

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

Dr. Ananda Nand Tripathi

Abstract: *When investigating the political participation of any given society or section of the population, it is necessary to consider whether participation is associated with democratic ideals. The very existence of inequalities, whether they are natural or the result of human action, may place limits on the depth and breadth of people's participation in political life. It is not possible to eliminate inequalities that are caused by natural factors; however, it is possible to eliminate inequalities that are caused by humans by simply adopting and adhering to democratic principles and values. The democratic principles of liberty, equality, fraternity, and justice, among others, have proven to be robust enough to support and shield the populace from the dangers posed by man-made disparities in wealth and opportunity. Therefore, the investigation into the nature and level of political participation and the consequent empowerment can only be evaluated based on the existence of democratic values. For the purposes of maximizing one's capacity for participation in decision-making and empowerment, the existence of a democratic system is a necessary precondition. The purpose of this paper is to make an attempt to investigate the theoretical perspective of women's participation in politics.*

INTRODUCTION

Women's political empowerment is a tool for stimulating the society for political and social empowerment, which would further stimulate the overall development and social change in the society. In other words, women's political empowerment is an instrument for empowering women (Ghimire, 2006). Regarding the status of the law, the constitutions of all of the countries acknowledge that all citizens are entitled to the same basic rights and that gender and religious bias are not acceptable grounds for discrimination. However, discrimination continues to be practiced in bodies that are responsible for making laws and policies. It has been argued that various social classes and minority groups ought to have their own representatives in order to be fairly represented (Michael, et.al., 1994). In South Asia, women are generally under-represented in high-level power structures, particularly in the countries that do not observe quotas in their parliaments for the representation of their women population. This is especially true in the countries where women do not make up a significant portion of the population. Affirmative action offers a means by which the dismal representation of women in political life can be improved. A majority of South Asian countries have implemented some form of affirmative action in order to ensure that women are included in political institutions and bodies that make decisions. This is because of the growing significance of including women in such bodies and institutions. However, it has been found that the representation of women from Muslim communities is practically non-existent in India. On the other hand, in Pakistan, it has been discovered that their share

1. Associate Prof. , Department of Political Science, School of Social Sciences, Uttar Pradesh Rajarshi Tandon Open University, Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh

in political institutions and bodies that make decisions is somewhat satisfactory. South Asian countries have a socio-cultural and political environment that is not conducive to active political participation by women, particularly women who belong to minority communities. This is especially true in the countries of South Asia.

Achieving empowerment does not mean gaining the power to dominate others; rather, it means gaining the power to work together with others to bring about change. Participation in political processes is a crucial element of individual empowerment. "Research in participation and empowerment links them in a way that is both unidirectional and bidirectional," the authors write. "Empowered individuals may be more likely to participate in organizations, and participation promotes empowerment" (Bakshi, 2002). The term "political participation" is commonly used to refer to the voluntary activities of members of a society that are involved in the selection of rulers and the formation of public policy. The right to participate is an essential component of democratic government and an inherent right within the democratic process. This is because democracy is inextricably linked to popular sovereignty, which is one of the inseparable characteristics of the political system. Participation in the political process is essential to the operation of every political system. Individuals can become more effective through participation, and participation connects individuals to the political system. When both the rate and the level of participation are higher, there is a greater variety of political activities. It is absolutely necessary to ensure that a democratic government can carry out its duties effectively. According to the definition provided by the International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, political participation is the primary method through which consent is granted or withdrawn in a democracy and rulers are made accountable to those who are ruled (International Encyclopedia, 1968). Voting, seeking information, discussing and proselytising, attending meetings, contributing financially, and communicating with representatives are all examples of the activities that are denoted by this term (International Encyclopedia, 1968).

Numerous authors have, quite correctly, argued that the participation of citizens in political processes is the defining characteristic of modern states. The degree to which citizens are involved in political processes is perhaps the single most important factor that differentiates a modern state from more conventional ones (Das, 1997). In most cases, high levels of political participation are linked to democracy, which is beneficial not only to the individual but also to society as a whole. In the context of democratic theory, political engagement has traditionally been referred to as a "sine qua non" (Das, 1997). It has been stated that political participation is a civic duty, a sign of political health, and the best method for ensuring that one's private interests are not neglected. All of these assertions are true. Even though a small number of people control the political system in every society, those who currently hold positions of political authority in each system are found to be quite interested in ensuring that the general populace has some level of involvement in political affairs. Therefore, political participation promotes stability and order by enhancing the legitimacy of political authority. This is accomplished by involving a greater number of people in the affairs of the state.

The concept of political participation can be understood in a variety of ways. The term is used to describe the actions of individuals operating at all levels of the political system. There are times when the term is used more frequently to refer to political orientations rather than activities. The term "political participation" refers to the exercise of power in spheres other than government and is defined in such a way as to include both of these categories. It is true that there is a great deal of misunderstanding surrounding what exactly is meant by the term in question; "Again, participation can be analysed from two perspectives: its intensity and its breadth. The degree to which a person is invested in a matter and the lengths to which they are willing to go in order to achieve their goal is what determines the intensity of their involvement. Because of the intricate nature of political activity, which necessitates participation in a variety of different aspects, ranging from voting to serving on a committee of technical experts or becoming a minister, width emerges as a result of political engagement " (Sheshadri, 1976).

