

# Gender Politics and Power Structure: An Analysis of Institutional Barriers to Gender Equality

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## Abstract

This study explores the institutional barriers to gender equality between gender politics and power structure, aiming to conduct a thorough analysis of the complex relationships between gender politics, power structure, gender equality, and institutional barriers. By examining the definition and importance of gender politics and the link between power structure and gender equality. Then it explores the close relationship between gender politics and institutional barriers. Subsequently, focusing on the legal field, we analyzed the impact of the legal system on gender equality and the potential impact of legal reform on gender politics, while focusing on the possible problem of gender discrimination in law implementation. Further, we explore the influence of the political system on gender equality. In addition, cultural and social factors were also included in the analysis. This paper will reveal how gender politics, power structure and institutional barriers jointly restrict the realization of gender equality. At the same time, we will explore possible solutions and policy recommendations to promote a more equitable and equal social development.

**Keywords:** gender politics, power structure, gender equality, institutional barriers

## 1. Introduction

Gender equality is an important and complex issue in modern society, covering many fields such as politics, society, culture and law. Gender equality is not only a matter of morality and ethics, but also a core issue closely related to social progress and sustainable development. However, despite some progress on a global scale, the problem of gender inequality remains, especially in the areas of politics and power structure.

## 2. Overview of Gender Politics and Power Structure

### 2.1 Definition and Importance of Gender Politics

As a multi-level concept, gender politics involves many social, cultural, political and legal fields, and its definition and understanding vary by time and place. Gender politics usually involves the development and evolution of gender roles, gender rights, gender standards, and social norms related to gender.

The importance of gender politics is that it is directly related to social fairness and justice. Gender inequality is a kind of social injustice, which limits the freedom and equal rights of individuals, and also hinders the overall development of the society. One of the concerns of gender politics is the roots and mechanisms of gender discrimination, which helps to reveal

why women are often treated unequally in all areas of society. Gender politics also involves the policy and legal framework of gender equality, and social change in promoting gender equality. The importance of gender politics is that it helps to eliminate gender inequality and push society towards a more just and equal direction (Liu Shuangxi, 2023).

## *2.2 The Relationship Between Power Structure and Gender Equality*

The power structure involves the distribution, control and exercise of power in the society. There is a close relationship between gender equality and the power structure, which determines who can participate in decision-making, mastering resources, and shaping social norms (Zhou Qian, 2023). In many societies, power structures are often biased towards men, leading to the existence of gender inequality.

On the one hand, gender inequality is caused by gender bias and discrimination in the power structure. Men often dominate the political, economic, and social domains, and they have more power in making policies, allocating resources, and defining social norms. This power structure makes women often disadvantaged, restricted and discriminated against. On the other hand, gender inequality can also affect the formation and maintenance of the power structure. Gender bias and stereotypes may cause women to struggle with entering top leadership positions or participating in political decisions, thus continuing to maintain the existing power structure. This cyclical effect makes gender equality even more difficult.

## *2.3 International Gender Politics and Power Structure Trends*

At the international level, trends in gender politics and power structure differ between countries and regions. However, there have been some positive trends globally designed to promote gender equality and change the power structure. International organizations and social movements have played an active role in promoting gender equality. The United Nations and other international organizations have developed a series of gender equality policies and legal frameworks to encourage countries to take measures to combat gender inequality. At the same time, the Women's Rights Movement and the Gender Equality Movement have

spawned important changes around the world, driving changes in gender politics and power structure through advocacy and protest. Some countries have taken steps to increase women's involvement in the political and commercial areas to change the power structure. For example, some countries have implemented gender quotas to ensure that women gain more representation in government and business (Wang Yeping, 2022). These policies and practices help to break with traditional power structures and promote gender equality. However, despite positive trends, changes in gender politics and power structure remain challenges. Gender inequality is entrenched, and social change takes time and sustained effort. At the same time, the problems of gender politics and power structure under different cultural and social backgrounds are also diverse, and the solutions need to be tailored to local conditions.

