

Impact of Gender Quotas on the Political Representation of Women: A Survey

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ABSTRACT

Globally, gender quotas have significantly improved the representation of women in politics. They are an important step toward more inclusive and equitable governance, even though they are not a cure-all for all problems relating to gender disparity in politics. In order to optimize the effects of quotas, it is imperative to tackle the obstacles linked to their execution and to supplement them with more extensive initiatives that support women's empowerment and gender equality across all domains of the community. Notwithstanding the decline, there has been a steady rise in women's political representation and participation worldwide, including in India, over the years. This emphasizes the possibility of further advancements and the continuous endeavors to attain gender equality in the political sphere. The Inter-Parliamentary Union's Parline database shows that India's Global Ranking for Women's Representation in the Lower House of Parliament Drops to 143 out of 185 Countries. Gender quotas for public elections are being implemented in an increasing number of nations. Currently, a little over half of all nations employ some kind of electoral quota for their parliaments. Gender equality is the ultimate goal. The greatest alternative tool and endeavor to promote and increase women's involvement in politics are gender quotas.

Keywords: Women, Politics, Governance, Global ranking Public elections.

Introduction

Gender Parity

Gender equality is slowly improving around the world in many aspects due to various initiatives from both national and international efforts. These initiatives include legal reforms, education programs, and policies aimed at increasing women's participation in the workforce and politics. However, the progress remains slow, highlighting the need for continued and intensified efforts to close the gender gap more quickly. As per the recently released Gender Gap report of World Economic of World Economic Forum 2024, gender parity in 2024 is 68.4 % which was 68.4% in 2023, so it only improved by 0.1% in one year, which is very negligible. The report has been cautioning that at the current rate of progress, it will take 134 years to achieve full gender parity.

Global Gender Gap Index rankings by region, 2024

Economy	Score	
	Regional	Global
Bangladesh	1	99
Nepal	2	117
Sri Lanka	3	122
Bhutan	4	124
India	5	129
Maldives	6	132
Pakistan	7	145

Source: World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2024

Iceland maintains its number 1 rank (93.5%), and is also the only economy to have closed over 90% of its gender gap. India has slipped two places to 129 out of 146 countries. Last year, it was ranked 127, after having jumped eight places from 135 in 2022. India has closed 64.1% of its gender gap in 2024.

India ranked third-lowest among the South Asian economies in terms of gender equality, performing worse than Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Bhutan. This indicates that India has more significant challenges in closing the gender gap compared to its neighboring countries. Under representation of women in politics and decision making is one of the reasons for this small decline.

Objectives:

1. To investigate the current state of gender parity within the country focusing on various social economic and political dimensions.
2. To study the extent and nature of the gender gap in political representation and participation.
3. To assess the impact of gender quotas on improving gender equality in political and organizational contexts

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach to examine the impact of gender quotas on women's political representation across various countries. The paper relied on secondary data sourced from reputable sources, including academic journals, gender gap reports, World Bank reports, UN reports, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, and election commission data.

A comprehensive review of these secondary data sources was conducted to evaluate the impact of gender quotas on women's political representation. This involved systematically searching and selecting relevant literature, such as academic journals, government reports, and credible online databases. The selected sources were critically analyzed to identify trends, patterns, and key findings related to the implementation and effectiveness of gender quotas.

Quantitative data, including statistical reports on women's representation before and after the introduction of quotas, were compared to assess changes over time. The synthesis of these diverse data points facilitated a comprehensive evaluation of the overall impact of gender quotas on enhancing women's political participation.

