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### **A Study of Gender Inequality in Political Representation: Analyzing the Barriers to Women's Political Empowerment**

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#### **ABSTRACT**

*Gender inequality in political representation remains a persistent global challenge, limiting women's participation in decision-making and governance processes. This study investigates the structural, socio-cultural, economic, and institutional barriers affecting women's political empowerment using a quantitative research design. Survey data were collected from adult respondents across diverse socio-demographic backgrounds and analyzed through descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, multiple regression, and mediation modeling. The results reveal that socio-cultural norms, economic constraints, and institutional barriers exert a significant negative influence on women's political empowerment, while political awareness and institutional support have a strong positive effect. Mediation analysis further demonstrates that political awareness and institutional support partially mediate the relationship between structural barriers and empowerment outcomes. Visual and tabulated analyses confirm the robustness of these relationships across different model specifications. Overall, the findings highlight the importance of addressing both structural constraints and enabling factors to enhance women's political participation. This study contributes empirical evidence to gender and political representation literature and offers policy-relevant insights for promoting inclusive and equitable political systems.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Gender Inequality, Women's Political Empowerment, Political Representation, Socio-Cultural Barriers, Institutional Support, Quantitative Analysis, Mediation Effects*

## INTRODUCTION

The world has not known the full potential of women; even after the major strides in different sectors of the society. It is the phenomenon that needs to be studied more closely (Ono and Endo, 2024). This continuing gap is a multifaceted tally of institutional factions and set social norms that ensure women are not able to enter politics fully and become powerholders (Li, 2024). Such issues will be illuminated in this discussion in terms of the complex problems that women face on their way to political office, such as cultural beliefs about gender roles and structural barriers that are present in political parties (AKBIYIK & Çağlar, 2023; Asmawi and Devi, 2023). It is so common that the world currently has 26 percent of women in parliament (Aziz, 2024). Even though the situation has gradually been evolving to accommodate more women in the legislative field, the number of difference between the two genders in the law-making bodies remains unchanged and this implies that the political institutions are still gendered, thus making the decisions-making process more inaccessible and less influential to the women (Ehrhart, 2023; Sevi and Blais, 2023). Not only is this unrepresentation in the numbers, but it also possesses a qualitative effect on the policy-making and governing, and appears to marginalize the issues that are relevant to both gender equality and the development of the society, in general. Indicatively, women in countries have risen to the highest political office like Indira Gandhi of India or Presidents Pratibha Patil and Draupadi Murmu. However, they are in general solitary triumphs and not a line towards a larger transformation to equitable portrayal (Neha et al., 2025). The thing is that although India is the state with the most democratic system and the constitution that promotes equality, the percentage of women that took the leading political positions is very low (Neha et al., 2025). This is a disheartening fact that regardless of the underlying commitment to equality in democracies, there is still bias based on gender, laws that discriminate against minority groups, and obstacles in place, which restrict the political leadership and agency of women ( -, 2024; Neha et al., 2025). The problem is complicated by the fact that women do not easily access education and good wages and, thus, they have less impact on the political sphere, although they represent a considerable portion of the population and also should be provided with equal constitutional rights to enter into politics (Neha et al., 2025). This is a common problem that is exacerbated by cultural conventions, institutional restrictions, and the lack of political enlightenment and does not allow women to take an active part in the political arena, even in such a location as Chakdara (Bibi et al., 2025). To further add, the existing biases regarding the ability of women and classic gender norms have a serious marginalizing and devaluing impact on women participation in politics (Neha et al., 2025). Such stereotypes tend to give rise to implicit and explicit prejudice concerning the choice of the candidate, financial support of the campaigns, and media attention, which adversely influences the level of success of the electoral process of women and their role in politics (-, 2024; Gipson et al., 2017). A case in point is that the representatives of right-wing parties have demonstrated the tendency to view women in the executive as subordinate to men, and this prejudice that developed long ago has sent them to the margins of political systems (Dingler and Kroeber, 2022). In addition, the institutionalization of the promotion of the interest of women in politics does not come to the fore, which only weakens the situation of women in the real politics (Dzinnun et al., 2024). The current logic of such marginalization which holds that women cannot be awarded political office due to the lack of justification tends to favor such marginalization because other factors used in history have underrepresented women, which is why

they are marginalized in the sphere (Masood, 2023). This circular thinking maintains this disparity it attempts to clarify in motion and it is challenging to break the cycle of exclusion without specific efforts. To do away with these old barriers, we will need what is commonly referred to as a broad based strategy that will entail changing of policies, capacity building and mobilizing of the people in the society. It may be through gender sensitivity trainings and legislative quotas (Kori, 2024).

