

# Gender Political Participation: Assessing the Factors Influencing Muslim Women's Empowerment in Malappuram District

K. P. Vahida<sup>1</sup>, Dr. C. Subramanian<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar

Department of Political Science & Public Administration,  
Annamalai University

<sup>2</sup> Professor

Department of Political Science & Public Administration,  
Annamalai University

## Abstract

The study explores the factors influencing the political empowerment of Muslim women in the Malappuram district. Despite significant progress in women's rights and political participation globally, certain societal and cultural barriers persist, particularly in conservative communities. Focusing on the context of Malappuram, where the Muslim population is predominant, and the research aims to identify the key determinants that impact Muslim women's engagement in political activities and decision-making processes. By understanding these factors, the study seeks to contribute to the ongoing discourse on gender equality and women's political empowerment.

**Keywords:** Gender, Political participation, Muslim women, Empowerment, Local governance.

## 1. Introduction

The term "gender" in modern English originates from Middle English and is derived from the Anglo-Norman and Middle French word "gender." This term, in turn, traces its roots back to the Latin word "genus," signifying kind, type, or sort. Gender refers to a complex interplay of social, cultural, and personal factors that shape our roles, behaviors, and identities. It goes beyond the biological distinction of being male or female and encompasses a broad spectrum of identities, expressions, and orientations. Gender is a dynamic concept that influences how we perceive ourselves and others, how we interact with society, and how society interacts with us. It's a crucial lens through which we understand the diversity of human experiences and the ways in which individuals navigate their lives within the context of societal norms and expectations.

The study explores the realm of gender and political participation, specifically focusing on the factors that have catalyzed the empowerment of Muslim women in Malappuram District. In this context, the term "gender" is explored within its historical and linguistic origins, elucidating its distinction from biological sex and its alignment with social and cultural attributes. The World Health Organization's definition of gender is referenced to highlight its variability across societies.

The intricate relationship between gender and politics is discussed, emphasizing the inclusivity of political participation for various genders, abilities, and backgrounds. The principle of democracy, as encapsulated in the phrase "For the People, by the People, and of the People," is underscored, advocating equal political engagement. Transitioning to the specifics of Malappuram District, the historical background of its formation in 1969 is provided, accentuating the collaborative efforts of leaders and individuals. The transformation of the Muslim community, particularly Muslim women, within the district is outlined, emphasizing the overcoming of educational, social, and cultural challenges. The newfound empowerment of Muslim women, their increased involvement in diverse fields, and the resulting positive social dynamics are presented as integral aspects of the district's progress. Ultimately, the study encapsulates the multifaceted journey of gender, political participation, and the transformation of Muslim women's empowerment in the unique context of Malappuram District.

## 2. Objectives

The study aims to examine the socio-cultural barriers impacting the political engagement of Muslim women in Malappuram District, Kerala, assess the role of education and its correlation with their empowerment in political processes, analyze how economic independence influences their political participation, explore the interplay of religious beliefs and community dynamics in shaping their involvement, and provide actionable recommendations to enhance the inclusion and empowerment of Muslim women in politics, ultimately contributing to a more representative and inclusive political landscape.

## 3. Theoretical Background

The theoretical background of your research focuses on the topic of gender political participation, specifically examining the factors that influence the empowerment of Muslim women in Malappuram District. This research is situated within the broader fields of gender studies, political science, and social empowerment. It draws from feminist theory, intersectionality, and political empowerment frameworks to understand how various factors such as socio-cultural norms, religious influences, education, economic status, and access to resources impact the political engagement and empowerment of Muslim women in a specific geographical context. The research seeks to contribute to our understanding of the complexities surrounding gender, religion, and political participation, and to inform strategies that can enhance the empowerment of Muslim women in the given district.

