

Women Political Elites in Pakistan: Policies towards Social and Psychological EmpowermentSehrish Irshad¹, Sobia Riaz², Afra Mahmood³, Saira Akram^{*4}**Original Article**

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Abstract

Women play a crucial role in socio-political development, contributing unique perspectives, skills, and experiences that enrich the decision-making process. Inclusive participation of women in politics and social initiatives not only upholds principles of equality and justice but also enhances the overall effectiveness of governance. Recognizing and empowering women in socio-political spheres is essential for achieving comprehensive development, as it ensures a diversity of voices, addresses a broader range of societal needs, and fosters a more equitable and representative society. The presence of women in political elites is paramount for socio-political empowerment as it not only reflects a commitment to gender equality but also brings diverse perspectives and priorities to the policymaking process. They serve as role models, inspiring other women to engage in civic and political activities, thereby contributing to the creation of a more inclusive and representative political landscape. Their influence extends beyond legislative decisions, shaping public discourse that address issues critical to women, such as healthcare, education, and gender-based violence. By fostering the participation of women in political elites, societies can harness the full spectrum of talent and experience, promoting a more equitable and just socio-political environment that benefits the entire community. This study historically examines the contribution and efforts of women political elites for the development of Pakistani women, meanwhile this study suggests the enabling factors to empower them in kind social, political and psychological perspectives.

Keywords: Women, Social, Political, Psychological, Empowerment, Political Elites, Women's Rights, Legal Reforms, Economic Policies for women's, Pakistan etc.

Introduction

Since Pakistan's independence in 1947, women's political participation and contribution have evolved amidst a complex socio-political landscape. Despite challenges, women have made notable strides, securing the right to vote in 1956 and actively engaging in various political movements and parties. Benazir Bhutto's selection as Prime Minister in 1988 marked a significant milestone, making her the first woman to lead a Muslim-majority nation. However, gender disparities persist, with women facing barriers such as cultural norms, limited access to education, and societal expectations. Efforts to enhance women's representation have led to reserved seats

for women in the National Assembly and provincial assemblies since the 2002 elections, enabling greater participation. Nonetheless, women continue to face discrimination, violence, and limited access to decision-making positions. Despite these challenges, women parliamentarians and activists have been instrumental in advocating for women's rights, education, healthcare, and social welfare, contributing to Pakistan's political landscape and striving for gender equality.

Fatima Jinnah's participation in Pakistan's politics, women's representation among political elites has fluctuated amidst shifting socio-political dynamics. While Jinnah's role during the early years of Pakistan's formation symbolized the potential for women's engagement, subsequent decades witnessed limited female political elites due to societal norms and institutional barriers. Benazir Bhutto's ascent as Prime Minister in the late 20th century marked a groundbreaking moment, illustrating the potential for women to occupy the highest echelons of power. However, despite periodic advancements, including reserved seats for women in parliament, women's representation among political elites remains uneven and faces challenges such as systemic discrimination, limited access to resources, and patriarchal norms. Nevertheless, figures like Benazir Bhutto, Asma Jahangir, and Malala Yousafzai have broken barriers, advocating for women's rights and challenging entrenched patriarchal structures, paving the way for future generations of women in Pakistani politics.

Political parties in Pakistan play a crucial role in enhancing the participation of women in politics by implementing internal party reforms, promoting gender-inclusive policies, and actively encouraging women's representation in decision-making bodies. Parties can prioritize women's leadership development programs, provide training and support for female candidates, and ensure equitable distribution of party tickets for elections. By fostering a conducive environment that values and supports women's political involvement, parties can help address systemic barriers and challenge traditional gender norms that hinder women's participation. Moreover, parties can advocate for legislative reforms that promote gender equality and empower women politically, economically, and socially. Through these concerted efforts, political parties can contribute significantly to advancing women's rights and representation in Pakistan's political landscape, fostering a more inclusive and equitable democracy (Taj & Zia, 2015)

In Pakistan, like in many other countries, the participation of women in politics has been historically limited, and they have faced various challenges in breaking through traditional gender barriers. However, efforts have been made over the years to increase the representation of women in politics and to empower them to play significant roles in decision-making processes. Women political elites refer to women who occupy influential and high-ranking positions within the political sphere of a given society. These women hold key roles in political decision-making, governance, and policy formulation. The term "political elites" generally refers to individuals or groups who have a significant impact on political processes and outcomes due to their positions of power and influence.