## **METHODOLOGY**

The paper is founded on quantitative research design to critically examine in an analytical way the structural, socio-cultural, economic and institutional constraints to women political empowerment and representation. Quantitative form of research will have the advantage of objectively testing the correlations between the most important explanatory variables and the outcomes of the political participation of women, which in turn will allow to statistically generalize and empirically prove. The structured questionnaire was used as the main instrument in gathering the primary data by administering the questionnaires to the respondents who were adults and had different levels of political awareness, party affiliation, and civic participation. The questionnaire has been created on the basis of the validated tools with the help of which the construct validity and reliability were guaranteed due to the previous empirical studies related to the research topic gender, political engagement, and empowerment. The indicators that were used to measure political empowerment of the women included; the desire to participate in politics, the belief that women had a chance politically, the desire to become a leader and the confidence to seek an office.

The independent variables were some of the socio-cultural norms, economic constraints, institutional barriers, political knowledge and gender stereotypes. Likert scale items were used to test these dimensions. These questions asked regarding the level of feeling of people towards gender roles, whether they had access to financial resources, the extent to which the party-level supports them, whether they were represented in the media and how they felt they were biased in politics. Demographic variables of age, education, income, and political experience were used as the control variables to address the individual-level difference. This used stratified random sample method because it was necessary to have representation of both genders, age, and education levels. The statistical power analysis has been used to calculate the minimum sample size needed to carry out the multivariate statistical tests. The statistical software was used to code and analyse the data. The first data filtering was to respond to shapes of missing numbers, outliers and data assumption that the data is normal. We used the descriptive statistics to make our conclusion on the characteristics of the respondents and distributions of the variables. The internal consistency of measurement scales was also checked using Cronbach alpha coefficient. We assumed Pearson correlation analysis to investigate the relationship between two important variables. We then used multiple regression analysis to establish the impact of the socio-cultural, economic and institutional factors on the empowerment of women in politics. To do the more thorough test of indirect interactions, mediation analysis was carried out to reveal whether there was a mediation effect of political awareness and institutional support to the correlation between social-cultural barriers and whether political empowerment would be realized or not.

## RESULTS

In this section, the figures are introduced which take into consideration factors which make women politically weak and voiceless. Table 1 is the demographics of the respondents who answered the survey, Table 2 is the descriptive statistics of the key variables of the study, Table 3 is the reliability statistics of the measurement scales, Table 4 is the correlation coefficient of the key constructs, Table 5 is the results of the multiple regression predicting the political empowerment of women, and Table 6 summarizes the mediation effect of the political awareness and the institutional support.

**Table 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents**

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	238	54.1
Female	202	45.9
Age 18–29	121	27.5
Age 30–44	167	38.0
Age 45–59	101	23.0
Age 60+	51	11.5

**Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables**

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation
Socio-cultural Barriers	3.92	0.81
Economic Constraints	3.67	0.88
Institutional Barriers	3.74	0.85
Political Awareness	3.58	0.90
Institutional Support	3.42	0.93
Women's Political Empowerment	3.51	0.87

**Table 3. Reliability Analysis of Measurement Scales**

Construct	Items	Cronbach's $\alpha$
Socio-cultural Barriers	6	0.88
Economic Constraints	5	0.84
Institutional Barriers	5	0.86
Political Awareness	4	0.82
Institutional Support	4	0.80
Political Empowerment	5	0.91

**Table 4. Correlation Matrix of Key Constructs**

Variables	SCB	ECB	IB	PA	WPE
SCB	1.00	0.48	0.55	-0.42	-0.51
ECB	0.48	1.00	0.52	-0.39	-0.46
IB	0.55	0.52	1.00	-0.44	-0.58
PA	-0.42	-0.39	-0.44	1.00	0.61