## 4. Methodology

The study adopted descriptive and analytical approaches with a qualitative research design. The focus is on conducting thematic analysis to identify trends and patterns in data. Secondary sources like articles, books, state government reports, and webliography are utilized for data collection. Thematic analysis involves identifying and analyzing recurring themes in the collected sources, helping to draw insights and understand the subject better.

## Result and Discussion

### 5. Socio-cultural barriers affecting political engagement of Muslim women

The political engagement of Muslim women can be influenced by various socio-cultural barriers that are deeply embedded in their communities and societies. These barriers can significantly impact their participation in political activities and their ability to voice their opinions and concerns in the political arena (Sinha, 2008).

Malappuram District, like many other regions, has a patriarchal social structure where men often hold dominant positions in both family and community decision-making. This can discourage women, including Muslim women, from actively participating in politics, as their opinions and voices might not be valued as much as those of men (Kurian, 2017).

Traditional gender roles in the district can limit the mobility and opportunities for women, including participation in public affairs. The expectation that women should primarily focus on household duties and family responsibilities may lead to a lack of time and resources for political engagement (Kokatanur, 2013). Conservative interpretations of Islam might be used to discourage women from engaging in public life, including politics. Some religious leaders might emphasize the importance of women's modesty and adherence to traditional roles, potentially discouraging them from entering the political arena (Cherayi & Kumar, 2014).

The absence of visible and successful female Muslim political leaders in the district can hinder young women's aspirations to participate in politics. The lack of representation can make it difficult for women to envision themselves in leadership positions (Kurian, 2017). Participation in politics can sometimes be viewed negatively within certain conservative segments of the society. Women who engage in politics might face social stigma, criticism, or even harassment, which can deter them from actively getting involved.

Unequal access to education can hinder women's understanding of political processes and their own rights. Lack of awareness about political rights, responsibilities, and the importance of political participation might lead to apathy among Muslim women (Hossain & Saha, 2013). Marriage and family responsibilities can become barriers to political engagement for Muslim women. Societal expectations often prioritize family obligations over personal pursuits, making it challenging for women to allocate time and effort to political activities (Cherayi & Kumar, 2014).

Political spaces in Malappuram District, like in many places, can be male-dominated. This lack of gender diversity can create an uncomfortable environment for women, making it difficult for them to voice their opinions or participate fully (Kurian, 2017). Kerala has a high literacy rate, but language barriers can still affect political engagement. Some Muslim women might feel less confident engaging in political discussions, debates, and activities if they are not comfortable expressing themselves in the predominant language of the region (Sinha, 2008). Safe spaces for women to engage in political discussions and activities are crucial. The absence of such spaces can limit opportunities for Muslim women to learn about politics, share ideas, and collaborate with others who share their interests (Cherayi & Kumar, 2014).

Economic factors can also play a role. Women from economically disadvantaged backgrounds might prioritize earning a livelihood over political participation, given their immediate financial needs (Hossain & Saha, 2013). The internal dynamics of political parties can also contribute to barriers. Some parties might not actively encourage or support women's participation, while others might offer limited opportunities for women to rise within the party ranks (Sinha, 2008).

In order to address these barriers and promote the political engagement of Muslim women in Malappuram District, targeted efforts are needed. These could include raising awareness about women's rights and the importance of political participation, providing education and training, creating safe and inclusive spaces, encouraging the involvement of female role models, and challenging patriarchal norms within both the community and political structures. It's important to approach this challenge with cultural sensitivity and understanding of the specific context in Malappuram District (Kurian, 2017).

## **6. Relationship between education and Muslim women's political empowerment**

The relationship between education and Muslim women's political empowerment in Malappuram District, Kerala is a multifaceted and dynamic interplay that is influenced by various factors.

Education is often considered a crucial factor in empowering individuals, including women, to participate in various aspects of society, including politics (Rallapalli, 2011). Education equips individuals with knowledge, critical thinking skills, and the ability to articulate their opinions effectively. In the context of Malappuram District, educated Muslim women may be better equipped to understand political processes, assert their rights, and engage in informed political discourse.

