

Gendered Politics and Development: A Comparative Analysis of Women's Political Participation in Post-colonial Zimbabwe and India

Okesh^{1*}, Maskini Yvonne², Yudhvir³

ABSTRACT

The present study sheds light on women's political participation in two post-colonial contexts, Zimbabwe, and India. Despite the efforts made to promote gender equality in politics, women continue to face numerous structural barriers to political power in both countries. Colonialism and patriarchal cultural traditions in Zimbabwe have restricted the political representation of women, while caste and religious divisions in India have hindered efforts to establish gender equality in politics. Gender inequality and discrimination against women have long been important concerns across the world. Women's political participation in 75 years of India's and 43 years of Zimbabwe's post-colonial contexts continue to be an important factor in these societies' development along with them also. These two countries have different political, social, and cultural contexts, which allows for a comparative analysis of the challenges and opportunities for women in politics in these two contexts. By drawing upon secondary sources including academic literature, reports, and government documents, this article compares women's political engagement in postcolonial Zimbabwe and India, stressing the problems and triumphs that women experience in the socio-political strata and to what extent the participation of women in politics has changed the society or governance in the communities.

Keywords: Gendered politics, Development, Post-colonial, Zimbabwe, India.

1. Introduction

The 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which practically every UN member state has already ratified, affirmed women's right "to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government." It states that "the goals of equality, development, and peace cannot be achieved without the active participation of women and the incorporation of women's perspective at all levels of decision-making" (UN, 1995, para. 181, Niner et al., 2021). Discrimination against women has been a significant issue across the world, with women's political participation being one crucial aspect of these struggles. Despite efforts made to establish gender equality in politics,

women continue to face numerous structural barriers to political power in many countries. In post-colonial contexts, these barriers are often compounded by the legacies of colonialism and patriarchal cultural norms, as well as other social and political factors.

Jean Jacques Rousseau advocated women's exclusion from politics in 1762. But in 1869 J.S. Mill observed that subordination of one sex over another is wrong and thus for human improvement he advocated perfect equality without admitting privilege to one side (Mill, 1960). Later in 1893, New Zealand became the first nation to give the right to vote to its women. But they were not allowed to stand for parliament. However, in the U.S. women were given the right to stand in the election in the year

1. Research Scholar, Department of Sociology, Central University of Haryana, India

* Corresponding Author ✉ okesh211928@cuh.ac.in

2. Student, Department of Sociology, University of Zimbabwe, Harare, Zimbabwe

3. Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Central University of Haryana, India

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1788 but they got the right to vote in the year 1920. Following this, 59 countries had approved the right to vote for its women by 1950. Later by 1980, 156 countries enfranchised their women.

There is a rising awareness of women's autonomy and their ability to participate as "full citizens" in modern society. The pressures that keep women out of the main stage need to be addressed, and their importance in the social, political, and economic context has to be recognized in all seriousness. Women may be powerful change agents and significant national development contributors. Their standing and their participation rights and duties in governing society may be connected. Political engagement, representation, and sharing in decision-making bodies are important indications of the position of women in any culture (Negrustueva, 2000).

One of the most serious issues of our day is the problem of women's political engagement. Although accounting for half of the world's population, women remain continually underrepresented in political decision-making positions. In most countries, men hold the majority of political positions, with women's participation in politics often limited by cultural and societal norms that prioritize men's leadership and decision-making. Women's underrepresentation in politics has significant implications for the development of societies and for the fulfillment of women's human rights. When women are not represented in decision-making positions, their perspectives and experiences are not adequately reflected in policies and laws, resulting in policies that may not serve the needs and interests of women.

Moreover, women's political participation is a crucial factor in achieving gender equality and women's empowerment. When women are empowered politically, they are better able to advocate for their rights and the rights of other women. They are also more likely to access education, healthcare, and economic opportunities, leading to better outcomes for

themselves, their families, and their communities. In recent years, there has been increased awareness and advocacy for women's political participation, with many countries adopting measures to increase women's representation in political decision-making. However, progress has been slow and uneven, with persistent cultural and societal barriers hindering women's political involvement in many parts of the world.

