

FACTORS INFLUENCING WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN PARLIAMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

The Year 2019 was marked by the large number of women being elected as representatives of people in the parliament of India. A record; 78 women out of 542 MPs were appointed as Lok Sabha members after winning the elections from different states of India, with Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal having the largest figure women, MPs with 11 each.

Interestingly in the 17th Lok Sabha election 2019, a good number of women approximately 724 contested the election in which 54 were from Congress and the alliance and 53 from BJP. Since independence Lok Sabha of Indian parliament observed first time fourteen percent women MPs. (The Economic Times 2019)

At the global level women, participation and role in different parliaments of the world have been under 25% as per the available data till mid of 2019. Since 1995 there have been minor changes in women participation from around 12% to 25%. In a report published in 2019 only, twelve women were here were twelve women serving as Head of the presidency, and Rwanda has the bigger number that won the election was 62% seats in the lower house. At the internal level, women account for less than 10% in twenty- seven states in their parliaments.

There remains below-average number of women parliamentarians, in Nordic countries 42% America, 30% and European countries include Nordic 28%, geographical areas 23%, Asia 20% Arab 19% and Pacific 16%.

Interestingly till 2020, there have been less than 20 % women presidency ministers, and most of them were conferred portfolios like women ministers, social affairs, children, youth, etc like departments were chosen fit for them. Matt Martino, 2018

In most of 103 countries globally the representation of women in most of the local deliberative bodies varies from 01% to 50% with a median of 26%. Most of the experts believe and at the ground level, it has been witnessed that female representation in local bodies like Panchayat, in India can make difference as compared to men. In Indian Panchayat there has been seen a significant changes where Panchayat are headed by female representatives or where the representation of female is adequate. Data reveals that in women lead councils, like Panchayat execution of works and progress of various development projects was 60% more efficient than male lead councils.

In Norway, research reveals the presence of women in municipal councils responsible for more and quality child care and women welfare measures as compared to men.

Data from a research reveals that till 2020 less than three countries have around 50% female parliamentarians, namely Rwanda 61% Cuba 53% Bolivia 53%. But most of them have remained under 30%. Not more than 30% of female members have been observing as parliamentarians in the majority of the countries. With 22 countries in Europe, 12 in Geographical and Caribbean, two in the Pacific and one in each Asia and Arab states. In the state where women representation is good, they have applied for some quotas for women in the parliaments as such their number has increased and in those countries where there is no reservation or quotas for female representation mostly women remain underrepresented. Matt Martino, 2018

Beijing declaration and Platform for Action gender balance in political representation and decision-making process was set and agreed target. History has witnessed that women participation in the decision-making process across the globe has empowered their abilities and capacities. (Susan de Villiers 2001)

Women in most unfavourable political environments have worked and succeed in combating problems related to gender inequalities, violence, child abuses and establish improved gender representation, parental and child care like initiatives in government. (Facts and figures n.d.)

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The question of under-representation of women is the stress of the thesis and to best explain it I will focus on the actors, institution and structure. As it has been revealed that structures, institutions and actors function in a reciprocal interplay where actors activities are limited by the current structures, actors work within fixed structure but actors are also the creators of the structures. (Rothstein, Bo n.d.)

Hence, actors are the primary focus to understand their role in increasing women participation in politics. And this thesis will be built upon three pillars, Structures, institutions and actors.

NATIONAL LEVEL EXPLANATION OF THE FACTORS THAT INFLUENCING WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN PARLIAMENTS:

A cross-national research on women in national legislatures conducted by (Sheri Kunovich *Southern Methodist University* Pamela Paxton *Ohio State University*) in 2005 reveals three factors that influence the percentage of women participation in parliaments, namely, **Structural**, **Political** and **Ideological** factors. (Kunovich and Paxton 2005b, 513)

STRUCTURAL FACTOR

Socio-economic and cultural structure of a country are major factors that determine the position and condition of women in a country, a modern socio-economic and cultural in a country will definitely be different and productive for the welfare of women as compared to the traditional one. (Wide see from thesis)

As per first factor, "structural" advocates that education of women will help her in the achievement of the labour force as such will be in turn a defining factor for her representation in politics. Women's economical status and higher education achievements will influence their political participation in comparison to others who are less or un-educated and in-active economically because of what so ever be the reason.