Education can increase awareness about political rights and responsibilities among Muslim women in Malappuram District (Venugopalan et al., 2021). Education enhances women's agency by providing them with the tools to make informed decisions and engage in public affairs. Educated women are more likely to be aware of their political rights, which can motivate them to participate actively in political processes.

Education can play a significant role in overcoming socio-cultural barriers that hinder women's political participation (Jafar, 2013). In a patriarchal society, educated women may challenge traditional norms and assert their right to engage in politics. Education can empower women to question discriminatory practices and advocate for changes that promote gender equality.

Education can contribute to economic empowerment, which, in turn, can have implications for political engagement (Dominic et al., 2021). Education and economic independence can increase women's confidence to participate in decision-making processes, including politics. Educated Muslim women in Malappuram District who are financially self-reliant may have greater freedom to engage in politics without being solely dependent on male family members.

The importance of women's representation in political spaces is emphasized (Azad, 2020). Educated Muslim women are more likely to understand the significance of representation and actively seek opportunities to participate in political forums such as gram panchayats. The impact of education on Muslim women's involvement in local governance, a significant aspect of political participation, is discussed (Aboobacker Siddique, 2005).

While education can be a transformative force, it is important to acknowledge that its impact on political empowerment is not linear. Challenges such as socio-economic disparities, cultural norms, and resistance from conservative elements may still persist. However, education can provide Muslim women in Malappuram District with the tools to navigate these challenges and advocate for their rights.

The relationship between education and Muslim women's political empowerment in Malappuram District, Kerala, is intricate and multidimensional. Education equips women with knowledge, awareness, and agency, enabling them to challenge barriers and participate more actively in political processes. However, the effectiveness of education in promoting political empowerment also depends on the broader socio-cultural context and the efforts made to create an inclusive and supportive environment for women's political engagement.

## **7. Economic independence on political participation of Muslim women**

The impact of economic independence on the political participation of Muslim women can be comprehensively understood by analyzing various research studies conducted in the context of Kerala, India.

Economic independence has been shown to have a transformative effect on the political participation of Muslim women. Education can contribute to economic empowerment, which, in turn, can have implications for political engagement (Dominic et al., 2021). As women gain economic autonomy, their confidence to participate in decision-making processes within political structures grows. This financial empowerment equips them with the agency to articulate their opinions and contribute actively to shaping local governance (Vidya, 2018).

Participation in economic activities, often facilitated through self-help groups, can significantly enhance women's financial status and augment their ability to engage in political activities (Prakashan, 2023). The self-reliance gained through economic ventures enables women to navigate the barriers of political participation, ultimately leading to an increased presence of Muslim women in political forums (Prakashan, 2023).

The relationship between empowerment and social inclusion of Muslim women becomes evident when considering the role of economic independence (Cherayi & Jose, 2016). With increased financial agency, Muslim women in Malappuram District are better positioned to challenge traditional norms and overcome barriers to political engagement, actively participating in political processes and demanding equal representation (Cherayi & Jose, 2016).

Marginalized Muslim women, when empowered through economic means, can overcome social exclusion, break free from discriminatory practices, and amplify their voices in political activities (Cherayi & Kumar, 2014). Economic independence acts as a countermeasure against social exclusion, providing these women with the means to participate effectively in political processes (Cherayi & Kumar, 2014).

Economic empowerment plays a vital role in promoting Muslim women's political participation in Kerala. Economic independence can empower women to take leadership positions, engage in decision-making processes, and contribute to their overall political empowerment (Aboobacker Siddique, 2005).

The impact of economic independence on the political participation of Muslim women in Malappuram District, Kerala, is evident from various research studies. Economic autonomy equips women with the agency to challenge norms, overcome exclusion, and actively engage in political processes, ultimately fostering their empowerment and amplifying their voices in local governance.

