



**Understanding Trustworthiness of Female Politicians in South Asia:  
A Study on Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka**

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## Dedicated to

*“My mother, Tahurin Sabur, who is the constant source of inspiration and my father, Mir Kafil Uddin, who is the constant source of positivity in my life”*

## Declaration

I declare that the dissertation entitled “*Understanding Trustworthiness of Female Politicians in South Asia: A Study on Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka*” submitted to the PPG Program of North South University, Bangladesh for the Degree of Master in Public Policy and Governance (MPPG) is an original work of mine. No part of it, in any form, has been copied from other sources without acknowledgement or submitted to any other university or institute for any degree or diploma. Views and expressions of the thesis bear the responsibility of mine with the exclusion of SIPG for any errors and omissions to it.

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## **Abstract**

This paper analyzes political trust in female politicians in South Asian countries, particularly in Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. These countries have seen female politicians in parliament, ministerial positions, local government, and even as heads of political parties and states. Most of the existing literature on female politicians in South Asia have explored the gender stereotype and stigma associated with females and their political participation. Those studies mostly describe the barriers and challenges of female politicians based on cultural factors. But this paper concentrated on the trustworthiness of a female as a politician, which covers whether the female politicians have created an image of being trusted as representatives by exploring the rational choice theory. The argument for rational choice theory states that if the trustee has the characteristics of ability, benevolence, and integrity (ABI), the trustor should have higher trust in the trustee. This logic of the ABI model supporting the rational choice theory should reflect on citizens' trust in female politicians in these three South Asian countries. By evaluating the perceived performance of female politicians and the political system they are associated with, their characteristics as trustees can be measured and the significant impact of performance in determining trustworthiness should be reflected in the study to support the rational choice theory. This study also includes cultural and socio-economic factors to find out whether the effect of such explanatory variables supports or negates the rational choice theory. If the perceived efficiency of female politicians does not affect the trustworthiness of female politicians, then the ABI model becomes questionable as efficiency can measure characteristics of the female politicians, and in that case, the rational choice theory becomes ineffective. Thus, studying the factors affecting the trustworthiness of female politicians is the main focus of this paper.

The study is based on quantitative analysis of the data that was collected from the SIPG Trust Survey conducted in early 2020 during its third round. Respondents from different age groups, income classes, education levels, occupations, and religions participated in the survey which made the data more diversified. The analysis suggests

that the performance of female politicians in Bangladesh affects the trustworthiness of female politicians as with higher performance, they are capable of gaining higher trust and if they are involved in corruption, the level of trust goes down. Better political performance is also associated with a higher level of trust in female politicians in Bangladesh. For Bangladesh, rational choice theory shows an effective implication even though cultural factors significantly impact the trustworthiness of female politicians. On the other hand, in Nepal, even though the perceived efficiency of female politicians has a significant effect on the female politicians, their involvement with corruption does not play a significant role which omits the importance of integrity as a factor of perceived trustworthiness. Even the political performance does not have a significant effect on the trustworthiness of female politicians. Instead, cultural and socio-economic factors have a significant impact in judging the trustworthiness of female politicians. Hence, the rational choice theory is not all effective for Nepal. The study on Sri Lanka does not give an effective result as the factors affecting the trustworthiness of female politicians in the country are mostly socio-economic factors. This suggests that the rational choice theory is not at all effective and also, the study of different domains is necessary to understand the trustworthiness of female politicians. In this study, Bangladesh and Nepal show almost the same pattern when determining the level of trust in female politicians but Sri Lanka does not relate to most of the factors that affect the trustworthiness of female politicians in Bangladesh and Nepal.

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## Abbreviations

|        |  |
|--------|--|
| ABI    | Ability, Benevolence, Integrity  |
| ADB    | Asian Development Bank   |
| ANOVA  | Analysis of Variance   |
| BD     | Bangladesh   |
| BDT    | Bangladeshi Taka   |
| CEDAW  | Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women |
| EIU    | Economist Intelligence Unit  |
| GD     | Gender Disparity   |
| IPU    | Inter Parliamentary Union  |
| MP     | Member of Parliament   |
| MPPG   | Master in Public Policy and Governance                                     |
| NPR    | Nepalese Rupee   |
| NGO    | Non-Government Organization  |
| SLR    | Sri Lankan Rupees  |
| SIPG   | South Asian Institute of Policy and Governance                             |
| UN     | United Nations   |
| UNDP   | United Nations Development Program   |
| UNICEF | United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund                     |
| USD    | United States Dollar   |
| WEF    | World Economic Forum   |

## Chapter 1: Introduction

The incomplete mission of achieving inclusive democracy has been passed on to the twenty-first century. The notion that democracies around the world tend to exclude or marginalize half of their citizens from systems of democratic participation and decision-making, creates concern about the true sense of representative and substantive democracy (Kumari, 2012). This exclusion may result due to constitutional or legislative obstacles, or, legal, religious, and cultural constructions of gender relations (Mastracci, 2017). South Asian democratic societies have witnessed powerful female leaders in ruling positions, but the gender parity index in politics says something different about the political participation of women in this region (Jahan, 1987). Why is it happening? How do the citizens perceive the political representation of females in this region? The study of the trustworthiness of female politicians in South Asia can give an overall idea about the situation.

To understand the perception, the study looks for a connection between trust and political leadership in the first place. Because trust can act as the vital component of leadership and leaders are bound to build trust among the citizens to be successful (Le & Tran, 2020). The study reveals the concern of why women are so disadvantaged in South Asia's political space, as well as an analysis of the numerous factors that might conspire to prevent women from engaging in decision-making bodies for lack of being trusted. It will conclude by looking at what factors are playing a significant role to decide the trustworthiness of female politicians and if the change in behavior of the factor can help females to gain more trust to increase their participation in the political sphere.

This chapter aims to provide an idea of the political representation of women in the current context. The barriers women are facing to actively participate in politics have been discussed in this chapter. The significance of the study that might help in the future to ensure more participation of women by building trust among citizens has been added to this chapter. Next a clear statement of objective and based on that the

question that needs to be addressed have been included in this chapter. This chapter also has an overview of the methodology and the limitations of the study. It is assumed that with the variation in the level of trust, the perceived image of female politicians might vary from person to person. To establish the logic, the study needs to go through relevant literature that will reveal the relation between trust and leadership.

### **1.1 Background of Study**

Women's political participation is a necessary condition for achieving gender equality and proper democracy (UN Women, 2021). But data revealed by UN Women showed that women are underrepresented at all levels of decision-making across the world, and gender representation in politics is still a long way off. To be more specific, Till yet, only 22 countries have a record of females being the head of state and 119 countries have never witnessed women leaders as political representatives. If this continues, it will take 130 years to reach gender parity in terms of the highest power in politics (UN Women, 2020). Even in ministerial positions, the national parliament, and local government, the scenario is the same. This shows the discrimination prevails in the political system all over the world and it is very evident.

On the other hand, when it comes to South Asia the scenario of political representation gives a contradictory image. South Asia has already witnessed powerful female political leaders like Sirimavo Bandaranaike, Indira Gandhi, Benazir Bhutto, Sheikh Hasina, Khaleda Zia which makes this region one step ahead in terms of female politicians holding the highest power of the state. But all of the named leaders came from families where fathers or husbands passed on their duty to them as dynastic power. In this region where patriarchy dominates the society, the emergence of these female leaders creates a dilemma about the image of female politicians in this region. Naturally, if the boundaries are broken then the entry of new participants should increase. That means the political field was supposed to be easy access for females in South Asia as people already have had experience with it and the existing female leaders were supposed to encourage all the women to enter the field. But, even though women in South Asia have made progress in economy and

education, the field of politics is yet to explore (WEF, 2020). To overcome this dilemma, it is needed to study what image they have created among the general mass to understand their trust in female politicians and to understand less participation of females in politics.

The paper sheds light on the study of trust to understand the perceived image of female politicians and a detailed study finds out the relevant factors that may affect the participation of females in politics. And the study of relevant factors will also help to figure out if it is possible to bring gender parity in this political system or there has to be an alternative to bring gender equality in the political system.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

In the South Asian background, the idea that women are subordinates whose political involvement is both devalued and undesirable is quite evident. In almost every field, gender inequality is exacerbated by the way women are handled in this part of the world (Richter, 1990). Patriarchy's philosophy has had a significant impact on the fate of women in most civilizations around the world, favoring authoritarian ideals above democratic ones. The "dirtiness or roughness of politics," "the toughness needed," or, conversely, the nobility of public service, the need for male as opposed to females whose horizons and loyalties were "limited" to the family and clan, may be the basis for such division of roles in different cultures or religions (Richter, 1990) .

The lack of a steady stream of women competing for top political positions suggests that these brief glimpses of female political influence are not indicative of overall female empowerment in the South Asian country. The seeming disparity between women's overall status in South Asian countries and the surprising prominence of a few is due to their proximity to established male power rather than their ability to overcome severe obstacles (Paxton, 2007). Despite the fact that women have reached the highest levels of government in Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka, cultural

impediments to women's unconditional participation in politics, such as familial rejection and illiteracy still exist (Richter, 1990).

The main factors preventing women from actively participating in politics are being influenced by the perception across demographics. Citizens' perceptions of political parties are important and are influenced by variables other than policy ideas. It isn't just about the political party; it is about who represent the party as well (O'Brien, 2019).

### **1.3 Review of Literature**

An abundance of literature and diverse studies have been conducted on the underrepresentation of females in politics and the understanding of the issues that are causing less participation of females in political affairs around the world. To know the current image of female politicians, it is important to take a look at the previous literature to see the shift in people's perception and expectation about female representation in politics that created the image of female politicians over the years. It is also required to understand the concept of the image of a politician and the factors that shape the image of a politician. Later in this section, the existing literature addressing the political representation of women in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Nepal has been reviewed.

#### **1.3.1 Perceived Image of a Politician**

According to Lilleker, image is the public representation of a political entity who might be a leader, a candidate in an election, or a political party (Darren, 2006). The representation that viewers perceive about the politician who is serving the public interest is the intersection point of the messages which the politician delivers and how he/she behaves on one hand and the expectation that the public has from the politician on the other hand (Trent et al., 2011). This expectation is also denoted by 'prior beliefs' that help people to make sense of what they are perceiving in the present based on past experience (Trafton, 2019). By construct, the image exists in

the heads/the mind of the audience, but it is based on the ability of the individuals to decode the messages and to interpret the behavior of politicians (Sharlamanov & Jovanoski, 2014). This indicates that perception is playing a key role to build the image as according to psychology, perception refers to the way sensory information is organized, interpreted, and consciously experienced (Schacter et al., 2010). Based on the performance of the politician, the experience people gather when receiving the service and their satisfaction about the service delivery can influence the image of a politician. And this service satisfaction is influenced by the perception that people have in mind about the politician, the expectation that people have from the politician based on past experience, and the actual output of the performance by the politician.

The image of the political entities is not an accidental mixture of circumstances, something given, something that appears by itself (Sharlamanov & Jovanoski, 2014). Image building is a process that involves more than one factor. Rein, Kotler, and Stoller (1987) indicated that in order to build the image of a politician, primarily it would be recognition of politicians by the citizen which is also the most important step and the next step would trust which citizens should have in the politician (Rein et al., 1987). The performance of a politician needs to be recognized according to Rein and Kotler to start the process of image building and then trust needs to be built up to create an image.

The authenticity of political and administrative institutions and actors depends largely on trust (Christensen & Laegreid, 2005). According to them, in a democratic system, citizens choose their representatives with the trust that their sovereignty will be handled properly. To relate trust with people's satisfaction with public services, it can be seen from the perspective of performance which can be broader or narrower (Bouckaert & Van de Walle, 2001). The narrower performance involves micro factors as in how individual citizens perceive the performance of specific public services based on their own experiences and it is assessed in relation to their political involvement and social position that means political and demographic factors (Christensen & Laegreid, 2005). So, to build the image of a politician these micro factors play an important role as these are associated with measuring trust. If trust varies with the



level of service satisfaction and in relation to demographic factors then these might play a significant role to build the image of a politician.

To understand the image of female politicians, in which stage of the image-building process females now needed to be figured out. Following Rein, Kotler, and Stoller (1987), the literature on recognition of females in politics and trust in female politicians is being reviewed.

### **1.3.2 Recognition of Female as Politicians**

Research on women's representation in politics escalated dramatically in the past 20 years when the world witnessed a divergent level of formal political participation of women both across and within countries (Paxton et al., 2007). It is very recent that women got recognition in formal politics as till the beginning of the twentieth century, in many countries it was an established belief for women that politics was a man's domain (Harkess et al., 1988). The role of women had a traditional stereotypical concept that originated from childhood socialization that used to define women's roles as limited as it did not go beyond the private sphere of home and family and in the case of men, the public sphere was assigned for them where politics was also included (Kearney, 1981). To gain formal recognition as politicians, history shows that women had to go through phases of a political movement to claim a seat on the table with men.

The 19<sup>th</sup> century witnessed a distinguishable shift in ideas at the social philosophy level regarding gender relations. At this time, there was a shift in the traditional idea of 'natural' male supremacy to achieve a 'modern' notion of gender equity (Marsh, 2013). The works of literature on that period show that in the US women started to fight for their rights when they were denied seats in the World-Anti Slavery convention because of their sex ("Seneca falls convention"). And in Europe, though it was the era of Queen Victoria, in general, the women had to face cultural limitations that did not allow them to engage in public speaking or hold 'male occupation' (Rosenberg, 1973).

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, though few states gave women voting rights that too came with a lot of conditions. Yet, this century saw some remarkable female politicians (Baker, 2016) as some of the parties' allocated seats to women which proved that the active movement by women activists was recognized by the society, especially men, and from there the process of building the image of females as politicians started. Though this modern notion of equity brought changes to important legal, educational, professional, and personal aspects, the goal of that notion was far off from achievement as by 1901 gender equality remained almost as utopian as in 1800 (Marsh, 2013). The image that was created back then gave an idea that sexes might be 'equal but different'.

It was at the beginning of the 20th century when women claimed a civic identity regardless of privilege, wealth, or class through the suffrage movement for the first time in history (Galligan, 2010). But according to Baker, women's suffrage did not produce upending status for women nor a wave of new legislation as the established gender norms created obstacles. For example, women's most reliable path to the political arena was to fill the slot of a late husband (Baker,2016). In fact, the first females to enter politics had to face gender stereotypes. For example, the first women in cabinet secretaries were given the post connected with social welfare (Baker,2016). It shows that, though females were recognized to join in politics the image of a female politician was influenced by the traditionally established perceptions and people's expectations from female politicians were different from that of male politicians as they perceived female politicians had traits like women which was very different from the traits of male politicians (Schneider & Bos, 2013). That means people were looking for masculinity as a trait in politicians. Until World War II, women's political rights were not legally sanctioned and formally recognized without significant restriction (Paxton et al., 2007). A decisive break came in the 1960s when Sri Lanka became the first country in the modern world to elect a female as the head of the government (Kearney, 1981). The feminist movement within a decade saw its outcome when the world witnessed women nominees in major parties in the 1980s (Baker,2016). By 2000, women's engagement with politics resulted in the adoption of some form of gender quota in many European and Latin American countries and also in a range of

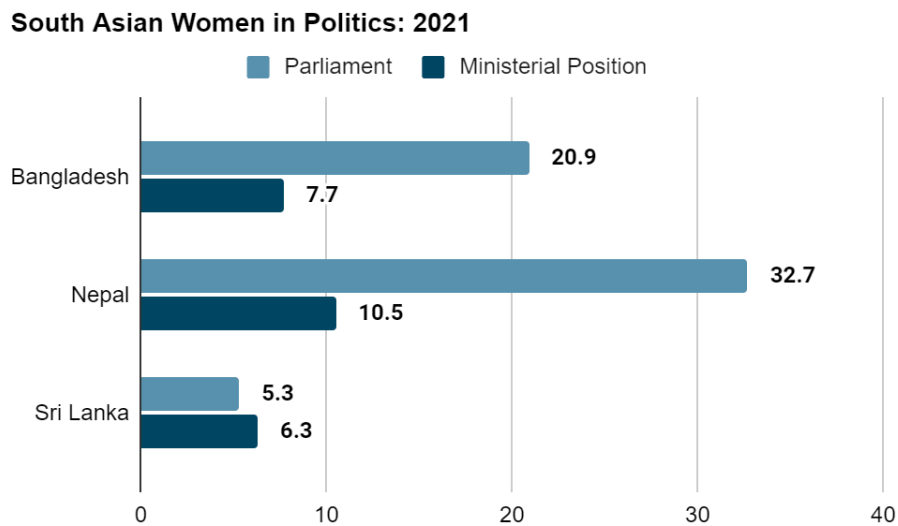
countries in Asia (Galligan, 2010). It shows that, by the beginning of the 21st century, the perceptions about female politicians changed when people saw them performing. Based on their experience with the females as their representatives and the service that they received that might create expectations. In the process of image building, the primary step which is recognition was achieved within the end 20<sup>th</sup> century, when the political representation of women was fully recognized.