The term "political participation" refers to the activities undertaken by private citizens in an effort to exert influence or provide support on matters pertaining to politics and government (Milbrath & Goel, 197&). This definition is more inclusive than the majority of others because it encompasses not only the active roles that individuals pursue in order to exert influence over the outcomes of political processes, but also the ceremonial and support activities. "Political participation" is defined by Almond and Powel as "the involvement of members of the society in the decision making process of the system." (Almond & Powell, 1975). "Political participation" is defined by Mc Closky as "those voluntary activities by which members of a society share in the selection of rulers and directly or indirectly, in the formulation of public policy" (Dowse, 1972). According to the definition provided by Verba and Pye, it consists of "those activities by private citizens that more or less directly aim at influencing the selection of governmental personnel and the actions they take" (Verba & Nie, 1972). The element of the will or intention of the people is one of the most contentious questions that need to be answered in order to arrive at a definition of political participation. In the final analysis, participating in politics means engaging in a process that involves exerting influence over the authoritative distribution of values within a society. The participation of the greatest number of people possible, particularly on the most fundamental level, is necessary for the effective operation of democratic systems. The Panchayati Raj was a significant political innovation and a vital conduit for popular participation in democratic development in independent India. Both of these things make it an important institution. It is envisioned not only as a method of implementing rural development policies and the dispersal of developmental benefits, but more importantly, as a training ground for the promotion of local initiative with the goal of increasing people's political consciousness, awareness of their rights, and direct participation in self-rule. This is because it is a training ground for the promotion of local initiative in order to increase people's political consciousness, awareness of their rights, and direct participation in self-rule.

Participation in political life is one of the defining characteristics of a democratic

system. The nature of democracy, as well as its continued viability, success, and efficacy, are largely determined by the degree to which all of the nation's residents are afforded opportunities for genuine, equal, and productive participation within the political system. Given that women make up roughly half of the population, it is imperative that this segment of society receives the appropriate amount of attention within the system as well as a proportionate share in the decision-making process. In a democracy, the active participation of citizens in political affairs is essential and essential because it lends legitimacy to the system and also strengthens the democratic fabric. This is why it is crucial and necessary (Palmer, 1976). If women are not provided equal opportunities for participation in the decision-making process within decision making institutions, then democracy will fail to achieve its goals. They are to participate in the formation of the nation and the political development of it as equal partners. Participation from at least some of the population in the decision-making process is necessary for the operation of a democratic political system. The engagement of citizens in political processes is essential due to the fact that circumstances that lead to a high level of participation on the part of members of a group typically result in a greater democratic potential (Lipset, 1973). According to the definition offered by Norman D. Palmer, political participation is defined as the involvement of citizens in political activities that either directly or indirectly influence the behavior and actions of decision-makers (Palmer, 1976). It is possible to define it as any "voluntary action, successful or unsuccessful, organized or unorganized, episodic or continuous, employing legitimate or illegitimate methods, intended to influence the choice of public policies, the administration of public affairs, or the choices of political leaders at any level of government, local or national." This definition encompasses a broad range of activities (Weiner, 1976). It is possible to make the point that not all citizens participate in any given political process in the same way or to the same degree. The manner in which individuals choose to participate in political life is significantly impacted to a great extent by the political culture of a society. The real purpose and impact of participation is to transform the citizen from a passive spectator into an active participant in politics, to give him the ability to disagree with what is proposed just as much as he is able to endorse it, just as much as he is able to scotch initiatives just as much as he is able to launch them, just as much as he is able to revise, criticise, and block them just as much as he is able to push, prod, and has (Mount, 1974). People must take part, either directly or indirectly, in the decision-making processes that affect their day-to-day lives for political participation to have any real-world significance, particularly in a democratic system. Only then will political participation have any real-world relevance.

MODES OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

The definition of political participation has been shifting radically in recent years as a result of these shifts. The many different ways that people can participate in politics will be directly influenced by these changes. Citizens have the opportunity to participate in a variety of alternative and different ways to influence the political system and the government. Prior to a few years ago, the vast majority of survey studies of political

participation restricted their investigation to a relatively narrow range of political acts. The vast majority of them inquired as to whether or not the individual had participated in the voting process, and some of them went on to inquire about activities such as going to political gatherings or rallies, working for a political party, donating money, or running for public office (Milbrath & Goel, 1977). However, the types of citizens who participate in these alternative methods of political participation, the manner in which they act, the amount of pressure they are able to exert, and the way the system reacts to their activities are all factors that influence how these methods function. Therefore, political participation encompasses more than just casting a ballot and more than just taking part in the electoral process. Voting, campaign activity, co-operative activity, and citizen-initiated contact are the four broad categories that Verba and Nie have categorized as the different ways in which citizens can participate in politics. These four categories are referred to as the four broad modes of participation (Verba & Nie, 1972). These modes, which were mentioned by Verba and Nie, which relate individuals to the polity, are expanded upon by Milbrath and Goel to include protest and communication. They are also of the opinion that political acts could be arranged in a hierarchy from the easiest to the most difficult, and that if a person performed a more difficult act, it was likely that he would perform those that are less difficult as well. If a person performed a more difficult act, he was likely to perform those that are easier as well (Milbrath & Goel, 1977).

It is helpful to think of political participation in a hierarchical sense; however, it is important to keep in mind that certain levels of participation might not be present in certain political systems (Rush & Althoff, 1971). Some political systems severely restrict or outright ban public meetings and demonstrations, while others forbid the formation of political parties and other types of political or quasi-political organizations, and so on. Not every political system has elections or some other form of voting (Rush & Althoff, 1971). Michael Rush and Philip Althoff, in their explanation of the level of political participation, added that apathy, alienation, and the use of violence vary clearly and significantly from system to system, but continue to be quite important factors in any examination of political participation (Rush & Althoff, 1971). In his analysis of the different ways that people can get involved in politics, Schonfeld identified ten distinct types of activities that people can do. These include (1) running for or holding public or party offices, (2) belonging to a party or other political organisation, (3) working in an election, (4) attending political meetings or rallies, (5) making financial contributions to a party or a candidate, (6) getting in touch with a public official, (7) publicly expressing a political opinion to convince others, and (8) getting involved in (Schonfeld, 1975). Participation in political processes is the parent, while politics itself is the offspring. The former is of the utmost importance both for the nation as a whole and for the individual, as it is what creates and determines politics. Participation in politics in any and all of a society's processes will, as a result, determine the nation's political system (Bala, 1999).

