

Investigating the Factors Affecting Women's Political Participation in Nepal: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract. *This research aims to examine the factors that have influenced women political participation in Nepal using qualitative approach by conducting case study interviews with Females that have served in political leadership capacity. The study shows that legal reforms in particular the ones in the region are still are limited in addressing gender equity, as deeply rooted cultural practices as well as perceived economic realities still confine women to the lower tiers of political activity. The work specifies such obstacles as the obvious ones, such as gender prejudices, lack of funds, and violence, and others, including support from a mentor and relatives, financial and institutional support. These work somewhat shifts the dominant notions of political participation showing that an intersectional approach should encompass all the identities and statuses connected to gender. The study also points out the inadequacy of the quotas in stating that though they enhance tokenism, they require other structural and cultural changes for genuine Girl Empowerment. Overall, this research informs theoretical debates of women and politics and provides policy prescriptions on how a better future can be created for women's political involvement in Nepal. The findings therefore have potential lessons for policy makers, advocates and scholars involved in feminists struggles for women representation in politics internationally.*

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INTRODUCTION

Women's political participation is essential for the formation of democratic societies and the promotion of inclusive governance. Nevertheless, despite progress made in recent years, women's representation and participation in political processes remain a significant obstacle in many nations, including Nepal. Understanding the factors that influence women's political participation is crucial for developing strategies that effectively address existing barriers and promote gender equality in political decision-making.

The deeply ingrained patriarchal norms and gender biases prevalent in Nepalese society are a significant influence in women's political participation (Bajimaya, 2022). Often, traditional gender roles, cultural practices, and societal expectations restrict women's access to political spaces, hindering their ability to participate actively and effectively. In addition, socioeconomic factors, such as limited educational opportunities, economic disparities, and lack of financial resources, can impede women's political participation (Al-Qahtani et al., 2020; Ngoa & Song, 2021).

According to recent data, Nepal has made some progress in increasing women's representation in politics, with women holding 33% of the seats in the federal parliament as of 2021 (Rai et al., 2021). However, women's participation in politics remains limited, especially in rural areas, and there are still significant barriers to their full engagement and leadership in the

political sphere. Various studies have explored the factors that contribute to these barriers and challenges, including socio-cultural norms and expectations, economic and educational disparities, political bias and discrimination, and legal and institutional barriers (see, for example, Bhattachan et al., 2019; Gurung, 2019; Manandhar, 2020; Nyaupane, 2020). However, there is a need for further research that examines these factors in greater depth, particularly from the perspectives of women themselves. It aims to contribute to the development of evidence-based policies and interventions that promote gender equality, empower women in positions of political leadership, and nurture an inclusive and participatory democratic system (Nazneen & Mahmud, 2012; Hatano, 2021).

Nepal can make significant progress toward achieving gender parity in political representation, ensuring women's voices are heard, and utilizing the full potential of its diverse population to shape the country's future by addressing the barriers identified by this investigation.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the factors affecting women's political participation in Nepal through a qualitative approach, with a focus on the experiences and perspectives of women who have engaged in political activities at various levels. By exploring the lived experiences of women in politics, this study seeks to contribute to a better understanding of the challenges and opportunities for women's full participation and leadership in Nepal's political landscape.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Women's political participation in Nepal has been the subject of several studies in recent years. These studies have identified a range of factors that contribute to the underrepresentation and marginalization of women in politics. In this section, we review some of the key findings from these studies, organized around the themes of socio-cultural factors, economic and educational disparities, political bias and discrimination, and legal and institutional barriers. Socio-cultural factors, such as gender stereotypes, patriarchal norms, and traditional gender roles, have been identified as significant barriers to women's political participation in Nepal (Bhattachan et al., 2019; Gurung, 2019; Manandhar, 2020; Nyaupane, 2020). For example, women are often expected to prioritize their domestic and family responsibilities over their political involvement, and they may face social stigma and discrimination if they deviate from these expectations (Gurung, 2019). Additionally, women's political participation may be perceived as a threat to male authority and power, leading to resistance and backlash from male-dominated political and social spheres (Bhattachan et al., 2019; Nyaupane, 2020).