## **3. Gender Equality and Institutional Barriers**

### *3.1 The Theoretical Framework of Gender Equality*

Gender equality is an important social goal, but achieving it requires the establishment of a solid theoretical framework. Gender equality theory involves a deep understanding of gender, gender roles, and gender inequality. At the theoretical level, gender equality usually emphasizes the following key aspects: First, the theory of gender equality emphasizes that gender is socially constructed, not just biodetermined (Yu Qingwen, 2022). This perspective challenges traditional gender stereotypes and roles, highlighting how society assigns different expectations and responsibilities to different genders. Secondly, the gender equality theory focuses on the root causes of gender inequality. This includes factors such as gender discrimination, power inequality, cultural traditions, and social norms. The theoretical framework seeks to identify and address these issues to achieve gender equality. Gender equality theory emphasizes that gender equality is not only about women's rights, but also about men's rights. It emphasizes that both men and women should be free to choose their own lifestyles, not constrained by stereotypes and social pressures. Gender equality theory considers the concept of multiple sex, including transgender, gender non-duality, and gender pluralism. This contributes to understanding inequality and discrimination in multigender societies.

### 3.2 Concept and Classification of Institutional Barriers

Institutional barriers refer to the structural problems in the system or system, leading to inequality and unfairness. In the context of gender equality, institutional barriers refer to institutional factors or rules that hinder the realization of gender equality. Institutional barriers can cover the political, economic, cultural, and social domains. Political institutional barriers include the legal framework and political system of gender inequality. This may include legal discrimination, electoral system unfairness, and gender bias in government policy. Political institutional barriers directly affect women's participation and power distribution in the political field. Economic institutional barriers involve the economic structure and opportunities of gender inequality. This includes the gender wage gap, occupational gender division, and women's absence in economic decision-making. Economic and institutional barriers affect women's status in the workplace and in their economic life. Cultural institutional barriers are related to socio-cultural concepts and norms that may have reinforced gender inequality. Stereotyping, gender stereotypes, social pressure all belong to the category of cultural institutional barriers. Social institutional barriers include gender bias in social services and support systems, such as marriage and family policies, treatment mechanisms for gender violence, etc. Social institutional barriers can affect women's health, safety, and social integration (Zhang Xiaobao, 2020).

### 3.3 The Association of Gender Politics and Institutional Barriers

There is a profound link between gender politics and institutional barriers. Gender politics is one of the important factors that influence and shape institutional barriers, but also a result of institutional barriers (Niu Tianxiu, 2014).

First, gender politics can promote or hinder the change in institutional barriers. Government policies, legal framework and political decision-making are crucial to the existence and elimination of institutional barriers. The attitudes and behaviors of gender political decision-makers can directly affect the persistence or improvement of institutional barriers. Second, institutional barriers can influence the realization of gender politics. If

institutional barriers exist, women are limited in political participation, decision-making, and resource allocation, which will hinder the realization of gender equality. Institutional barriers can be barriers to gender political reform and require targeted policies to address them. The interaction between gender politics and institutional barriers is complex and requires in-depth research and policy intervention. Gender political decision makers need to consider the existence of institutional barriers and take steps to eliminate them to achieve the goal of gender equality.

## 4. Law and Gender Politics

### 4.1 Legal System and Gender Equality

The legal system plays a vital role in shaping and upholding gender equality. Laws provide the framework for society to regulate behavior that can be used to promote or hinder gender equality. The legal system defines the legal rights and obligations of gender equality. This includes anti-gender discrimination laws, marriage laws, labor laws, etc., which stipulate the legal responsibilities of individuals and institutions on gender equality issues. The explicit language of the law can provide strong support for gender equality and ensure that individuals are treated equally. Legal system shapes the social and cultural concept. The existence and enforcement of the law can convey social information and influence people's values and behavior. For example, protecting gender equality by creating laws could help change society's perceptions of gender roles and stereotypes. However, the legal system itself may also have a gender bias. Some laws may discriminate against a specific gender, or fail to effectively maintain gender equality due to poor enforcement. This makes legal reform and implementation crucial.

### 4.2 The Impact of Legal Reform on Gender Politics

Legal reform is one of the key factors in achieving gender equality. By reforming the law, society can eliminate gender discrimination, remedy gender inequality, and promote the realization of gender equality. Here are a few key aspects of the impact of legal reform on gender politics: First, legal reform can eliminate gender discrimination. By repealing or modifying gender exist laws, society can ensure that men and women are treated equally before the law. This could include reforming employment laws to eliminate the gender wage

gap, or reforming family laws to promote equal distribution of family responsibilities. Secondly, legal reform can increase women's political and social participation. Laws can promote broader participation in the political field through developing a gender-equal electoral system, encouraging women to participate in politics, and providing political support. This helps to change the power structure and achieve gender equality. In addition, legal reform could also improve the treatment of gender-related violence and unfair treatment. For example, stricter laws and legal procedures for gender violence could provide more protection and support for the victims, while punishing the perpetrators (Ni Ping, 2019).