There are many distinct types of participation, and only when citizens can influence results is qualitative or substantive engagement conceivable. The source of power is not ownership or access to the necessary resources, but rather the capacity to exert agency, preference, and authority within social and political frameworks (Batliwala, 1994, Niner et al., 2019).

Women's representation is seen as crucial for both normative and pragmatic reasons. From a normative standpoint, the political elite ought to represent the interests of all people (Philips, 1991). If women are excluded from the political process, policies may solely represent the viewpoint of men. Therefore, realistically speaking, it can result in decisions and resource allocation that are not in women's best interests (Connell, 1990).

Considering the unique challenges faced by post-colonial societies, there is a growing corpus of such research that investigates women's political engagement in various circumstances. For instance, studies have looked at the impact of colonial legacies, patriarchal norms, and conflicts on women's political participation in countries such as Zimbabwe, and India. Post-colonial societies have been marked by complex sociopolitical contexts that have posed significant challenges to the political participation of women. These societies have undergone various hindrances to their development. For their development, it becomes needier that every citizen should be used as an asset. They should be equally treated regarding

power and rights. Gender and development have been a key subject for academics and policymakers also. Only structural changes in power relations, allowing women to have more influence and access to resources, mental shifts, and the ability to envisage and implement change-related tactics would allow post-colonial societies to emerge (Kabeer, 2005). Additionally, women cannot be thought of as a unitary society with a shared will (Goetz, 2007; Kabeer, 2005). These societies have inherited legacies of colonialism and patriarchal cultural norms that have often limited women's access to political power. In addition, post-colonial societies have had to contend with internal conflicts and divisions along ethnic, religious, and other fault lines, which have further complicated efforts to promote gender equality in politics. Women's political participation in post-colonial societies has therefore been a contested terrain, with structural and cultural barriers hindering their access to political decision-making positions.

In post-colonial India, women have had their right to vote since independence. Also, they are given the right to contest the elections. Despite the constitutional amendment, women in India continue to be marginalized in legislative bodies at both the national and state levels. In the first election in 1952, only 4.4 percent of women were there in the Lok Sabha and 7.3 percent in the Rajya Sabha. In the latest 2019 election, the percentage has gone up to 14 percent as 78 MPs got elected in Lok Sabha and 10.2 percent in Rajya Sabha (Election Commission of India, 2022).

This representation is still below the average representation of women representation at the global level i.e., 26.4 percent (IPU Pauline, 2022). While talking about Zimbabwe women's representation was around 10 percent in 1980 when this country got independence. Now in the latest election, this number has grown and now is 34 percent. This is still less than the 50 percent target which is set on Gender and Development

and Millennium Development Goal 3 by the SADC Protocol. In Zimbabwe, 52 percent of voters are women, and still, this country has not got its first women president. Also, their women leaders do not get positions in the ministries. In Zimbabwe, women make up an extremely low 14 percent of councilors. Because women do not feel themselves considered, this lack of representation can lead to ignorance. Despite, these challenges, women have been at the forefront of political struggles for equality and empowerment, often mobilizing across ethnic and religious divides to push for political change. The study of women's political participation in post-colonial societies is, therefore, critical to understanding the ways in which gender intersects with broader sociopolitical dynamics in these societies.

2. Research Objectives and Methodology

This research article aims to compare and contrast the challenges and opportunities for women's political participation in post-colonial Zimbabwe and India. This study seeks to identify the structural barriers that hinder women's political participation and representation in these two countries. By drawing upon secondary sources, including academic literature, reports from international organizations, and government documents, this research article will critically analyze the historical and cultural contexts of Zimbabwe and India that have influenced women's political participation. Additionally, this article aims to examine the factors that contribute to the success or failure of women's political engagement in these contexts.