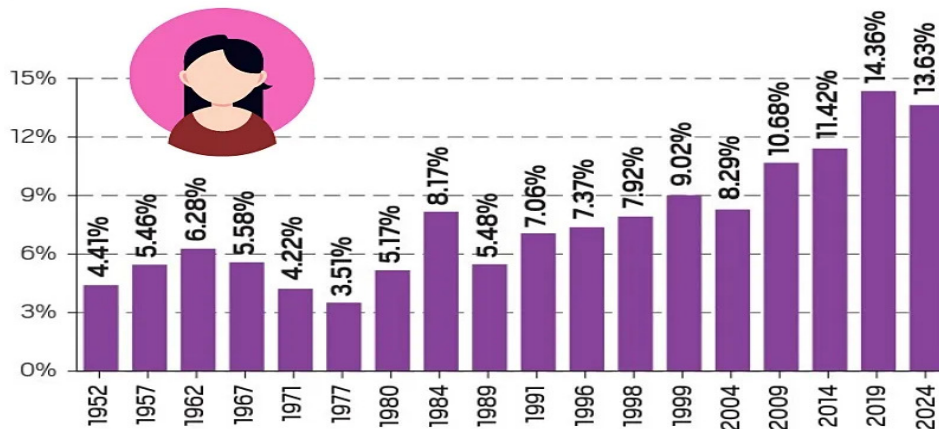
Representation of Women in Politics

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action emphasizes the importance of addressing gender inequality in power-sharing. It highlights women's equal access to and full participation in decision-making as a crucial strategy for achieving equality for women and girls. Additionally, it underscores that everyone has an equal right to participate in their country's government, whether through public office or informal leadership roles. Despite women's increased engagement in public life, equality is still a distant goal. Women remain significantly underrepresented in all aspects of decision-making, from political offices to corporate boardrooms. This underrepresentation underscores the necessity of quotas, which are essential to encourage and ensure women's participation in these crucial areas.

Recent Trends in Women's Representation in Indian Politics

Year	No. Women MPs	Percentage
16 th Lok Sabha (2014-19)	64	11,8%
17 th Lok Sabha (2019 -2024)	78	14.4%
18 th Lok Sabha(2024-	74	13.6%

CHANGE IN WOMEN'S STRENGTH IN LOK SABHA OVER THE YEARS



Women in Lok Sabha 2024. (Data via PRS Legislative Research)

Between the 16th and 17thLok Sabha, there was a noticeable increase in the number of women members, from 64 to 78, which corresponds to an increase in the percentage from 11.8% to 14.4%. However, in the 18th Lok Sabha, the number slightly decreased to 74, and the percentage dropped to 13.6%. While this represents a slight decline from the previous term, it is still higher than the representation in the 16th Lok Sabha.

On the whole, there has been an improvement in women's representation in the Lok Sabha over terms. This indicates progress, although the slight dip in the 18th Lok Sabha suggests that efforts to maintain and further increase female representation need to be sustained and possibly intensified.

Global and regional averages of women in national parliament

Global Average

	Lower chamber and unicameral	Upper chamber	All chambers
Total MPs	37,251	7,013	44,264
Gender breakdown known for	37,251	7,013	44,264
Men	27,232	5,129	32,361
Women	10,019	1,884	11,903
Percentage of women	26.9%	26.9%	26.9%

Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2024

Regional Average

Region	Lower chamber and unicameral	Upper chamber	All chambers
Americas	34.8%	36.4%	35.1%
Europe	31.7%	31.3%	31.6%
Sub-Saharan Africa	27.2%	27.5%	27.3%
Asia	21.7%	18.9%	21.4%
Pacific	19.4%	49.4%	22.5%
Middle East and North Africa	17.7%	11.6%	16.5%

Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union, Jan 2024

There is a notable gender disparity in political representation globally, with women holding only about a quarter of parliamentary seats. This percentage is consistent across both lower and upper chambers. Out of a total of 44,264 MPs worldwide, 11,903 are women. Men hold 73.1% of parliamentary seats globally, which indicates a significant gender gap. Coming to the Regional Averages, The data reveals significant regional disparities in women's representation in national parliaments.

The Americas and Europe have the highest averages, indicating progress towards gender equality in political representation. In contrast, the Middle East and North Africa have the lowest averages, pointing to a substantial gender gap. The Pacific region shows an unusual pattern with a high percentage of women in upper chambers. These figures underscore the need for targeted efforts to improve women's political representation globally, particularly in regions where it remains low. These inferences suggest that while some progress has been made in increasing women's representation in parliaments globally, there is still a significant gender gap, particularly in certain regions, which needs to be addressed to achieve gender-equitable governance. The data highlights the ongoing need for policies and initiatives aimed at increasing women's representation in national parliaments, particularly in regions with lower averages.

The latest IPU Women in Parliament report highlights the importance of quotas in ensuring greater representation of women in politics. In 2021, countries with gender quotas elected significantly more women to their lower and upper houses compared to those without. However, quotas alone are insufficient without enforcement mechanisms and supportive measures. Examples from El Salvador, Côte d'Ivoire, Kazakhstan, and Algeria show that quotas without penalties or adequate campaign finance support can result in stagnation or decline in women's representation. In contrast, Mexico's success in achieving gender parity through enforceable quotas, clear rules against discriminatory practices, and support for women candidates demonstrates the effectiveness of comprehensive and well-implemented affirmative action policies.

Countries with Gender Quotas : Developed vs Developing

Only six countries have 50 per cent or more women in parliament in single or lower houses: Rwanda (61 per cent), Cuba (56 per cent), Nicaragua (54 per cent), Andorra (50 per cent), Mexico (50 per cent), New Zealand (50 per cent), and the United Arab Emirates (50 per cent) .