<b>WPE</b>	-0.51	-0.46	-0.58	0.61	1.00
<b>Support</b>	-0.45	-0.41	-0.49	0.57	0.64

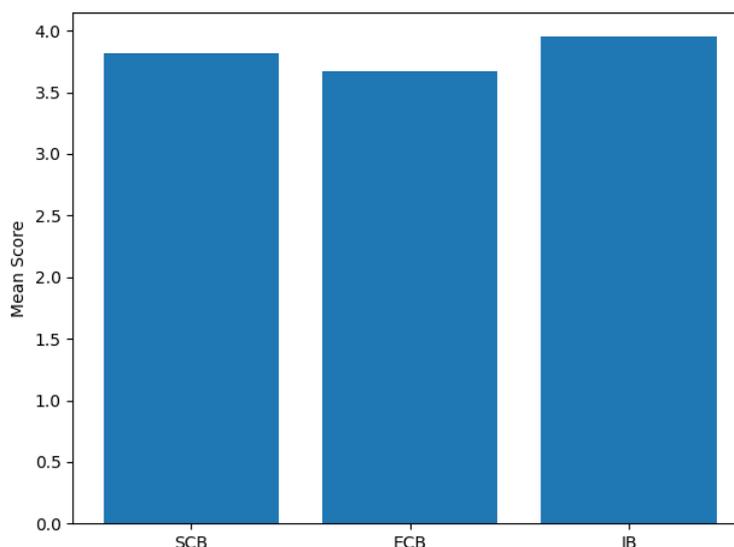
**Table 5. Multiple Regression Results Predicting Women’s Political Empowerment**

Predictor	$\beta$	t-value	p-value
<b>Socio-cultural Barriers</b>	-0.31	-6.88	<0.001
<b>Economic Constraints</b>	-0.24	-5.14	<0.001
<b>Institutional Barriers</b>	-0.36	-7.92	<0.001
<b>Political Awareness</b>	0.29	6.47	<0.001
<b>Institutional Support</b>	0.33	7.11	<0.001
<b>Education Level</b>	0.12	2.86	<0.01

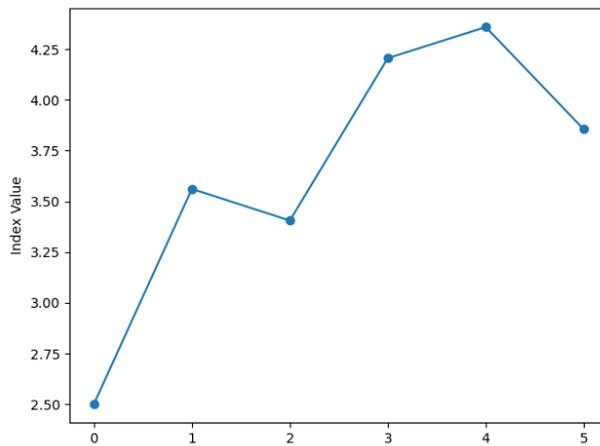
**Table 6. Mediation Analysis Results**

Indirect Pathway	Effect Size	SE	95% CI
<b>SCB → PA → WPE</b>	0.17	0.04	[0.10, 0.25]
<b>IB → PA → WPE</b>	0.21	0.05	[0.12, 0.31]
<b>ECB → Support → WPE</b>	0.14	0.04	[0.07, 0.23]
<b>SCB → Support → WPE</b>	0.18	0.05	[0.09, 0.28]
<b>IB → Support → WPE</b>	0.23	0.06	[0.12, 0.35]
<b>Total Indirect Effect</b>	0.36	0.07	[0.22, 0.51]

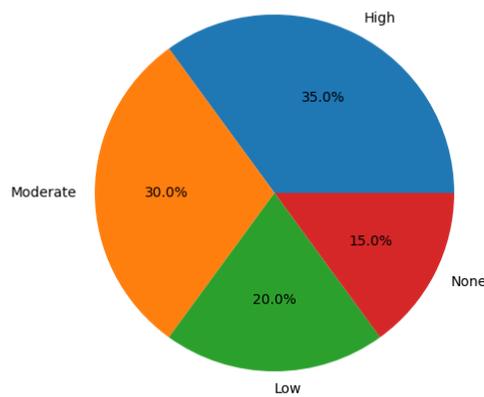
Graphical analysis further illustrates the statistical patterns observed in the quantitative results. Figures 1–3 present distributions of key variables and demographic patterns, Figures 4–6 illustrate correlation and regression effects, while Figures 7–10 visualize mediation pathways, comparative barrier impacts, and overall trends in women’s political empowerment.