Besides it also reveals that women with higher education in particular subjects like law, political science, International relations, further strengthen their chances of being politically active as such increase their

representation in politics. As per Inter parliamentary Union 2000 in qualitative research, there are evidences from “South Asian” countries where it has been observed that candidates with their good educational and professional background are selected by political parties. (IPU (Inter-Parliamentary Union)).

POLITICAL

As per the second factor that is the *political explanation*, its focus on the factor what type of political system is prevailing in a country will be responsible for the “demand” or “limit” of male or female representation in a political system, the point is that whether a political system is democratic, or it has a proportional representation electoral system, etc are the important factors to understand the participation of women in the national parliament. Giving an example of the US shows that with the presence of proportional representation as compare to the plurality-majority system women gets more access to the political system. As in the proportional representation system a proportional closed-list system and the multimember district provides many benefits to women as the party operate under the close-list system publishes the list of candidates, they may be influenced by public opinion to equalize parties’ mandate ticket across gender, eventually lead to more number of a female candidate.(Kunovich and Paxton 2005a)

POLITICAL CULTURE

Political Culture "the historical source of such differences in habits, concerns, and attitudes that exist to influence political life in the various states". In a society political culture determined by the values and attitudes of the people living in that particular society assigns a particular role to its member. For example Americans believe politics belongs to men and believed it is difficult for women. Hence, such type of political culture would certainly deprive women of the right to participation in the decision- making process, besides free and fair elections and open competition that is more possible in a democratic system also influence the representation of women candidates.(Hill 1981)

“Quotas and legislative appointment” are political processes both of which are used for “democratic and non-democratic” nations to enhance the representation of a female. Quotas can be either voluntary or mandatory and if the state makes quotas mandatory that can result in a credible increase in women representation. Most of the theorist and gender experts consider quotas means for increasing women representation. Most of the countries in the world have implemented cretin kinds of political quota system to enhance women participation. These changes were advocated by the United Nation’s Economic and Social Council during 1990 that women’s should be given at the minimum of 30% reservation in various legislative bodies of government, this was followed by a large number of social movements making awareness about women rights. Taking further note of the women representation in 1995 the Beijing conference on women by the United Nations stressed on the government at the nation and international level should ensure equal representation to women in all institutions. (Rohini and Ford 2011)

Similarly, legislative appointments most commonly in non- democratic countries is another type of political activity to increase female or group representation, The most common in countries with inequalities in the society. In legislative appointments, seats are reserved for a specific number and then selected individuals to fill the positions after elections. e.g., In Egypt 10 representatives from women and christen are appointed by the president. (The New Equation 2002).

However, it must be noticed that appointment is “extra electoral” as candidates are appointed in non-democratic countries out of the election to gain legislative position, to say in simple terms there is a selection of representatives rather than elected as in the democratic system.