## **8. Religious beliefs and community dynamics on political involvement**

Malappuram District in Kerala, India, is known for its unique social and political dynamics, deeply influenced by religious beliefs and community dynamics. The district has a significant Muslim population, and this religious composition has a substantial impact on its political involvement.

**Religious Identity and Voting Patterns:** The dominant religious identity in Malappuram District is Islam, and the Muslim community plays a crucial role in shaping the political landscape. Religious beliefs and values often influence voting patterns, with candidates and parties aligning themselves with the interests of the Muslim community. Many voters prioritize candidates who promise to protect the rights and interests of the Muslim population, thereby emphasizing the impact of religious beliefs on political choices.

Religious beliefs serve as a strong foundation for community mobilization during elections. Mosques and religious leaders often play a significant role in encouraging voter turnout and supporting specific candidates. Friday sermons and other religious gatherings provide platforms for discussing political issues and endorsing candidates who align with the community's values. This mobilization amplifies the influence of religious beliefs on political involvement.

While religious beliefs are crucial, Malappuram District also demonstrates a nuanced interplay between religious identity and secularism. Political parties often adopt an inclusive approach that addresses the concerns of both religious and secular segments of the population. However, identity politics can sometimes lead to polarization, as candidates may exploit religious sentiments to gain electoral advantages.

Religious beliefs also shape the priorities of political involvement. For instance, the belief in social justice and communal harmony resonates strongly with the Muslim community. Political parties often focus on policies related to education, healthcare, and economic development to address the community's concerns, enhancing political engagement in the process.

The district's political leadership reflects the influence of religious beliefs. Muslim leaders hold significant positions, both at the local and state levels. This representation ensures that the community's voices are heard in the political decision-making process, reinforcing the connection between religious beliefs and political involvement.

Malappuram's diverse religious composition also fosters interactions and collaborations between different communities. While religious beliefs might be a central factor, community dynamics encourage political engagement across religious lines. This can lead to strategic alliances and cooperation, mitigating potential religious division.

The impact of religious beliefs on political involvement is also mediated by educational and socioeconomic factors. A more educated and economically empowered population tends to critically evaluate political options beyond religious affiliations. As education and awareness increase, individuals may become more inclined to vote based on broader policy considerations.

Religious beliefs and community dynamics significantly influence political involvement in Malappuram District, Kerala. The Muslim-majority composition of the district creates a distinctive political landscape where religious identity, community mobilization, social welfare concerns, and intercommunity dynamics all play a vital role in shaping electoral choices and political representation. However, it's important to note that the influence of these factors can be dynamic and multifaceted, and individual political involvement can vary based on personal beliefs, socioeconomic status, and other contextual factors.

## **9. The Transformation Journey Empowering Muslim Women in Malappuram District**

The transformation of Muslim women's empowerment in Malappuram District stands as a testament to the impact of education, social initiatives, and evolving perceptions. Historically, within the district's Muslim-majority population, women were confined to domestic roles, resulting in gender disparities. However, a series of factors and interventions have led to a paradigm shift, empowering Muslim women and challenging traditional norms.

Education has played a pivotal role in this transformation. The district's considerable Muslim population has witnessed concerted efforts to improve educational prospects for girls. Scholarships and financial aid tailored for girls' education have enabled many to excel academically and explore diverse career opportunities. The establishment of educational institutions by other communities has also sparked renewed enthusiasm for education within the Muslim community.

Historical milestones like the introduction of the Travancore Education Rules in 1912 marked a turning point by ensuring equal educational opportunities for all, including Muslims. This policy change enabled Muslim women to access government-run educational institutions, greatly expanding their horizons. Another influential change was the incorporation of physical education, breaking down traditional barriers and fostering physical and mental well-being among Muslim women.

The launch of the Kudumbashree Mission in 1998 has been a significant stride towards empowerment. This pioneering self-help group initiative has empowered women by providing access to microfinance, imparting essential skills, and enabling them to start businesses, fostering economic independence. Moreover, it has raised awareness about women's rights and emboldened them to participate in decision-making processes.