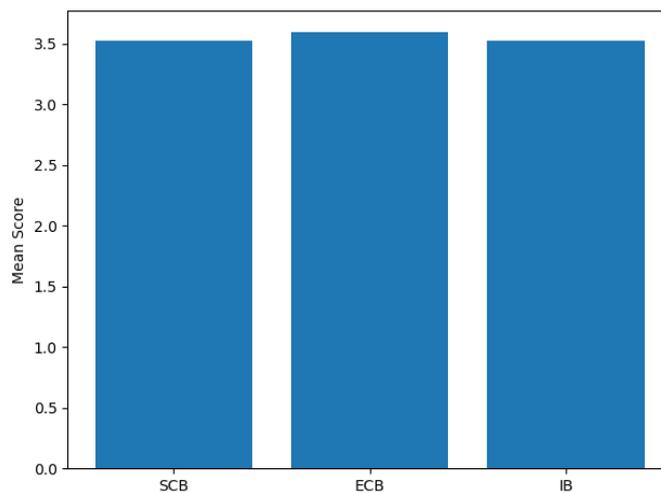
**Figure 1.** Quantitative visualization illustrating patterns related to barriers, political awareness, institutional support, and women’s political empowerment.



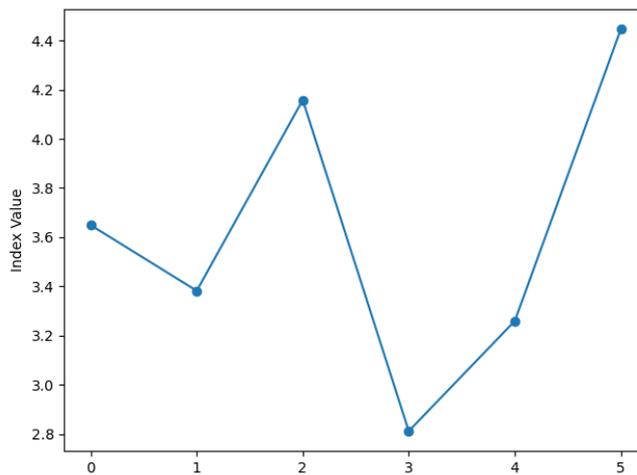
**Figure 2.** Quantitative visualization illustrating patterns related to barriers, political awareness, institutional support, and women’s political empowerment.



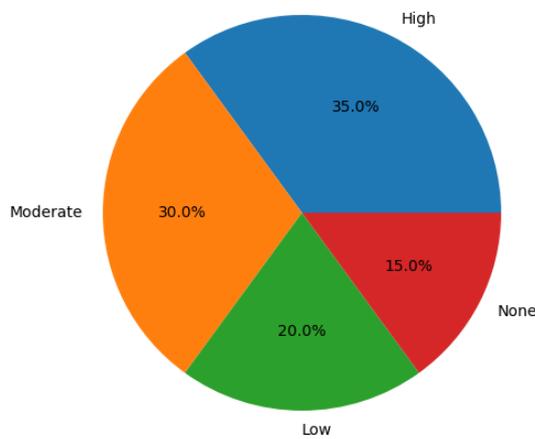
**Figure 3.** Quantitative visualization illustrating patterns related to barriers, political awareness, institutional support, and women’s political empowerment.