VARIABLES OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Political participation appears to be a complex phenomenon, a dependent variable that

hinges upon many factors such as the psychological, socio-economic and political, which provide orientation to individuals either positively or negatively.

Psychological Environment: Participating in politics has a tendency to fulfil the psychological need of an individual to overcome feelings of isolation. It is a measure of the extent to which individuals are interested in and concerned about issues pertaining to the government and public life. The degree to which a person feels emotionally attached to political causes or institutions will almost certainly determine the breadth and depth of their involvement in politics. There are people in every society who are concerned and interested in the political affairs of their society, and there are also people in every society who are not concerned or interested in the political affairs of their society at all. It's possible that the differences in their psychological attitudes are to blame for this disparity. It is now abundantly clear that the former are more likely to be politically active than the latter are given the current circumstances. In this regard, it is generally accepted that men are psychologically more involved than women are in politics, as is the case in their respective field of activity.

Socio-economic Environment: A direct influence on political participation will come from the surrounding socioeconomic environment. The categories of education, occupation, income, age, caste, religion, sex, family background, residence, and other factors are all considered socio-economic variables. According to Robert Lane, "political participation IS a function of age, sex, education, and status." [Citation needed] (Lane, 1959). Therefore, in general, participation tends to be higher among people who have higher levels of education, who are members of higher occupational and income groups, who are middle aged, who belong to dominant ethnic and religious groups, who come from political family backgrounds, who have settled down in a community, who live in urban areas, and who are members of voluntary associations (Closky, 1968). However, the correlation between political participation and some of these socio-economic variables may vary from culture to culture in various political contexts, and the effect that these socio-economic variables have on political participation may not be able to be determined.

Political Environment: The overall political environments do, to a great extent, influence the process as a whole that is involved in political participation. The nature of the party system, the electoral system, the means of propaganda and campaigning, the degree of modernization and urbanisation, the influence of ideology, the general awareness of the people, and other factors are all considered to be aspects of the political environment. The political party is the most powerful instrument there is in terms of easing people into the political process. The political party is analogous to the nation in that it possesses the symbolic power of the nation as well as the ability to inspire in its members and sympathisers feelings of affection, devotion, and self-sacrifice. Additionally, the party encourages its members to cultivate a sense of belonging within the group.

The term "election campaign" can be used synonymously with "propaganda" to refer to the efforts that political parties put forth in order to engage voters in the process

of political participation. Campaigning has the effect of polarising party affiliations, reaffirming candidate preferences, and winning votes. In point of fact, it is a method of acquiring political education. The degree to which an individual is exposed to the influence of propaganda is an important component of the individual's relationship to the political environment in which he finds himself. Democracy and modernization both require citizens to actively participate in the political process. In a traditional society, only a select few people are concerned with matters of government and politics (Roy, 1999). There is a correlation between living in the city and having higher rates of participation in political processes and activities. It has been argued that urbanisation, when coupled with other processes that are components of social modernization, would bind citizens with new ties to the nation state and increase the extent of political communication, which in turn would lead to greater political awareness (Das, 1997).

Both positively and negatively, ideology can influence a person's level of political participation. Participating in democratic politics is typically met with a positive response from individuals who have unwavering faith in democratic ideology. On the other hand, individuals who have a disdainful attitude toward the democratic ideology are not likely to be interested in participating in politics. Political participation is tied to political awareness, which can be defined as actual knowledge of current events on the political front. Interest and awareness are closely related to each other. The percentage of a society's population that can be characterised as 'aware' is notoriously low in every society. The level of awareness has an effect not only on the quality but also on the quantity of participation (Das, 1997). It is important to keep in mind that all three groups of variables are intertwined and have close ties to one another. Therefore, a shift in any one of them has the potential to either increase or decrease the overall level of political participation.

One more aspect that needs to be taken into consideration is the reasons behind why some people choose to abstain from any and all forms of political participation, or why, even if they do participate, they are only willing to play a minor role. To put it another way, individuals who take part in the majority of political activities are considered a minority, and this minority is frequently of a very small size. Both psychological and emotional factors play a role in the phenomenon of reduced political participation. People who do not take part in the activity are said to be apathetic, cynical, alienated, and anaemic (Roy, 1999). Apathy can be defined as individuals' passivity or their abstention from political activity. [Case in point:] [Case in point:] It is possible to define it as a lack of interest or concern for individuals, circumstances, or phenomena in general or in particular (Das, 1997). The decline of political vitality and vigilance is directly correlated to apathy (Das, 1997). Therefore, it can only be attributed to a lack of interest in political affairs.

Morris Rosenberg has suggested that there are three primary reasons for people's lack of interest in politics. The first reason is that people believe political activity will have certain consequences. The individual might believe that participating in political activity is a waste of time, which brings us to the second reason. The third reason is that

political stimuli are an important factor in encouraging political activity, and that the absence of such stimuli may contribute to feelings of apathy and indifference toward political issues (Roy, 1999). The attitude that one ought to be sceptical of the intentions and actions of other people characterises someone who is cynical. Cynicism is defined by Robert Auger and his colleagues as having a contemptuous and distrustful attitude toward human nature (Roy, 1999). It has been observed that people who are extremely cynical may believe that participating in politics in any capacity is pointless, and as a result, they may join the ranks of those who are completely uninterested in politics (Roy, 1999).