Ahmad & Anwar (2018), Women political elites can be found in various capacities. Some of these include;

Elected Offices: Women who have been elected to public offices, such as members of parliament, senators, governors, mayors, or other positions through democratic processes.

Appointed Positions: Women appointed to key government positions by elected officials, including ministerial roles, advisors, and other high-ranking administrative roles.

Party Leadership: Women who hold leadership positions within political parties, such as party chairs, vice-chairs, or other influential roles in party structures.

Advocacy and Activism: Women who, while not holding formal political office, play influential roles in shaping political discourse and policies through advocacy, activism, and engagement with civil society.

Elected Representatives: Women who have been elected to various political offices, such as members of the National Assembly, Senate, provincial assemblies, and local government bodies.

Political Leaders: Women who hold leadership positions within political parties, such as party heads, central committee members, or other key roles that contribute to shaping party policies and strategies.

Appointed Officials: Women appointed to high-ranking government positions, including ministerial roles, advisory positions, or other key administrative positions.

Advocates and Activists: Women who, while not holding formal political office, are actively engaged in political advocacy and activism, working to promote women's rights, social justice, and gender equality.

International Representatives: Women representing Pakistan on the international stage, such as ambassadors, diplomats, or delegates to international organizations.

At the international level, women have increasingly assumed prominent roles in politics, shaping policies, advocating for social change, and challenging traditional gender norms. Figures like Angela Merkel, the former Chancellor of Germany, stand as exemplars of women's leadership, demonstrating competence and resilience in navigating complex political landscapes. Merkel's tenure, marked by steady leadership and pragmatic decision-making, underscores the transformative impact of women in high-ranking political positions. Similarly, figures like Jacinda Ardern, the Prime Minister of New Zealand, have garnered global admiration for their empathetic and inclusive leadership styles, emphasizing collaboration and compassion in governance. Beyond heads of state, women leaders in international organizations, such as Christine Lagarde, the Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, the Director-General of the World Trade Organization (WTO), have wielded significant influence in shaping global economic policies and fostering cooperation among nations. Their leadership not only amplifies women's voices on the world stage but also underscores the imperative of gender diversity in decision-making processes to address complex global challenges effectively (Scherer & Palazzo, 2011).

Furthermore, women political elites have emerged across various regions, advocating for gender equality, social justice, and human rights. Figures like Hillary Clinton, the former Secretary of State of the United States, have been instrumental in advancing women's rights agendas and challenging systemic barriers to gender equality. Clinton's historic presidential candidacy in 2016 symbolized a watershed moment in American politics, inspiring women worldwide and galvanizing support for women's empowerment. Similarly, figures like Michelle Bachelet, the former President of Chile and current United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, have championed progressive policies and social reforms, prioritizing marginalized communities' rights and well-being. Their leadership exemplifies the transformative potential of women's participation in politics, driving meaningful change and advancing inclusive governance models that prioritize equity and justice. As women continue to ascend to positions of power and influence, their contributions to

political discourse and policy-making offer a powerful catalyst for social progress and democratic renewal on a global scale.

Women representing their country on the international stage, such as ambassadors, diplomats, or delegates to international organizations. The concept of women political elites is essential in discussions about gender equality and representation. Historically, women have been underrepresented in political leadership positions, and efforts to increase their participation aim to address gender imbalances and promote a more inclusive and diverse political landscape.

Initiatives to support women's political empowerment often include legal reforms, affirmative action measures, and advocacy for equal opportunities. Increasing the number of women political elites is seen as a crucial step toward achieving greater gender equality and ensuring that the perspectives and concerns of women are taken into account in the formulation of policies and decision-making processes.