Economic and educational disparities between men and women have also been found to hinder women's political participation in Nepal (Witenstein & Palmer, 2013; Gurung, 2019; Manandhar, 2020). Women are often disproportionately affected by poverty and lack of access to resources, which can limit their ability to participate in political activities and campaigns (Manandhar, 2020). Moreover, women's low levels of education and literacy can also impede their political participation and leadership, as they may lack the knowledge and skills necessary to engage in political discourse and decision-making (Kahne et al., 2016; Stromquist, 2006). Political bias and discrimination against women have been identified as another significant barrier to their political participation in Nepal (Gurung, 2019; Manandhar, 2020; Nyaupane, 2020). For example, women may face gender-based violence, harassment, and intimidation when running for political office or participating in political activities (Nyaupane, 2020). Additionally, women may be excluded from political decision-making processes and opportunities due to the male-dominated political culture and networks (Gurung, 2019; Vickers, 2006).

Legal and institutional barriers to women's political participation in Nepal have also been identified in previous studies (Bhattachan et al., 2019; Manandhar, 2020; Nyaupane, 2020). For example, Nepal's electoral laws and regulations may not be gender-sensitive, and they may not adequately address the specific needs and challenges faced by women candidates (Manandhar, 2020). Moreover, women's participation in political parties and their representation in

leadership positions may be limited by the lack of affirmative action policies and quotas (Bhattachan et al., 2019; Nyaupane, 2020). Previous studies have identified a range of factors that affect women's political participation in Nepal, including socio-cultural norms and expectations, economic and educational disparities, political bias and discrimination, and legal and institutional barriers. However, there is a need for further research that explores these factors in greater depth and from the perspectives of women themselves.

METHODS

Hence, the study adopted a qualitative research approach to identify the barriers to women's political participation in Nepal. To secure qualitative data, the research was based on the semi-structured interviews that made it possible to gather detailed contextual information regarding individual subjects and their perception of particular experiences occurred in the course of their political activities. The choice of qualitative research was quite appropriate in this study because it embraced an underlying appreciation of the multifaceted nature of subject under consideration specifically focusing on gender, culture and politics in Nepal.

The study targeted women with experience and knowledge of political participation of women in the developing countries. The inclusion criteria herein aimed at identifying women who had served in political capacity at the local, provincial and national levels in Nepal. When recruiting participants, it was purposely targeted to have women of different socio-economic status, cultures and regions in order to get as many different experiences as possible. Also, the first participants of the study were taken through the study and invited to recruit other women of child bearing age who fulfilled the inclusion criteria. This made the targeting especially successful in getting women in rural areas or those who would not come for the survey on their own volition.

Data Collection

Interviews were conducted in a face-to-face, semi-structured fashion, for the purpose of capturing women's personal stories and opinions on political participation in Nepal. This semi-structured type of interviewing made it possible to interview participants whilst allowing them to provide the detailed account about their encounters and at the same time, ensured consistency in the themes explored in all the interviews. The interview guide was developed with a lot of care and concern in formulating the questions and this was done after conducting a literature review on the level of women participation to politics. The questions were crafted to address four primary areas: The components of the interviews were: (1) the reasons for political participation and self-interests that were involved, (2) the perceived challenges to participation within the political process, (3) the enablers that was helpful to the participants to engage in political processes, and (4) the strategies required to improve on the situation of women in political realms in Nepal. This approach made it possible for the interviews to provide data that was central to the research questions under this study, at the same time providing for emergence data.