### **1.3.3 Female Politicians in South Asia**

Even though South Asia witnessed some of the most powerful female politicians in the world, the overall political participation by women remains abysmal (Omvedt, 2005). Region-wise, women occupied only 11.83 percent of ministerial positions, and 17.5 percent in national parliaments on average combining all the 8 countries of South Asia (UN Women, 2020). The obstacles to gender parity in politics are deeply implanted in South Asian social and cultural patterns which are heavily influenced by patriarchy (Omvedt, 2005). In South Asia, the female leaders who made it to the top, most of them came in on a dynastic basis or as icons from famous political families starting from Sirimavo Bandaranaike, first Prime Minister of Sri Lanka and the world, Indira Gandhi, the first and only Prime Minister of India, Benazir Bhutto, the first female head of state of a Muslim nation from Pakistan and Sheikh Hasina, the longest-tenured Prime Minister of Bangladesh (Bukhari, 2021). This gives an idea that these women own their identity to the men who they are representing as they came as a part of the patriarchal spectrum. Women in politics do not only represent the citizens, but they also represent other women by portraying the issues that affect women's life on behalf of general women (Mastracci, 2017). The absence of a continuous wave of females participating in politics even after seeing females in the top position creates a dilemma about the image of female politicians in the South Asia region. It is evident that females got proper recognition as politicians but in terms of the trust, it may vary due to diversified demography, economy, and social heterogeneity (Véron, 2008).

Both Bangladesh and Sri Lanka have the experience of being ruled by females as heads of government. Nepal has also witnessed the first female as the head of state. But

according to UN Women, in ministerial positions Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Nepal have only 7.7 percent, 6.3 percent, and 10.5 percent female representatives respectively and in parliament, the percentage is 20.9, 5.3, and 32.7 respectively (UN Women, 2020). In the case of Bangladesh, women are still victims of violence against women, child marriage, discrimination in the job sector such as the wage gap, and other gender-based inequalities which are affecting women’s participation in politics (Tithi, 2019). In Sri Lanka, the concept of women having roles involving responsibilities for the household and children tends to restrict the political participation of women (Kearney, 1981). And women in Nepal have been victims of high levels of poverty, social exclusion, and marginalization because of their gender (ADB, 2016). It shows that demographic factors play a key role in understanding the perception of women in these countries.



**Figure 1: Women in Parliament and Ministerial Position**

### 1.3.4 Trustworthiness of Female Politicians

Though by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, females have fully arrived on political ground, till yet there is no hope that females can achieve gender parity in politics anytime soon (UN Women, 2021). To achieve gender parity a number of initiatives have been taken by the United Nations and individual states. According to UN Women, to achieve

Sustainable Development Goal 2030, it is essential to achieve equal participation of women in political and public life. In the last 15 years, many states have adopted gender quotas or formulated party rules that require a certain percentage of female candidates to attain gender balance in state politics (Galligan,2010). Half of the world population is constituted by women, but they are acquiring less than a quarter of membership in national parliaments globally (Sharma, 2020).

**Table 1: World and Regional Average of Female Politicians**

| <b>World Averages</b>        | <b>Single House or Lower House<br/>24.9%</b> | <b>Upper House or Senate<br/>24.7%</b> | <b>Both House Combined<br/>24.9%</b> |
|------------------------------|--|--|--------------------------------------|
| <b>Regional Averages</b>     |  |  |                                      |
| Nordic Countries             | 43.9%  | -                                      | -                                    |
| Americas                     | 31.1%  | 32.1%                                  | 31.3%                                |
| Europe                       | 28.7%  | 29.1%                                  | 28.8%                                |
| Sub-Saharan Africa           | 24.4%  | 24.1%                                  | 24.4%                                |
| <b>Asia</b>                  | <b>20.5%</b>                                 | <b>16.7%</b>                           | <b>20.0%</b>                         |
| Middle East and North Africa | 17.5%  | 10.8%                                  | 16.6%                                |
| Pacific                      | 16.6%  | 43.8%                                  | 19.4%                                |

Research revealed that women politicians are more likely to cooperate and endorse social values that encourage the welfare of others and hardly support unethical decisions relative to men (Goethals & Hoyt, 2017). Still, women are facing prejudice as political representatives because people tend to assume that the trait of a politician is masculine (Galligan, 2010). A gender stereotype is an overamplified belief or idea about the behavior trait of males and females that is perceived by most people in a society and learned in the course of growing up and socialization (Turska-Kawa & Olszanecka-Marmola, 2018). This perception might affect the level of trust in female politicians compared to male politicians. The study also shows that women face cultural barriers to participate in politics even though they have made gains in

employment or education in many countries (Galligan, 2010). This shows that demography has a role to play to create the image of a female politician. The perception that has been created over the years regarding females is now influencing the image of females as politicians. Though from the study it is not clear if the performance of female politicians is affecting the level of trust in them as people's representatives.

According to Orzekauskas and Smaiziane, to understand the current image it is needed to analyze the factors that participate in the construction of the image (Sharlamanov & Jovanoski, 2014). In the process of building image, the primary step of 'recognition of a politician' has been achieved by females but the second step which is trust in politicians needs further study. Based on the performance of female politicians, how the service is being perceived by the people belonging to different demography that might affect the level of trust in female politicians will be the focus of the study. And the result will help to understand the current image of female politicians.

A plethora of studies has been conducted on the reasons for the underrepresentation of women in politics. The perception that has been created regarding women in these countries might influence the image of females as political representatives. To understand this image, further study will be conducted on variation in trust based on the performance of female politicians in relation to demographic factors.

#### **1.4 Significance of Study**

1. The study will help to capture people's perceptions about female politicians in South Asia (Bangladesh, Nepal & Sri Lanka) in general.
2. The study will reveal if the performance of female politicians has been able to build trust in them or if the public prefers males with the job of politics - will show a bigger picture of these facts.
3. Factors that affect people's expectations of female politicians can be studied from this research.

4. If people's perceptions about female politicians and expectations from them can be treated as major hurdles which make it hard for females to enter politics or reach the topmost position without any dynastic influence.
5. Understanding the trustworthiness of female politicians will give an idea about the prospect of females as political representatives in South Asia.

### **1.5 Research Objective**

The objective of the study is to provide a better understanding of the trustworthiness of female politicians in Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka based on their performance and social factors that might play a role in bringing variation in the perceived image of female politicians in these countries. Even if females have acquired the highest position in all three states, they are not politically empowered yet. The reason behind that will be figured out by evaluating the trust of people in existing female politicians.

### **1.6 Research Questions**

Based on the research objectives, the research questions have been designed.

1. What factors are affecting the trustworthiness of female politicians in Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka?

At first, the researcher will try to find out the reaction of mass people on the trustworthiness of female politicians in Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. The perceived image of female politicians by the citizens can draw a picture of the trustworthiness of female politicians. Some relevant factors will be determined to measure the variation in trust and its effect on the trustworthiness of the female politician. After figuring out the relevance of the factor, the researcher will try to analyze the significance of the relevant factors that might affect the trustworthiness of female politicians in respective countries.

## **1.7 Methodology**

This part of the paper intends to cover the type of research and the data collection method and the statistical tools that have been used to analyze the hypotheses. The primary data that has been used for this research were collected from a mass survey that was conducted in three phases and the third phase data has been taken for study. The survey was conducted under the South Asian Institute of Policy and Governance in Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. The third phase of this Trust Survey was conducted in 2020 and it covered 6,240 respondents that included people from diversified backgrounds. For further study and justification of the research data have been collected from secondary sources like published literature, books, and the internet as well. To study the relationship between citizens and female politicians a mass survey seems to be more fruitful for getting more accurate results. The research is quantitative in nature as it involves analyzing the quantitative data to get the ultimate outcome.

## **1.8 Limitation**

1. The survey data is not the most recent one as the last survey was conducted in 2020.
2. Due to situation constraints, the study could not add interviews. Interviews from previous researchers and female politicians could make the paper more interesting.
3. The study is one-sided as only the citizen or general people's experience has been considered and the experience of female politicians has not been included in the study.
4. The study does not show the picture of entire South Asia as a major demographic like India has not been included in the study.

The limitations of this study may give scopes for future research which may give different perspectives on the topic.



## **Chapter 2: Theoretical Foundation and Analytical Framework**

### **2.1 Trust Theory in Political Leadership**

The importance of trust in government has been acknowledged, at least since Confucius concluded that the ability to rule rests on the basis of arms, food, and trust (Newton et al., 2018). Institutional and personal factors play a role in public trust. People may have faith in both the system as a whole and individual actors they meet or watch, which may include both central government leaders and actors in the administration and public service field. Another possibility is to have faith in the political-democratic system as a whole, but mistrust in current leaders or other political figures. This mistrust may be focused on stereotypes or symbols, such as "distrust fashions" promoted by the media, or on personal negative interactions with government officials. People can trust some political and administrative leaders because of their accomplishments or leadership qualities, but not because of the political-administrative system's institutional factors. The fourth factor is mistrust of both the system as a whole and individual government officials. (Christensen & Laegreid, 2005). Psychology says that trust is a core personality characteristic of individuals. There is an argument that "trust and mistrust are learned in early life and only challenging experience and trauma will change them later in life" (Allport, 1961; Cattell, 1965; Erikson, 1950; Rosenberg, 1956,1957).

Based on the theories, it can be assumed that as females are already in the political scene and have occupied positions in parliament and political parties that means those who have been serving have gained the trust of citizens as trust is one of the most vital components of leadership as said above. But the less participation of female politicians and their constant absence in the political system makes us think about the factors that are affecting the perception about the female politicians in relation to the level of trust. To understand the trustworthiness of female politicians it is important

to know the level of trust and the factors that influence the level of trust in female politicians.

Trust is described as a readiness of one party (trustor) to be vulnerable to another party (trustee) based on the trustor's positive expectations of the trustee's intentions or actions (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995; Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt, & Camerer, 1998). This is the rational choice of the individual to who he/she wants to trust. In the literature, there are two main viewpoints on the concept of trust in the leader-follower relationship when making the choices: one is the character-based viewpoint, and the other is the relationship-based viewpoint (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). Followers try to capture inferences about the leader's qualities such as honesty, reliability, fairness, and ability, and these inferences have implications for followers' readiness to be vulnerable to their leaders, according to the character-based viewpoint (e.g., Mayer et al., 1995). Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman developed a model to understand the viewpoint, which is known as the ability, benevolence, integrity (ABI) model. This ABI model was developed to measure trust at the inter-personal level. Trust is a product of the social exchange mechanism, which goes beyond traditional economic exchange, from a relationship-based viewpoint (Brower, Schoorman, & Tan, 2000). This relationship-based trust can be explained by non-calculative rational choice theory where a trustor can choose who he/she wants to trust judging by the level of trustworthiness of the trustee to form a relationship or cultural values and norms based on which they build the relationship.

Now from this viewpoint, it can be said that, to build trust a political leader must possess some quality that will give a positive vibe about that leader's character irrespective of gender. And their effectiveness as a leader may give an idea about their image in relation to trust. As trust also involves a social exchange between followers and leaders, it is also possible that the gender of the leader, presumption, and pre-perception about him/her might affect the trustworthiness of the leader. Based on that, in the next section hypotheses have been developed to understand the level of trust in relation to the effectiveness of and social factors that might influence the image of female politicians.

When it comes to trust in the government and political system, trust comes in two forms- social trust and political trust (Newton et al., 2018). Political and social trust encourage active participation and the successful delivery of public services, minimize tax evasion, make it easier for political losers to consent, and pave the way for political consensus and compromise. To narrow it down, only the political form of trust is taken as a mediating variable in this study. That means to understand the image, the influence of political trust will be measured in relation to female politicians.

In much of the literature on contemporary democratic theory, the principle of political trust plays an important role (Cole, 1973). The theoretical and functional consequences of political trust for a democratic society have been discussed by Aberbach and Walker. They argued that the presence of distrustful people is an obstacle to the realization of the "democratic concept" on a normative level. In practice, they concluded that leaders in a representative democracy cannot succeed until they have earned citizens' trust. "Destructive conflict and a breakdown in the social order are possible if distrustful groups are refused access to decision-makers, or if structures are too rigid to reform," they mentioned (Aberbach & Walker, 1970). In a similar vein, Iglitzin claims that the system trusts "endanger those who are peaceful and able to help the system. When the faith is replaced by apathy, distrust, and skepticism, it takes very little to transform these attitudes into uncontrollable conduct." (Iglitzin, 1972). In the South Asian context, political trust is an important element as the performance of politicians and government in democratic countries affects the level of trust immensely as the political situation remains unstable most of the time and the countries need to deal with poverty, economic inequality, multiculturalism, and people with a variety of demographic features.

## **2.2 Rational Choice Theory**

The traditional definition of rational choice is "the process of determining what options are available and then selecting the most desired option based on some consistent criterion" (Levin & Milgrom, 2004). As it was proposed by Mayer, Davis, and

Schoorman that trust in a trustee is based on the trustor's willingness to trust (Mayer et al., 1995), here comes the trust that is built on a rational choice framework when a trustee can exercise their free will to trust a trustee based on their relationship with the trustee, or by judging the trustee's trustworthiness (Cofta, 2019). Adam Smith developed the Rational Choice theory back in 1776 and gradually got new dimensions over time. Rational choice theory is the standard economic model in the case of decision-making (Levin & Milgrom, 2004). This theory is helpful in understanding an individual's behavior in any specific field as the basis of the theory is that based on one's preference, the individual makes the choice (Levin & Milgrom, 2004). It is the decision of a trustor who he/she wants to trust based on his/her preference. As trusting someone is a decision-making process, a rational choice model is thus applied to trust as well. The rational choice theory does not explain the reason behind trusting an individual rather it tries to explain the reason people learn to trust each other (Dowding, 2001). This learning process is the outcome of repeated interactions with an individual or seeing that individual interacting with others (Dowding, 2001). So based on the relationship with the trustee and factors that might affect the perception of the trustee, a trustee can decide if he/she wants to trust the trustee.

In politics, the rational choice theory is applicable to understand the voting behavior of the citizen, how they perceive the actions of politicians or institutions or how they handle political issues (Colquitt et al., 2000). Other than that, the cultural and social factors also can affect the rational choice of an individual. The way an individual is leading life, his/her personal preferences, cultural orientation can influence the choices he/she makes (Baniamin, 2019). So, it might be possible that the choices of an individual might affect the way he/she judges the trustworthiness of a trustee. In the study of the trustworthiness of female politicians, the rational choice theory is applicable to understand if the choices of the citizens affect their judgment about the trustworthiness of female politicians.

Historical institutionalists and sociological institutionalists both have a concept of preferred choices. To explain human activities, historical institutionalists adopt two approaches: the calculative method and the cultural approach. Human acts, according

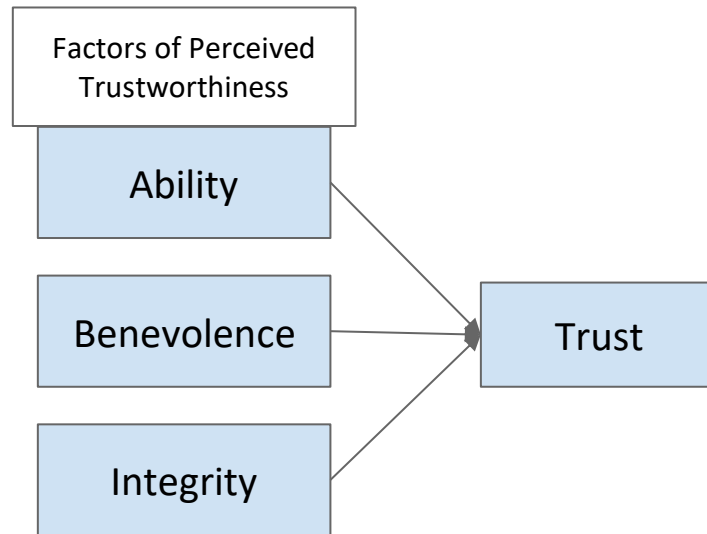
to the calculative view, are instrumental and based on a strategic cost-benefit analysis. The cultural perspective, on the other hand, suggests that human acts are restricted by an individual's worldview rather than being totally strategic (Baniamin, 2019). The previous literature on participation of females in politics mostly show the cultural perspective as politics or the public life of the polity has been assumed to be a natural realm for men, whereas the "natural" sphere for women has been thought to be private which makes them ineligible for political roles (Richter, 1990). This bias in decision making regarding the role of females as politicians is very apparent if we look at the number of females in politics.

Other than the cultural perspective, it is essential to study the calculative view of rational choices and find out if it is applicable for female politicians or it is only dominated by the cultural perspective. The ABI model by Mayer, Davis and Schoorman (1995) can explain the calculative view of rational choice as it suggests a trustee should be trusted if he/she has the characteristics which are considered to be the factors of perceived trustworthiness (Svare et al., 2019). It is expected that the calculative view should have more impact than the non-calculative view when judging the trustworthiness of female politicians.