In the context of a political system, alienation is another form of non-participation that can take place. A cynical attitude toward politics and political leaders is referred to as "alienation," while actual hostility is denoted by the term "hostility" (Das, 1997). According to Robert Lane's definition of the term, political alienation is "a person's sense of estrangement from the politics and government of his society and the tendency to think of the government and politics of the nation as run by others for others according to an unfair set of rules" (Roy, 1999). Anemic, in the words of Robert Lane, denotes "a sense of value loss and lack of direction" (Roy, 1999). It is a term that refers to a state of mind in which a person has the perception that they are powerless to achieve their goals. Therefore, while apathy refers to a lack of interest and cynicism denotes an attitude of distaste or disenchantment, alienation and anaemic both suggest a feeling of being estranged or divorced from the society in which one lives (Roy, 1999).

WOMEN AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

In general, democratic thinkers have established a connection between liberty and the process of political participation on the part of the populace. Because "local institutions are to liberty what primary schools are to science; they put it within the people's reach; they teach people to appreciate its peaceful enjoyment and accustom them to make use of it," participation is maximized in local government. This is due to the fact that "local institutions are to liberty what primary schools are to science" (de Tocqueville, 1966). Karl Mam advocated for greater participation from the general populace in the process. According to him, the participation of the masses in political processes is simultaneously an educational process and an effort to build up a capacity for governing the new society (Sheshadri, 1976). It is a well-known fact that a woman's individual characteristics are a significant factor that can influence the form and degree to which she participates in politics, as well as the political system as a whole.

When considering the nature and operation of the political system as a whole, it is extremely important to make an effort to evaluate and assess the level of political participation of women and the extent to which they participate in politics. It is particularly more beneficial to political parties and political leaders due to the natural qualities of women such as honesty, affection, and a sense of duty. This is because women tend to be more politically active. Women were encouraged to develop a perspective on the larger socio-political issues by being encouraged to participate in

large-scale movements, which resulted in a weakening of the bondage of tradition (Kumar, 2000). Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was ratified on the 10th of December, 1948, asserted that "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights." This was a central tenet of the movement that led to the adoption of the Declaration. The equality of the sexes was guaranteed by Article 2. It states that "everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms without distinction of sex," which means that everyone has the same rights and freedoms. It is being hailed as a rallying cry for the advancement of the women's empowerment movement. It is not an argument in favour of the feminist ideology. The political theory and practise known as feminism seeks to liberate all women, including women of colour and women from working class backgrounds (Smith, 1982). Milbrath and Goel made the observation that it is common practise in virtually all societies to consider politics to be primarily a male domain and to expect women to behave politically in a manner that is congruent with men. This sex difference is gradually disappearing as a result of the changes brought about by modern industrial societies, but the influence of tradition can still be seen. Political engagement on a psychological level is more common among men than among women (Milbrath & Goel, 1977).

Studies on gender disparities in political behaviour typically centre on the ways in which children of different sexes are socialized at a young age. Tedin et al., on the other hand, place a greater emphasis on the role that contextual factors play in explaining gender differences in political expressiveness than they do socialization or structural factors. Women are less politically expressive than men because the environment of a housewife or the menial sort of employment available to most women does not encourage them to participate in politics or give them the stimulation to collect and discuss politically relevant information. This contributes to the gender gap in political participation and expression. The socialisation process institutionalises and passes on to subsequent generations the female situational factors that lead to less political expressiveness. This, in turn, makes it more difficult for women to overcome the situational disadvantages they face (Teden, et.al. 1977).

In 1979, the United Nations adopted a convention to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women. This convention, known as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEADAW), is often referred to as the Human Rights Bill of Women. The following women's rights are protected by this international treaty: (1) Their right to vote in any and all general elections and referendums, as well as their right to be elected to general assembly's; (2) their right to participate in the formulation and implementation of governmental policies, as well as their right to hold public office; and (3) their right to participate in non-governmental and socio-political organizations (Manaveeyam, 2000). According to Henry Chafe, discrimination against women can be traced back to the deeply ingrained structure of society, the roles that women play, and a sexual division of labour that relegated females primarily to the domestic sphere of life (Chafe, 1972). Therefore, it is argued that the only way to modify the existing trends in the political participation of men and women is for there to be substantial social changes that are capable of destroying the

structural basis regarding the traditional views of male and female roles (Ahmad, 1975).

The political participation or political behaviors of human beings, just like any other aspects of human behavior, take place within a particular socio-cultural setting. This is true regardless of the aspect of human behavior that is being considered. It suggests that social structure, economic development, and historical factors working together have an effect on political participation. Understanding the political behavior of Muslim women requires putting that behaviour within the context of Islam. It has been noted that Islamic tradition accords men and women an equal status with regard to matters of religion and religious observances; however, this does not hold true on a political level (Bano, 1990). According to Marcia Lee, the lack of female participation in politics is caused by three factors: having children at home, being afraid of being discriminated against based on gender, and the perceptions that women have that there are certain things that they should not do (Lee, 1976). Although women may have an interest in politics, the socialization process that is considered to be advantageous for males in the field of political participation is considered to be sex-role socialization, which is generally accepted.

Participation in political processes is of critical importance for women, both collectively and on an individual level. Whether women band together to protest gender-based injustices or participate in non-gender-specific associations and struggles, the most important group benefit from political participation is influence on decision-making to make public policies sensitive to the needs of the group in question. This is true regardless of whether women work together to protest gender-based injustices or whether they participate in non-gender-specific associations and struggles. It provides a form of democratic apprenticeship; it offers socialisation in the norms of reciprocity and cooperation, as well as the capacity to gain broader perspectives on particular problems in order to develop a sense of the common good. For groups, participation also builds social trust and capital, and it provides a form of democratic apprenticeship. Participating in politics helps individuals develop their civic skills, and effective lobbying can lead to improvements in personal welfare and status (Goetz, 2003). The very slow progress that women have made in gaining political office around the world has been attributed to a variety of factors, including: their lack of time for politics due to their domestic obligations; their lack of socialization for politics; their lower social capital and weaker asset base than men as a result of discrimination in schools and on the market; their under-representation in jobs that favour political careers; and their marginalisation within male-dominated political parties. Despite these and other factors, women have made very little headway in (Randall, 1987; Matland and Taylor, 1997; Rule, 1981).

