. Despite being half of the state's population, women's political participation in Uttarakhand remains limited, with male dominance prevailing in the political arena. While 50% reservation in Panchayat Raj Institutions has increased women's representation in rural local bodies, this paper highlights the marginalized role of women in state-level politics and parliamentary representation.

The research sheds light on the significant role that women have played in driving social reforms in Uttarakhand, including movements against alcoholism and forest policies. However, the paper underscores that their political participation remains constrained. It also explores the myriad challenges women face, such as lower economic status, lack of education, and the burden of domestic and professional responsibilities.

Despite these challenges, the paper emphasizes the positive impact of women's political leadership, which has been associated with reducing gender inequality and prioritizing critical social issues like health, education, and pensions. Furthermore, women's participation in decision-making is vital for creating gender-equal opportunities and gender-sensitive policies. This research underscores the need to address the barriers hindering women's political participation in Uttarakhand and highlights the potential benefits of their increased involvement in governance for achieving sustainable development and social justice. It is based on theoretical data collected from various secondary sources such as books, journals, newspapers, government websites, and UN data.

KEYWORDS: *Women's Empowerment, Political Participation, Uttarakhand, Gender Inequality, Social Reforms.*

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