### **2.3 ABI-Model of Trust**

The variation in the level of trust can be explained by referring to the trustworthiness of a trustee perceived by a trustor (Colquitt et al., 2007). According to Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman, it can be understood by the ABI model. This model has been used in multiple studies and gained worldwide acceptance (Baer & Colquitt, 2018). Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman proposed that Trust in a trustee is based on the trustor's willingness to trust and the trustee's perceived ability, benevolence, and integrity (Mayer et al., 1995). It depends on the attributes of the trustee if that given party is capable of being trusted or not. The model has identified three characteristics of a

trustee as Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman believed this set of characteristics can explain a major portion of trustworthiness.



**Figure 2: Ability, Benevolence, Integrity Model (ABI-Model) of Trust**

As defined, Ability is “that group of skills, competencies, and characteristics that enable a party to have influence within some specific domain” (Mayer et al., 1995). That means in one domain a person might be an expert with high ability and in another domain a person might be less effective which means low ability. If a trustee does not have the required ability to perform a particular job then it might make him/her less trustworthy related to that job (Svare et al., 2019).

Benevolence is defined as “the extent to which a trustee is believed to want to do good to the trustor, aside from an egocentric profit motive” (Mayer et al., 1995). When someone wants to be helpful without expecting any rewards it shows the benevolence of that individual. Hence, this characteristic has a positive orientation when creating a perception of trustee towards trustor (Mayer et al., 1995).

To explain Integrity Mayer, Davis and Schoorman mentioned that “the relationship between integrity and trust involves the trustor's perception that the trustee adheres to a set of principles that the trustor finds acceptable” (Mayer et al., 1995). However, it depends on the trustor if he/she considers the trustee to have integrity based on

the acceptability of the set of principles that defines personal integrity (Mayer et al., 1995).

ABI model can be executed to study the trustworthiness of female politicians based on the performance variables which can portray the ability, benevolence, and integrity of female politicians. If the female politicians and the political system they are associated with show a better performance by fulfilling expectations of citizens then the level of trust in female politicians should be higher. To compare with non-calculative views, cultural and socio-economic factors are also included in the study.

## **2.4 Analytical Framework**

Some theories claim that in countries with good governance, national wealth, economic equality, and inclusive social relations, the political trust would be high and positively linked. As per this viewpoint, inefficient governance, income equality, and culture divided by social cleavages are likely to result in low trust throughout the country. In some other theories, political trust is object specific. In general, trust involves a risk that the trustee will not break their trust and that makes them change their sense of trust depending on the experience with the trustee which also gives them the sense of who to trust in what situation (Newton et al., 2018). For example, a citizen can trust a male politician with a certain task, but the same citizen might struggle to trust a female politician with that same task.

Now following these theories, the political situation, economic inequality, social and cultural division in Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka indicate that citizens are supposed to have low trust in the political system. Not necessarily this low trust has to be applicable for the entire political system. As discussed before, the low trust might be applicable only for political actors but not in the political system. And the gender of the actor plays a vital role in such circumstances. Mohammad and Othman stated the image of a party is a crucial factor in gaining public confidence in politics. In

the eyes of the public, how do you appear? What do your voters see or rather how do they see you or your party when they look at you or your party? The term 'you' in this context refers to both the party and its leaders. It alludes to the party's representatives to some degree (Mohamad & Othman, 2020). Trustworthiness and reliability are usually the product of successful policies and performance initiated or implemented by the government's representative or party. These programs were beneficial to both the country and its people. People believed that the leadership and its party deserved to be given the chance to govern the country because they are trustworthy, and the country would benefit from their leadership.

Political trust is strongly intertwined with leadership effectiveness (Mustafa & Nazir, 2018). People could only see their leaders as either successful or ineffective. This is where the study of leadership success plays a crucial role in political leadership research. The research on different leadership styles serves as a good starting point for learning more about leadership success (Knies et. al, 2016). That means trust differs based on the performance of government and political leaders. If the performance is poor the trust will be low and if the performance meets the expectations of citizens they will perceive the representative as a good leader. And this has to be applied irrespective of gender. In South Asia, though females have to break social and political barriers to play the role of a political representative, to gain political trust they have to put on a good performance by being an efficient leader and by being transparent. Even if the government's overall performance is poor, the politician can still win the trust of its citizens by his/her performance.

To understand trustworthiness, it is required to measure the level of trust based on the performance of female politicians. This might come out as a positive result which will show that citizens are happy with the performance. They find female politicians are effective and transparent which makes them trustworthy as political leaders and creates a positive image as well. It might also happen that citizens are not happy with the performance as they find male politicians more effective in this job than female politicians which makes the female politicians less trustworthy as politicians and also create a negative image as well.

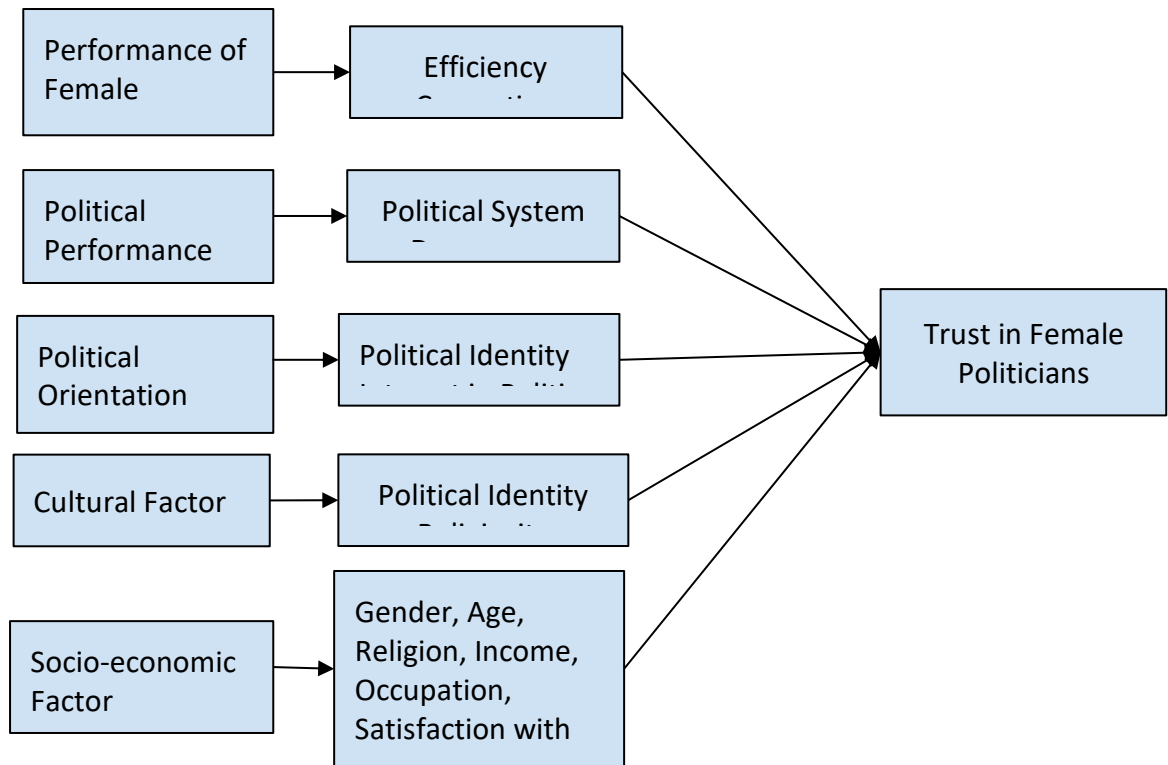


Several studies have found a connection among a variety of socio-economic factors, socio-political factors, and political trust. Agger and his colleagues discovered that age had an independent influence on political dissatisfaction in their Oregon research and that the elderly "is the most politically pessimistic" (Agger et al.,1961). Agger discovered "that the well-educated have a higher level of political confidence than the less well-educated. When Agger looked at two "social class metrics," he discovered that those with higher educational attainments are more likely to be trusting than those with lower scores on the two scales. Milbrath discovered a strong propensity for those in the upper age groups to be the least trusting, even though education and other demographic characteristics were regulated (Milbrath, 1965). Using data from a Detroit study, Aberbach and Walker discovered that race has an effect on political confidence, with blacks being less trusting than whites (Aberbach & Walker, 1970). A study of Nashville data by McDill and Ridley revealed a clear correlation between class and alienation. "Low social status is likely to lead to anomie and political alienation," they concluded (Ridley & McDill,1962). Similarly, Lineberry and Sharkansky concluded that "lower-income people are the most unhappy with governments and policies," and "some research indicates that many working-class voters are alienated," according to the study (Lineberry & Sharkansky, 1978).

It is very evident that social factors can affect the level of political trust to some extent. In South Asia, where the population is almost one-fifth of the world's total population, social, economic, cultural, and demographic diversification are very noticeable. The social factors have significant roles to play when it comes to determining the image of female politicians across the region. Gender inequality in this area is influenced by large inequalities in region, caste, age, and income (UNICEF, South Asia). Studies by the United Nations show that gender differences persist in all South Asian countries due to patriarchal traditions and social norms. Though most of the South Asian countries including Bangladesh and Sri Lanka have witnessed females as state heads most of them come from dynastic families as stated before. And the gender disparity in politics and the Sustainable Development Goal of women's equal participation gives us an actual picture of the status of women in general in this region.

Though previous research has found a dynamic relationship between social context and trust in government institutions, as well as the fact that demographic variables are not seen as significant determinants of political trust (Christensen & Laegreid, 2005). But in the case of female politicians and considering the region, the result might be different. Patriarchy is so deeply embedded in South Asian culture that every woman who wishes to speak up for her rights is shamed by the majority of people and taught to remain quiet and suffer in order to protect the dignity of her family, community, religion, and even the country (Deutsche Welle). So, it will not be surprising if people coming from different age groups, educational backgrounds, income statuses, religions have different perceptions about females participating in politics and acting as a representative.

Hence, the image of female politicians can vary due to variation in political trust in relation to social factors. Even women themselves might find it inconvenient to participate in politics due to the social barriers and there is a possibility that both men and women might judge the female politicians as they want to see them doing household chores rather than representing as political leaders.



**Figure 3: Analytical Framework**

In the next section, the research design and the independent variables will be discussed to test the hypothesis. The aim of the hypotheses would be to find the variation in the perceived image of female politicians by the citizens based on their performance and relevant social factors in relation to political trust as mediator variables.

## 2.5 Research Design and Variables

The research design covers two sets of independent variables- performance and social factors. Here, the image of female politicians is a dependent variable and political trust is the mediating variable. The independent factors are expected to affect the level of political trust which eventually affects the image of female politicians. To understand the image at first, trust needs to be measured. Hence the path between independent and dependent variables would be connected through the mediating variable. Now the justification behind the independent variables will be discussed.

**Table 2: Independent Variables**

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Performance of Female Politicians</b> | <b>Efficiency of Female Politicians</b> |
|  | <b>Corruption by Female Politicians</b> |
| <b>Political Performance</b>             | <b>Political System</b>                 |
|  | <b>Democracy</b>                        |
| <b>Political Orientation</b>             | <b>Political Identity</b>               |
|  | <b>Interest in Politics</b>             |
| <b>Cultural Factor</b>                   | <b>Religiosity</b>                      |
| <b>Socio-economic Factors</b>            | <b>Age</b>                              |
|  | <b>Gender</b>                           |
|  | <b>Religion</b>                         |
|  | <b>Education</b>                        |
|  | <b>Income</b>                           |
|  | <b>Satisfaction with Life</b>           |

### **2.5.1 Performance Variables**

The set of performance variables involves three independent variables. The goal is to understand the trust of female politicians based on their performance which shapes their image as politicians to the citizens. The efficiency of female politicians and involvement in corruption variables have been chosen to measure the variation in trust in relation to their performance. Citizens' satisfaction with the efficiency of female politicians indicates that the level of trust would be higher in them, and the perceived image would be a positive one. For any leader, it is important to prove their efficiency which gives them the edge to become a representative. If citizens are satisfied with the efficiency of the politician that means the politician has the ability to fulfill the expectations of the citizen and the politician is benevolent enough to serve the citizens. That would certainly build trust between the citizen and the politician which helps to understand the trustworthiness of that politician.

The other independent variable in the set of performance variables is the female politician's involvement in corruption. This variable deals with character-based trust. Transparency, fairness, and integrity increase the willingness of followers to trust their leaders as stated in trust in leadership theory. So, this variable is important to understand the trustworthiness of female politicians as an indication of corruption can play a vital role to bring variation in the level of political trust.

### **2.5.2 Political Performance**

This set of variables is to find out if the citizens' perception about the performance of the government can influence their judgment of the trustworthiness of female politicians. As female politicians are part of the system, it is possible that a citizen can judge a female politician by her affiliation with the existing political system. If a citizen is not satisfied with the political system, the affiliation with such a system might affect the trustworthiness of female politicians. The situation can be reversed as well. Satisfaction with the political system might give the female politician an extra advantage even if she does not perform up to the mark. So, it is possible that the political system might affect the trustworthiness of female politicians indirectly.

The other independent variable belonging to this set is satisfaction with democracy. This variable is to find out if the satisfaction with democracy has an effect on the trustworthiness of female politicians. Democracy is a vital factor to judge political performance. If the representatives of the state cannot ensure democracy then it is obvious that citizens will not trust the system and the actors involved with the system. So it might be possible that the trustworthiness of female politicians might be affected by the citizens' satisfaction with democracy. To understand the trustworthiness of female politicians, the importance of these independent variables cannot be ignored.

### **2.5.3 Political Orientation**

The importance of political identity and interest in politics these two variables are considered to identify the political orientation of an individual. The importance of political identity might influence the judgment of the trustworthiness of female politicians. People to whom political identity is important might have strong opinions about the political system and the performance of the actors involved with the system. Their political identity might influence their decision to trust the politician coming from a specific party. Hence, the trustworthiness of female politicians might be affected following this logic.

The other variable is the interest of an individual in politics. Those who are interested in politics are more aware of the performance of politicians and their impact as representatives. So, their perception of female politicians should be taken into consideration to measure the level of trust. To make the study more reliable this variable has been included in understanding the trustworthiness of female politicians.

### **2.5.4 Cultural Factor**

The cultural factor is to consider the values or ideologies of a particular individual. The values or ideologies that one carries are considered personal preferences. It is human nature that a person tends to trust someone who he/she can relate to on the same ground. It might be possible that people judge trustworthiness on the basis of cultural similarities. The cultural factor is considered as the religiosity of an individual. People who believe being religious is important might have conservativeness in them when judging the trustworthiness of female politicians. It is a very common scenario that barriers for women have been created in the name of religion. So the people who think religiosity is an important aspect of life might not trust women as political leaders despite their ability. Hence cultural factors might have a strong influence on the trustworthiness of female politicians.

### **2.5.5 Socio-economic Factors**

This set of variables involves socio-demographic factors. The reason for choosing a social position and demographic features as independent variables is the relevance of these factors might be used to understand the long-term trends in confidence in female politicians. As mentioned before in theory, gender, age, education, occupation, income, religion these factors have been proved to be relevant in measuring political trust. For example, a person with more education is supposed to have more knowledge about gender equality and more awareness about women's empowerment as well as should have better knowledge about politics.

The other demographic factors like gender may show that women are more confident about female politicians than men. In a conservative society, men may not like the participation of females in politics which can definitely affect the level of trust and also help to understand how they perceive the image of female politicians. Another variable is the income of the citizen. It can be assumed that those who have a good income might trust the government and the government actors because of their satisfaction with life. And here the job is to find out if this is relevant when the government actors are females. Similarly, the occupation sector also has a role to play as another variable to find out if employment in the public sector and private sector can affect the level of trust in female politicians. As currently in both sectors the quota system prevails, people's reaction to this might affect the level of trust if the political actor is female.

Religion is another social factor that might be relevant in measuring the trust in female leaders as with the level of religiosity the level of trust may differ when they see females as the political representative. The last variable is age. Generally, one would expect the older generation to be much conservative about the participation of females in politics as that's how society used to think during their time. Compared to that, the younger generation should be more open to the concept as they have been witnessing the change in perception about women in recent times. So the image of

female politicians to the younger generation is supposed to be more positive than the older generation.

Overall, the aim is to find out the relevance of performance variables and social factors in measuring the level of trust to understand the trustworthiness of female politicians and if the variables are relevant then how significant these would be in shaping the image of female politicians now and in the future.



## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

A researcher must create a methodology for the topic at hand in terms of finding the answers. The term "research methodology" refers to a methodical approach to solving a problem. It describes the processes for gathering and analyzing information on a given subject. There are various methods for conducting research, but qualitative and quantitative methods are the most prevalent and efficient. The study is based on primary data collected in Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka during a mass survey. A questionnaire was used to collect information. The questionnaire helped to acquire a deeper grasp of the respondent's perception as well as the trustworthiness of female politicians.