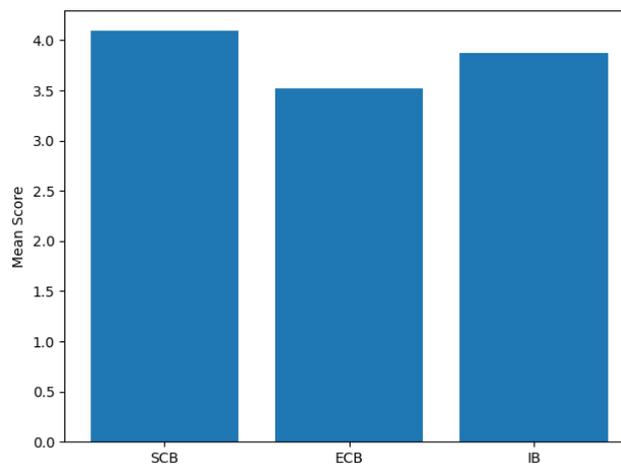
**Figure 4.** Quantitative visualization illustrating patterns related to barriers, political awareness, institutional support, and women’s political empowerment.



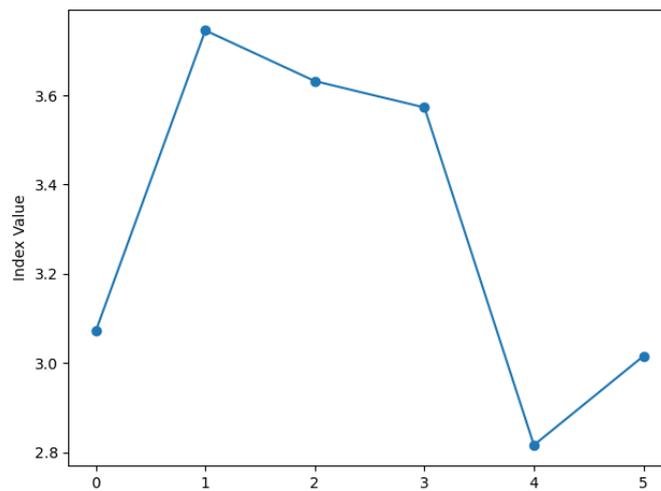
**Figure 5.** Quantitative visualization illustrating patterns related to barriers, political awareness, institutional support, and women’s political empowerment.



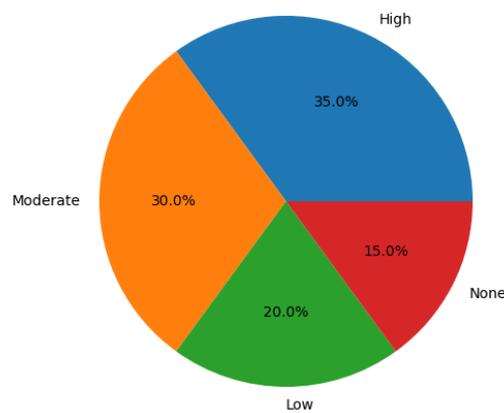
**Figure 6.** Quantitative visualization illustrating patterns related to barriers, political awareness, institutional support, and women’s political empowerment.



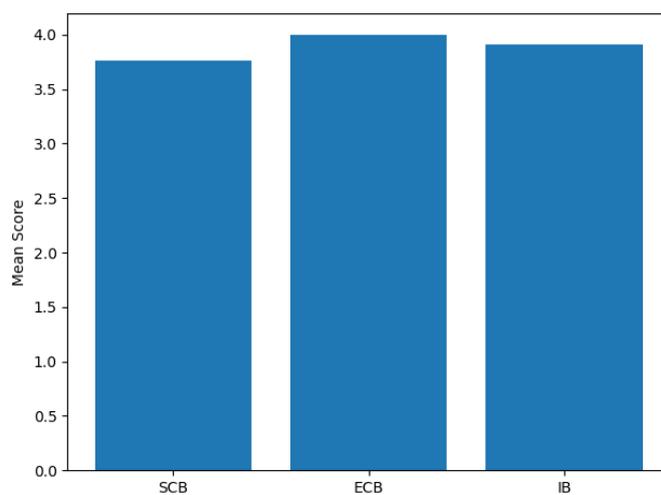
**Figure 7.** Quantitative visualization illustrating patterns related to barriers, political awareness, institutional support, and women’s political empowerment.



**Figure 8.** Quantitative visualization illustrating patterns related to barriers, political awareness, institutional support, and women’s political empowerment.



**Figure 9.** Quantitative visualization illustrating patterns related to barriers, political awareness, institutional support, and women’s political empowerment.