#### *4.3 Sexist Discrimination in the Enforcement of the Law*

Despite the framework of legal protection of gender equality, the problem of gender discrimination remains in practical implementation. These problems may stem from the attitudes of law enforcers, the influence of social-cultural concepts, and the inadequacy of the legal system. Law enforcers may be gender-biased. Legal practitioners such as police, judges, and prosecutors may lack sensitivity to gender inequality or be blind to gender discrimination. This may lead to unjust decisions and unfair legal treatment; social-cultural ideas may have an impact on legal enforcement. The existence of gender stereotypes and stereotypes in society may lead to the neglect of gender equality issues by law enforcers. For example, in sexual assault cases, the victim may face social blame and the offender may be sentenced lightly; the legal system itself may be flawed, making gender discrimination more likely. The complexity of the legal process, unequal access to judicial resources and the lack of appropriate gender education and training may all lead to problems of gender discrimination.

### **5. Political System and Gender Equality**

#### *5.1 Political Leadership and Gender Equality*

Political leadership plays a crucial role in shaping and promoting gender equality. The attitudes, policy decisions and actions of political leaders can directly influence society's attitudes towards gender equality and actual progress. When political leaders themselves actively support gender equality and embody it in their daily behavior, they can be role models

for society and encourage others to take similar actions. This includes gender equality rhetoric, gestures and policy support from political leaders and the right to create laws and policies to combat gender discrimination, increase women's participation in political and economic fields, and improve gender-related social services. This includes policies to create anti-gender discrimination laws, an electoral system that promotes gender equality, and support women's employment (Li Si, 2016). Political leadership can also influence public awareness through education and advocacy advocating for gender equality. They can use speeches, social media, and other channels to convey the importance of gender equality and promote a wider social focus on gender issues.

#### *5.2 Political Participation and Gender Political Rights*

Political participation is an important component of gender equality, and the political system should ensure that both men and women have equal opportunities to participate in the political process. First, the right to vote and the right to be elected are the basis of gender political rights. The political system should guarantee equal suffrage for both men and women, meaning that every citizen has the right to vote for the candidates as they see fit. At the same time, the political system should also encourage women to be active in their campaigns, ensuring that they have the opportunity to hold public positions. Second, the political system should support the representation of women in the government and political institutions. This includes the establishment of gender equality electoral systems, such as gender quota systems, to ensure greater representation of women in political decision-making. This helps to reflect social diversity and avoid decision concentration in gender-specific populations. The political system should also provide equal opportunities and resources for political participation, ensuring that women can participate in political movements, political party activities and government positions. This may include the provision of gender-equal political training and support to help women build up their political leadership skills.

#### *5.3 Gender Factors in Political Decision-Making*

The gender factor in political decision-making means that the importance of gender equality



should be considered when making policies and laws. The gender sensitivity of political decision-making is crucial to ensure that policies do not further exacerbate gender inequality. Political decision-makers should conduct a gender analysis assessing the different effects that policy may have on men and women. This includes factors such as considering the gender wage gap, gender employment gap, and gender-related demand for social services. Through gender analysis, policy makers can predict the gender impact of policy and take measures to eliminate inequality; political decisions should actively promote the policy objectives of gender equality. The government should develop and implement policies aimed at promoting gender equality, including anti-gender discrimination laws, child care policies, family support measures, etc. This helps to close the gender gap and improve women in the political and social sphere (Ao Xinglin, 2015).

Gender in political decision making also includes the importance of considering gender in crisis management and emergency situations. The government should ensure that emergency measures and relief activities do not adversely affect gender equality and meet the particular needs of women. Political systems play a key role in gender equality, and political leaders, political participation and gender-sensitive policy making are all key factors in achieving gender equality. Both gender political rights and gender considerations contribute to building a more equitable and equal society.

## **6. The Influence of Cultural and Social Factors**

### *6.1 Cultural Shaping of Gender Politics*

Culture plays a vital role in shaping gender politics. Culture includes not only art, values and traditions, but also social norms and behavioral patterns, which can influence the perception and practice of gender equality. Culture can define gender roles and expectations. Different cultures have different expectations and roles for men and women, which may lead to gender inequality. Some cultures may emphasize male dominance, while others may be more equal and inclusive; culture can influence the ideas and advocacy of gender politics. Some cultures may encourage gender equality and the spread of women's rights, while others may hold conservative gender attitudes that limit women's freedom and rights; cultures

can also communicate gender politics through media, literature and the arts. This can include gender portrayal of characters in film and television works, sexist lyrics in music, and gender themes in literature. These forms of cultural expression can shape the public perception and attitude towards gender politics.