### **3.1 Research Method**

The study is quantitative in nature and the research is survey-based research. To define survey research, "the collection of information from a sample of individuals through their responses to questions" (Check & Schutt, 2011). To understand people's trust in female politicians, information was gathered by asking questions to mass people related to their views and preferences. It was a large population-based data collection that took place in Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. The responses were analyzed using statistical tools and to interpret the results secondary data were used in the research. This method is used to find out the significant and relevant factors that are affecting the trustworthiness of female politicians.

### **3.2 Study Area**

The study is based on the South Asia region, specifically on Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. All these countries have significant experience with female politicians as females are playing an important role in the political arena of these countries. So the study can give important insights into the trustworthiness of female politicians if citizens of this region share their views and opinion about their experiences with

female politicians. Multiple studies have been conducted on female politicians in South Asia but most of them are concentrated on India or country-specific studies. It is expected that this study will bring some new dimensions to this line of research.

### 3.3 Study Population

The population of this study consists of 6240 people who are considered to be the mass people. Among these 6240 samples, 2740 samples belong to Bangladesh, 2254 of the samples belong to Nepal, and 1244 samples belong to Nepal. These people come from all levels of society that include all age groups, every education level, every income level creating a diverse group of respondents.

### 3.4 Sample Characteristics

**Table 3: Demographic Profile of the Respondents**

| Demographic Variables |                                       | Country of Survey      |                   |                       |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
|                       |                                       | Bangladesh<br>(N=2740) | Nepal<br>(N=2254) | Sri Lanka<br>(N=1244) |
| Gender (%)            | Male                                  | 47                     | 52                | 50                    |
|                       | Female                                | 53                     | 48                | 50                    |
| Education (%)         | Up to Primary level                   | 49                     | 27                | 22                    |
|                       | Up to Higher Secondary level          | 39                     | 48                | 64                    |
|                       | Graduation and above                  | 12                     | 25                | 12                    |
| Age (%)               | Youth (From lowest up to 25-year-old) | 8                      | 20                | 16                    |
|                       | Middle age (From 26 up to 50)         | 68                     | 60                | 62                    |
|                       | Older (From 50 and above age)         | 24                     | 20                | 22                    |
| Religion (%)          | Muslim                                | 92                     | 5                 | 15                    |

|  |           |   |    |    |
|--|-----------|---|----|----|
|  | Hindu     | 7 | 86 | 28 |
|  | Buddhist  | 1 | 6  | 51 |
|  | Christian | 1 | 2  | 6  |
|  | Other     | 0 | 1  | 0  |

### 3.5 Data Collection Procedure

The quantitative data were collected by field survey. The sample population was asked to respond to the questionnaire based on their experience with female politicians. The questionnaire was developed by SIPG. In Bangladesh, the survey was monitored by North South University. In Nepal, the survey was monitored by Tribhuvan University and in Sri Lanka, the survey was monitored by the University of Peradeniya. All these involved institutions gathered diversified data to make the research more fruitful.

### 3.6 Data Scaling and Analysis

The quantitative data were collected from the field and the qualitative data were collected from secondary sources. The quantitative data is analyzed by using a statistical tool like SPSS and the data is presented using tables, charts, and graphs for a better understanding. The survey questions were mostly about rating a scale of their preference that was marked as low to high. The trust level has been measured in a Likert scale ranging from 1-10 scale, where 1 was 'very negative' to 10 being 'very positive'. For performance variables, to rate the efficiency of female politicians, a Likert scale of 1-10 was given where 1 was 'very inefficient' and 10 was 'very efficient' and to rate the involvement in corruption a Likert scale of 1-5 was given to rate from low to high. To rate the political performance by the political system and democracy the Likert scale ranged from 1-10 where 1 represented 'extremely negative' and 10 was 'extremely positive'. For political orientation, the importance of political identity was rated from 1 to 10, that is, low to high and to rate the interest in politics the scale given was 1 to 4 where 1 was 'not interested at all' and 4 was 'very interested'. For religiosity and satisfaction with life respondents rated on a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 represented low value and 10 was high.

To find out the relevant factors that might affect the trustworthiness of female politicians' data was analyzed through frequency distribution, one-way ANOVA, and Regression analysis. Univariate analysis is conducted through frequency distribution to show how the respondents are distributed. One-way ANOVA has been conducted to assess the mean variation of the level of trust among Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. And Regression analysis is to identify the relative significance and contribution of the explanatory variables in understanding the trustworthiness of female politicians.

### **3.7 Ethical Consideration**

As the survey was conducted at the field level and was monitored by the respective institutions in Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka, there is not supposed to be any question about the authenticity of the data. As the questions involved the personal interest and preference of the respondents so the information about the respondents was considered to be confidential and privacy was ensured to the respondents.

## **Chapter 4: Data Presentation and Analysis**

This chapter covers the relevant data that was collected through the SIPG Trust Survey in the third round and a detailed analysis of the data to find the relevant factors affecting the trustworthiness of female politicians. The quantitative data that was collected by asking survey questions in Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka has been analyzed using SPSS. The quantitative analysis has been adopted in this study to find the mean difference in explanatory variables among these three countries and to find the significant factors that are affecting the trustworthiness of female politicians in Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka.

At first, the general findings for dependent and independent variables based on the responses to survey questions have been discussed. In this part, both the combined outcomes and country-wise outcomes have been explained. Later on, the study performs analysis of variance (ANOVA)-based post-hoc analysis to get information about the statistically significant difference between the means of explanatory variables among the countries that are affecting the trustworthiness of female politicians. And finally, the study performs regression analysis to find out the significance of the variables affecting the trustworthiness of female politicians.

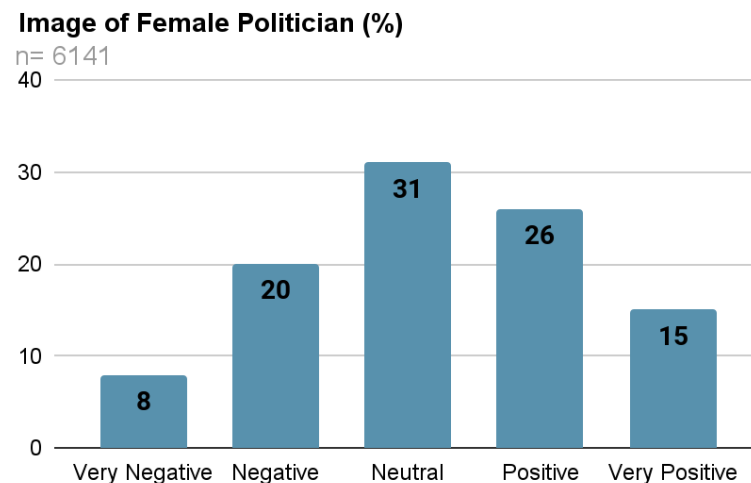
### **4.1 General Findings for Dependent and Independent Variables**

The survey questions were answered by 6240 respondents in a total of which 2740 were from Bangladesh, 2256 were from Nepal, 1244 were from Sri Lanka. The questions are related to the trustworthiness of female politicians based on their performance, quality of governance, culture, and social factors that cover the analytical framework's dependent and independent variables. The general findings need to be discussed to see how the respondents and responses are distributed and to understand the view of the respondents of respective countries about that particular variable based on their answers. The general findings are the result of the

univariate analysis done through frequency distribution of the responses which has been conducted using SPSS.

#### 4.1.1 Trustworthiness of Female Politicians

As it has been mentioned before that “trustworthiness” is being used as a synonym for “image” in this study. The question that was being asked to the citizens to understand the trustworthiness of female politicians in Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka was “What is your image of female politicians compared to male politicians?” The respondents rated the answer on a scale of 1 to 10 where ‘1’ being ‘very negative’ and ‘10’ being ‘very positive’. To interpret the responses, scale 1-2 stands for ‘very negative’, scale 3-4 stands for ‘negative’, scale 5-6 stands for ‘neutral’, scale 7-8 stands for positive and scale 9-10 stands for ‘very positive’.

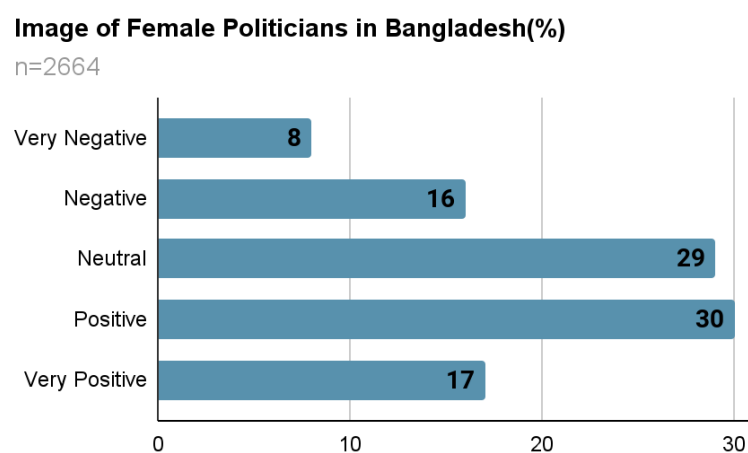


**Figure 4: Trustworthiness of Female Politicians**

From figure 4, the pooled sample shows that 26% of respondents have a positive image of female politicians while 15% of respondents hold a very positive image of female politicians. That means, 41% of the respondents believe that female politician is worthy of being trusted. On the other hand, 31% of respondents responded that the image of female politicians was ‘neutral’ to them compared to male politicians which means they did not have a definite opinion about the trustworthiness of female

politicians. It is also visible that 20% of respondents have a 'negative' image of female politicians and 8% of the respondents have a 'very negative' image of female politicians. This is the scenario in Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka combinedly which gives an overall idea about the perception of female politicians in these South Asian countries.

In a survey question, the scenarios that 'neutral' point might reflect- respondents might be ambivalent about a given issue or they do not have enough experience about the issue, or they just do not want to give a real opinion if that opinion is not socially acceptable (Mora, 2020). In the case of Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka, experience with female politicians should not be an issue as all these countries have been served by female politicians. So, the cause might be 31% of respondents were ambivalent or did not want to give a real opinion on how they perceive the image of female politicians. Now, the country-based study is needed to understand the views of the respondents on the image of female politicians to study the trustworthiness of female politicians in each country.



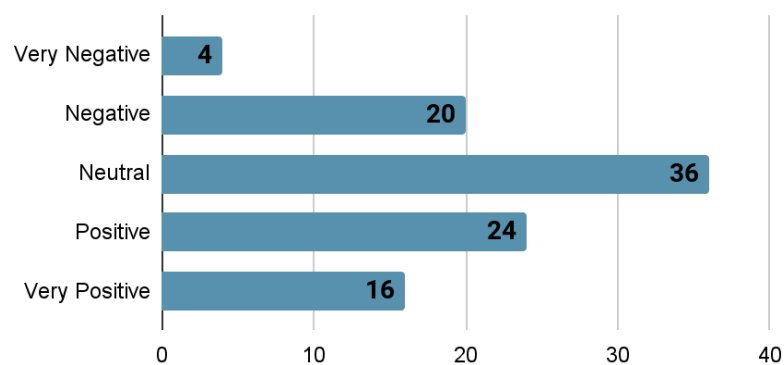
**Figure 5: Trustworthiness of Female Politicians in Bangladesh**

In Bangladesh, 2664 respondents answered the question "What is your image of female politicians compared to male politicians?" Among them, 30% of the respondents rated it as 'positive' and 17% of the respondents rated it 'very positive'. Despite having female political leaders as heads of the major political parties and

government for more than two decades, 29% of the respondents hold a ‘neutral’ image of female politicians. The survey shows that 16% of the respondents have a ‘negative’ image of female politicians and 8% of the respondents have a ‘very negative’ image of female politicians in Bangladesh. Overall, in Bangladesh, the image of female politicians is leaning towards positive compared to male politicians which means they believe that female politician is worthy of being trusted.

### Image of Female Politicians in Nepal (%)

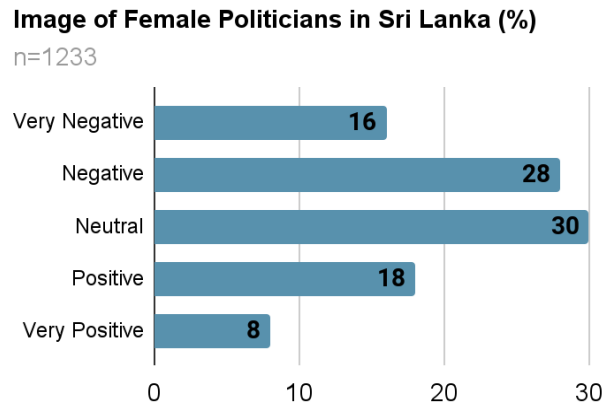
n=2244



**Figure 6: Trustworthiness of Female Politicians in Nepal**

In Nepal, 2244 respondents participated to share their views on the image of female politicians compared to male politicians. The data shows that 36% of the respondents were ‘neutral’ about the image of female politicians compared to male politicians. Even though Nepal tops the index of women in the national parliament for the last three years (IPU Parline, 2020), it is expected that respondents might have a clear image of female politicians by now. But 24% of the respondents are found to have a ‘positive’ image of female politicians and 16% of the respondents have a ‘very positive’ image of female politicians. That means 40% of the respondents are leaning towards the positive image of female politicians compared to male politicians. The rest 24% of the respondents are leaning towards a ‘negative’ to a ‘very negative’ image of female politicians. So, the data suggests that a higher percentage of people in Nepal trust females in the role of a politician.





**Figure 7: Trustworthiness of Female Politicians in Sri Lanka**

The survey data shows a different pattern in the case of Sri Lanka. Among 1233 people who responded to the question about the image of female politicians, 30% of the respondents rated their image of female politicians as 'neutral'. And 28% of the respondents rated it as 'negative', whereas 16% of the respondents rated it as 'very negative'. Only 18% of the respondents rated the image of female politicians as 'positive' and 8% of the respondents rated it as 'very positive'. The above data suggest that majority of the respondents from Sri Lanka are not confident to trust female politicians. Given the fact that the first elected female head of government in the world is from Sri Lanka, such inclination towards the negative image of female politicians by the respondents gives an interesting insight

#### **4.1.2 Performance of Female Politicians**

The performance of female politicians is considered to be one of the independent variables that might influence the perceived image of female politicians by the respondents. And, to understand if the trustworthiness of female politicians is influenced by their performance or not it is necessary to analyze the distribution of responses on this subject. The performance variable is defined by the **Efficiency** of female politicians and **Corruption** by female politicians.

### a) The Efficiency of Female Politicians

In the survey, the respondents were asked “What is your opinion about the efficiency level of female politicians?” The respondents rated the answer on a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 was ‘very inefficient’ and 10 was ‘very efficient’. To interpret the responses, scale 1-2 stands for ‘very negative’, scale 3-4 stands for ‘negative’, scale 5-6 stands for ‘neutral’, scale 7-8 stands for positive and scale 9-10 stands for ‘very positive’.

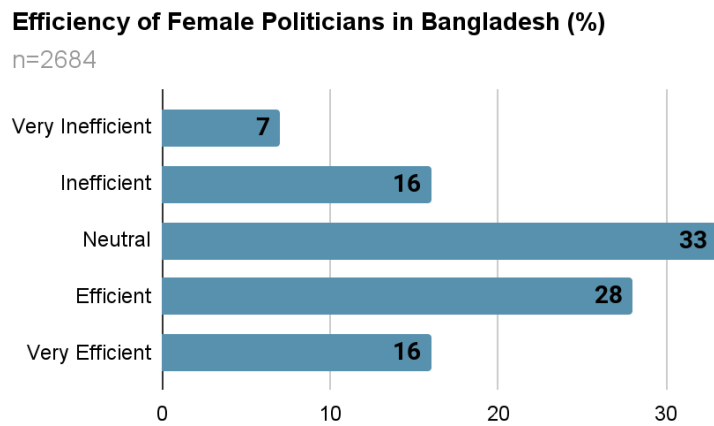
**Table 4: Mean of Perceived Efficiency of Female Politicians**

| Category      | N    | Mean | Minimum | Maximum | SD    |
|---------------|------|------|---------|---------|-------|
| Pooled Sample | 6152 | 5.87 | 1       | 10      | 2.372 |
| Bangladesh    | 2684 | 6.17 | 1       | 10      | 2.408 |
| Nepal         | 2237 | 5.76 | 1       | 10      | 2.246 |
| Sri Lanka     | 1231 | 5.40 | 1       | 10      | 2.426 |

From table 4, it is evident that among 6152 respondents, most of the respondents rated the perceived efficiency level as ‘neutral’ as the mean value is 5.87 which means they do not have an absolute opinion about the efficiency level of female politicians. That means three countries’ mean response would be ‘neutral’. The data also shows that Bangladesh perceives the efficiency level of female politicians to be higher compared to Nepal and Sri Lanka with a mean value of 6.17. The standard deviation (SD) suggests that the responses are not close to mean rather spread out for all the countries.