Significance

The study holds profound significance in shedding light on the multifaceted dynamics of gender, power, and governance in Pakistan's political landscape. By focusing specifically on women political elites, the research offers a nuanced understanding of the challenges, opportunities, and policy interventions essential for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in the country. Through comprehensive analysis and empirical research, the study can uncover the structural barriers that hinder women's participation in politics, including patriarchal norms, institutional biases, and socio-cultural constraints. Moreover, by examining policies aimed at enhancing women's social and psychological empowerment, the research can inform evidence-based interventions and advocacy efforts geared towards fostering inclusive and equitable political systems. By elucidating the experiences, perspectives, and policy priorities of women political elites, the study can amplify marginalized voices, challenge dominant narratives, and catalyze transformative change in Pakistan's political discourse.

Methodology

The qualitative research methodology employed in the study. The qualitative data collected from several research articles and thesis, was meticulously analyzed using thematic analysis, allowing researchers to identify key themes, patterns, and discourses related to women's political empowerment, social inclusion, and psychological well-being. By employing a qualitative research methodology grounded in feminist and participatory principles, the study aimed to center women's voices, experiences, and agency within Pakistan's political discourse, while also generating contextually relevant recommendations for advancing gender equality and women's empowerment in the political and psychological arena.

Literature Review

Akram at el, (2021) discusses that women's rights in Pakistan have been shaped by both domestic legislation and international treaties. While the Constitution of Pakistan guarantees equal rights to women, including access to education, employment, and participation in public life, women still face significant challenges due to cultural norms, discriminatory laws, and limited access to justice. International treaties and conventions, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), have played a crucial role in advocating for women's rights globally and holding states accountable for ensuring gender equality. Pakistan ratified CEDAW in 1996, committing to eliminate discrimination against women and promote their

full participation in society. Despite ratification, implementation remains a challenge, highlighting the need for greater awareness, legal reforms, and institutional mechanisms to uphold women's rights effectively. International treaties provide a framework for advocacy, monitoring, and accountability, encouraging dialogue and collaboration among governments, civil society organizations, and international bodies to advance gender equality and women's empowerment in Pakistan and beyond.

Akram (2023) mentioned that political instability in Pakistan has been a recurrent theme in contemporary time, reflecting the country's tumultuous political history characterized by military coups, weak democratic institutions, and governance challenges. Studies often attribute political instability to a combination of factors, including power struggles between civilian and military authorities, ethnic and sectarian tensions, weak governance structures, and external influences. The military's historically prominent role in politics, periodic coups, and the erosion of democratic norms have contributed to cycles of instability, hindering sustainable development, economic progress, and social cohesion. Moreover, issues such as corruption, nepotism, and weak rule of law exacerbate political tensions and undermine public trust in government institutions. Scholars advocate for institutional reforms, enhanced democratic processes, and greater civilian oversight to address underlying causes of instability and promote political resilience, social stability, and democratic governance in Pakistan.

Akram et al. (2023) research study on child marriages in Pakistan highlights the pervasive socio-cultural norms, poverty, and lack of education that contributes to this phenomenon and underscores the profound psychological effects on young girls. Studies reveal that child brides often experience heightened levels of stress, anxiety, and depression due to early marital responsibilities, domestic violence, and limited autonomy. The abrupt transition from childhood to married life deprives girls of educational opportunities, personal development, and agency, leading to feelings of powerlessness and hopelessness. Moreover, child brides face increased risks of maternal mortality, reproductive health complications, and social isolation, further exacerbating their psychological distress. Addressing the psychological effects of child marriages requires comprehensive interventions that prioritize girls' education, economic empowerment, and access to mental health services, while challenging entrenched patriarchal norms and promoting gender equality and human rights in Pakistani society.