Furthermore, this research article aims to investigate the impact of the political participation of women on the development of these societies in terms of gender equality and women's empowerment. The study will examine how women's political engagement has influenced these civilizations' socio-political development. Based on this analysis, this research article will suggest policy recommendations that can enhance the political

engagement of women and endorse gender equality in politics in Zimbabwe and India. By achieving these objectives, this study focuses on contributing to the existing knowledge of gendered politics and development in post-colonial societies, particularly in Zimbabwe and India.

3. Political Involvement of Women in Post-colonial Zimbabwe

Women's political engagement has made great progress in postcolonial Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe won independence from British domination in 1980, and various initiatives to promote gender equality have progressed since then. The Zimbabwean government formed the Women's Affairs Department in 1985 to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. The government also implemented several laws and initiatives to encourage women's political engagement. For example, the Zimbabwean constitution requires a minimum of one-third of all elected members of parliament to be women, this is evidenced by the 225 female members of Parliaments in the House of Commons. Quotas have also been set by the government to guarantee that women are represented in different government posts, such as local councils and the courts. In 2013, Fanny Chirisa amongst other 124 women sworn in the 8th Parliament Republic of Zimbabwe. Women's involvement in the Parliament has since coupled from 17 percent to 35 percent from the 2008 elections making Zimbabwe amongst the 30 countries in the world to practice the special electoral quota system considering women in the Parliamentary political affairs. According to the Gender and Development Index of SADC, Zimbabwe is at a 41% threshold for attaining stated objectives for the engagement of women in governance.

A female politician and legal consultant Fadzai Mahere (2022) once said, 'People sexualize appearances and, rather than focusing on the content of what women could offer.' The Zimbabwean Constitution of 2013 stipulated

that just like men women should have equal opportunities in all circles that inclusive of Political participation (Government of Zimbabwe, 2013.) This law was put forward as a means of engaging women in the public sphere and broadcast that the era of patriarchal dominance is way over. However, the government seems to contradict itself especially where self-proclaimed female political activists arise. This is exemplified by looking at one particular woman, Joyce Teurairopa Nhongo Mujuru who rose to fame for her political activism during the post-colonial war and after the post-colonial war too. J. Mujuru was the first female vice president of Zimbabwe from 2004 up until 2014. Mujuru held most political posts in the government until the time she became a political revolutionary before she was ousted for trying to replace Robert Mugabe as the president.

This revolutionary change was however not embraced by many men in the government including the former president of Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe who in a speech ("speaking on the alleged political ambitions of Zimbabwean Vice President Joice Mujuru at the time") said, "We are experiencing it for the first time in ZANU-PF and for that matter it's a woman who is saying, "I want to take over that seat" (quoted in News24, 2014). As a result, gender equality efforts in political participation have become obsolete in light of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, a women's empowerment agenda that is universally regarded as the most significant global policy declaration on gender equality and also a turning point for radical change in gender equality. Hence it becomes a point that in Zimbabwe efforts of female participation is still limited by the masculine ego-centric that feel the women should remain domesticated in the private sphere of the household.

According to Thata (2015), while it is true that men were the root cause of Joyce Mujuru's demise as the former vice president of the Mugabe era in 2014, what is intriguing is the

contribution of other females, primarily Grace Mugabe and Oppah Muchinguri, who are both prominent political figures. In light of this occurrence, many questioned the premise of women's empowerment and the female support system. According to Thata (2015), males are still using other women to topple their female predecessors, illustrating how powerful the patriarchal hegemony is still now. Therefore, women are not just their own greatest foe under the subjugation of culture and patriarchy, but also their enemy (Chitsike, 2015). According to Chitsike (2015), women have a "pull her down syndrome" (PhD), in which they are opposed to each other in leadership capacities. Women seldom sell one another out for political purposes, according to Chitsike, but the "PHD" phenomenon veiled as politics is an act of patriarchal oppression. Women believe to make it into the political world you need to be outstanding against your fellow gender, that is gendered politics.

