# The Role of Women in Politics

## Introduction

In modern democratic governance, gender equality in political participation is considered a fundamental aspect. Besides, international standards stipulate the need for both men and women to participate equally in the different levels and aspects of political processes. Theoretically, this is envisioned in the equal rights and opportunities, but in practice, it has proven even more challenging for women to access and exercise these rights. This research is anchored on the challenges that women face in their quest to participate in politics. The research looks at the political structures that make it possible for women to access and exercise their rights and opportunities in political participation.

## Research question

As Erzeel and Celis (2016) explain, the extent to which women participate in politics and their access to decision-making is an indicator of gender equality within a society[[1]](#footnote-0). In most political forums, equality is viewed in the context of representation, thus ignoring the fundamental aspects of participation and decision-making, which are key pillars of political activity in the society. The continuous misinterpretation of the factors that constitute equality in politics has been one of the main reasons behind the slow penetration of women in politics.

The participation of women in politics forms the basis of the research question, which is “What are the exact roles played by women in politics?” As Abdo-Katsipis (2017) explains, the equality in decision-making is integral to the advancement of women’s right[[2]](#footnote-1). However, as women become more entrenched in the decision-making processes, this research aims at demystifying such participation as mere justice and democracy by looking into the interests that women hold with respect to their participation in politics.

This research question is significant in contemporary and comparative political studies, as it highlights the motive behind the active participation of women in politics. With more specificity, this research question is important to women who are yet to understand their position in influencing the public decisions that characterize the role of politicians. This research question is important as it defines with clarity the expectations pegged upon women who are involved in active politics in different regimes.

## Preliminary response to the research question

Over the years, women have been relegated to the background and circumscribed within the political arena by ideologies, structures and procedures that work in favor of men. Besides, the political field has an invisible ceiling that often hinders the political participation and blocks the upward mobility of women in political careers. Amidst these challenges, women continue to further their political ambitions, thus contributing immensely to the political and democratic processes in different societies.

As Sanbonmatsu (2015) elucidates, there are certain factors that make it difficult for women to understand their roles in politics[[3]](#footnote-2). In advanced democracies, finances and the multiple roles played by women in the society are considered the major hindrances that women encounter in understanding their role in politics. However, cultural orientations continue to be the leading factor that affects the role played by women in politics both in developing and developed countries. Cultural barriers such as religion and ethnicity have set societal expectations and tags on women, hence limiting their interest in political participation. In active politics, political parties play a significant role that determines the nature and structure of political leadership in countries. Political party philosophies have excluded and discriminated women from political processes, a factor that has hindered the quest for knowledge on what roles women play within the political party and the political arena at large.

Having understood some of the factors that determine the roles played by women in politics, it is important to identify the specific roles played by women who have been in active politics. In many countries, women play the role of leading change. As such, women have performed the noble roles within governments that have labeled them as agents of change. Besides, a study conducted by Mavisakalyan (2014) illustrates that female political leaders are identifiable with practices of good governance and transparency[[4]](#footnote-3). Therefore, women have been instrumental in the eradication of bureaucracy in government operations, as well as boosting the quality of governance.

Having being attached to cultural identities, women have initiated programs that have enabled the less-privileged in their respective societies to access help. This was illustrated in the study findings by Jacob, Scherpereel and Adams (2013), who indicated that many of the self-help development projects in rural communities were initiated by female politicians who lobbied for such projects from the government[[5]](#footnote-4). Despite the limited resources at their disposal, women have overcome these challenges to contribute to national and regional development. In many political settings, women do not have the support they need to acquire resources for development. Nevertheless, despite these challenges, women have managed to contribute to development.

Lack of women empowerment is among the leading factors that have led to the inadequate participation of women in politics. Women have proven to be effective once they are entrusted with executive political powers[[6]](#footnote-5). Today, the elevated position of women in the modern society can be attributed to the role played by female politicians in developing gender policy documents that ensure equal rights for the girl child. Other than using their political influence to lobby for feminine interests, women in politics play a role in ensuring that the vulnerable groups in the society are catered for. Such vulnerable groups include the disabled, orphans and widows.

Women are considered to be selfless, and demonstrate their motherly instincts when performing their legislative and executive roles in politics. Unlike their male counterparts, women in politics often rise beyond their party affiliations to support bills that are aimed towards ensuring that the social fabric is strengthened through promoting families and empowering the youth. Furthermore, women in politics have transformed the manner in which consensus is built on issues[[7]](#footnote-6). While men prefer confrontation and aggression, women in politics often embrace dialogue and deliberations to build consensus on pertinent issues.