Developed and developing countries have adopted gender quotas in politics to varied extents reflecting the differences in political, social, and economic contexts. Developed countries with quotas generally have higher representation of women in parliament because of their strong institutional frameworks and gender sensitive policies and its implementation. For example, Sweden has nearly 50% female representation, while France has around 40%. Developed countries have resources and stricter enforcement mechanisms for implementing quotas whereas developing countries though reflects remarkable progress in some cases, for example, Rwanda has achieved over 60% female representation in parliament, one of the highest in the world. India has seen significant female participation ie, one-third of seats in local governance. But these developing countries often face greater challenges due to cultural norms, political instability, and economic constraints. Developing countries generally face resistance due to traditional gender roles and hence needs progressive attitude. They have to institute continuous efforts and tailored approaches in order to ensure gender quotas that can lead to meaningful and sustainable gender equality in politics globally.

Contextual Factors

It is important to consider various factors that may influence these numbers, such as political party policies, the effectiveness of gender quotas, social and cultural barriers, and broader societal attitudes towards women in politics. Deeper analysis essential to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics at play. Continued efforts and targeted policies are essential to sustain and build on these gains.

Gender quotas

Gender quotas have emerged as a critical tool in addressing the underrepresentation of women in political institutions. These quotas are designed to ensure that a certain percentage of candidates or elected officials are women, thereby promoting gender parity in political decision-making bodies.

Types of Gender Quotas

Gender quotas can be broadly categorized into three types:

1. **Legislated Candidate Quotas:** These legal requirements mandate that political parties include a specific percentage of women among their candidates. The goal is to ensure more women are elected to political office, promoting gender equality. The exact proportion varies by country.
2. **Voluntary Party Quotas:** Adopted voluntarily by political parties, these quotas are not legally enforced but reflect the party's commitment to gender equality.
3. **Reserved Seats:** Specific seats in the legislature are reserved exclusively for women, ensuring their representation.

Case Studies

1. India

India introduced gender quotas at the local government level through the Panchayati Raj system, allocating 33% and then 50% of the seats for women in village councils. Women are now more frequently involved in municipal government, which has empowered them locally and given them invaluable political experience. Yet, obstacles persist concerning the opposition to patriarchy and the petty character of certain female candidates.

2. Rwanda

A common example of a country that has successfully implemented gender quotas is Rwanda. The Rwandan government enacted a constitutional requirement designating thirty percent of parliamentary seats for women in the wake of the 1994 genocide. Because of this, Rwanda currently has more female lawmakers than any other country in the world, with over 60% of the seats held by women. This has had a big influence on how policies are made, putting more of a focus on things like women's rights, healthcare, and education.

3. France

France introduced legislated candidate quotas in 2000 through the Parity Law, requiring political parties to field an equal number of male and female candidates. While this has increased the number of women in the French National Assembly, issues such as non-compliance by political parties and financial penalties have highlighted the complexities of implementing and enforcing such quotas.

Quotas: Pros and Cons

Pros

Breaks down barriers: Gender quotas have proven successful in accelerating the rise of women in political positions and dismantling long-standing gender stereotypes.

Diverse Views: Increased female representation guarantees the inclusion of many viewpoints in the formulation of public policy, resulting in more inclusive and thorough governance.

Role Models: Women and girls are encouraged to pursue careers in politics and public life by the example set by female politicians.

Policy Changes: Women in politics typically put a higher priority on social welfare, healthcare, and education, which results in policies that help larger swaths of the population.

Transparency: Promote democratization by making the nomination process more transparent

Cons

Violate the principle of equal opportunity by giving preference to women as its violation of voter right

Resistance and reaction: The public and male politicians may oppose quotas, which could spark reaction and attempts to compromise their efficacy.

Sustainability: Maintaining women's political representation after initial quotas is difficult and calls for constant efforts to alter political systems and public perceptions.

Create conflicts within party organizations

Voters do not have the choice to elect the person of their choice when it is reserved

Conclusion

Despite the decrease, the overall trend over the years shows a gradual increase in women's political participation and representation across the globe including India . This highlights the potential for future improvements and the ongoing efforts to achieve gender parity in politics. India's Global Ranking for Women's Representation in the Lower House of Parliament Drops to 143 out of 185 Countries according to the Inter-Parliamentary Union's Parline database . An increasing number of countries are introducing gender quotas for public elections. Today, about half of the countries in the world use some form of electoral quota for their parliaments. Ultimate aim is to achieve gender equality. Gender Quotas are best alternative instrument and initiative to encourage and enhance women's participation in politics. Gender quotas have made significant strides in enhancing women's political representation across the globe. While they are not a panacea for all issues related to gender inequality in politics, they represent a crucial step towards more equitable and inclusive governance. To maximize their impact, it is essential to address the challenges associated with their implementation and to complement quotas with broader efforts aimed at empowering women and promoting gender equality in all spheres of society.

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