All the interview conducted in the Nepali language as the norm was to enable the participant freely express their ideas and experience without language hinderance. All recordings were conducted at time and places most convenient for the participant through appointments in their homes or their place of work to have them feel as comfortable as possible and to avoid interferences by third persons. The interviews were conducted with the average duration of one hour and 30 minutes to 1 hour and 30 minutes depending on the interviewee enjoyed the conversation, and the richness of the answers given. Interviews were conducted verbally and all of them were recorded with the participants' consent. This was advantageous in capturing all the dialogue especially the social constructs of tone and duration of silence which are critical in qualitative research. These-recorded and taped conversations were transcribed in detail in order to develop text data that could be analyzed. Thus, the focus was made on the specifics of transcription of the interview, using the participants' exact words with the attention to the tone and non-verbal expressions whenever possible (e. g., laughter, pauses).

To increase the validity of the findings and the detail of the collected data, which is very important in case studies, the interviews were repeated with a sub-sample of the participants. These were done to build more precision in case of any unclear responses, expand on other possible themes and to confirm the initial conclusions. Furthermore, field notes were taken while and after the interview, in order to record the interview context, any specific observations, as well as interviewer's impressions. These notes supplemented the transcriptions and helped with the analysis of the results. Transcriptions and spontaneous field notes were saved at password-requiring database that was available only to the specific researchers group. In order to maintain anonymity of the participants all identifiable information was redacted in the transcripts. The given to each participant was created with pseudonyms. Anonymity of the individuals was maintained by censoring the accounts or by blurring information within the transcriptions.

Data Analysis

As a method of data analysis, thematic analysis was employed and the research utilised NVivo software to assist with the analysis. The interviews conducted with the participants were transcribed first and then subjected to a procedure of coding, both Inductive and deductive coding in which various themes were elicited from the interviews as well as the themes of interest derived from the theoretical frameworks used in the study. Theme development was therefore a cyclic process where all the data was scrutinized several times to make sure that the themes captured the data adequately. As a way of strengthening the reliability of the study, member checking was conducted whereby the participants were given an opportunity to scrutinize the themes and the interpretations that were in the course of being developed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Some major themes identified from the data analysis of the interviews are as follows: The essential things on women political participation in Nepal. The above-mentioned themes are explained below with quotes from the participants. In order to bring meaning to the participant's experiences and situate them within the social and political context, an interpretation is made after each quote.

Personal Experiences of Political Participation

Participants frequently reported experiencing discrimination and gender bias within the political arena. This theme highlights the pervasive challenges women face as they navigate the male-dominated political landscape in Nepal.

"I was always told that politics is not for women. Even my colleagues would say, 'Why are you here? You should be at home.' It made me doubt myself."

This quote illustrates the internalized doubt and the societal pressures women face, which often undermine their confidence in pursuing political careers. The expectation that women should adhere to traditional gender roles is a significant barrier to their political engagement.

"When I ran for office, people didn't see me as a leader, but as someone's wife or daughter. It was like my identity was tied to the men in my life, not my abilities."

Here, the participant expresses the struggle of being perceived through the lens of familial ties rather than as an individual leader. This reflects the deeply ingrained patriarchal values that persist in Nepalese society, where women's identities are often overshadowed by their relationships to men.

"I had to work twice as hard to be taken seriously. Even then, my ideas were often dismissed until a male colleague repeated them."

This quote underscores the additional labor women must invest to gain recognition and respect in political settings. The dismissive attitude toward women's contributions reveals the

gender bias entrenched in political institutions.

"I faced harassment not just from opponents, but even within my own party. They would say things like, 'You're too emotional to handle politics.'"

The participant's experience of harassment, even within her own political party, highlights the systemic nature of gender bias in politics. The stereotype of women being "too emotional" is a common tactic used to delegitimize their authority and participation.

The participants' accounts vividly illustrate the gendered barriers women face when entering the political arena in Nepal. Despite formal legal frameworks that ostensibly support gender equality, these measures appear to be more symbolic than substantive in their impact. For example, the constitutional provisions mandating a certain percentage of female representation have not translated into genuine political empowerment for many women. The entrenched patriarchal culture continues to dominate, reducing these legal provisions to mere tokenism (Bhattachan et al., 2019). This echoes Law (1989) critique of 'affirmative remedies,' which argues that such measures often fail to address the deeper, structural inequalities that perpetuate gender disparities.