Alexander & Jalalzai (2018), Women political elites possess significant opportunities to advance policies for social and psychological empowerment. Through legislative initiatives, they can propose and champion legal reforms that address gender-based violence, discrimination, and mental health, ensuring a comprehensive legal framework. Actively participating in policy development allows them to shape initiatives targeting education, healthcare, and economic opportunities with a gender-responsive lens. Women leaders can leverage their positions for advocacy and awareness, using their influence to promote social and psychological empowerment issues, build public support, and challenge societal norms. International collaboration offers a platform for sharing best practices and contributing to global conversations on women's rights. By engaging with grassroots movements, building alliances, and serving as role models, women political elites can inspire future leaders, fostering a supportive environment for policies that advance the social and psychological empowerment of women.

Cherayi & Jose (2016), The importance of women's participation in Pakistan's politics is multifaceted and holds significant implications for the nation's development, governance, and social progress. Firstly, women constitute approximately half of the population, and their active

involvement in politics ensures a more representative and inclusive democracy. By having women in decision-making roles, diverse perspectives and concerns are more likely to be considered in policy formulation, contributing to more comprehensive and equitable legislation. Additionally, women's participation fosters the creation of policies that address gender-specific issues, such as women's rights, healthcare, and education. Furthermore, women in politics serve as role models, challenging societal norms and encouraging greater female participation in civic life. Their presence can also contribute to the dismantling of gender stereotypes and the promotion of gender equality in broader society. Ultimately, the full and active participation of women in politics is essential for building a more just, inclusive, and democratic Pakistan.

Bari (2010), Women political elites in Pakistan refer to women who hold influential and high-ranking positions within the political sphere of the country. This includes women who are actively involved in politics, whether through elected offices, appointed roles, or influential party positions. Political elites typically wield considerable power, influence policy decisions, and contribute to shaping the political landscape of the nation.

Syed & Tabassum (2014) highlighted underscores the complex interplay of gender dynamics, institutional constraints, and socio-cultural factors shaping women's participation and leadership in politics. Studies highlight the persistent challenges faced by women political elites, including systemic discrimination, patriarchal norms, and limited access to resources and decision-making structures. Despite these obstacles, research also documents the transformative potential of women's political empowerment, illustrating how women leaders navigate and challenge traditional power structures, advocate for gender-responsive policies, and amplify women's voices within political discourse. Additionally, scholars emphasize the importance of intersectional approaches in understanding the experiences of women political elites, recognizing the diverse identities and intersecting inequalities that shape their opportunities and constraints. By critically examining the achievements, limitations, and implications of women's political leadership, the literature contributes to broader debates on democracy, governance, and gender equality in Pakistan and offers insights for advancing inclusive and equitable political systems.

Khattak & Higdon (2020) study on women political elites suggests that their presence and influence contribute significantly to women's social empowerment. Studies indicate that women political elites serve as role models and advocates for gender equality, challenging societal norms and inspiring other women to pursue leadership roles. Through their policy advocacy and legislative initiatives, women political elites address key social issues affecting women, such as education, healthcare, and economic empowerment, thereby promoting social inclusion and well-being. Moreover, their visibility and representation in political spheres contribute to changing perceptions of women's capabilities and roles in society, fostering greater acceptance of women's rights and agency. Overall, the literature highlights the pivotal role of women political elites in advancing women's social empowerment and fostering more inclusive and equitable societies in Pakistan.

Koch (1997) mentioned that women political elites play a crucial role in empowering women psychologically through their leadership, advocacy, and representation. By occupying positions of power and influence, women political elites challenge traditional gender stereotypes and norms, demonstrating women's competence, resilience, and capacity for leadership. Their visibility and achievements serve as empowering symbols, inspiring other women to challenge barriers and pursue their aspirations with confidence and determination. Moreover, women political elites advocate for policies and programs that prioritize women's rights, address gender-based

violence, and promote access to education and healthcare, thereby bolstering women's sense of worth, agency, and self-esteem. Through their mentorship, support networks, and role modeling, women political elites create spaces for women to voice their concerns, assert their rights, and participate actively in decision-making processes, fostering a sense of belonging, empowerment, and solidarity among women across diverse communities. Overall, the leadership and advocacy of women political elites contribute significantly to empowering women psychologically, promoting resilience, self-efficacy, and a sense of collective agency in challenging systemic inequalities and advancing gender equality agendas.