It is now unarguable that wide involvement in decision-making processes is required for good democratic government (Dahl, 1971, 1998; Pateman, 1970). Verba et al. (1995:38) define political involvement as any "activity that has the intent of effect of influencing government actions either by directly affecting the making or implementation of public policy or indirectly by influencing the selection of people who make the policies". While Verba et al. (1978) are correct in their remark that all persons should have an equal chance to influence decision-making processes, research has demonstrated that women's engagement in formal political institutions and processes is minimal (Bari, 2005).

3.1 Gender Equity

"Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or another opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or another status". Given the low proportion of

women in political positions relative to males, a variety of steps have been implemented to guarantee equity and equality are maintained. Women have historically faced discrimination as a result of both widespread ideas and societal institutions that favour males in terms of economic and sociopolitical engagement. This is mostly owing to patriarchal cultural gaps that have remained throughout history (Mangezvo, 2013). To address these disparities, a number of international and regional declarations and/or treaties have been drafted to encourage women's involvement in political processes. These include the 1995 Beijing Declaration, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the African Women's Rights Observatory (AWRO), and the Zimbabwean Constitution.

The conventions also seek to challenge normative political and socio-cultural systems that perpetuate inequality and disregard gender equity, as well as to address the discrepancies that exist between men and women (UN ECOSOC, 1997).

4. Political Involvement of Women in Post-colonial India

With 662.9 million women, India is regarded as the world's biggest and one of the most reliable parliamentary democracies (Shirin and Carole, 2019). Equal standing for men and women in all political, social, and economic domains was guaranteed by the Indian Constitution when the country gained independence. The Directive Principles of State Policy, which provide equal compensation for equal effort by men and women, humane working conditions, and maternity relief, enable economic empowerment while Part III of the Constitution preserves the basic rights of men and women (Maraju, 2012). According to Articles 325 and 326 of the Constitution, any Indian citizen who is registered to vote and is over the age of 25 is eligible to contest for election to the lower house of Parliament (Lok Sabha) or state legislative assemblies, while the minimum age for the upper

house (Rajya Sabha) is 30 (Shirin and Carole, 2019). However, at the time of the Constitution's formulation, constitutional provisions for reserved seats for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in Parliament and legislative assemblies did not contain an equivalent reserved quota for women. Leading Indian women's organizations, as well as the ruling party, the Congress, rejected the plan, believing that women should be able to contest the election on a same basis as males (Anarsi, 2001; Mala, 2004).

The report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India in 1974 urged for increased participation of women in political institutions and reintroduced the topic of reserving of seats for women (Gol, 1974). Following that, the 73rd and 74th amendments to the Constitution were introduced in 1992, requiring one-third of the total number of seats in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and municipal bodies to be reserved for women in order to improve women's participation in decision-making at the grassroots level (Anuradha, 2014).

Despite suggestions to implement seat reservations for women in parliament and state legislatures dating back to 1997, such legislation was yet to be passed owing to resistance (Parveen, 2017). But now recently, On September 21, Indian legislators enacted the Women's Reservation Bill, 2023, (Nari Shakti Vandana Adhiniyam, 2023) the first piece of legislation examined in the country's new Parliament building. The measure, which was nearly overwhelmingly passed by both houses of Parliament – with only two votes against it – will ensure that women hold at least 33% of the seats in state legislative assemblies and the Lok Sabha, the lower house of Parliament. In other areas, such as marriage and employment, India has made strides towards women's emancipation. For example, the Supreme Court has given daughters the same status as a coparcener in Hindu families, granting them inheritance rights, and it has ruled that "women officers in the army should be entitled to permanent commission and command

postings in all services other than combat, and they have to be considered for it irrespective of their service length" (Sanjay, 2022). The minimum marriage age for girls was recently raised from 18 to 21 years (The Hindu, 2021).