IDEOLOGICAL FACTOR

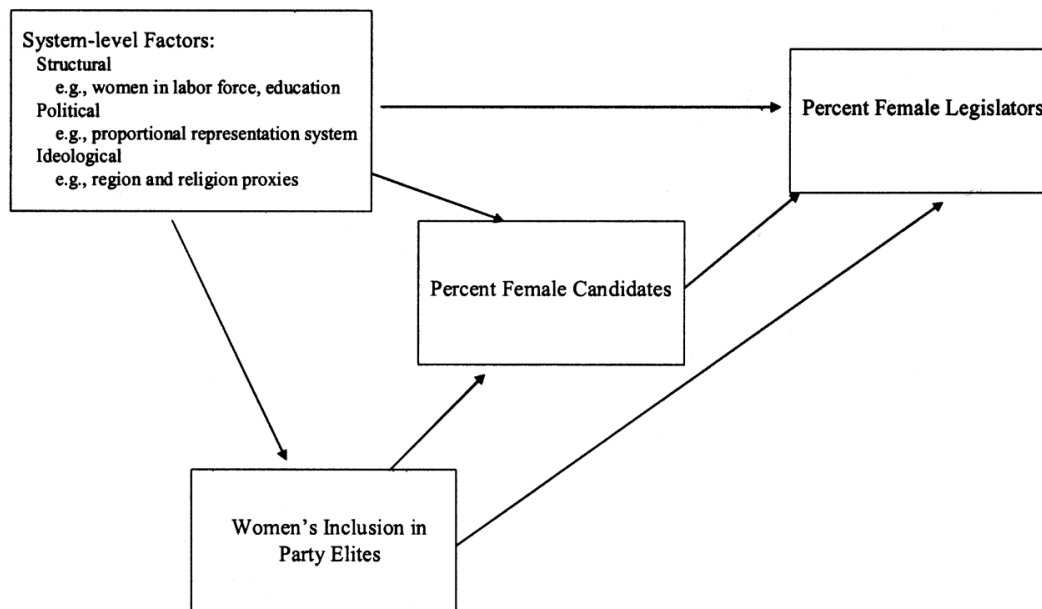
Finally, as far as the “*ideological*” factor is concerned, a particular set of ideas in a society about the women’s position and role can increase or decrease the participation of women in that set of political institutions. Ideological factors determine that irrespective of a favourable political system as discussed above, irrespective of the good number of qualified women candidates as well good atmosphere of the political system for women candidates, certain norms in the society such as social, cultural or religious can confine women’s representation in politics. In past history as we have been witnessing through greatest ideologists like ‘Aristotle, J. J. Rousseau, Thomas Hobbes and John Locks’ have warranted women exception from participation in political activities, bases of argument considering women’s no rational nature, the thinkers are of the opinion that, “If women were to control the government, the state would be in danger, for they do not act according to dictates of universities, but are influenced by accidental inclination and opinions” (Hegel 1977)

This notion for a female even after she has got right to participation are been still question, Even women are independently elected as representatives the notion of “the man as a husband, fiancé, lover, or myth is the mediator between them and the political world.” As in a research respondent of “Central America States”, “The patriarchal ideology prevailing in our society is the biggest stumbling block we have a face”

Throw observed that even if the women gain access to political offices they still face limitation in exercising their decisions independently while working with the male members in the office. There have been instances of women being harassed and demoralized in parliaments of Uganda (Tamale 1999) and Bangladesh fundamentalist turning their back during female politicians address. (commonwealthklt 1999p35)

Hence in nutshell various anti- women ideologies, due to religious orthodoxy and miss interpretation as well as patriarchal pattern in society have confined the access of women in politics. In general terms, conservative religious ideology promotes less public role for women.

It is an evident factor that countries with Islamic influence would there would be less number of female representations in politics as well in any other field. As explained by 2003 Noble Laureate, Shirin Ebadi, “Many people use Islam to justify the unequal position of women. They are wrong” (Kunovich and Paxton 2005b)



CONCLUSION

Under the theoretical framework that what should be the possible measures that subject in any political system will attract them to be a part of it, in other words interest of an individual in any political system of a country depends of the credibility and output of that political system. To put in technical terms for a healthy political environment in a country, factors like structure, political and ideological, influence the percentage of subjects in politics or political activism. Secondly the role of political party's women organizations and interest or pressure groups is of vital importance to attract people. Thirdly participation as discussed by the experts reveals that for an health participation in a state depends on the way a voter weighs a particular government or a political party whom he should choose to be elected for his benefit, and it depending on the value of the prescribed agenda or election manifesto of that particular party. Voters mostly prefer parties who that thing will be beneficial overall; this is what we come to understand from economic model by Downs 1957.

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