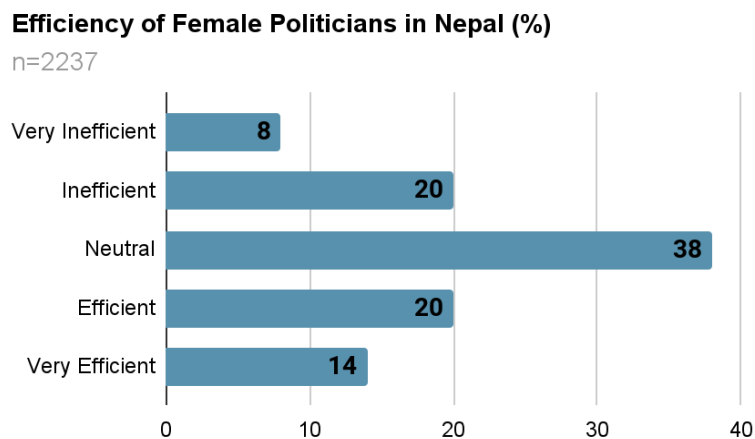
In Bangladesh, 2684 people responded to the question about the efficiency level of female politicians. Figure 8 shows that 33% of the respondents rated the efficiency level as ‘neutral’ which means they do not want to share any opinion about the efficiency of female politicians. But most of the respondents believe that female politicians are ‘efficient’ to ‘very efficient’ as 44% of the respondents rated it from 7-

10 on the Likert scale. However, 23% of the respondents think of female politicians as 'inefficient' to 'very inefficient'. Overall, most of the respondents have a positive view of the efficiency of female politicians in Bangladesh.



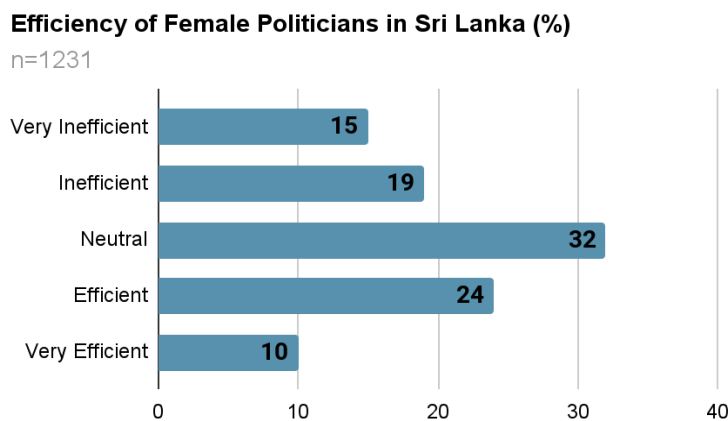
**Figure 8: Perceived Efficiency of Female Politicians in Bangladesh**

From figure 9, the distribution of 2237 respondents in Nepal based on their responses about the efficiency of female politicians suggests that 38% of the respondents rated the efficiency level as 'neutral', 34% of the respondents rated it as 'efficient' to 'very efficient' and, 28% of the respondents rated it as 'inefficient' to 'very inefficient'. Overall, in Nepal, most of the respondents are ambivalent towards the efficiency of female politicians and one-third of the respondents seem to believe that females are efficient as politicians.



**Figure 9: Perceived Efficiency of Female Politicians in Nepal**

In Sri Lanka, 1231 people responded to the question about the efficiency of female politicians. Figure 10 suggests an equal distribution of respondents as 32% of the respondents rated the efficiency level as 'neutral', 34% of the respondents rated it as 'efficient' to 'very efficient' and, the remaining 34% of the respondents rated it as 'inefficient' to 'very inefficient'.



**Figure 10: Perceived Efficiency of Female Politicians in Sri Lanka**

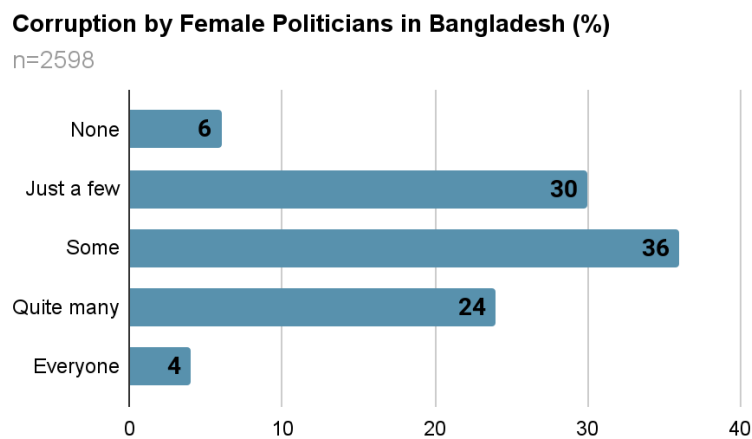
#### **b) Corruption by Female Politicians**

To understand the view on corruption by female politicians, the survey included the question- "How many female politicians are involved in corruption?" The respondents were asked to rate the answer on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 stands for 'None', 2 stands for 'Just a few', 3 stands for 'Some', 4 stands for 'Quite many', and 5 stands for 'Everyone'.

**Table 5: Perceived Corruption by Female Politicians**

| Category      | N    | Mean | Minimum | Maximum | SD    |
|---------------|------|------|---------|---------|-------|
| Pooled Sample | 5907 | 2.95 | 1       | 5       | .980  |
| Bangladesh    | 2625 | 3.62 | 1       | 5       | .747  |
| Nepal         | 2219 | 3.48 | 1       | 5       | 1.002 |
| Sri Lanka     | 1189 | 3.87 | 1       | 5       | .932  |

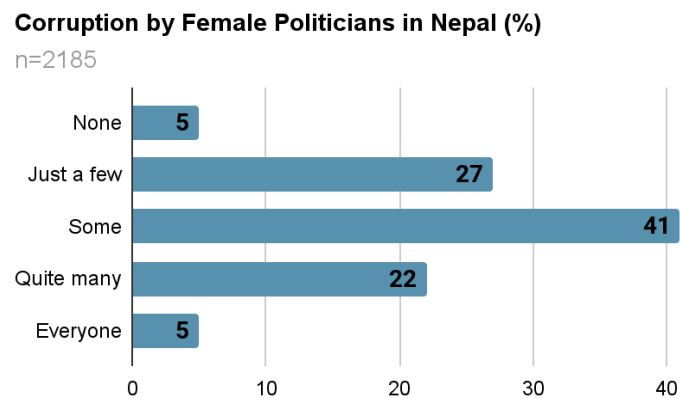
The pooled sample consists of 5907 respondents who answered the question on corruption. Table 5 suggests that most of the respondents answered that ‘some’ of the female politicians might be involved in corruption as the mean value is 2.95. For country level, Bangladesh has a mean value of 3.62 with SD=.747 which supports the pattern of pooled samples. Nepal supports the pooled sample with mean value of 3.48 but the SD=1.002 suggest that the responses are not much closer to mean value. Compared to Bangladesh and Nepal, Sri Lankan respondents assume more females are involved in politics with a mean value of 3.87 and SD=.932. Now the next section is about finding the perception of respondents in each country about the corruption by female politicians.



**Figure 11: Perceived Corruption by Female Politicians in Bangladesh**

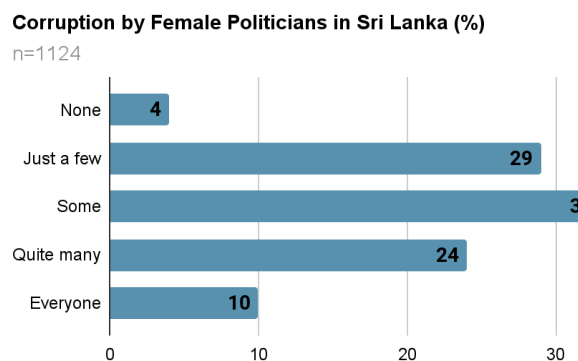
In Bangladesh, 2598 respondents participated in answering the question about female politicians being involved in corruption. The distribution of respondents looks like 36% of the respondents thought ‘some’ female politicians are involved in corruption, 30% of respondents thought the number is ‘just a few’, 24% of respondents marked it as ‘quite many’. Very few respondents like 6% of them thought ‘none’ of female politicians are involved in corruption and least of them marked it as ‘everyone’. From their long experience with female politicians, most of the respondents agreed that some of the female politicians are involved in corruption.

Nepal shows an almost similar pattern as Bangladesh in terms of its perception of female politicians involved in corruption. Figure 12 shows that 41% of respondents labeled 'some', 27% of respondents labeled 'just a few', and 22% of the respondents labeled 'quite many' when they asked about the number of female politicians involved in corruption. Only 5% of the respondents perceived the number as 'none' and the remaining 5% perceived it as 'everyone'. The Nepalese respondents might be influenced by their perception of 'some' corrupted female politicians when it comes to trusting the female politicians.



**Figure 12: Perceived Corruption by Female Politicians in Nepal**

From figure 13, it is evident that 1124 respondents participated in the survey to answer the question on female politicians involved in corruption. The distribution of respondents would be 33% opted for 'some', 29% opted for 'just a few', 24% respondents labeled 'quite many', 10% of the respondents thought it to be 'everyone' and, only 4% of the respondents perceived that 'none' of the female politicians are involved in corruption.



**Figure 13: Perceived Corruption by Female Politicians in Sri Lanka**

### 4.1.3 Political Performance

Trusting the female politician might be influenced by the political performance of a country as female politicians act as an actor of the system. In this paper, the political performance has been measured by view on the political system and satisfaction with democracy.

#### a) Political System

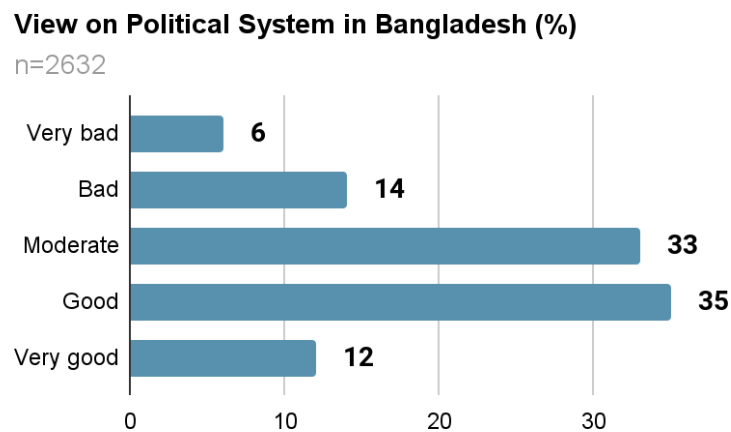
To understand the satisfaction with the political system the survey included the question- “Here is a scale for rating how well things are going now: 1 means very bad; 10 means very good. Where on this scale would you put the political system as it is today?” To interpret the responses, scale 1-2 stands for ‘very bad’, scale 3-4 stands for ‘bad’, scale 5-6 stands for ‘moderate’, scale 7-8 stands for ‘good’, and scale 9-10 stands for ‘very good’.

**Table 6: View on Political System**

| Category      | N    | Mean | Minimum | Maximum | SD    |
|---------------|------|------|---------|---------|-------|
| Pooled Sample | 6050 | 5.43 | 1       | 10      | 2.374 |
| Bangladesh    | 2632 | 6.14 | 1       | 10      | 2.213 |
| Nepal         | 2185 | 4.61 | 1       | 10      | 2.289 |
| Sri Lanka     | 1233 | 5.33 | 1       | 10      | 2.373 |

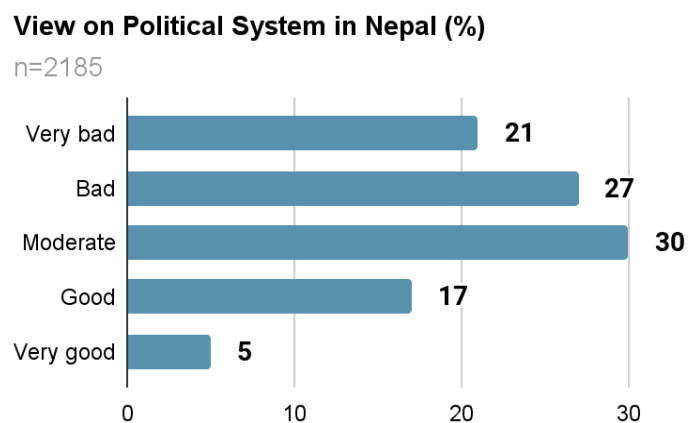
As seen in table 6, 6050 respondents from all three countries shared their views on the political system. To most of the respondents the political system in their respective country seemed to be ‘moderate’ as the mean value is 5.43. But the SD=2.374 suggests that the responses are not concentrated in the mean region rather spread out. Bangladesh has a higher positive view about the political system as mean=6.14 which is higher than Nepal (4.61) and Sri Lanka (5.33). But the standard deviation of all

countries shows a similar pattern as the pooled samples. Overall pulled data suggest that most of the respondents were moderately satisfied with the political system of their country.



**Figure 14: View on Political System in Bangladesh**

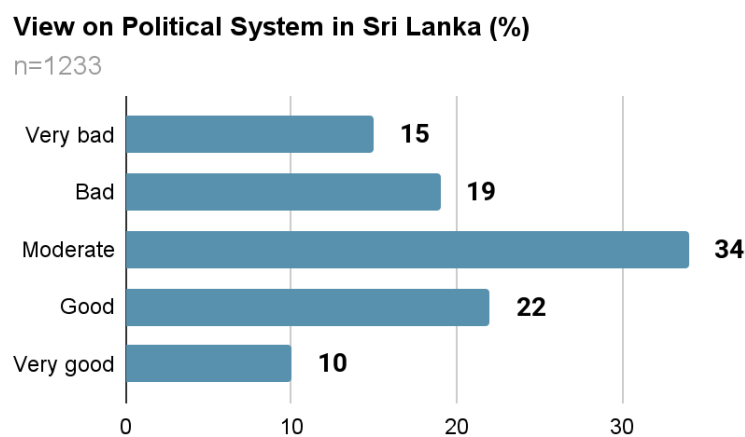
From figure 14, it can be assumed that respondents from Bangladesh were satisfied with their political system as among 2632 respondents 35% rated the system as 'good' one while 33% opted for 'moderate'. Two-third of the respondents shared that they were satisfied with the system. From the other one-third of respondents, 12% said the system was 'very good' and 6% said it was 'very bad'. Overall, Bangladesh has a positive view of the political system of the country.



**Figure 15: View on political System in Nepal**



In Nepal, 2185 responded to the question on the political system. From the above figure 15, the distribution of respondents suggests that the view of the respondents on the political system was not so positive. 30% of respondents agreed on the political system to be 'moderate', 27% of respondents felt it was 'bad' and to 21% of respondents the system was 'very bad'. 17% of the respondents had a 'positive' view of the political system and only 5% had a 'very positive' view. But, overall, respondents from Nepal are not in the satisfying spectrum when it comes to the political system of their country.



**Figure 16: View on Political System in Sri Lanka**

The distribution of respondents from Sri Lanka who shared their views on the political system of their country is showing almost equal distribution. As figure 16 suggests 34% of 1233 respondents opted for 'moderate', 34% of respondents viewed the system as 'bad' to 'very bad'. Another 32% of respondents rated it as 'good' to 'very good'. Though the majority of respondents were moderately satisfied with the system, a good percentage of respondents were just satisfied with the political system. But Sri Lanka seems to have a large group of people who were dissatisfied with the system and had a negative view about the functioning of the system.

## **b) Satisfaction with Democracy**

To understand the satisfaction with democracy the survey included the question- "Are you satisfied/dissatisfied with the way democracy (Gonotanta/Lolotantra) is

developing in your country?” The respondents rated the answer on a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 was ‘very dissatisfied’ and 10 was ‘very satisfied’. To interpret the responses, scale 1-2 stands for ‘very dissatisfied’, scale 3-4 stands for ‘dissatisfied’, scale 5-6 stands for ‘neutral’, scale 7-8 stands for ‘satisfied’, and scale 9-10 stands for ‘very satisfied’.

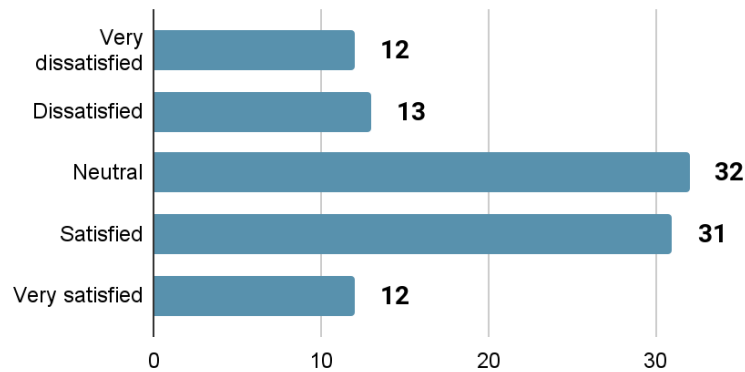
**Table 7: Satisfaction with Democracy**

| Category      | N    | Mean | Minimum | Maximum | SD    |
|---------------|------|------|---------|---------|-------|
| Pooled Sample | 5975 | 5.37 | 1       | 10      | 2.430 |
| Bangladesh    | 2571 | 5.83 | 1       | 10      | 2.455 |
| Nepal         | 2181 | 4.83 | 1       | 10      | 2.324 |
| Sri Lanka     | 1233 | 5.37 | 1       | 10      | 2.366 |

Table 7 shows that 5975 people answered the question of satisfaction with democracy. The pulled data suggests that most of the respondents were ‘neutral’ about it with a mean value of 5.37 but SD=2.430 suggests that the responses are above the mean. Bangladesh and Sri Lanka show mean values of 5.83 and 5.37 respectively which indicates a ‘neutral’ view on this matter. But the mean value of Nepal (4.83) suggests that most of the respondents are dissatisfied with the democracy. All the standard deviation shows data points above the mean. Combined data suggests that in three of the country’s most of the respondents did not have a strong opinion about the existing democracy in their respective countries.