Despite advances in other areas, women's political presence remains restricted. Women made up fewer than 9% of the total 8,049 candidates running in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, even though women voters increased from 46.6% in 1962 to 69.9% in 2019 (The Economics Times, 2019). According to 2020 data, the highest proportion of women representatives elected to the Lok Sabha was in the 2019 elections, and it was less than 15% of the total membership, while women's representation in the Rajya Sabha was even lower, not yet crossing 13 percent of the total membership. The average representation in state legislative assemblies, or Vidhan Sabhas, is often less than 10% (Pankhuri, 2021).

One of the most significant and transformational features of the Indian Constitution modifications was the provision of reserving one-third of the total seats in local body elections for women. Various studies have indicated that this approach leads to a significant rise in women's political engagement at the municipal level. Currently, 20 of India's 28 states have increased reservation to 50%, enhancing women's political participation (Sahoo, 2022).

One of the key challenges for women in politics has been "proxy representation," where women who are elected to represent are largely controlled by their male family members. However, with the increase in women's representation in politics and the implementation of measures such as the reservation of seats, this challenge has also declined significantly (Neera and Usha, 2001).

5. Structural barriers to women's political participation in Zimbabwe and India

In Zimbabwe and India, women's political participation is hindered by various structural

barriers, which limit their access to political power and decision-making positions. These barriers are embedded in cultural norms, institutional practices, and legal frameworks that perpetuate gender inequalities and restrict women's opportunities to participate in the political sphere. Studies have shown that women in these countries face discrimination, harassment, and violence when attempting to enter or advance in politics, which reinforces the gender gap in political representation. There are numerous and interconnected causes, and it is important to adequately investigate where they converge. Social stereotypes, a male-dominated political party system, commitments to one's family, a lack of resources, and many structural obstacles are there. According to research by Kanchan Chandra, a sizable portion of women who do gain party nominations and win seats in parliament are 'dynastic' or have political ties to their families. Such relationships are frequently a point of entrance for women because traditional channels of accessibility are constrained. According to research, 30 percent of those elected in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections were "dynasts," as were 41 percent of all women candidates (Bhandare, 2019). Furthermore, economic disparities, lack of resources, and social stigma also play an important role in preventing women from fully participating in politics. Despite the efforts of feminist movements and civil society organizations to address these barriers, women's political representation remains low in both countries, indicating a need for sustained advocacy and policy reform.

6. Comparative analysis of political engagement of women in Zimbabwe and India

Women's political engagement has made great progress in postcolonial Zimbabwe, and Zimbabwe is one of the 30 countries in the world to practice the special electoral quota system considering women in Parliamentary political affairs.

In India, women's representation in politics has been increasing, but it is still low compared to

men's representation. Recently, many scholars have begun to focus on the comparative analysis of women's political engagement in different countries. Two such countries are Zimbabwe and India, where women's political participation is hindered by various structural barriers. As previously discussed, in Zimbabwe, women face cultural and traditional beliefs that prioritize men's role in politics, and a lack of resources and support from political parties. Similarly, in India, women's political participation is limited by patriarchal norms and gendered violence, as well as a lack of resources and representation within political parties.

Despite these similarities, there are also notable differences in the ways women engage in politics in these two countries. In Zimbabwe, women's political participation is often driven by civil society organizations and women's groups, who work to increase women's representation and participation in political processes. On the other hand, in India, women's political engagement has been largely driven by women's self-help groups, which have played a significant role in empowering women at the grassroots level.

Additionally, there are differences in the legal frameworks and policies that govern women's political participation in these two countries. In India, the government has implemented a number of affirmative action policies, such as reserving a percentage of seats for women in local government bodies. While these policies have had some success in increasing women's representation in politics, they have also faced resistance and backlash from traditionalists who oppose women's political participation. In Zimbabwe, however, there are fewer such policies in place, and efforts to implement them have been met with resistance from political elites.