The dynamics of migration have inadvertently contributed to women's empowerment. With household heads often migrating for work abroad, women have assumed the role of family leaders. This responsibility has honed their financial management skills, decision-making abilities, and overall self-assurance.

The culmination of these factors has brought about a remarkable transformation in the roles and opportunities available to Muslim women in Malappuram District. The declaration of Kerala as a fully literate state in 1991, along with the contributions of individuals like Ayisha, and initiatives like Kudumbasree, has collectively paved the path towards greater gender equality and women's empowerment. This transformation spans various sectors, from piloting and scientific research to business.

The empowerment of Muslim women in Malappuram District underscores the potency of education, awareness, and progressive endeavors. The confluence of these factors has shattered conventional boundaries, propelling Muslim women into active engagement in public life and propelling societal advancement. As the district evolves, this transformation serves as a beacon of optimism and inspiration for other communities, highlighting the pivotal role of gender equality and women's empowerment in achieving comprehensive progress.

## **10. Reshaping Political Landscape in Malappuram**

The implementation of women's seat reservation in local body elections has been a transformative force in enhancing their involvement in the political arena. In Malappuram District, the landmark decision to allocate 50 percent of seats to women in the 2010 local body elections has yielded substantial outcomes, particularly for Muslim women. This groundbreaking policy shift has resulted in greater representation of Muslim women in pivotal decision-making capacities, equipping them to actively shape political processes and impact policy formulation.

The influence of this reservation initiative on the empowerment of Muslim women in Malappuram District cannot be overstated. The provision, which earmarked half of the seats for women in the 2010 local body elections, galvanized a surge of participation among Muslim women in the electoral sphere. Consequently, nearly half of the district's panchayats are now represented by women. Significantly, this electoral milestone coincided with Malappuram District's inaugural elections under the Panchayat Raj Act, marking a historic juncture. Notably, the position of President was exclusively reserved for women during this period, a transformative move that ushered in Advocate K.P. Mariyumma as the district's first female President.

The subsequent line-up of Presidents for Malappuram District showcases the commendable contributions of three accomplished women who have admirably discharged their duties:

Years	Presidents
1995 to 2000	Adv. K.P. MARIYUMMA
2000 to 2005	Adv. M. UMMER
2005 to 2010	ARIMBRA MUHAMMED MASTER
2010 to 2015	SUHARA MAMPAD
2015 to 2020	A.P. UNNIKISHNAN
2020	M.K. RAFEEKHA

In essence, the strategic introduction of gender-based seat reservation in local elections has propelled a remarkable shift in the trajectory of Muslim women's empowerment in Malappuram District. This initiative not only amplifies women's political presence but also illustrates a progressive stride towards a more inclusive and representative political landscape.

Among the six Presidents listed, it is noteworthy that three of them were women who exhibited exemplary leadership, serving as a testament to the present status of Muslim women in Malappuram District. The district comprises fifteen Block Panchayats, and significantly, nine of these administrative units are under the capable guidance of women:

Block Panchayat	Women Presidents
NILAMBUR	PUSHPAVALLI
AREACODE	P. RUKHIYA SHAMSU
KONDOTTY	V.P. SHAJINI UNNI
TIRURANGADI	SAJIDA K.T
TANUR	K. SALMATH
VENGARA	BENSEERA M
PERUMBADAPPU	ADV. E. SINDHU
KUTTIPPURAM	VASEEMA VELERI
KALIKAVU	P. SREEJA

Among these distinguished leaders, five are Muslim women who have emerged as influential representatives. These dedicated individuals have demonstrated exceptional competence in their roles, efficiently administering their respective areas. At present, the landscape of Malappuram District is enriched by the presence of 591 elected Muslim women representatives within village panchayats. This contingent encompasses 36 Panchayat presidents, 33 vice presidents, and 105 standing committee chairpersons.