### Satisfaction with Democracy in Bangladesh (%)

n=2571

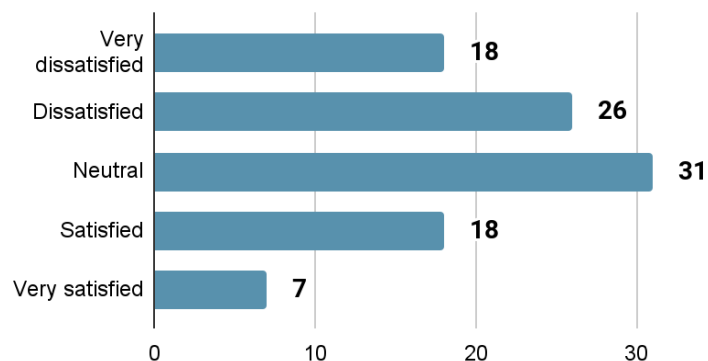


**Figure 17: Satisfaction with Democracy in Bangladesh**

From Bangladesh, among 2571 respondents 32% of them rated the satisfaction with democracy as 'neutral'. It is evident that an almost equal percentage of respondents opted for 'satisfied' as 31% of respondents agreed to be satisfied with the democracy. Although 13% of respondents opted for 'dissatisfied', the equal percentage of respondents which is 12% were 'very satisfied' and 'very dissatisfied' with the democracy. Overall analysis suggests that Bangladesh is either 'neutral' or 'satisfied' with the way democracy is developing in the country.

### Satisfaction with Democracy in Nepal (%)

n=2181

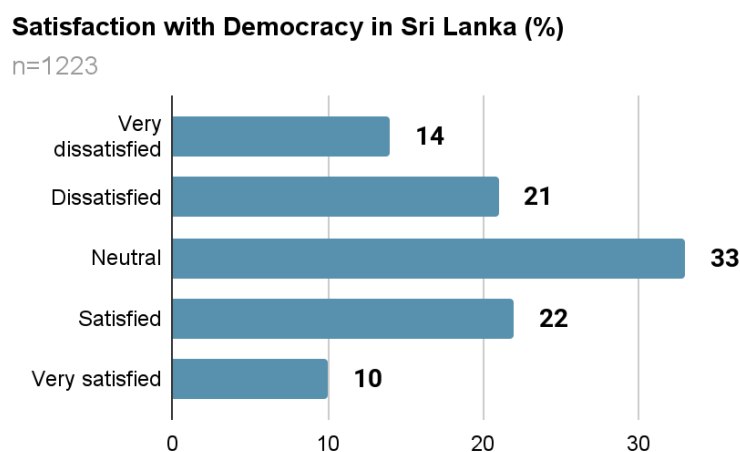


**Figure 18: Satisfaction with Democracy in Nepal**

In Nepal, 2181 responded to the question of democracy. From the above figure 18, the distribution of respondents suggests that the view of the respondents on

democracy was mostly neutral and somewhat negative. 31% of respondents agreed to be 'neutral' about the way democracy is developing, 26% of respondents were 'dissatisfied'. 18% of respondents were 'satisfied' and only 7% of respondents were 'very satisfied' with it. Nonetheless, 18% of the respondents were 'very dissatisfied' with the form of democracy in their country. Overall, respondents from Nepal are not in the satisfying spectrum when it comes to the form of democracy in their country.

As it is seen from figure 19, a total number of 1223 people from Sri Lanka responded to this part answering how satisfied they are with the form of democracy in their country. Only 10% of the respondents said they were 'very satisfied' while 14% of the total said they were 'very dissatisfied' with the form of democracy in Sri Lanka. The highest 33% of the people said they were indifferent about it. 21% of the people said they were 'dissatisfied' with democracy in Sri Lanka while 22% said they were 'satisfied' with it. Overall it seems that most of the respondents belong to the 'dissatisfied' to 'very dissatisfied' spectrum in Sri Lanka when it comes to the form of democracy in their country.



**Figure 19: Satisfaction with Democracy in Sri Lanka**

#### 4.1.4 Political Orientation

The importance of political identity and interest in politics these two variables are considered to identify the political orientation of an individual. The importance of political identity might influence the judgment of the trustworthiness of female

politicians. Those who are interested in politics are more aware of the performance of politicians and their impact as representatives. That is why the political orientation of the respondents has been analyzed.

### a) Political Identity

To understand the importance of political identity the survey included the question- “How important is the political identity for you?”. The respondents were given a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 was ‘not at all important’ and 10 was ‘very important’. To interpret the responses, scale 1-2 stands for ‘not at all important’, scale 3-4 stands for ‘not important’, scale 5-6 stands for ‘in between’, scale 7-8 stands for ‘important’, and scale 9-10 stands for ‘very important’.

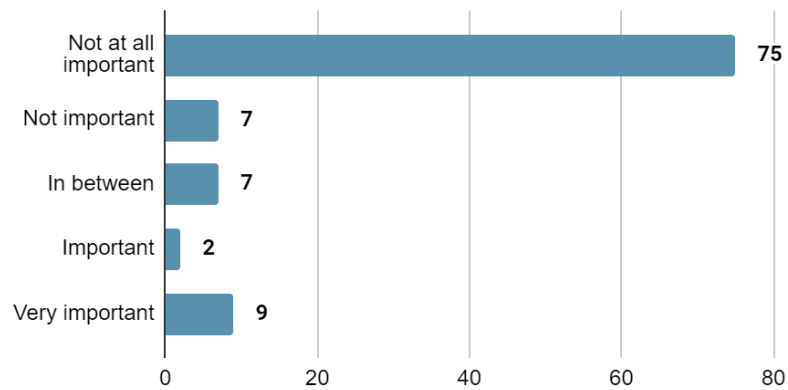
**Table 8: Importance of Political Identity**

| Category      | N    | Mean | Minimum | Maximum | SD    |
|---------------|------|------|---------|---------|-------|
| Pooled Sample | 6108 | 3.57 | 1       | 10      | 2.972 |
| Bangladesh    | 2656 | 2.43 | 1       | 10      | 2.757 |
| Nepal         | 2213 | 4.21 | 1       | 10      | 2.685 |
| Sri Lanka     | 1239 | 4.85 | 1       | 10      | 3.038 |

Table 8 shows that 6108 people answered the question of political identity. The pulled data suggests that most of the respondents rated political identity as ‘not important’ and SD=2.972 suggests that the responses are above the mean and spread out. Sri Lanka has a higher importance of political identity as mean=4.85 which is higher than Bangladesh (2.43) and Nepal (4.21). But the standard deviation of all countries shows a similar pattern as the pooled samples. Combined data suggests that in three of the country’s political identity might not be considered as an important dimension.

### Importance of Political Identity in Bangladesh (%)

n=2656

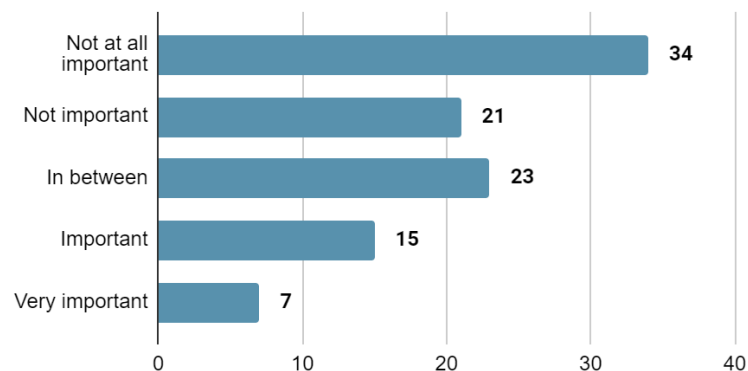


**Figure 20: Importance of Political Identity in Bangladesh**

In Bangladesh, the distribution of the 2656 respondents seems to be dominated by the ones to whom political identity is 'not at all important' as 75% of respondents opted for that option. Figure 20 suggests that only for 9% of respondents political identity is 'very important' and 7% of the respondents opted for 'not important' and 7% of respondents opted for 'in between'. As few as 2% of respondents opted for 'important' when it comes to political identity. In a nation where politics come in every sphere of life, such a response from the respondents of Bangladesh might not be something expected.

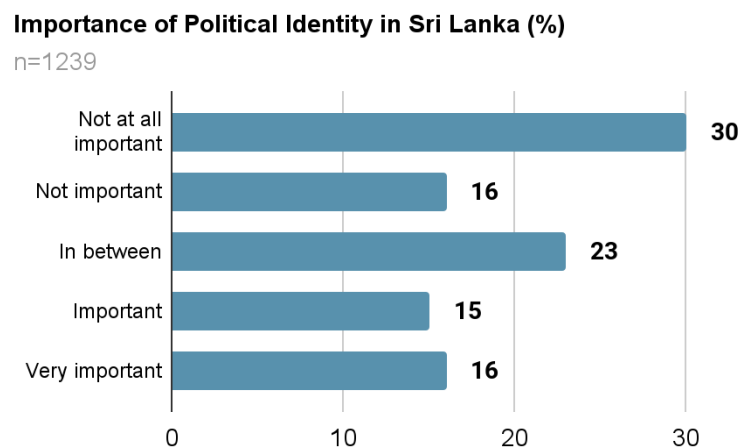
### Importance of Political Identity in Nepal (%)

n=2213



**Figure 21: Importance of Political Identity in Nepal**

From figure 21, it can be assumed that in Nepal the distribution of 2213 respondents is dominant around 'not at all important' to 'in between' on the scale as 34% of the respondents rated their political identity as 'not at all important', 21% of the respondents rated it as 'not important' and, 23% of the respondents rated it as 'in between'. For 15% of the respondents, the political identity is 'important' which is much higher than that of Bangladesh. Only 7% of the respondents opted for 'very important' according to the survey. Even if most of the respondents did not consider political identity to be an important factor, there is a good percentage of respondents to whom political identity might carry importance in their life.



**Figure 22: Importance of Political Identity in Sri Lanka**

From figure 22, it is evident that 1239 respondents participated in the survey to answer the question on the importance of political identity. The distribution of respondents would be 30% opted for 'not at all important', 23% opted for 'in between', 16% respondents labeled 'not important', 16% of the respondents thought it to be 'very important' and, only 15% of the respondents considered it to be just 'important'. Most respondents from Sri Lanka rated the importance of political identity as 'not at all important'.

## **b) Interest in Politics**

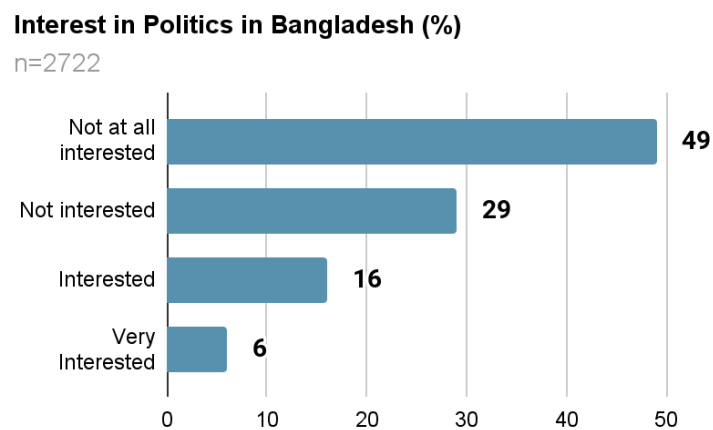
As the research is on the ground of politics, it is important for the study to find out those who participated in this survey how interested they were in this subject. The

question that was included to find out if the respondents were interested in politics or not was- “How interested would you say you are in politics?” The respondents were asked to rate the answer on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 stands for ‘Not all interested’, 2 stands for ‘Less interested’, 3 stands for ‘Somewhat interested’, and 4 stands for ‘Very many’, interested’.

**Table 9: Interest in Politics**

| Category      | N    | Mean | Minimum | Maximum | SD   |
|---------------|------|------|---------|---------|------|
| Pooled Sample | 6173 | 2.13 | 1       | 4       | .952 |
| Bangladesh    | 2656 | 2.43 | 1       | 4       | .914 |
| Nepal         | 2209 | 2.26 | 1       | 4       | .862 |
| Sri Lanka     | 1242 | 2.65 | 1       | 4       | .894 |

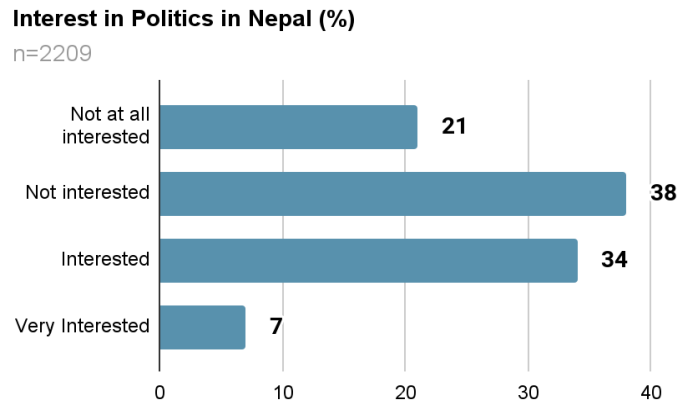
Among 6173 people who shared how interested, they are in politics, from table 9, it is seen that the mean (2.13) response to the question ‘less interested’ for pooled samples and three countries. Comparatively Bangladesh has higher interest in politics compared to other two countries as the mean is 2.43 which is higher than Nepal (2.26) and Sri Lanka (2.65). The SD suggests that the responses are closer to mean as the SD value is closer to zero but above the mean value.



**Figure 23: Interest in Politics in Bangladesh**

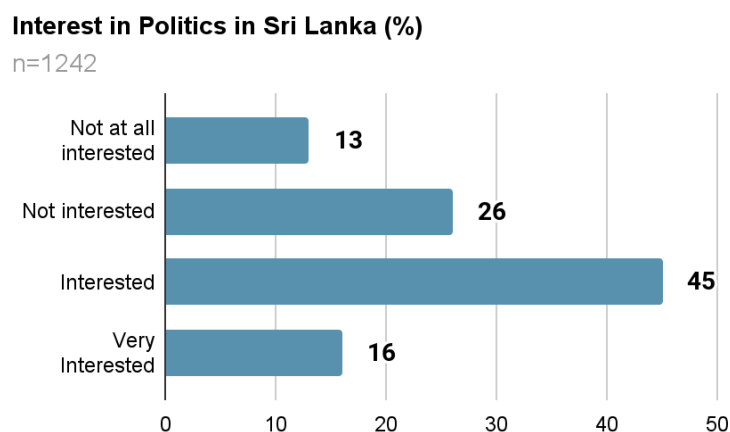


While questioning the interest in politics in Bangladesh, figure 23 suggests that out of 2722 people only 163 people were 'very interested'. Almost half of the respondents said that 49% were 'not at all interested' in politics in Bangladesh. 29% of the respondents were 'not interested' in politics and 16% of the respondents felt 'interested' in politics in Bangladesh. It is seen that more than the majority of the respondents didn't find any interest in politics in Bangladesh.



**Figure 24: Interest in Politics in Nepal**

From figure 24, it is evident that 2209 people from Nepal were asked about their interest in politics in Nepal. As seen overall that only 7% of Nepal's respondents were 'very Interested' in politics in Nepal. Around 750 people from the respondents were just 'interested' in Nepal. As high as 38% of the respondents found no interest in politics in Nepal who ended up choosing 'not interested' Lastly, 21% of the 2209 people felt 'not at all interested' in politics in Nepal.



**Figure 25: Interest in Politics in Sri Lanka**

From Sri Lanka, 1242 people participated to answer the question on interest in politics. Figure 25 suggests that a good number of people- 16% of the total respondents, were 'very interested' in politics. While only a smaller number around 13% of the respondents felt 'not at all "interested" in politics in Sri Lanka. Almost half of the respondents, around 45% were "interested" in politics. And 26% of the 1242 people from Sri Lanka were 'not interested' in politics in their country.

#### **4.1.5 Culture**

To find the possibility of the cultural orientation of the respondents being a factor that might influence them to trust or distrust the female politicians, the study needs to consider the cultural dimension. This dimension covers the importance of religiosity in this study. At first, the analysis of the pooled sample is being discussed, then the country-wise analysis is presented in this section.