Most of the time, the level of political participation of women is evaluated based on the number of women who hold elected positions of public office. This is because formal politics is the context in which political participation is measured. This extremely crude measure is made even more so by the tendency to limit it to the numbers of women in the main legislative house at the national level. This excludes not only the numbers of women in regional and local government, but also the numbers of women elected as

magistrates, members of the boards of public bodies such as schools or health facilities, and other similar positions. This measure is already extremely crude, but it is made even more so by the tendency to limit it to the numbers of women in the main legislative house at the national level. The utilisation of this method was decided upon due to the fact that it is more convenient. There are significant data gaps on the numbers of women who serve in local governments and other sub-national elected bodies all over the world. Additionally, there is such a wide variation in governance systems for sub-national communities and public bodies that they are barely comparable (Goetz, 2003). Because there is no requirement for a correlation between the two, the number of women who hold representative political positions is not necessarily the best indicator of the breadth and depth of women's participation in politics. When women's participation in independent civil society activity was discouraged under single-party governments, a relatively high number of women were found to be active in politics in socialist countries. This occurred during periods (Molyneux, 1994). In spite of the fact that the women's movement can be relatively ineffective at these levels, certain nations, like France and Uganda, have relatively high percentages of women serving in their local governments. This is the case despite the fact that these countries do not share a common language. India and the United States of America both have some of the lowest percentages of women holding national office, despite having some of the largest women's movements in the world (in terms of the sheer number and variety of women's organisations). It's possible that the number of women who are actively involved in women's organisations, or even just the total number of women's organisations in a country, is a better indicator of the level of women's political participation in that country. Ramirez, Soysal, and Shanahan have compiled data on the strength of the women's movement in a number of countries, and their findings are presented here (1997). Furthermore, the presence of a large number of such organisations in a country may indicate not strength but rather fragmentation and, as a result, weakness in the women's movement. In spite of this, it is one of the few indicators that can be used to measure women's activism. To the best of my knowledge, no correlations have been found between this variable and the various measures of women's educational achievement, including adult literacy rates, numbers of women who graduate from college and secondary schools, and enrollment ratios. For the purposes of this EFA report, compiling these statistics would be a relatively straightforward endeavor that would be worthwhile (Goetz, 2003).

Because women can express their political interests through participation in a wide variety of political and civic associations, the term "women's political participation" should be understood in a broader context than just the number of women who hold elected office and should even be understood in a broader context than the number of women's organisations. Political participation is defined by Verba, Scholzman, and Brady as "activity that has the intent or effect of influencing public action." This can be done directly by influencing the making of public policy, or indirectly by influencing the selection of political decision makers. This definition includes voting, campaigning for a party or supporting party work through other means (such as policy development, membership drives), contacting policy-makers directly by writing or telephone, protest

activities, getting involved in organizations that take a stand in politics, taking part in informal efforts to solve community problems, and serving in a voluntary capacity on local governing boards such as school or zoning boards. Voting is one of the most fundamental ways that citizens can exercise their right to participate in the political process. This definition is obviously biased toward a particular culture; the concepts of citizen lobbying of representatives or participation in political campaigns are most applicable in democratic contexts in which there is a lack of violence and corruption in political competition (especially in electoral campaigns), and in which there are disciplined parties with internal democracy, clear programmes and positions. This narrow definition has been criticised by feminist political scientists for being overly focused on individual political acts and for excluding the forms of public engagement that are preferred by women. Additionally, this definition has been criticized for being too narrow. The vast majority of people are adamant that women's participation in civil society, or what Verba and others would refer to as non-political activity, should be included in the definition of political participation.

The problem with having overly broad definitions of political participation is that it is difficult to measure activities, especially acts of resistance that take place in the private sphere, and there simply aren't any data available that can be compared across nations. A scale of political participation with eight points was developed by Burns and others. This scale evaluates political activities such as voting, protesting, and participating voluntarily in political parties, religious organisations, and local communities. This has been helpful in describing differences in levels of political engagement between women and men in the United States, as well as explaining the causes of those differences; however, it has not been tested anywhere else. In spite of the fact that women have an equal or even higher likelihood of voting than men, they are significantly less likely to participate in a variety of other political acts. These include making contact with their representatives, contributing financially or in terms of time to political campaigns, and joining political organizations. These factors were education and the types of jobs that provide the resources and contacts that are needed for politics. They found that women's advantage in political participation was linked to a much stronger endowment of one key factor. They found that leisure time did not differ between women and men, and that it was not related to political participation. Additionally, while family income did have a significant impact on political activity, levels of family income did not differ much between women and men. This goes against the popular expectation that time constraints and a lack of resources inhibit women's political engagement. They found that leisure time did not differ between women and men, and that it was not related to political participation. It was discovered that women have higher endowments than men do of certain factors that are positively related to participation. These factors include participation in high school clubs as well as participation in religious associations. It is interesting to note that women's experiences of discrimination based on their gender also produced political activity; however, the study did not measure the extent to which this discrimination simultaneously eroded other participatory resources. Despite this, women's endowments of these participatory factors were outpaced by men's advantages

in terms of educational attainment and employment opportunities. Also, women's religious affiliations have ambiguous implications for their subsequent recruitment into political activity, given that many religious institutions do not allow women to hold leadership positions. This is one of the reasons why women are underrepresented in political activity.