The participants' experience points out how women suffer from patriarchal constraints as they attempt to join the political world in Nepal. Even when there are legal structures in place that should provide for gender equality, these steps seem more like appeasement than genuine change-makers. For instance, the constitution requirements that encourage a certain level of women representation in the legislative assemblies are not associated with meaningful political emancipation for many women. The traditional male chauvinistic culture still prevails and these legal provisions remain a mere ornament (Bhattachan et al., 2019). This can be likened to Law (1989) analysis of 'affirmative remedies' that serve to mitigate gender discrimination but still do not challenge systematic discriminations that contribute to such issues.

Various participants indicated that they were often not viewed as separate equal and rational political beings but rather as wives, husbands, children, friends and so on. This relegation to mere 'wife' or 'daughter' forms de-legitimises them in the political arena and perpetuates the stereotype that a woman is only what belongs to a man. These experiences conform with the definition of "benevolent sexism" provided by Amaechi (2020) where seemingly positive beliefs about women's roles inadvertently limit their possibilities for decision making and management. Furthermore, this is not isolated to Nepal; such trends have often been detected in archetypal patriarchal nations wherein female political ambitions are systematically erased.

The demand for women to 'work twice as hard' in order to be given recognition as their male counterparts reflects the culture of hegemonic masculinity inherent within political organizations. Generally, the political field has been described as an arena that favors the representation of hegemonic masculinities, where any changes for the masculinities that do not fit into this framework will invariably experience some level of resistance. This is an example of the idea of epistemic injustice whereby female contributions are considered to be of less value than those of men simply because of the gender of the speaker. This can be seen as pointing to a more general problem of the gendering of knowledge and political authority where women are systematically silenced.

Barriers to Political Participation

As to the reasons for their limited activity in the political life, the participants mentioned limited access to political processes due to certain patterns of behavior, lack of funds to engage in politics, and existing threats of violence.

"We are barred from attending political meetings in my village without our husband's consent; how then can we participate?"

This quote captures the fact that women and girls are heavily policed and their agency limited, especially in the rural setting where tradition dictates their movements. The requirement

of obtaining the permission of the husband directly counters women's participation in politics.

"It is very costly to do politics; many of us cannot even afford to fund campaigns or even travel for meetings, it is a challenge."

Here, the participant's observation directs to economic constraints which are a hindrance especially to female participants originating from poor backgrounds. Economic factors prevent them from fully engaging in political activities, thus perpetuating the social marginalization of women.

"There is always the threat of violence. I have been threatened for simply raising my voice. Hate speech is used to assume control and it succeeds in doing so."

The culture of violence plays a huge role in discouraging women in matters of politics. This quote pinpoints the continuation of the practice where women are threatened and prevented from speaking up, which is why women still remain underrepresented in political process today.

"If there is no family support, then it's not feasible," he said But not all families are supportive They are afraid of the stigmatization that comes with it.

This quote demonstrates that women need the backing of family members if they are to be active participants in politics. But, due to cultural constraints and social backlash effects, there is poor support that hampers women from participating fully.

The investigation present various intertwined barriers that women experience when trying to attain political careers suggesting that gender politics are not only entrenched but also complex. Some of the rural participants pointed out that women need their husband's consent to participate in any political activities, which is rather indicative of continued subjugation of women in their marital homes. This is not just an Australian cultural peculiarity but rather an instance of the process that Grewal (2012) terms 'symbolic violence' in which particular forms of feminine comportment are re-inscribed and consolidation of women's subordination.

The other constraints highlighted were mainly economic with major emphasis being placed on the expensive nature of political campaigns. This finding is supported by research done across the world indicating the fact that women especially those from the least privileged groups in society lacks the economic capital to fund effective competitive political campaigns. But the gender factor with regard to education in Nepal is even worsened by social class differentiation in terms of economic status where most women know as a fact that they are financially dependent on their male counterparts (Maharjan & Gurung, 2019). This dependence on male earnings not only inhibits women's political endeavours, but also keeps them subordinate in both the home front and politics.