Ansari (2018) discusses that women political elites play essential roles in public policy making and public administration by bringing diverse perspectives, priorities, and experiences to decision-making processes. As policymakers, they advocate for gender-responsive policies and initiatives that address the needs and concerns of women and marginalized communities, thereby promoting equity and social justice. Through their leadership in public administration, women political elites work to ensure the effective implementation and enforcement of policies, advocating for inclusive governance structures and equitable resource allocation. Their presence in positions of power also fosters accountability, transparency, and responsiveness in government institutions, helping to build trust and legitimacy among citizens. Overall, women political elites contribute to more inclusive and responsive public policies and administrations that reflect the diverse needs and aspirations of society.

Shakil et al. (2023) described that In Pakistan's politics, women face psychological and economic challenges that hinder their full participation and empowerment. Psychologically, societal norms and cultural expectations often discourage women from pursuing leadership roles, leading to self-doubt, imposter syndrome, and fear of backlash. Moreover, women in politics frequently encounter harassment, intimidation, and violence, which exacerbate psychological stress and trauma. Economically, women confront barriers such as limited access to education, financial resources, and employment opportunities, perpetuating economic dependence and vulnerability. Discriminatory laws and social norms further marginalize women, restricting their ability to own property, access credit, and participate in economic decision-making. Addressing these interconnected challenges requires comprehensive reforms, including gender-sensitive policies, enhanced legal protections, and targeted interventions to promote women's psychological well-being and economic empowerment in Pakistan's political arena.

Discussions

Implementation Gaps regarding Elite Women in Pakistani Politics

Implementation gaps and uneven access to resources and opportunities persist. Some women have risen to prominent political positions, breaking barriers and serving as role models for others. Benazir Bhutto, for example, served as the Prime Minister of Pakistan, and there have been other women leaders in various capacities. Civil society organizations play a crucial role in advocating for women's rights and pushing for policy changes.

Women's rights activists work to address gender-based violence, discrimination, and inequality. The role of women political elites in formulating policies towards social and psychological empowerment is crucial in addressing gender disparities and fostering inclusive development. Women in influential political positions have the potential to advocate for and implement policies that specifically target the social and psychological well-being of women in society. Here are key aspects related to women political elites and their impact on policies for social and psychological empowerment:

Women political elites can play a pivotal role in introducing and supporting legislation aimed at protecting women's rights, addressing gender-based violence, and promoting gender equality. Legal reforms can contribute to social empowerment by ensuring women's access to education, healthcare, employment, and protection against discrimination.

Women in political leadership can advocate for policies that improve educational opportunities for girls and women, addressing issues such as gender-based discrimination, ensuring equal access to education, and promoting literacy. Policies focusing on women's health, maternal care, and family planning are crucial for social empowerment. Women political elites can push for healthcare initiatives that prioritize women's well-being. Women in political positions can advocate for economic policies that empower women economically, such as access to credit, vocational training, and entrepreneurship opportunities. Economic empowerment contributes to psychological well-being by enhancing financial independence.

Women political elites can champion policies aimed at preventing and addressing gender-based violence. This includes legal frameworks, support services for survivors, and awareness campaigns to change societal attitudes. Policies promoting women's political participation and representation are key to social and psychological empowerment. Women political elites can work towards creating an inclusive political environment and breaking gender barriers in politics. Women in political leadership roles can use their influence to raise awareness about gender issues, challenge stereotypes, and promote a more inclusive and equitable society.

Policies that address mental health, counseling, and support for women who have experienced trauma or discrimination contribute to psychological empowerment. Women political elites can advocate for the inclusion of these services in public health systems.

Challenges for Women political elites in advancing policies at social and psychological empowerment

Deep-rooted Gender Bias: Persistent societal norms and deep-seated gender biases can hinder the acceptance of policies promoting women's empowerment, making it difficult for women political elites to garner widespread support for their initiatives.