The accomplishments of these elected representatives are a testament to their unwavering determination and heightened self-assurance. Their devoted commitment to their responsibilities is evident in their transition from being confined to domestic spheres to effectively governing the Panchayats, signifying a remarkable journey of personal growth and public service.

This success is underscored by the changing social attitudes towards the roles and potential of women. The passage of time has brought about a shift in conventional perspectives, propelled by the rising tide of awareness and education. These forces have collectively challenged age-old norms, cultivating a more nurturing and enabling environment for the empowerment of women within Malappuram District.

### 11. Major Findings

- Religious and cultural norms significantly shape Muslim women's political involvement, often acting as impediments due to traditional gender roles and conservative interpretations of religious teachings.
- Education is a key driver of empowerment and political participation. Women with higher education levels exhibited greater awareness, confidence, and willingness to engage politically.

- Economic independence plays a pivotal role, allowing women to access resources, attend events, and actively participate in political discussions.
- Limited access to resources, such as transportation and internet, hinders participation, highlighting the importance of addressing accessibility challenges.
- Family support is influential. Women with families encouraging their engagement tend to be more politically active.
- Intersectionality with factors like socioeconomic status and age influences empowerment levels, necessitating tailored strategies.
- Religious institutions and leaders impact participation positively or negatively, either supporting or discouraging women's involvement.
- Targeted policies addressing education, economic opportunities, awareness, and family sensitization can enhance political empowerment.
- Local leadership and mentorship foster engagement, with women leaders serving as inspirational figures.
- Changing dynamics show younger generations challenging norms and displaying greater readiness to participate in public life.
- The introduction of a 50 percent seat reservation for women in local elections has led to increased political engagement among Muslim women. This policy shift has enabled them to take on pivotal decision-making roles.
- The seat reservation initiative has resulted in nearly half of the district's panchayats being led by women. This has significantly amplified the representation of Muslim women in local governance.
- The tenure of Presidents in Malappuram District has highlighted exceptional leadership by women. This indicates the evolving status and capability of Muslim women in leadership roles.
- Over 591 elected Muslim women representatives in village panchayats, including presidents, vice presidents, and committee chairpersons, showcase their competence in governing administrative units.
- The success of elected representatives illustrates the transformative journey of Muslim women challenging traditional gender roles, transitioning from domestic spheres to effective governance.
- Changing social attitudes toward women's roles and capabilities have been influenced by increasing awareness and education, fostering a more empowering environment for Muslim women in Malappuram District.

## **12. Suggestions to enhance Muslim women's inclusion and empowerment in politics**

Empowering and enhancing the inclusion of Muslim women in politics in Malappuram District, Kerala, requires a multi-faceted approach that addresses various challenges and leverages opportunities for their participation.

### **1. Education and Awareness:**

- Establish educational campaigns that emphasize the importance of political participation and the role Muslim women can play in shaping policies.
- Organize workshops and seminars to educate Muslim women about political processes, governance structures, and their rights as citizens.
- Collaborate with local religious leaders to promote the idea of women's political involvement within the framework of Islamic teachings.

### **2. Leadership Development:**

- Create leadership training programs that specifically target Muslim women, focusing on public speaking, negotiation skills, and policy analysis.
- Encourage women to take on leadership roles in community organizations, which can serve as a stepping stone to political engagement.
- Provide mentorship opportunities where experienced women politicians can guide and support aspiring Muslim women leaders.



### **3. Reserved Seats and Quotas:**

- Advocate for the introduction of reserved seats or quotas for women in local and state-level political bodies, ensuring a certain percentage of positions are allocated for women.
- Lobby for the implementation of reservation policies that take into account the specific needs and concerns of Muslim women within the district.

### **4. Engage with Existing Political Structures:**

- Encourage political parties to actively recruit and nominate Muslim women as candidates for various elections.
- Establish dialogue between political parties and women's organizations to address barriers that prevent Muslim women from participating in politics.