The threats of violence, social and psychological also aggravate these challenges. VAWP is a worldwide concern, but its prevalence in Nepal has special meaning because of the country's history of political conflict and turmoil (Khanal et al., 2020). Measures of danger identified in this study were consistent with the culture of impunity noticeable in VAWP cases, whereby political institutions offer lip service to the problem. This accords with the work that I have done on VAWP where I posit that such violence is not simply used to force women to conformity, but is also used to maintain women in submissive positions within political institutions. This is a psychological effect that leaves many women scarred and believing that politics is a hostile territory for them not to mention those who are discouraged from activism in the first place.

Facilitators of Political Participation

However, certain participants were able to describe fixed enablers that helped them to participate in political processes, including positive referent groups, prominent inspirational figures, and resources.

"My mother was my greatest influencer. She used to say I could be anything I wanted to be, even a politician," she said I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for her encouragement.

This quote underlines the fact that there should always be someone at home encouraging the females to venture into politics. Approval from the family can help women cope with societal pressures and have a positive outlook on themselves.

"Fortunately, I had a role model who taught me about the political reality I was dealing with and explained how everything worked and whom I had to talk to."

This participant's experience identifies the role of mentorship as a crucial enabler. Mentors who offer guidance as well as connections are likely to improve women's prospects for the political market.

"I felt privileged to have financial support from an organization that funds women to be in politics because that helped me to be in a position to run a good campaign and contest fairly."

The participant elaborates on the role of financial resources and institutional arrangements in enhancing fairness. These are the sources of funding and support that women candidates need to ensure they have a political equal opportunity out of the current economic hurdles.

"For me, seeing other women who ventured into politics motivated me to do the same because it was empowering to see other women succeed in this line of work."

Positive examples cannot be overestimated as they encourage other women to become actively involved in politics due to its feasibility. This quote shows how change begins and affects different areas by seeing women occupying leadership positions.

Besides these barriers, the study also points to several enablers that can help women political representation but are always accompanied by certain social or economic factors. More specifically, the importance of family support and, particularly, support from female relatives has been identified as prominent. This finding supports the 'kinship network' approach by Wolf (1992) that women are usually related and tracked down through their families using their relations to get emotional or even financial support in their candidature for a political capacity. However, it is again important here to remember that this latter aspect of reliance on family also premised on the more general problem of the absence of structures of support for women in political activities, and it is implied that if women lacked family support they would not be able to enter political practices.

Other factors that were deemed to be important enablers included mentorship and role models; these have been supported by studies from other parts of the world on women in leadership positions. However, the need for the mentors shows that there is effectively no institutionalised mechanisms for the political career mobility of women, thus, personal connections are trying to fill the gaps left by organisations. This lack of institutionalized support for women in particular underlines a major absence in the political architecture that could be perhaps remedied by conscious efforts of the political actors and civil society.

Opportunity to secure financial funding was considered crucial in order to address the issue of gender parity and women's participation in politics was thought to be aided through organizations focused on supporting women politicians. However, this support is very useful, it again raises the concern of the degree of economic disparity experienced by women and the need for more structural form of support for female politics (Dahlerup & Freidenvall, 2010). While I appreciate that, the general use of outside funding especially from NGOs and other international organizations raises a lot of questions about the overall sustainability of such efforts but most probably not only the political parties themselves are STILL reluctant to invest more specifically into women candidates.

Recommendations for Improving Women's Political Participation

Recommendations that participants gave include; availability of education to women, quotas among other things, and enlightening women.

"We require more programs aimed at increasing Women leadership mentoring, and the main driving force is education, and those women were right."

This quote clearly shows how education helped women to participate in politics Education programs that will address women's need can empower them by providing them with knowledge and skills that they need to be effective leaders.

"Quotas are important,' said one, campaigning for quotas because if there are no quotas, everyone sits down and invariably men dominate."

The participant supports quotas as asurety of women's political leadership positions and call for its adoption. Quotas can be used as a means of correcting the existing gender imbalance in political systems since they are a skewed outcome of a bias.