Institutional Barriers: Gender discrimination within political institutions may pose challenges for women political elites, limiting their influence and making it challenging to implement and sustain policies that address social and psychological empowerment.

Resistance to Change: Traditional attitudes and resistance to change can impede efforts to challenge existing power structures and societal norms, hindering the effective implementation of policies aimed at transforming gender roles and empowering women.

Limited Representation: Despite advancements, women remain underrepresented in political spheres, making it challenging for women political elites to push through policies that prioritize social and psychological empowerment without sufficient support from their male counterparts.

Stereotyping and Prejudice: Women political elites may face stereotypes and prejudices that question their leadership capabilities, credibility, and ability to make informed decisions, affecting their effectiveness in advocating for policies promoting social and psychological empowerment.

Intersectionality: Challenges faced by women political elites are often exacerbated by Intersectionality, considering factors such as race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and other

identity markers, which can further complicate efforts to address social and psychological empowerment comprehensively.

Limited Resources: Inadequate resources, both financial and institutional, may constrain the implementation of policies aimed at social and psychological empowerment, limiting the impact of initiatives that could otherwise bring about meaningful change.

Balancing Personal and Professional Demands: Women political elites often face the challenge of balancing personal and professional demands, as societal expectations may place additional pressures on them compared to their male counterparts, impacting their ability to focus on policy initiatives.

Lack of Access to Networks: Limited access to political networks and mentorship opportunities can hinder the growth and influence of women political elites, making it more challenging for them to navigate the complexities of policy implementation.

Electoral Challenges: Women political elites may encounter difficulties in the electoral process, facing gender-specific barriers such as unequal campaign funding, biased media coverage, and negative public perceptions, which can affect their chances of reaching and maintaining political office.

Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach, including advocacy for gender-sensitive policies, changes in societal attitudes, and the creation of supportive environments within political institutions. Collaborative efforts from civil society, political leaders, and the broader community are essential for overcoming these obstacles and achieving meaningful social and psychological empowerment for women.

Opportunities for Women political elites in advancing policies at social and psychological empowerment

Women political elites can leverage their positions to advocate for and raise awareness about social and psychological empowerment issues, fostering public support and understanding. By actively participating in the legislative process, women leaders can propose and champion reforms that strengthen legal frameworks supporting social and psychological empowerment, including laws addressing gender-based violence, discrimination, and mental health. Women political elites can actively contribute to the development of policies that specifically target social and psychological empowerment, ensuring a gender-responsive approach to issues such as education, healthcare, and economic opportunities. Women in leadership roles can influence institutional change by promoting gender-inclusive policies within government agencies, creating environments that support women's participation and advancement. Women political elites representing their countries internationally have the opportunity to engage in global collaborations, exchanging best practices and contributing to the international dialogue on women's rights and empowerment.

Cole & Stewart (1996), Women leaders can build alliances with like-minded individuals and groups, both within and outside the political sphere, to strengthen support for policies promoting social and psychological empowerment. By connecting with grassroots movements and community organizations, women political elites can amplify the impact of policies, ensuring that they resonate with the needs and aspirations of diverse communities. Women in leadership positions serve as role models, inspiring other women and girls to pursue political engagement and leadership roles, creating a pipeline of future leaders focused on social and psychological empowerment. Women

political elites can support educational initiatives that promote gender equality, challenge stereotypes, and provide opportunities for women and girls to access quality education, contributing to long-term social empowerment.

Engaging with the media allows women political elites to shape narratives, challenge stereotypes, and influence public opinion, fostering a more supportive environment for policies related to social and psychological empowerment. Building networks and engaging in mentorship opportunities can provide women political elites with valuable support and guidance, enhancing their ability to navigate political landscapes and effectively advocate for policies. Embracing technology allows women leaders to reach broader audiences, share information, and mobilize support for policies promoting social and psychological empowerment through digital platforms. Women political elites can advocate for gender-responsive budgeting, ensuring that resources are allocated to programs and initiatives that directly contribute to social and psychological empowerment.