In the study that Burns and others carried out, one of the most important things that they discovered was that "gender differences in participation are the result of disparities in the stockpile of factors that facilitate participation, not of gender differences in the way participatory factors are converted into activity." This was one of the most important things that they discovered. In light of this, political philosopher Anne Phillips asserts that "everyone knows to be the case: that the extent to which individuals become involved in politics and thereby gain access to decision-making channels is directly correlated with the resources they have at their command; that all other things being equal, those who have everything else get political power as well." According to Anne Phillips, "everyone knows to be the case: that the extent to which individuals become involved in politics and thereby gain access to decision-making channels is directly This common-sense explanation of the advantage men have in political engagement goes a long way toward explaining the low levels of political participation among women. On the other hand, Burns and his colleagues do not take into account the participation of women in official political institutions or in representative politics. Their study does not help to explain why it is that even when women's educational levels approach parity with those of men, formal political institutions remain relatively closed to women. This is because their study does not help to explain why women's educational levels approach parity with those of men. To put it another way, it appears that women's participation in formal politics does not increase in tandem with advancements in their educational status, in comparison with men's participation. In the United States of America, the educational attainments of women are now on par with those of men; however, the persistently low numbers of women in representative positions – below the already low global average – suggest that there may be something specific to political institutions that discourages female participation. This idea is supported by the fact that the number of women in representative positions has remained consistently low. The observation that there is no correlation between women's levels of education and the achievements they achieve in formal politics is true for other countries as well: According to Jayaweera's research on 23 countries in Asia with middle and low incomes, there is not a significant difference in the percentage of women who participate in formal politics regardless of whether there is nearly universal education, such as in the Republic of Korea, whether there is quite extensive female educational participation (Sri Lanka), or whether there is extremely low female literacy. This was the conclusion of Jayaweera's study (Pakistan and Nepal). In other words, the absence of a strong linear relationship between women's educational attainments and their numbers in formal politics suggests that there must be something specific to political institutions that discourage female participation. This notion is supported by the fact that there is not a significant correlation between women's educational attainments and their numbers in informal politics. Jayaweera

suggests that it is not a very big mystery: women's many time constraints as a result of their domestic and other work commitments, as well as 'gendered perceptions of political and community leadership,' mean that women choose to stay out of politics, and even if they do want to participate, they are not considered admissible as representatives. In a short while, we will get back to this problem. Thus, the suggestion made by Burns et al. that women can, just as easily as men, convert endowments in 'participatory factors' into participatory activity is contradicted by qualitative research into the persistence of gender-based selection and treatment biases in significant non-political and political institutions, even in a democracy that is as well-established as the one in the United States (Kenworthy and Malami, 1999; Keiser et al, 2002).

When evaluating the findings presented by Burns et al., one must take into account the fact that gender gaps in educational attainment are greater among older age groups in the United States – those above the age of 40 and most likely to hold formal representative positions – than among younger generations, under the age of 30, who are currently experiencing parity in educational accomplishments. As a result, we should be able to anticipate an increase in the proportion of politically active women as the younger generation of women who are better educated comes of age. In point of fact, the Burns et al sample includes a significant number of people over the age of 40 (which is proportional to the proportion of people over 40 in the population), which causes it to exaggerate the current gender gap in educational accomplishments. However, it does an accurate job of reflecting how a gendered educational gap affects the political participation of people over the age of 1940. It is not clear from the studies that have been done to date whether or not there is a measurable time delay that occurs between increases in women's educational status and their participation in formal politics. It would be a worthwhile question for the EFA team to test, using the statistics that are currently at their disposal. There are no cross-national studies of gender-based variations in the kinds of political activities that are measured. This is primarily due to a lack of consistent data on gender differences in voting behavior, protest activity, voluntary community activity, and so on. While the general pattern of gender-differences in participation observed by Burns et al may well hold for many other nations, there are no such studies because there are no gender-based variations in the kinds of political activities they measure. When investigating and providing explanations for gender disparities in political participation in other cultures, it is important to be sensitive to the different opportunities for political participation that are available due to differences in political institutions and cultures.

We fall back on the number of women in office because it is currently the only consistent and comparable source of data showing variations in women's engagement in politics. This is because it is difficult to measure the quantity and nature of women's political participation across countries, so we fall back on this measure instead. It is not entirely unrelated to the question of women's relative political effectiveness in any particular country; however, it is far from being an ideal indicator of the levels of women's political engagement in any given country. The fact that there are a greater number of women in politics than is typical (the current global average for female

representation in lower houses is approximately 15 percent - IPU 2003) should be taken as evidence that some of the many barriers that prevented women from participating in politics have been removed. To some extent, the success of the women's movement or other civil and political associations in challenging the biases that produce unequal and unjust treatment of women once they gain access to social, economic, and political institutions is a prerequisite for overcoming any of these roadblocks. These biases select women and men into social, economic, and political institutions in different ways. Therefore, the percentage of women holding elected positions should at least partially reflect the power of women's political activism and the results it has produced. The project of ensuring that participation in the public arena to advance women's interests requires paying attention to a number of factors, one of which is the percentage of women who hold elected office. Even though women who hold public office are almost always members of social and political elites who have no ties to the women's movement, there is mounting evidence from around the world that women legislators, even when they are in an extreme minority, help to steer political debate in parties and legislatures toward issues that are significant to women and children. This is the case even though women who hold public office are almost always members of social and political elites who have no ties to the (Lijphart, 1991; Rule and Hill, 1996; McDonagh, 2002; Thomas, 1994; Vega and Firestone, 1995; Chattopadhyay and Duflo, 2001).