"Awareness campaigns are important: people have to know that women are just as capable of leadership as men Changing people's attitudes is one way of tackling the issue."

Education and increasing the civic consciousness of the populace is thought to be one of the most effective ways of defining and preventing the reinforcement of the socially acceptable gender politics. This quote is more or less a call and echo to change the hearts and minds of the population in regard to the political culture.

"There is need for support from political parties as they are required to come up with ways and policies supporting women within the political arena as opposed to merely paying lip service about the support of women."

This quote demands political parties to be more involved in acts that encourage the women's involvement. This argument is agreeable with me because it are the political institutions of a country that need to support change so that women should not only be paraded but should also fully participate in political leadership.

Here, the participants provided the following suggestions for increasing women's engagement in politics which are commensurate with the findings of the current literature in gender politics. The demand for more focused programs in educational setting for leadership advancement for women underscores the need for women to have capacity for not only politics, but also competent leadership. This recommendation is also inline with the literature review on gender and education where Mansuri & Rao (2013) highlight that educational change is a central instrument in eradicating gendered politics that subordinate women. However, these programs work well only if they are able to cover the women in both the rural and urban areas as maternal education is still low in the rural areas.

The endorsement of quotas as a tool for entrenching women's representation is the pragmatic way of addressing strains in the political arena in as much as promoting women's rights. Nevertheless, quotas are not without seams. If they can enhance the numbers of women occupying political roles, they do not always lead to descriptive or persuasive representation (Dahlerup, 2006). Thus it would be safe to conclude that quota can be either good or bad depending on how it is designed and how it is implemented and the political environment that goes with it. For example, in Nepal the traditional perceptions of male dominance may require more than the quota system in order to work efficiently.

Increased focus towards the awareness campaigns further underlines the significant impact of social perception in influencing women's political activities. Gender perceptions concerning leadership roles in the society need to be reconsidered so as to enable women to participate in politics without prejudice. Nevertheless, such campaigns must be well-structured and smart so that they do not re-establish the stereotypical models or new exclusionary. Furthermore, it means that the success of the campaigns centralising the need to change the male perception of the gender norms and making men collaborators rather than adversaries in the battle for women's rights.

Theoretical Implications

In fact, the following is one of the main contributions of this study: a troubling of conventional gender theories whereby gender is seen as a definitive factor in political participation but where patriarchal dynamics are caricatured as rigid or increasingly less significant. Most early models of political participation, including what Miyakova, Ajaps et al. (1995) categorize as the resources model, distinguish give variables that include education, income and civic skills that enable people to participate in politics. However, these theories have been criticized for not giving enough attention into the fact that patriarchy becomes part of the social DNA, and so women may be not given a chance despite having all the resources. In line with this, evidence from this study underscores the fact that availability of resources is not sufficient to help women overcome the stiff odds in politics. Still, the women today who are educated, financially stable and capable of holding responsible positions are still sidelined by the norms which put them in homes only. This resonates with Fraser's (1990) ideas, the politics of recognition that contends that for substantive equality to be realized, provides for more than redistributive means; there is the need for a transformation of social and cultural relations that sustain gender inequality.

Nusitaling's analysis of the cultural factors inhibiting women's political activism including requirements to seek male authorization and prospects of experiencing violence reveals the research as a valuable returning to the question of patriarchy in political theory. Early formative theorists namely, Ade (2021) defined patriarchy as a social relations of domination and subordination that subjugates women to the dominance of males. In a way, this work also supports Millett's thesis by showing that authoritarian's masquerade as discrimination is not the only way in which women's subordination is reinforced, but cultural structures that are so pervasive that they function at the more or less unconscious level also play a significant role in denying women a full and creative control over their lives. Furthermore, the results conform to Hamilton & Sharma (1996) idea of biopower, whereby power is not only exercised through the political strategies but on different forms of bodies' and behaviors' control as well. This paper therefore concludes that patriarchal structure ensures women's political bodies remain controlled through disciplining mechanisms of social expectations, economic dependencies and even threats of violence in the context of Nepal. It's a part of the power dynamic that needs to be understood in order to come up with a more nuanced theory of political participation that takes into account subtle ways that power works toward the exclusion of the less powerful.