Women political elites and women political empowerment play pivotal roles in positively contributing to women's social and psychological empowerment through various mechanisms and initiatives. Firstly, the presence of women political elites in decision-making positions serves as a powerful symbol of gender equality and representation, challenging entrenched patriarchal norms and inspiring women across society to aspire for leadership roles. When women see fellow women occupying positions of political power and influence, it fosters a sense of empowerment and agency, instilling confidence and ambition to pursue their own aspirations. Additionally, women political empowerment translates into the formulation and implementation of gender-responsive policies and programs aimed at addressing women's socio-economic needs, promoting education, healthcare, and economic opportunities, and combating gender-based violence and discrimination. These policies not only enhance women's material well-being but also contribute to their psychological empowerment by affirming their rights, dignity, and worth in society. Moreover, women political elites often serve as advocates and champions for women's rights, amplifying their voices, and concerns, challenging social norms that perpetuate gender inequality, and fostering inclusive dialogues that prioritize women's perspectives and experiences. By leveraging their positions of influence, women political elites can facilitate broader societal shifts in attitudes and behaviors towards gender equality, fostering a more equitable and supportive environment for women's social and psychological empowerment to flourish (Sharma, 2020).

The relationship between women political elites and social and psychological empowerment is intricate and interconnected. Women political elites, by virtue of their positions in the political sphere, have the potential to influence policies and initiatives that directly impact the social and psychological well-being of women in society.

Women political elites can advocate for and actively contribute to the development of policies that address social and psychological empowerment. These policies may encompass areas such as education, healthcare, economic opportunities, and legal reforms. Through their roles in legislation, women political elites can push for legal reforms that protect women's rights, address gender-based violence, and contribute to a legal framework that fosters social and psychological empowerment. Increased representation of women in political leadership promotes a more inclusive decision-making process, ensuring that policies are crafted with a better understanding of women's diverse needs and experiences.

Women political elites serve as role models, challenging traditional gender roles and inspiring other women to pursue leadership roles. This helps break down societal barriers,

contributing to the social and psychological empowerment of women by expanding their opportunities and aspirations. Using their influence and platforms, women political elites can raise awareness about social issues, challenge stereotypes, and advocate for societal changes that positively impact the psychological well-being of women. Women in political leadership can influence resource allocation, ensuring that budgetary considerations are directed towards programs and initiatives that enhance social and psychological empowerment, such as education and healthcare.

Women political elites bring diverse perspectives to policymaking, considering Intersectionality in addressing the unique challenges faced by women from various backgrounds, contributing to a more comprehensive approach to empowerment. Engaging in international forums, women political elites can collaborate on strategies and policies that promote social and psychological empowerment globally, sharing best practices and learning from successful initiatives in other regions. Building connections with grassroots organizations and engaging with local communities allows women political elites to understand and address the specific needs of different groups, enhancing the effectiveness of policies aimed at social and psychological empowerment. Women political elites can advocate for mental health initiatives, reducing stigma, and promoting access to mental health services, contributing to the psychological well-being of individuals in society.

While the influence of women political elites is significant, it's important to recognize that challenges persist, and a comprehensive approach involving collaboration with other stakeholders is crucial for meaningful and sustainable progress in social and psychological empowerment. The relationship between women political elites and empowerment is dynamic, with the potential for positive impact through policy formulation, advocacy, and societal transformation.

Conclusion

Women political elites representing their country internationally can engage in collaborations and partnerships to address global challenges related to women's rights and empowerment. It's important to note that the effectiveness of policies depends on their implementation, enforcement, and the broader socio-cultural context. Women political elites can act as catalysts for positive change, but sustained efforts from various sectors of society are necessary to achieve meaningful social and psychological empowerment for women.