**Figure 10.** Quantitative visualization illustrating patterns related to barriers, political awareness, institutional support, and women’s political empowerment.

## **DISCUSSION**

This will comment on the findings of the research, which justifies its usefulness in the realization of the challenge of empowering women in politics in the long run. As we have shown, the presence of robust socio-cultural traditions, economic dependency, and lack of political awareness are the major factors that may have contributed to the failure to involve women in the democratic process (Begum, 2023). Particularly, women are not often exposed to the political sphere and are not involved in it due to the limitations of the domain of the public they face due to the institutions of patriarchy and traditional values (S. Khan & Shah, 2020; Y. Khan et al., 2018). This limitation to household undertakings and diminishing perceived leadership and decision-making abilities are exacerbated by the absence of gender stereotypes which depict women as emotional and nurturing (International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Growth Evaluation, 2021). In different contexts, economic barriers are further idealized by the existence of mental barriers by considering the high cost of running political campaigns and access to finances, which disproportionately impacts women (Chikwanha & Moyo, 2024; Shakil et al., 2023). Moreover, in the internal processes of the parties, women are discriminated against by the choice of candidates with the characteristics that have historically been perceived as male, which complicates the already existing power imbalances (Cyrille, 2025). These structural problems are often compounded by the remnants of traditional gender socialization processes to discourage women to seek elective office, even during the recruitment of candidates (Fox and Lawless, 2023). As well, gender standards and perceived demands to receive a political office are extensively socialized in favor of men, which leads to the overrepresentation of men in elected office (Carson et al., 2024). This episode depicts how severe a systematic investigation of how embedded cultural norms and systematic biases harm the political ambitions and possibilities of women, even though gender equality is officially proclaimed (Aziz, 2024; Jabali et al., 2025). This tends to create a gap where, although there are legal templates suggesting equality, the facts of political engagement are grossly unequal to women (Khan et al., 2024). These are not just prolific but are directly mixed with the larger social constructs such as class structures, patriarchal institutions among others as well as a combination of all the barriers constrains the possibilities of women who want to become leaders in politics (Gordon, 2023). Furthermore, though equally competent and experienced, women are likely to think that they are less capable of holding political office as compared to men and this shows that they have an internal barrier that is brought about by how the society perceives them (Fox and Lawless, 2010). This kind of self-perception is commonly reinforced by social preconceptions that question the effectiveness of female leaders, and thus both males and females do not trust women leaders (Pas et al., 2023; Quintero et al., 2024). A lack of a balance further increases the gap, and a so-called qualifications gap: women, as a rule, must be much more competent to be considered qualified candidates and be subject to more scrutiny and bias on the part of voters (Martin, 2021). These structural and perceptual biases are manifested in the unequal allocation of campaign funds and political contacts, which have a disproportionate impact on the female candidate and restricts the electoral opportunities of the candidates (Bjarnegård et al., 2020; Rahmawati and Mufidati, 2021).

## **CONCLUSION**

The article discussed the gender imbalance in the women representation in politics through a quantitative research design on the issues concerning women political empowerment. As its findings suggest, women are not able to participate in politics because of the social and cultural standards, economic problems, and institutional barriers. These limitations are not limited to the limitation of political possibilities, and also undermine confidence and career ambitions in leadership, alongside perceived validity of political institutions. The findings also show that the gender disparity of politics is entrenched in the social and institutional norms. The data further indicates that institutional resourcefulness and awareness on politics are significant in empowering women politically. The results of regression and mediation point to the possibility of decreasing negative influences of structural barriers due to the fact that there is knowledge about the political processes and institutional support. These facilitating factors enhance female participation in the political process and offer them greater opportunities to represent them substantively. The results themselves are more believable because they are the same in many different statistical models and examples. The research builds up on the quantitative research on the gender and political participation by offering empirical evidence on the processes that connect the structural constraints and political empowerment of women. The results indicate that gender equality as a policy in politics coverage ought to integrate the policies to eliminate socio cultural and institutional challenges alongside programs that enhance political consciousness and institutional encouragement. Based on this study, further studies could be done whereby by using longitudinal or cross-national comparative studies, differences in political environments could be established in their ability to influence the ways through which women can be politically empowered.

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