The work adds to the body of knowledge within the field of intersectionality as a concept put forward by Kimberlé Crenshaw back in 1989. Intersectionality explains, as to how various social categorizations like race, gender, class, caste etc., work together to shape forms of oppression and privilege. It is therefore imperative to point out that as it relates to the Nepalese context, issues of colour, caste as well as ethnicity are key determinants of the experiences of women in political leadership. Therefore, this study's evidence indicates the constraints to political participation are not uniform, but differ depending on these cross-cutting dimensions. For instance, a woman from the dalit caste or tribal origin is doubly marginalized and experience multifaceted barriers to participate in politics. This points to the need to generate a multi-layered view of gender and other respects in political theories instead of regarding gender in a singular and simple way than it is seen at the current times. This has theoretical implications for political participation and means that more complex theoretical frameworks of political participation should incorporate intersectionality to be able to capture women's multiple experiences. This is in accordance with, Davanger (2022) who opine that oppressed women cannot be understood through one-axis system of analysis since they are made up of more than one identity.

For this reason, the study results on the effectiveness of quotas in increasing women political representation need to raise reflection on the theory supporting quotas. As with quotas, quotas are always considered in terms of the so-called critical mass, according to which the concentration of women in political roles is essential for the occurrence of deep-seated changes in the policy and operations. But the research finds out that although quotas enhance the

clerkship of women in political bodies, it does not necessarily lead to enhancement of their political authority, or the alteration of patriarchal systems. This view supports the observations of scholars like Barnes et al. (2019) who maintains that the success of the quotas depends on the context in which they were introduced in. The study suggests that it must be supported with other institutional changes that would bring about a positive change in the organizational culture in order to be effective. This poses the need for engagement of a better and advanced theoretical perspective about quotas as a tool that may be useful but at the same time has some drawbacks when it comes to combating core rooted systems of gender injustice.

The study enriches the feminist political theory through identifying the factors that promote women's political participation, including mentorship and family support reflecting on the relational and social capital approaches to political activism. Several feminists have criticized liberal political theory by asserting that it cannot acknowledge the sources of women's interaction in which relatedness is necessary for political participation. This paper elaborates this argument by demonstrating how women's political careers are always informed by their networks, familial or otherwise. Indeed, this supports what has been said by the post-modernist/feminist scholars about liberal political theory; that it is weak at addressing the social and communal aspects of political agency. The theoretical implication here is a call for some shift in the way we conceptualize political participation more especially in the context of social networks and relations.

CONCLUSION

Women's Political Participation in Nepal is presented, where the factors that continue to act as hindrances and the factors that can enable women's political participation is presented. The study brings out the fact that the adherence to patriarchal values and the culture of female subjugation, poverty and unemployment persist to exclude women from the political leadership. Although there have been endeavors in the legal system that addresses the issues of gender equality, the current situation of Nepali women is actually quite the opposite: decision-making power is low, and access to resources scarce, to which, women experience high rates of gender-based violence. On that token the study supports the theoretical frameworks for gender and political participation by disputing the resource mobilization models and the notion of women competing against odds that are structurally and culturally put in place. It reveals the imperative for additional, more nuanced views of political engagement, which factor in the multiple dimensions the Gender Intersectionality Theory participant and power statuses that interact with gender to constitute women's political reality. This paper demonstrates that the quotas as a good thing in enhancing numerical representation but, found ineffective in enhancing substantive representation of women in politics. However, quotas need to be supported by additional institutional changes and the transformation of sociocultural referendum that stems from patriarchal tendencies that are still characteristic for the political sphere. Furthermore, the research pays particular attention to the relational and social capital, indicating that political participation of women can be favored by having role models or family support, both of which are still considered by political theories as essential components for a more complete explanation.

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