Over the last half century, the number of women in politics has risen significantly. Whereas other governments are struggling to attain the two-thirds gender rule stipulated by the United Nations in elective and appointed political seats, some governments have embraced women leadership in elective [[8]](#footnote-7)posts. Despite these dynamics, the number of women in politics remains low. Women in politics play the mentorship role. Majority of these women have appeared on media platforms where they have been able to demystify the myth that politics is a field reserved for men. The outright appearance by female politicians on such platforms has been instrumental in eradicating the cultural stereotypes that acted as barriers to understanding the roles that women play in the political arena.

## Annotated Bibliography

## Women, Political Participation, And The Arab Spring: Political Awareness And Participation In Democratizing Tunisia (Abdo-Katsipis 2017)

In this research, the author examines the obstacles encountered in promoting female participation in the democratization of Tunisia. The study established that there are significant gaps in the degree of political awareness between men and women, thus the conclusion that the societal and cultural structures influence the participation of women in politics. This study is significant to this research, as it paints a picture of the factors that affect the ability to women to undertake their roles in politics.

## Accessing Power In New Democracies: The Appointment of Female Ministers in Post-communist Europe (Ingrid Bego, 2013)

The main purpose of this article is to enhance the understanding on how women are acquiring access to political power in democracies that are not fully established. The study established that high numbers of female enrollment in higher education correlates with higher percentage of women appointed in political offices. This article is significant in the research, as it highlights the factors that influence the decisions behind the appointment of women in politics. Through these appointments, the role of women in politics is illuminated.

## Political Parties, Ideology And The Substantive Representation Of Women (Silvia Erzeel and Celis Karen, 2016)

This article borrows substantially from contemporary literature in assessing the relationship between the political party ideologies and the opportunities offered to women in political representation. This study highlights the position that women hold in the political parties, and how political party ideologies influence the roles played by women in enhancing their political ambitions and participation in decision making. Therefore, this article is significant to the research as it conceptualizes the gendered interests that define the position of women in political parties.

## Gender Norms And Women's Political Representation: A Global Analysis Of Cabinets, 1979-2009 (Suraj Jacob, John Scherpereel and Melinda Adams 2013)

In this study, the authors were driven by the need to establish the role that the international diffusion of gender plays in determining the recent increases in the political representation of women. Findings in the study illustrate that the norm of diffusion has had significant positive effects in the women involvement in politics, more so through cabinet representation as compared to legislative representation. From this study, the research can support its position that women play the role of mentorship in politics, hence the success of norm diffusion on women’s political representation.

## Violence Against Women In Politics (Mona Lena Krook, 2017)

This article begins by acknowledging the increased political engagement by women in many parts of the world. However, with the increase in female political participation, the study identifies a growing trend in intimidation, physical attacks and harassment directed to these women. These concerns have been dismissed by their male counterparts as the cost of doing politics. This article is important in highlighting the approaches taken by women in reaching consensus on issues of contention. Through this article, the stereotypical challenges encountered by women in enhancing their political participation are revealed.

## Women In Cabinet And Public Health Spending: Evidence Across Countries (Astghik Mavisakalyan, 2014)

This study examines the effects on the public health policy outcomes accruing from the representation of women in executive political offices. The study shows that increased public health spending is prevalent in cabinets with higher women representation. Such findings illustrate the transparency and accountability that defines the role of women in transforming the nature of political office holders. This study is vital to the course of the research, as it highlights the role played by women in promoting the welfare of the vulnerable in the society.

## Electing Women Of Color: The Role Of Campaign Trainings (Kira Sanbonmatsu, 2015)

With the increasing penetration of women in the American political arena come challenges as portrayed in this study. The study observes that women of color are underrepresented in politics, hence the need to understand the factors behind this underrepresentation. The article further pinpoints the status of women candidates of color and the purpose of campaign trainings. In the context of the research, this article exposes some of the factors that hinder women from undertaking their roles in politics. Besides, the study acknowledges the role played by women of color who are already in politics to create programs that encourage the indulgence of more women into politics.

## Women In Cabinets: The role of party ideology and government turnover (Daniel Stockemer and Aksel Sundström, 2017)

This study focuses on party ideology to advance the discussion on the factors that determine the share of women in cabinets across the world. The study considers the proportion of female cabinet members from liberal and conservative governments from different times. Across different countries, the rate at which women are appointed into executive political posts remains low. This article plays a significant role in the research as it attempts to define the factors that lead to the inclusion of women in political appointments despite the political ideology of the regime.

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