Overall, a comparative analysis of women's political engagement in Zimbabwe and India reveals both similarities and differences in the structural barriers and strategies for overcoming them. While women in both countries face

significant obstacles to political participation, there are also important differences in the ways that women have organized and mobilized for political change. Understanding these similarities and differences is crucial for developing effective strategies to promote the political empowerment of women in both countries and beyond.

7. Change in Society or Governance due to Women's Involvement in Politics

Women's participation in politics has had a tremendous impact on society and government in both Zimbabwe and India. Participation of women in official political institutions and procedures has contributed to a more inclusive and varied decision-making process. In Zimbabwe, growing female political engagement has resulted in the development of gender-sensitive policies and a consideration of women's problems on the national agenda. Women's representation in parliament has also increased, and there are now reserved seats for women at the local level. In India, women's political participation has contributed to the adoption of policies aimed at promoting gender equality and women's empowerment, such as the implementation of reservations for women in panchayats and municipalities. However, despite these efforts, gender inequality in politics is still prevalent, and in comparison, to males, women continue to be underrepresented in formal political institutions and procedures. More concentrated efforts are needed to overcome patriarchal hegemony and expand chances for women's political engagement in order to make progress and attain gender equality.

8. Impact of women's political participation on gender equality and women's empowerment in Zimbabwe and India

Women's political participation is essential to achieving gender equality and women's empowerment in India and Zimbabwe. In postcolonial Zimbabwe, the government has

implemented several laws and initiatives to encourage women's political engagement. The Zimbabwean constitution requires that at least one-third of all elected members of parliament be women, and quotas have been set by the government to guarantee women's representation in different government posts. However, the efforts of gender equality in political participation become obsolete in Zimbabwe, where patriarchal hegemony still exists, limiting women's participation in politics. The increase in political participation, particularly since the 1990s, can be attributed to various factors. Firstly, women's improved levels of literacy and increasing labor-force engagement have enhanced their political understanding and confidence to vote (Vaishnav, 2018). Second, the expansion of electronic media and the digital revolution has increased the reach of voter rights awareness programs done by the Election Commission of India and other organizations. Third, the Election Commission has put in place institutional measures to encourage women to vote, such as assuring their safety by protecting them from harassment and establishing distinct lines for women at voting stations. Women-friendly 'pink booths' are also put up, with all workers, including election officials, police, and security personnel, being female (Merellie, 2022). Voter intimidation and violence on election day have dramatically decreased as a result of increased election security measures over the years, promoting participation from a wider range of individuals, not only women. Fourthly, women's reservations in panchayats and municipalities have contributed to a rise in the representation of women in local power structures (Sanjay, 2022). Fifth, ideas of women's rights, technical advancements, and political changes are gaining support and inspiring more women to cast votes. Nonetheless, there is still a gender gap in politics, with women's involvement in official political institutions and procedures being far lower than that of men. In spite of this, women have been more involved in Indian politics

recently, holding positions as prime minister, cabinet minister, and chief minister. In general, women's political engagement is essential to achieving gender equality and women's empowerment, and success in this area necessitates attempts to oppose patriarchal rule.

9. Conclusion

In conclusion, the comparative analysis of women's political participation in post-colonial Zimbabwe and India highlights the significance of gendered politics in development. Despite India gaining independence much before Zimbabwe, the latter has made greater strides in women's political empowerment. Zimbabwe's use of quotas and reserved seats in parliament has played a vital role in enhancing women's representation in formal political structures. On the other hand, India's progress in women's political participation has been relatively slow, despite being a more developed country as per the GDP rate. While reservations for women in local-level politics have been effective, the lack of adequate representation in parliament remains a significant challenge. Patriarchal hegemony continues to be a major obstacle to women's political empowerment in both countries. Addressing this challenge requires a comprehensive approach that involves increasing women's political awareness, providing greater opportunities for their participation in decision-making, and addressing the deeply ingrained biases that perpetuate gender inequality in politics. Overall, promoting women's political participation is crucial for achieving gender equality and women's empowerment, and both India and Zimbabwe have a long way to go to achieve this goal.

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