##### **a) Religiosity**

Religiosity is another cultural dimension that might influence how the respondents perceive females as politicians and if they are willing to trust female politicians or not. To measure the religiosity of respondents the question that was included in the survey was- "Independently whether you attend religious services or not, what would you say you are?" To answer the question respondents were given a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 was 'not religious at all' and 10 was 'very religious'. To interpret the responses, scale 1-2 stands for 'not religious at all', scale 3-4 stands for 'not religious', scale 5-6 stands for 'in between', scale 7-8 stands for 'religious', and scale 9-10 stands for 'very religious'.

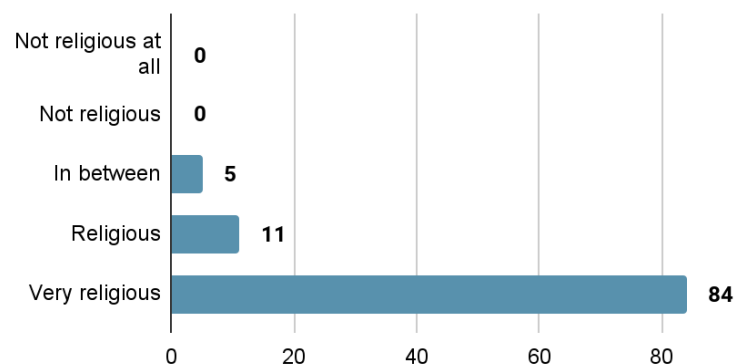
**Table 10: Importance of Religiosity**

| Category      | N    | Mean | Minimum | Maximum | SD    |
|---------------|------|------|---------|---------|-------|
| Pooled Sample | 6206 | 8.08 | 1       | 10      | 2.452 |
| Bangladesh    | 2737 | 9.46 | 1       | 10      | 1.268 |
| Nepal         | 2225 | 6.79 | 1       | 10      | 2.691 |
| Sri Lanka     | 1244 | 7.34 | 1       | 10      | 2.411 |

The pooled sample of 6206 respondents shows that with mean value 8.08, most of the respondents considered themselves to be 'religious' and the SD=2.452 suggests that the responses are spread out and above the mean level. Bangladesh has the highest mean value of 9.46 which suggests that most of the respondents are 'very religious' and the SD=1.268 is the lowest among pooled samples and other two countries suggest that data are comparatively less spread out than the other countries. In Nepal most of the respondents are 'in between; with mean value 6.79 and in Sri Lanka most of the respondents are 'religious' with the mean value 7.34. The standard deviation of Nepal and Sri Lanka show a similar pattern. Whatever may be the major religion in the respective countries, it is evident that the respondents of all three countries perceive religiosity as an important aspect of life.

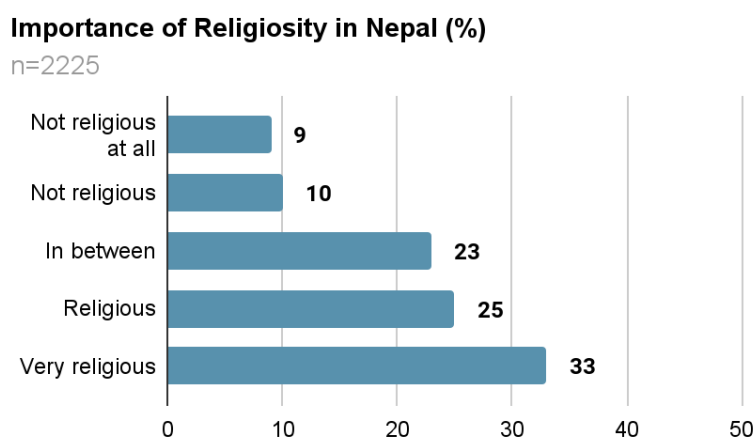
**Importance of Religiosity in Bangladesh (%)**

n=2737



**Figure 26" Importance of Religiosity in Bangladesh**

From Bangladesh, among 2737 respondents 84% of them rated the importance of religiosity as 'very important'. It is evident that 'not religious at all' or 'not religious' were not options for the respondents who came from this Muslim majority country. The distribution of respondents is limited from 'in between' to 'very religious' as 11% of the respondents rated religiosity as 'religious' and very few like 5% of respondents were staying 'in between'. Overall analysis suggests that Bangladesh considers religiosity as a very important cultural aspect.

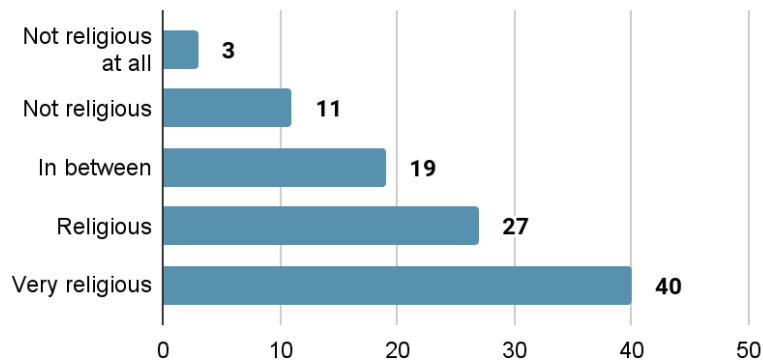


**Figure 27: Importance of Religiosity in Nepal**

From the above figure 27, it can be seen that 2225 respondents rated the importance of religiosity. Among them, 33% rated themselves to be 'very religious', 25% of respondents rated themselves as 'religious', 23% of respondents were 'in between', 10% of them were 'not religious' and 9% opted for 'not religious at all'. Though most of the respondents were inclined towards 'very religious' but Nepal seems to have a noticeable percentage of respondents who rated religiosity as a less important factor to be considered.

### Importance of Religiosity in Sri Lanka (%)

n=1244



**Figure 28: Importance of Religiosity in Sri Lanka**

From figure 28, it is evident that 1244 respondents participated in the survey to answer the question on the importance of religiosity. The distribution of respondents would be 40% opted for 'very religious', 27% opted for 'religious', 19% respondents rated it 'in between', 11% of the respondents considered themselves to be 'not religious' and, only 3% of the respondents rated it 'not religious at all'. From the analysis, it can be said that most respondents from Sri Lanka considered religiosity as an important cultural factor.

#### 4.1.5 Socio-economic Factor

The demographic profile of the respondents is a part of the socio-economic factor. In every research, the study of demography is important as that helps to understand the respondents better. Demography profile includes gender, age, education, religion, and some other factors. From table 3.1 in the previous chapter, the demography profile covers the gender, age, and education level of the respondents who participated in this study. Along with this, the demography profile also includes the occupation and income level of the respondents. These social factors might play a role to influence the way one individual thinks. That is why it is important for the research to study the respondents accordingly to find out what factors might affect their level of trust in female politicians. The distribution of respondents based on occupation and income level is presented in the table below-

**Table 11: Distribution of Respondents based on Occupation and Income Level**

| Demographic Variables |                                     | Country of Survey      |                   |                       |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
|                       |                                     | Bangladesh<br>(N=2740) | Nepal<br>(N=2254) | Sri Lanka<br>(N=1244) |
| Occupation (%)        | Working                             | 17                     | 23                | 37                    |
|                       | Self Employed                       | 25                     | 30                | 25                    |
|                       | Retired                             | 3                      | 3                 | 3                     |
|                       | Housewife                           | 48                     | 18                | 15                    |
|                       | Student                             | 5                      | 13                | 5                     |
|                       | Unemployed                          | 2                      | 13                | 15                    |
| Income (%)            | Lower Income (< \$87)               | 7                      | 7                 | 14                    |
|                       | Lower-middle Income (\$87-\$341)    | 71                     | 71                | 80                    |
|                       | Upper-middle Income (\$342-\$1,058) | 21                     | 21                | 4                     |
|                       | High Income (>\$1,058)              | 1                      | 1                 | 2                     |

Social factors are not only about the demographic profile of the respondents. It also includes economic factors, political factors, factors that are associated with daily life, and so on. In this study, the respondents were also asked about their satisfaction with life. The aim is to find out if the trustworthiness of female politicians is related to these socio-economic factors or not.

#### **a) Satisfaction with Life**

To understand if respondents were satisfied with their life, they were asked- “All things considered, socio-political, economic, family, etc.), how satisfied are you with your life?” The respondents rated the answer on a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 was ‘very dissatisfied’ and 10 was ‘very satisfied’. To interpret the responses, scale 1-2 stands for ‘very dissatisfied’, scale 3-4 stands for ‘dissatisfied’, scale 5-6 stands for ‘neither

satisfied nor dissatisfied’, scale 7-8 stands for ‘satisfied’, and scale 9-10 stands for ‘very satisfied’.

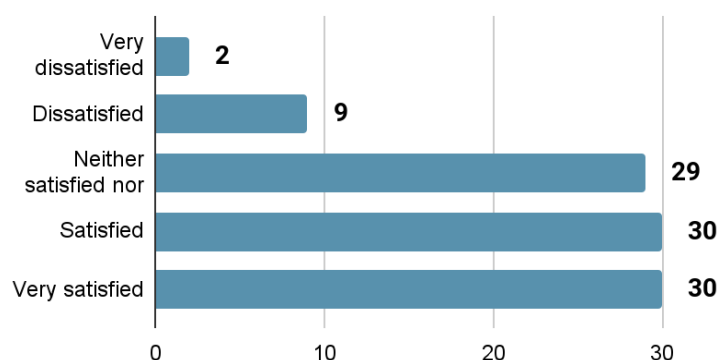
**Table 12: Satisfaction with Life**

| Category      | N    | Mean | Minimum | Maximum | SD    |
|---------------|------|------|---------|---------|-------|
| Pooled Sample | 6217 | 6.62 | 1       | 10      | 2.323 |
| Bangladesh    | 2733 | 7.12 | 1       | 10      | 2.223 |
| Nepal         | 2241 | 6.62 | 1       | 10      | 2.182 |
| Sri Lanka     | 1243 | 5.48 | 1       | 10      | 2.384 |

Table 12 represents the satisfaction with the life of the respondents of this questionnaire. A total of 6217 people responded to this question where most of the responses opted for ‘neither satisfied nor dissatisfied’ with mean value of 6.62. Respondents from Bangladesh showed higher satisfaction with life with a mean value of 7.12 indicating the ‘satisfaction’. Both Nepal and Sri Lanka showed ‘neither satisfied nor dissatisfied’ with mean values of 6.62 and 5.48 respectively. The standard deviation of pooled samples and the countries are showing similar pattern which suggest the responses are spread out and above the mean value.

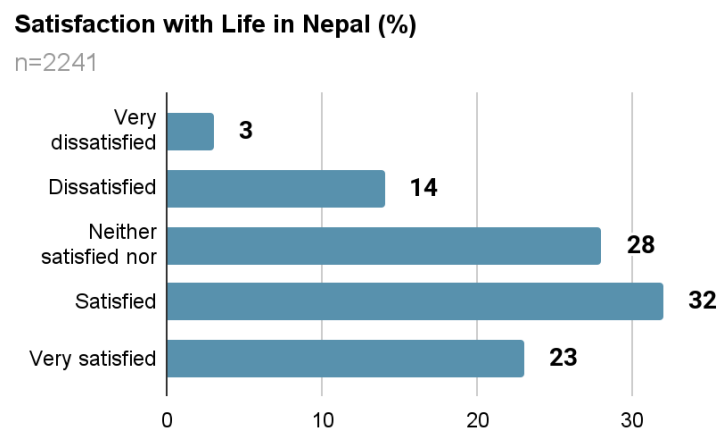
**Satisfaction with Life in Bangladesh (%)**

n=2733



**Figure 29: Satisfaction with Life in Bangladesh**

This questionnaire asked 2733 people from Bangladesh regarding their satisfaction with life in Bangladesh. Figure 29 suggests, among them, only 2% and 9% of respondents said they were ‘very dissatisfied’ and ‘dissatisfied’ accordingly. 29% of the respondents said they were ‘neither satisfied nor dissatisfied’ with their life. Lastly, 30% of the people said they were ‘satisfied’ and ‘very satisfied’ with their lives in Bangladesh. This sums up almost 1640 people of respondents who said they were either ‘satisfied’ or ‘very satisfied’ with their lives in Bangladesh.



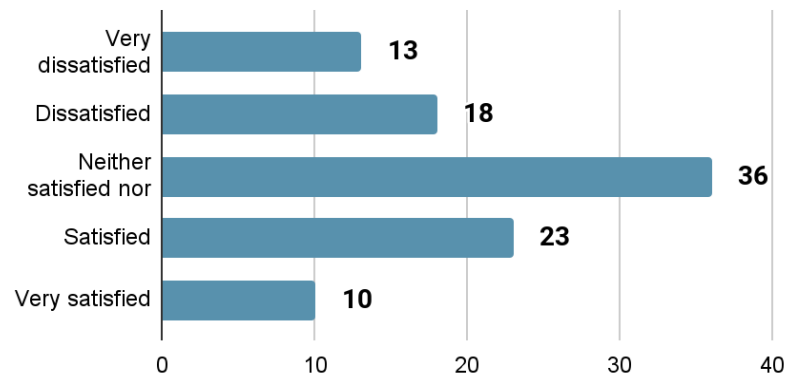
**Figure 30: Satisfaction with Life in Nepal**

From Nepal, 2241 people have responded to the question of how they are satisfied with their lives in their country. According to figure 30, a very low margin with 3% of the respondents said they were ‘very dissatisfied with their lives while 23% of the people said they were ‘very satisfied’ with their lives in Nepal. Out of 2241, 314 people were ‘dissatisfied’. Lastly, 28% and 32% of the respondents said they were ‘neither satisfied nor dissatisfied’ and ‘satisfied’ with their lives in Nepal respectively.



### Satisfaction with Life in Sri Lanka (%)

n=1243



**Figure 31: Satisfaction with Life in Sri Lanka**

As it is seen from figure 31, a total number of 1234 people from Sri Lanka responded to this part answering how satisfied they are with their lives in this country. Only 10% of the respondents said they were 'very satisfied' while 13% of the total said they were 'very dissatisfied' with their lives in Sri Lanka. The highest 36% of the people said they were indifferent between the satisfied and dissatisfied with their lives in this country. 18% of the people said they were 'dissatisfied' with life in Sri Lanka while 23% said they were 'satisfied' with their lives.

#### 4.2 Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

To gain information about the relationship between the trustworthiness of female politicians and the independent variables, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) test has been conducted in this study.

The one-way ANOVA has been used here to see the mean difference of the explanatory variables that are affecting the trustworthiness of female politicians across Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. From the above table 13, it is observed that country is taken as a reference category. The mean for the reference category Bangladesh has a 6.18 mean value, Nepal has a 6.03 mean value, and Sri Lanka has a 4.95 mean value. So the table shows that Bangladesh has a higher mean value

compared to Nepal and Sri Lanka which implies respondents from Bangladesh believe in higher trustworthiness of politicians compared to the other two countries. Then, the mean difference of the explanatory variables between Bangladesh & Nepal shows the value of .147 which is not statistically significant as the p-value is greater than 0.05. On the contrary, the mean difference of the explanatory variables between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka shows a value of 1.228 which is statistically significant as the p-value is less than .05. The mean difference of explanatory variables between Nepal and Sri Lanka is also statistically significant with a value of 1.081.

**Table 13: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) based post-hoc analysis (Hochberg)**

| Reference Category | Mean for Reference Category (I) (1-10 scale) | Other Categories | Mean for Other Categories (J) (1-10 scale) | Mean Difference (I-J) | SE   | Sig. |
|--------------------|--|------------------|--|-----------------------|------|------|
| Bangladesh         | 6.18   | Nepal            | 6.03                                       | .147                  | .067 | .086 |
|                    |  | Sri Lanka        | 4.95                                       | 1.228                 | .081 | .000 |
| Nepal              | 6.03   | Bangladesh       | 6.18                                       | -.147                 | .067 | .086 |
|                    |  | Sri Lanka        | 4.95                                       | 1.081                 | .083 | .000 |

The mean difference of explanatory variables between Bangladesh and Nepal seems to be very low but the relationship between these two categories is not a significant one. The variables that are affecting the trustworthiness of female politicians might show almost similar trends for these two countries but the significance of the variables might differ country-wise. With Sri Lanka, both Bangladesh and Nepal are showing a comparatively high mean difference of explanatory variables and with both countries the relationship is significant. The variables that are affecting the trustworthiness of female politicians in Sri Lanka might show a different trend than the other two countries.

### 4.3 Regression Analysis

To find the relationship between trustworthiness and all the explanatory variables regression analysis has been conducted. The relevant and significant factors that are affecting the trustworthiness of female politicians are the outcomes of regression analysis. In this study, regression analysis has been performed on both pooled data and country-based data.

Table 14 suggests that linear regression has been performed to understand the trustworthiness of female politicians. Through this analysis, the trend of changes in the dependent variable with the one-unit change in the independent variable can be observed. We also see the significant level of the changes by observing the p-value of the relationship where  $p < .001$  means it is statistically highly significant,  $p < .01$  means moderately significant, and  $p < 0.5$  means statistically significant. The table used 3 asterisks to represent statistically highly significant and 1 asterisk for statistically significant and 2 asterisks mean moderately significant.