### **5. Community Mobilization:**

- Work with local mosques and religious leaders to promote women's political involvement through sermons, discussions, and community events.
- Collaborate with women's groups to organize awareness campaigns that highlight the importance of women's representation in political decision-making.

### **6. Economic Empowerment:**

- Develop vocational training and microfinance programs that empower women economically, enhancing their ability to engage in politics.
- Advocate for policies that address gender disparities in employment and income, which can indirectly impact women's participation in politics.

### **7. Legal Reforms and Supportive Policies:**

- Lobby for legal reforms that protect and promote women's rights in areas such as inheritance, marriage, and property ownership, which can contribute to their overall empowerment.
- Advocate for policies that provide support for working women, such as affordable childcare services and flexible working hours.

### **8. Media and Communication:**

- Establish platforms for Muslim women to share their stories and experiences, raising awareness about their challenges and successes in politics.
- Collaborate with local media outlets to showcase the contributions of Muslim women in various sectors, including politics.

### **9. Engage Youth and Schools:**

- Introduce civic education programs in schools that emphasize the importance of diversity and gender equality in political participation.
- Encourage youth organizations to promote the active involvement of Muslim women in community and political activities.

By implementing these actionable suggestions, stakeholders can work together to enhance the inclusion and empowerment of Muslim women in politics in Malappuram District, Kerala. The key is to address both systemic and cultural barriers while creating an enabling environment that encourages women to actively participate in shaping the political landscape.

## **13. Conclusion**

Research delved into the intricate landscape of gender political participation, focusing specifically on the factors that shape the empowerment of Muslim women in Malappuram District, Kerala. Through a comprehensive exploration of various dimensions, this study sheds light on the multifaceted nature of Muslim women's engagement in the political sphere. The findings of this research underline the undeniable progress made in recent years towards enhancing Muslim women's empowerment in politics. The increasing literacy rates, coupled with changing societal attitudes, have paved the way for greater access to education and economic opportunities for these women. This has translated into a higher political awareness and a willingness to challenge traditional norms, as evidenced by the rising number of Muslim women participating in local governance and community decision-making processes. However, it is clear that numerous challenges persist. The deeply

entrenched patriarchal norms within the socio-cultural fabric of the society continue to hinder the full realization of Muslim women's political potential. The interplay of religious conservatism, familial obligations, and societal expectations creates a complex web that constrains their active involvement in political activities. Furthermore, the lack of dedicated support systems and gender-sensitive policies remains a significant barrier, limiting their ability to navigate the political arena effectively.

The research underscores the crucial role of education as a catalyst for change. By empowering young Muslim girls with education, opportunities for skill development, and exposure to diverse perspectives, the cycle of gender inequality can be gradually broken. Fostering alliances between women's organizations, civil society groups, and governmental bodies can pave the way for more inclusive policies that acknowledge and address the unique challenges faced by Muslim women in their political journeys. The advancement of Muslim women's political participation and empowerment in Malappuram District is an ongoing process that demands a comprehensive and collaborative approach. By dismantling traditional barriers, promoting education, and advocating for gender-sensitive policies, it is possible to create an environment where Muslim women can actively contribute to governance, policy-making, and community development. While there has been significant progress, there remains much work to be done to ensure that every Muslim woman's voice is not only heard but also valued in shaping the future of the district and beyond.

### **Conflict of Interest and Funding**

Based on the authors' comprehension, there are no financial or personal associations that could be interpreted as influencing the outcomes depicted in this study. This research study was conducted without any institutional funding. The study was carried out independently, and no financial support was received from any external organization or institution.

### **Acknowledgement**

The development of this study is indebted to the diligent endeavors and unwavering dedication of numerous individuals, all of whom we sincerely acknowledge. We would also like to express our gratitude to the researchers and authors who have previously delved into a comparable topic, as their prior contributions have laid a solid foundation for our unexpected and fruitful exploration, ultimately facilitating a smooth and successful conclusion to this piece.

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