

Gender And Politics: Get Real About Power, Who's Represented, And Fighting Back Today

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Quick Summary

This paper digs into how gender and politics are all tangled up, looking at who has the power, who gets a voice, how things are run, and how people are pushing back. Using ideas from feminist thinkers – like different types of feminism and how they all connect – I argue that women being underrepresented in politics isn't just a numbers problem. It's built into the system because politics has always been a man's world. By looking at ideas and real-world examples from around the globe and in India, like those big changes to the constitution (the 73rd and 74th Amendments, and the Women's Reservation Act of 2023), I want to show how changes to the rules can help but also hold things back. I also look at the stuff that keeps women out, like how parties pick candidates, violence in politics, money problems, and online harassment. By seeing how all these things connect, I argue that to make things really fair, we need to change the system, change how people think, and keep fighting for what's right.

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What's This All About?

Gender and politics are super connected when it comes to deciding who has the power, who's in charge, and who gets to be a citizen. Way back when, politics was set up to be a man's game, favoring things like being logical, bossy, competitive, and being a

leader in public – things that were usually linked to men. Even though democracies today say

everyone is equal, women and people who don't fit the typical gender roles still get shut out when it comes to truly being involved in politics.

The fact that women are still not equal in politics makes you wonder if democracy is really working. If democracy means everyone gets a voice, then keeping half the population on the sidelines messes with the whole idea. I think that gender inequality in politics isn't just a coincidence; it's baked into the system, the ideas people have, and the culture we live in.

Thinking It Through: Feminism and Power

To really get what's going on with gender and politics, you need to look at it through the lens of feminist thought. Liberal feminism says everyone should have the same rights and be able to get involved in politics. They push for things like changing laws, stopping discrimination, and setting quotas for elections to fix the imbalances. But, while these kinds of changes can get more women in office, they might not fix the deeper issues of sexism in the system.

Radical feminism questions the very base of sexism. They argue against the idea that women should be stuck at home while men run the world. They see political institutions as not just neutral places, but as places built on male dominance.

Post-structural feminism, especially the ideas of Judith Butler, messes with the idea that gender is fixed. Butler says that gender is something we create through our actions. In politics, leadership is often seen as a masculine thing, putting women in a tough spot: either act like a man or risk being ignored.

Intersectionality, introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw, makes things even more complicated by showing how different types

of oppression overlap. Gender mixes with things like class, race, religion, and where you live, creating different experiences of being shut out of politics. Intersectionality stops us from thinking of womanhood as one thing and asks us to pay attention to the different layers of inequality.

All these ideas together show that being underrepresented in politics isn't just about numbers; it's about the system, people's beliefs, and how all these things intersect.

How Power Works in Politics – And Who It Favors

Historically, places like parliaments, government offices, and parties have been run by men. Even though things have slowly changed, women are still underrepresented in national governments around the world. The idea that leaders should be masculine still affects who gets picked, how they're judged, and how the media portrays them.

Political parties are like the gatekeepers of who gets to be a representative. The way they pick candidates often favors men who are already connected, have money, and know the right people. Women often don't have the same access to campaign funds or mentors in politics.

Also, women politicians are often judged more harshly on their looks, whether they're married, and their family life – things that men rarely have to deal with. These kinds of expectations reinforce the idea that men are on top in democratic systems.

Representation and Elections: What Works?

Lots of countries have used quotas to try to fix the problem of underrepresentation. For example, Rwanda has one of the highest percentages of women in parliament because they have quotas in their constitution. Nordic countries have also used quotas within parties, which has helped get more women elected.

But, just getting more women in office doesn't automatically change things. The culture of these institutions, what they focus on, and party rules can still limit how much women can influence decisions. The difference between just having women present and them actually having power is still a big issue in feminist political analysis.

Gender, Policy, and How Things Are Run in India

In India, changes to the constitution have been important in getting women more involved in politics. The 73rd and 74th Amendments said that one-third of the seats in local governments had to be reserved for women. These changes made local politics more democratic and brought millions of women into formal political roles.

Research shows that this has led to improvements in things like access to water, sanitation, education, and health at the local level. on the other hand, the issue of proxy representation – where male relatives are really in charge – shows that sexism is still a problem.

At the national level, the Women's Reservation Act of 2023 suggests reserving one-third of the seats in parliament and state assemblies for women. While this is a good sign, there are still debates about when it will actually happen and how it will work with reservations for other groups based on caste. These discussions highlight that it's important to think about how all these things connect when making policies.

Intersectionality: Understanding the Different Ways People Get Excluded

Intersectionality shows why some women, usually those who are rich and upper-class, might be visible in politics while women who are already marginalized stay excluded. In India, caste and class have a big impact on who can get involved in

politics. Women from lower castes and minority groups often face even more discrimination.

Similarly, around the world, things like race, immigration status, and money problems all intersect with gender to shape who can participate in politics. Without understanding intersectionality, changes to help women could end up just helping those who are already privileged instead of fixing the system.

What's Holding Women Back Today?

Even with legal changes, there are still big obstacles:

Sexist Political Culture: Leadership is still seen as a masculine thing.

Parties as Gatekeepers: The way candidates are picked favors men who are already in power.

Money Problems: Women often don't have the same access to campaign funds.

Violence and Harassment: Women face threats and intimidation.

Online Harassment: Social media makes it easier to spread sexist abuse.

Burden of Care: Women still do most of the work at home, limiting their time for politics. To fix these things, we need to hold institutions accountable, have the political will to change, and transform society.

Fighting Back: Feminist Resistance

Feminist movements have always pushed for more rights through resistance. From fighting for the right to vote to using digital activism today, feminist politics challenges sexism and imagines new ways of governing that are fair and prioritize care.

Feminist networks around the world have built connections, focusing on issues like reproductive rights, equal pay, and violence against women. Resistance is not just about saying no; it's about creating new, inclusive ideas of what it means to be a citizen and a leader.

Conclusion

Gender equality in politics is vital for democracy to really work. Even though changes to constitutions, quota systems, and policies have helped get more women involved, inequality still exists in institutions and how people think.

This paper says that to really make a difference, we need:

- * To have clear ideas
- * To understand intersectionality
- * To ground our ideas in policy
- * To change the system
- * To keep fighting for what's right

Democracy can't be legitimate if it keeps excluding people based on their gender. True inclusion means not just having a seat at the table, but changing the power dynamics themselves.

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