Widespread gender disparities still exist, despite the fact that there are more women occupying positions of political power at higher and higher levels. There has been an increase in the number of countries that have no women in positions of power, and the percentage of women who serve in national parliaments has decreased to 25.5%, down from 24.95% the previous year. Additionally, the number of countries that have no women in positions of power has increased. Despite the fact that women and girls account for half of the world's population, they are significantly underrepresented in the political process at the national level in the majority of countries. According to the findings of this report, there are currently 26.1 percent of legislative seats held by women all over the world. This represents an increase from the 14.2 percent of legislative seats held by women in the year 2002. Rwanda, Cuba, Nicaragua, and the United Arab Emirates were the only nations in which women held at least one-half of the legislative seats as of the first day of March 2022. (see Table 3). There is currently an elected female head of state or government in 29 countries and the special administrative region of Hong Kong. This brings the total number of countries with such a leader to 30. Since the year 1960, there have been over 140 women elected or appointed to the position of head of government in at least 70 different countries. The only regions in which women held at least 16 percent of legislative seats at the national level were Europe and the Americas. This was the case only in those two regions. In the year 2022, more than twenty percent of the legislative seats in six different regions are held by women legislators. Although women's representation has increased since 2002, the Middle East and Northern Africa is the only region in which they hold fewer than 20 percent of the legislative seats (CRS, 2022). This is despite the fact that women have gained representation in this region since 2002.

CONCLUSION

According to the findings of qualitative studies, cultural factors are more important than educational factors in determining the degree to which women participate in political life and the roles they play. It would appear that the general public is becoming more open to the idea of women holding positions of power and authority as there are more women entering politics. Culture has a significant impact on the ways in which men and women are given different opportunities to enter political institutions and are treated differently once they are there. Ironically, strong kinship and patronage-based systems may be able to accept greater numbers of women in politics on the grounds of their family status than can systems based on individual merit that disguise male biases in political institutions. This is a result of the fact that strong kinship and patronage-based systems are able to accept greater numbers of women in politics on the grounds of their family status. However, these systems will only benefit a select group of highly accomplished women, and only in a limited number. These inconclusive findings and observations may show, more than anything else, that political institutions may differ significantly from other types of social institutions in significant ways, particularly with regard to the methods by which they select participants. Both individual and collective political capabilities, as well as political resources, are obviously improved by endowments of human capital (education being the most important of these), in addition to material resources. But political expertise and resources can also come from other places: charisma, social capital, and the right ideas at the right time can be more important than the best education or the fattest campaign treasure chest, and they can enable a leader to mobilise followers and seize power. Anne Phillips (1991:78) has talked about the 'relative autonomy' of the political sphere in this regard. Although the political arena replicates class and gender biases in society, it can also provide an arena for transgressing social conventions and for experimentation in which unlikely candidates – women, or men from socially excluded groups, men without education or capital – can occasionally rise to leadership positions effective social movements. This is because the political sphere can provide an arena in which social convention Matland's observation that idiosyncratic conditions for women's access to politics explain the difficulty of identifying any systematic or structural factors influencing women's access to politics in LDCs thus holds perhaps more broadly than he imagined it would when he first made it. Matland's observation that idiosyncratic conditions for women's access to politics explain the difficulty of identifying any systematic or structural factors influencing It would be misleading to try to draw connections between women's political success and broader social changes because the number of women who win electoral contests in contexts where there are no electoral systems that favour diversity or special measures promoting their candidacies (quotas and reservations) is still so very low. These contexts include countries where there are no quotas or reservations for women running for office. On the other hand, the percentage of women who hold official political positions is not the most accurate indicator of women's political participation. In order to shed light on the factors that are contributing to higher rates of women's engagement in these activities, more systematic research on other forms of political participation by women,

such as voting behavior, lobbying activity, associational activity, and membership in political parties, is required. Although research that is comparative across nations on these aspects of political participation is in its infancy, it seems likely that these aspects of political participation are more closely related to the educational levels of women than the number of legislative seats that are won by women.

References

- Almond, G.A. G.B. Powell Jr. (1975) *Comparative Politics: A Developmental Approach*, Amerind Publishing Company, New Delhi, p.98
- Almond, G.A. and Verba, S. (1965) *The Civic Culture: Political Attitude and Democracy in Five Nations*. Boston: Little Brown P 119.
- Bala, Raj (1997) *The Legal and Political Status of Women in India*, Mohit Publications, New Delhi, , p.250.
- Burns, Nancy, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Sidney Verba, (2001) *The Private Roots of Public Action: Gender, Equality, and Political Participation*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
- Chattopadhyay, Raghavendra, and Esther Duflo, (2001) 'Women as Policy-Makers: Evidence from a India-Wide Randomized Policy Experiment', mimeo Department of Economics, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
- Closky, Herbert M.C. (1968) "Political Participation" *International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences* vol:12 (New York: MacMillan , p.253
- CRS(2022) *Women in National Governments Around the Globe: Fact Sheet*, Congressional Research Service, R45483, April
- Das, Hari Hara (1987) *Introduction to Political Sociology*, Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, , p. 146.
- Dighe, Anita, (1993) 'Women, Literacy and Empowerment: The Nellore Experience', Paper Presented at the International Seminar on 'Women, Education, and Empowerment' held at UNESCO Institute for Education, Hamburg, 27 January - 2 February.
- Dowse, R. and Hughes, J. (1971) "Girls, Boys and Politics", *British Journal of Sociology*, Vol.22, P 53-65.
- Dowse, Robert E. (1972) *Political Sociology*, John Wiley and Sons, London, p.290.
- Ghimire, D. (2006), *South Asian Women in Politics*, Paper Presented at the Sixth Asia Pacific Congress on Political Empowerment of Women, Organized by Centre for Asia Pacific Women in Politics, February, 10-12, Manila.
- Jayaweera, Swarna, (1997) 'Women, Education, and Empowerment in Asia', *Gender and Education*, Vol. 9, No. 4.
- Jonasdottir, G. Anna. (1998), *Is There a Nordic Feminism, Nordic Feminist Thought on Culture and Society*, (London: Routledge).
- Keiser, Lael R., Vicky M. Wilkins, Kenneth J. Meier, and Catherine A. Holland, (2002) 'Lipstick and Logarithms: Gender, Institutional Context, and Representative Bureaucracy', *American*