Under the performance of female politicians, there are two variables named 'Efficiency' and 'Corruption'. With the one-unit change in the perceived efficiency of female politicians, the trust in female politicians is increased by .513 for the pooled sample which is positively related to the dependent variable and the  $\beta = .513$  is statistically highly significant with a p-value less than .001. A similar case is also seen for Bangladesh and Nepal with the independent variable perceived 'Efficiency' as the  $\beta = .795$  and  $\beta = .505$  for Bangladesh and Nepal respectively and also represents a statistical high significance with a p-value less than .001. But the trust in female politicians decreases with an increase in perceived efficiency of female politicians as  $\beta = -.018$ . But this value is not significant for this case as the p-value is greater than .05. The corruption variable has negative relation for all the cases like in pooled sample, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka when measuring trust in female politicians, but it shows a positive relation in case of Nepal. For the pooled sample, one unit of increase in the perceived 'corruption' by female politicians, trust in female politicians decreases by .22 ( $\beta = -.22$ ) which has a p-value of less than .05.

**Table 14: Summary of the linear regression models of trustworthiness of female politicians in three South Asian countries**

|  | Pooled Sample | Bangladesh | Nepal    | Sri Lanka |
|--|---------------|------------|----------|-----------|
| <b>Performance of Female Politicians</b>                             |               |            |          |           |
| Efficiency (1= Very inefficient, and 10= Very efficient)             | .513***       | .795***    | .505***  | -.018     |
| Corruption (1= None, and 5= Everyone)                                | -.022*        | -.025*     | .014     | -.011     |
| <b>Political Performance</b>   |               |            |          |           |
| Political system (1= Very bad, and 10= Very good)                    | -.022         | -.025      | .003     | -.124*    |
| Democracy (1= Very dissatisfied, and 10= Very satisfied)             | .068***       | .086***    | .019     | .002      |
| <b>Political Orientation</b>   |               |            |          |           |
| Political Identity (1= Not at all important, and 10= Very Important) | .029*         | -.044**    | .094***  | .126***   |
| Interest in politics (1= Not interested, and 4= Very interested)     | -.021         | .015       | -.041*   | -.012     |
| <b>Culture</b>   |               |            |          |           |
| Religiosity (1= Not religious at all, and 10= Very religious)        | .045***       | -.026*     | .106***  | -.017     |
| <b>Socio-economic Factor</b>   |               |            |          |           |
| Gender (ref: Female)   | .043**        | .033       | -.010    | .118**    |
| Age (low to high)  | .032*         | .007       | .015     | .101**    |
| Education (low to high)  | -.010         | -.023      | .009     | .041      |
| Religion (ref: Buddhist)   |               |            |          |           |
| Muslim   | .244***       | -.001      | .053*    | .097**    |
| Hindu  | .330***       | .028       | .084**   | .345***   |
| Christian  | .073***       | -.001      | .065**   | .088**    |
| Other  | .014          |            | -.006    |           |
| Occupation (ref: Unemployed)   |               |            |          |           |
| Working  | -.039*        | .009       | -.024    | -.106*    |
| Self-employed  | -.067***      | -.023      | -.048    | -.079     |
| Retired  | -.025*        | -.009      | -.026    | -.034     |
| Housewife  | -.024         | -.001      | .002     | -.095*    |
| Student  | .001          | -.015      | .051*    | -.039     |
| Income (low to high)   | -.001         | .035**     | -.008    | -.011     |
| Satisfied with life (1=Very dissatisfied, and 10= Very Satisfied)    | .074***       | .020       | .067**   | .083*     |
| Constant   | .488          | 1.221**    | 1.405*** | 2.802***  |
| Adjusted R Square  | .374          | .716       | .339     | .120      |
| N  | 6240          | 2740       | 2256     | 1244      |

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*  $p < .05$  (two-tailed tests)

A similar trend is seen in Bangladesh with  $\beta = -.025$  and  $p < .05$ . For Sri Lanka, although  $\beta = -.011$  suggests that with an increase in perceived corruption by female politicians, the level of trust in female politicians decreases but the relationship is not significant. On the contrary, the opposite relation in Nepal is found as it shows that with an increase in corruption the trust in female politicians increases. But this relation is not statistically significant either.

Political performance has two independent variables named 'Political System' and 'Democracy'. When the political system is improved, all the datasets show a negative relation with the trustworthiness whereas for Nepal it shows a positive relationship with the dependent variable. But none of the pooled samples, Bangladesh and Nepal are found to be statistically significant with a p-value greater than .05. For Sri Lanka, those who assume the political system is good, tend to have lower trust in female politicians as  $\beta = -.124$  which is also statistically significant. The independent variable 'Democracy' is statistically highly significant with  $\beta = .068$  and  $\beta = .086$  for the Pooled sample and Bangladesh respectively as the  $p < .001$ . For Nepal and Sri Lanka, the relation between democracy and trustworthiness in female politicians is not statistically significant based on the regression table.

Political orientation has two sets of variables: 'Political Identity' and 'Interest in Politics'. Table 4.11 suggests that Nepal and Sri Lanka have a highly significant beta value,  $\beta = .094$  and  $\beta = .126$  respectively for 'Political Identity' with a p-value  $< .001$ , which means the more important the political identity the higher the trustworthiness of female politicians for an individual. Bangladesh has a statistically significant relationship with  $\beta = -.044$  which portrays that to whom political identity is more important in Bangladesh have lower trust in the female politicians. 'Interest in politics' shows a statistically significant beta value only for Nepal. Those who have a higher interest in politics, perceive female politicians as less trustworthy as  $\beta = -0.041$  in the case of Nepal.

'Religiosity' is the variable under the cultural factor. The religiosity variable shows a significant beta value for the pooled sample and Nepal having a p-value  $< .001$ . With

the increase of religiosity, the trustworthiness of the female politicians increases by  $\beta=.045$  and  $\beta=.106$  for the pooled sample and Nepal respectively. Bangladesh and Sri Lanka have shown opposite results compared to these two though the beta value of Sri Lanka  $\beta=-.017$  is not significant enough to address. But for Bangladesh with the increase in religiosity the trustworthiness reduces by  $.026$  ( $\beta=-.026$ ) and this value is statistically significant.

The independent variable 'Gender' used female as a reference category while 'Religion' used Buddhist as the reference category. For religion 'Buddhist' came first in alphabetical order hence it has been used as the reference. The variables under the socio-economic factors do not show enough statistically significant relationship with the trustworthiness of female politicians other than the 'Religion', 'Occupation' and 'Satisfaction with life'. In Sri Lanka, both gender and age showed statistically significant beta values  $\beta=.118$  and  $\beta=.101$  respectively with a  $p\text{-value}<.01$ . The variable education doesn't show any significant relation with the trustworthiness of female politicians. Among the religion on the pooled sample Muslim, Hindu, and Christian showed statistically high significant beta values. Surprisingly for Bangladesh, any religion doesn't affect the trustworthiness of the female politicians and they are indifferent to the religion based on this regression table of this sample. And for Sri Lanka 'Hindu' religion carries the most statistically significant beta value ( $\beta=.084$ ) with a  $p\text{-value}<.001$ . That means in Sri Lanka, Hindus have higher trust in female politicians. Among the occupation variables, only the 'self-employed' shows a significant beta value in the pooled sample in the opposite direction of ( $\beta=-.067$ ). It shows that the 'self-employed' people have lower trust in female politicians. For variable 'income' only Bangladesh shows a statistically significant relation where the pooled sample, Nepal and Sri Lanka have a statistically insignificant relation. For the 'satisfied with life' the pooled sample shows a highly significant relationship with a  $p\text{-value}<.001$  with  $\beta=.074$ , for Nepal the  $p\text{-value}<.01$  with  $\beta=.067$  and for Sri Lanka the  $p\text{-value}<.05$  with  $\beta=.083$  while for Bangladesh it is not statistically significant at all. With more satisfaction in life, they perceive female politicians as more trustworthy.

The constant term for the pooled sample shows a statistically insignificant value whereas for all three countries these values are statistically highly significant with a p-value less than 0.001. The adjusted r-square value shows how efficiently the independent variables explain the dependent variable in the regression model. Or in other words how the model explains the variability in the dependent variable. From the table, we can see that for the country Bangladesh the model explains almost 72% variability of the trustworthiness of female politicians with the independent variables. This means this model explains a good portion of the dependent variable. And the model explains very least for the country Sri Lanka with an adjusted r-square value of 0.12. This model explains almost 37% variability and 34% variability for the pooled sample and Nepal with its independent variables.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion of Key Findings and Conclusion**

In this chapter, an effort has been made to present the key findings to understand the trustworthiness of female politicians which are the results of the analysis in the previous chapter. This chapter also focuses on the answer to the research question. Based on the findings, the scope for future research is also addressed in this chapter.

### **5.1 Discussion of Key Findings**

The analysis shows both expected and unexpected trends between explanatory variables and the trustworthiness of female politicians. This chapter includes the discussion of significant findings and tries to look at the possible explanations behind such outcomes.

#### **1. With the increase in perceived efficiency of female politicians, trustworthiness also increases in Bangladesh and Nepal but not in Sri Lanka**

The perceived efficiency of female politicians is an indicator of how well one has performed as a representative. Bangladesh and Nepal both these countries have significant experience with female politicians and that is why it is an important determinant to the citizens of these countries when they judge the trustworthiness of female politicians. The respondents from both these countries were mostly indifferent about the perceived efficiency of female politicians. But when judging the trustworthiness, they considered the efficiency of female politicians to be a significant factor. Though Sri Lanka got the first elected prime minister of the world, it did not play a significant role in increasing the participation of female politicians in Sri Lanka as only female representation in Sri Lankan Parliament is only 5.4% and only 3.7% of female politicians served in the ministerial position (UN Women, 2021). The experience with female politicians is not as high as the other two countries. Probably, that is why they are not giving importance to a vital factor like efficiency when judging the trustworthiness of female politicians.



## **2. Corruption plays a significant role to determine the trustworthiness of female politicians in Bangladesh but not in Nepal and Sri Lanka**

When asked about female politicians' involvement in corruption, the respondents of Bangladesh assumed it to be few. When rated the trustworthiness of female politicians they considered this corruption as a significant factor. Nepal also had a similar trend when rating corruption by female politicians. As it is a question of integrity, it is obvious that this factor should play a significant role in determining the trustworthiness of female politicians. Most of the respondents from Nepal considered female politicians to be less corrupted. It might be possible that in general, they think females are not very involved with corruption compared to men. That might be the reason this factor did not play a significant role when judging the trustworthiness of female politicians. But showing a positive relation with corruption raises further questions. For Sri Lanka, though it shows a negative relationship but not a significant one. Maybe as they did not consider corruption to be a significant factor, their perception of female politicians took a negative turn. Sri Lankan respondents mostly rated the trustworthiness of female politicians as negative to very negative.

## **3. Satisfaction with democracy has a highly significant impact on the trustworthiness of female politicians in Bangladesh, but not in Nepal and Sri Lanka**

The respondents from Bangladesh showed higher satisfaction with democracy compared to the respondents of Nepal and Sri Lanka. For the latter two countries, the responses were mostly inclining towards negative. Not only that, the association of democracy with the trustworthiness of female politicians turned out to be not significant at all. But for Bangladesh, the democracy and the trustworthiness of female politicians have shown a highly significant relation. Though the democracy index 2020 suggests that Bangladesh belongs to the 'hybrid' regime with a score of 5.99 (EIU, 2021) which does not indicate a stable form of democracy. But the justification behind its significant impact on the trustworthiness of female politicians might be they think the female

representation as state and party heads has something to do with their perceived form of democracy and that is why maybe those who are satisfied with democracy have higher trust in female politicians.

**4. Political Identity plays a significant role in determining the trustworthiness of female politicians in Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka**

When asked about the importance of political identity most of the respondents from all three countries responded, 'not important at all'. When determining the trustworthiness of female politicians all these countries considered this identity to be a significant factor. It might be because more than the female politicians they trust the political parties they belong to. The ideologies of female politicians follow the matter to them more than their performance as political actors.

**5. With the increase in religiosity, trustworthiness in female politicians decreases in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka but increases in Nepal**

The majority of the respondents from all these countries happened to be very religious when asked about their religiosity. It is predictable that with an increase in religiosity, the trustworthiness of female politicians might decrease as religion has been used as a weapon to restrict women in many cases. But Nepal showed an opposite pattern that makes the case somewhat interesting. With the increase in religiosity in Nepal, the trustworthiness of female politicians also increases. It is hard to find any justification for this. The demographic profile shows most of the respondents from Nepal belong to the Hindu religion and regression analysis showed in Nepal Hindus have higher trust in female politicians compared to other religions. The distribution of respondents might play a role in this. Otherwise, the religion Hinduism might not be very conservative towards females in general, but the study did not find any evidence of this.

## 5.2 Theoretical Implication

The analytical framework of this study indicates that both the calculative and non-calculative approach of rational choice theory should affect the trustworthiness of female politicians in Bangladesh. The calculative approach is implemented by ABI Model where certain characteristics serve as the factors of trustworthiness and in this study performance variables are used to measure the characteristics to support ABI model. Cultural factors are also included as explanatory variables to find the impact of non-calculative approach of rational choice. The study shows that to understand the trustworthiness of female politicians only a calculative approach is not sufficient as non-calculative approaches like culture, values, social norms play a significant role.

In Bangladesh, with greater performance female politicians are likely to be trusted more which shows that by showing ability, benevolence, and integrity they are worthy of being trusted by the citizens. Even political performance like satisfaction with democracy has a role to play in determining trustworthiness of female politicians. Culture factors like religiosity played a significant role in case for Bangladesh but the social values, ideologies, socio-economic condition do not show any significant effect on trustworthiness. So, the bias in rational choice is not much evident in Bangladesh as people were more calculative and logical when making decisions. The calculative approach as in the ABI model works for the scenario in Bangladesh.

In Nepal, the performance of female politicians has partial effect on trustworthiness of female politicians as efficiency of female politicians works as a contributing factor which shows the ability and benevolence but involvement of female politicians in corruption does not play a significant role which shows that integrity of the trustee is not considered while determining the trustworthiness. Even the political performance does not have significance in Nepal which implies that the calculative approach of rational choice that is the ABI model cannot decide the trustworthiness of female politicians. But values, norms like identity, religion and their satisfaction with life affect the trustworthiness which means the respondents from Nepal are more non-

calculative and they show biasness when deciding if they want to trust the female as politicians.

For Sri Lanka, the calculative approach of rational choice theory does not work at all as performance of female politicians does not have any significance in determining their trustworthiness. Respondents from Sri Lanka are non-calculative when making the decision to trust female politicians. It is mostly the socio-economic factors that affect the trustworthiness of female politicians.

### **5.3 Future Research Scope**

The study is only concentrated on three countries of South Asia and the variables were also limited for conducting the research. The interesting outcome of the paper gives some insights that also require more analysis. To study the subject from different angles and to make it more relevant in solving the gender disparity in politics, future research is compulsory. The limitation and the outcomes of this study both create scopes for future research.

Inclusion of more variables to measure the performance of female politicians is needed to determine trustworthiness of female politicians as this study works on only limited variables indicating performance of female politicians which are not sufficient to understand the entire scenario.

Inclusion of variables to compare the performance of male and female to determine trustworthiness is also a scope for future research. The actual mindset and perception of citizens can be measured if the performance variables can be compared between male and female. That will give an insight into what sectors female politicians should concentrate to gain more trust or it might show how relevant the cultural barriers are in this twenty-first century.

Study of different domains for Sri Lanka to understand the trustworthiness of female politicians is important as the outcomes for Sri Lanka do not paint a clear picture about the actual scenario. Being more educated compared to Bangladesh and Sri Lanka,

having the first female state head in the world, females are not at all prominent in the area of politics in Sri Lanka. It should be figured out if it is only the cultural barriers or the performance of the female as politicians are responsible for such conditions in Sri Lanka.

#### **5.4 Conclusion**

The paper addressed the issue of gender disparity in politics in Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka by studying the trustworthiness of female politicians and whether that can mitigate gender disparity in politics. The data was collected from a mass survey where respondents were asked questions related to the trustworthiness of female politicians. The analysis showed comparative differences in variables in the three South Asian countries, and it analyzed the significant factors affecting the trustworthiness of female politicians.

The study has provided some interesting insights into the trustworthiness of female politicians. Theoretical implication suggests that trustworthiness depends on the characteristics of the trustee following the ABI model, but this study has articulated that although this notion is applicable for Bangladesh, it does not hold true for Sri Lanka, and it partially holds true for Nepal. In some cases, the respondents made rational choices when judging the trustworthiness of female politicians. Similar factors were identified for Bangladesh and Nepal that affect the trustworthiness of female politicians. For Sri Lanka, the result was not so effective, and a study of different variables is needed to understand the trustworthiness of female politicians in the country.

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