Women political elites play a pivotal role in shaping policies that contribute to the social and psychological empowerment of women. Through their positions in governance, these leaders can advocate for legislative reforms that protect women's rights, address gender-based violence, and promote gender equality. They have the potential to influence education policies that enhance opportunities for girls and women, advocate for comprehensive healthcare initiatives, and champion economic empowerment programs. By actively engaging in initiatives that prevent gender-based violence and promoting women's political participation, women political elites foster a more inclusive and equitable society. Additionally, their influence can extend to advocating for psychological support services and challenging societal norms through awareness campaigns. The commitment of women political elites to advancing these policies contributes significantly to dismantling gender barriers and fostering the holistic empowerment of women at both social and psychological levels.

Women political elites face numerous challenges in implementing policies aimed at social and psychological empowerment. Deep-seated gender biases and traditional norms often hinder

the acceptance of progressive reforms, making it challenging to garner support for initiatives promoting women's rights. Discrimination and resistance within political institutions may impede the effective implementation of policies, limiting the influence of women leaders. Additionally, women political elites may encounter obstacles in overcoming stereotypes, biased perceptions, and societal expectations, which can hinder their credibility and effectiveness in advocating for social and psychological empowerment. Balancing political responsibilities with societal expectations of gender roles may also pose personal challenges for these leaders. Overcoming these obstacles requires persistent efforts to change cultural attitudes, strengthen institutional support, and foster an environment conducive to the advancement of policies that genuinely empower women at social and psychological levels.

The relationship between women political elites and social and psychological empowerment is symbiotic and transformative. As architects of policies and advocates for change, women political elites wield substantial influence in shaping initiatives that directly impact the social and psychological well-being of women. Through their leadership roles, these women can advocate for legal reforms, challenge societal norms, and allocate resources to programs promoting education, healthcare, and economic opportunities. By breaking gender barriers and serving as role models, they inspire a shift in societal attitudes, contributing to the social empowerment of women. Simultaneously, policies addressing mental health, gender-based violence, and discrimination enhance psychological well-being. The representation of women in political spheres ensures diverse perspectives, fostering a more comprehensive approach to empowerment. This dynamic relationship underscores the pivotal role women political elites play in fostering positive societal change, contributing to the holistic social and psychological empowerment of women in communities and nations alike.

Women political elites possess significant opportunities to advance policies for social and psychological empowerment. Through legislative initiatives, they can propose and champion legal reforms that address gender-based violence, discrimination, and mental health, ensuring a comprehensive legal framework. Actively participating in policy development allows them to shape initiatives targeting education, healthcare, and economic opportunities with a gender-responsive lens. Women leaders can leverage their positions for advocacy and awareness, using their influence to promote social and psychological empowerment issues, build public support, and challenge societal norms. International collaboration offers a platform for sharing best practices and contributing to global conversations on women's rights. By engaging with grassroots movements, building alliances, and serving as role models, women political elites can inspire future leaders, fostering a supportive environment for policies that advance the social and psychological empowerment of women.

Further Suggestions

Further studies on "Women Political Elites in Pakistan" could explore several avenues to deepen our understanding and inform policy interventions aimed at advancing gender equality and women's empowerment in the country. Firstly, longitudinal studies tracking the trajectories of women political elites over time could provide insights into the challenges they face, the strategies they employ, and the impact of their leadership on women's empowerment outcomes. Understanding the dynamics of women's political participation, career progression, and policy influence can inform targeted interventions to overcome barriers and enhance opportunities for women's advancement in politics.

Additionally, comparative studies examining the experiences of women political elites across different regions, political parties, and governance contexts could elucidate the contextual factors that shape women's political empowerment and its implications for social and psychological well-being. By analyzing variations in policy frameworks, institutional dynamics, and socio-cultural norms, such studies can generate contextually relevant recommendations for promoting inclusive and gender-responsive governance practices.

Furthermore, qualitative inquiries exploring the Intersectionality of gender with other axes of identity, such as class, ethnicity, and religion, could illuminate the complex dynamics of power and privilege that shape women's experiences in politics and inform more nuanced approaches to promoting diversity and inclusion within political institutions. By embracing interdisciplinary perspectives and engaging diverse stakeholders, further studies on women political elites in Pakistan can contribute to advancing knowledge, fostering dialogue, and catalyzing transformative change towards gender equality and social justice.

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