- Political Science Review, Vol. 96, No. 3.
- Kenworthy, Lane, and Melissa Malami, (1999) 'Gender Inequality in Political Representation: A Worldwide Comparative Analysis', *Social Forces*, Vol. 78, No. 1.
- Kuensel, (2007), Editorial, "Make Way for Women", December, 12.
- Kumar, R., (1994) "Development and Women's Work in Kerala", *Interaction and Paradoxes*, Economic and Political Weekly (Mumbai), Dec.17-24.
- Lane, R.E. (1961) *Political Life*. Illinois: The Free Press. P 209.
- Lipjart, Arend, (1991) 'Debate - Proportional Representation III. Double-Checking the Evidence', *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 42.
- Macgill, N. Frank (2002) *International Encyclopaedia of Government and Politics, Volume Two*, New Delhi: S. Chand & Company Ltd, , p.1016
- Marshall, Ann, (2002) 'Organizing Across the Divide: Local Feminist Activism, Everyday Life, and the Election of Women to Public Office', *Social Science Quarterly*, Vol. 83, No. 3.
- Matland, Richard E. and Michelle Taylor, (1997) 'Electoral System Effects on Women's Representation', *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 30.
- Mayaram, Shail, (1999) 'Backlash Against Women in the Panchayat System', unpublished mimeo, Institute for Development Studies, Jaipur.
- McClosky, H. (1968) *Political Participation*. In *International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, New York Collier- Macmillan, Vol. 12, P 253.
- McDonagh, Eileen, (2002) 'Political Citizenship and Democratization: The gender Paradox', *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 96, No. 3.
- Michael, G., et.al. (1994), *Political Science: An Introduction*, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey.
- Milbrath, L. (1965) *Political Participation*, Chicago: Rand McNally. P 32.
- Milbrath, Lester W. M.L. Goel, (1977) *Political Participation: How and Why Do People Get Involved in Politics*, Rand McNally, Chicago,, p.2.
- Molyneux, Maxine, (1994) 'Women's Rights and the International Context: Some reflections on the post-communist states', *Millennium*, 23:2, LSE, London
- Nie, R.N. and Verba, S. (1975) "Political Participation". In Fred I. Green Stein and Nelson W. Polsby (eds.). *Handbook of Political Science*, Vol. 4 Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Pub.Co. P 4.
- Nie, N. H., Powell, Jr., G. B. and K. Prewitt, (1969), 'Social Structure and Political Participation: Developmental Relationships', *American Political Science Review*, 63, 361-78, 808-32.
- Nie, N. H., S. Verba and J. Kim, (1974), 'Political Participation and The Life Cycle', *Comparative Politics*, 6, 319-40.
- Palmer, D.N. (1976) *Election and Political Development: The South Asian Experience*. New Delhi. Vikas Pub. House.P 50-57.
- Phillips, Anne, (1991) *Engendering Democracy*, Polity Press, Cambridge.

- Raman, Vasanthi. (2002), *'The Implementation of quotas for women: The Indian experience'* Quota Report Series, IDEA Publication.
- Ramirez, Francisco O., Yasemin Soysal, and Suzanne Shanahan, (1997) *'The Changing Logic of Political citizenship: Cross-National Acquisition of Women's Suffrage Rights, 1890 to 1990'*, *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 62..
- Reynolds, Andrew, (1999) *'Women in African Legislatures and Executives: The Slow Climb to Power'*, Electoral Institute of South Africa.
- Roy, Kalpana (1999), *Women in Indian Politics*, Rajat Publications, Delhi.
- Rule, Wilma, (1981) *'Why Women Don't Run: The critical Contextual Factors in Women's Legislative recruitment'*, *Western political Quarterly*, Vol. 34, No. XX.
- Rule, Wilma, (1994) *'Women's Underrepresentation in Electoral Systems'*, *Political Science and Politics*, Vol. XXVII, No. 4.
- Rule, Wilma, and Steven Hill, (1999) *'AintIa Voter? Voting Rights for Women'*, Centre for Voting and Democracy, http://www.fairvote.org/women/voting_rights.htm
- Rush, M. and Althoff, P., (1971). *Introduction to Political Sociology*, London: Thomas Nelson.
- Schonfeld, W. R. (1975), *'The Meaning of Democratic Participation'*, *World Politics*, 28, 134-58.
- Seshadri, K. (1976) *Political Linkages and Rural Development*, National Publishing House. New Delhi, p. 175.
- Smith, B. (1985) *Decentralization: The Theoretical Dimension of the State*, George Allen and Unwind, London,
- Tedin, Kent L. David W. Brady and Arnold Vedlitz, (1977) *"Sex Differences in Political Attitudes and Behaviour: The Case for Situational Factors"*
- Thomas, Sue, (1994) *How Women Legislate*, Oxford University Press, New York.
- Verba, S. and Almond, G.A. (1963) *Civic Culture : Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Verba, S. and Nie, N.H. (1972) *Participation in America*. Harper and Row New York P 104-108.
- Verba, Sidney (2000) *Political Participation and Political Equality, A Seven Nation Comparison* , Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, ,p.39
- Verba, Sidney Norman H. Nie, (1972) *Participation in America: Political Democracy and Social Equality* , Harper Row, New York, p.4
- Verba, Sidney, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Henry E. Brady, (1995) *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics*, Haroard University Press, Cambridge.
- Weiner, M. (1966) *Political Participation and Political Development"*, in M. Weiner, (ed.). *Modernization*, New York: Basic Books
- Weiner, Myron *"Political Participation: Crisis of Political Process"* in Norman D. Palmer., pp 57-58.