### *6.2 Social Pressure and Gender Discrimination*

Social stress and gender discrimination are common problems in gender politics, and they can directly or indirectly affect gender equality among individuals and society. Social stress can limit individual choices and behavior. Social expectations of gender roles and behaviors may cause individuals to feel constrained and be afraid to pursue their own interests and careers. For example, some societies may consider that men should not become nursing, and women should not become engineers, and that gender discrimination is widespread in the workplace and social life. Women may face gender wage gaps, promotion opportunity limitations, and gender-related violence and harassment. This discrimination not only limits women's economic independence, but also negatively affects their mental health. Social stress and gender discrimination may also lead to a cycle of gender inequality. When women feel restricted and discriminated against, they may be reluctant to participate in political, professional or other domains, leading to the maintenance of gender inequality.

### *6.3 Challenges and Opportunities of Cultural and Social Factors*

Cultural and social factors are both challenges and opportunities that have a profound impact on gender politics. The challenge is that changing cultural perceptions and social norms may take time and effort. Culture is deeply rooted, and changing gender stereotypes and discrimination requires education, propaganda and social change. However, cultural and social factors also provide opportunities as they can be shaped and guided. The education system can promote education on gender equality, the media can disseminate equal and inclusive messages, and policy makers can develop laws and policies to combat gender discrimination. These efforts can change cultural and social perceptions of gender politics and promote gender equality. Moreover, cultural diversity can also bring about new ways of thinking about gender politics. Different cultures may have

different gender perceptions and practices, which can provide useful insights into research across gender equality and promote global gender equality efforts (Bi Yali, Li Shuzhuo & Shang Zijuan, 2014).

## **7. Promotion and Challenge of Gender Equality**

### *7.1 Implementation of a Gender-Equality Policy*

The implementation of the gender equality policy is an important step in promoting gender equality, and it can drive change in the social structure at different levels. First, the government plays a key role in developing and implementing gender equality policies. Government can promote gender equality through legislation, regulation, and resource allocation (Su Yue, 2017). For example, policies such as anti-gender discrimination laws, electoral systems supporting gender equality, and the provision of gender equality training can help combat gender inequality. Second, gender equality policies require cross-sectoral cooperation and social engagement. Ngos, the media, educational institutions, and businesses can all play an active role in promoting gender equality. Social movements and advocacy organizations can also drive the gender equality agenda, drawing public attention and action (Wang Hui, 2016).

Implementation of gender equality policies also requires data collection and monitoring to assess policy effectiveness and develop better policies. Governments and organizations should regularly collect data on progress in gender gaps, gender discrimination, and gender equality, and use this data for policy decisions.

### *7.2 The Persistent Phenomenon of Gender Inequality*

Although a series of measures have been taken to promote gender equality, there is still some persistent gender inequality, and the gender wage gap is a significant problem. In many countries, women still pay on average less than men, reflecting gender discrimination in the workplace and gender stereotypes of career choice (Fan Hongxia, 2013). Closing the pay gap requires improving pay equity, providing equal career opportunities, and encouraging women into high-paying industries and positions; gender violence and harassment remain widespread. Women and women are frequently victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and harassment. Society needs tougher legal measures to combat gender violence and

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### *7.3 Strategies to Improve Gender Politics and Power Structure*

#### **7.3.1 Promote Political Quotas**

The political quota system is an effective strategy designed to increase the representation of women in the political domain and power structure. The political quota system can make legal means that a proportion of political positions are held by women (Becchio Giandomenica & Fiorito Luca, 2023). Such a system can include gender quotas for candidates in the electoral system, such as requiring that a certain percentage of candidates must be women. This can effectively increase the representation of women in politics, ensuring that their voices are heard. Governments and political parties can actively promote women in political campaigns and provide support and resources. Political training and funding programs can help female candidates improve their campaigns and overcome the challenges of gender inequality. The government can also encourage political parties to include more female candidates on the shortlist to ensure gender equality.

#### **7.3.2 Gender-Equality in Education and Cultural Change**

Gender equality education and cultural change are another important strategy to achieve the improvement of gender politics and power structure (Daskalova, 2018). First, gender equality education is key, which can change gender stereotypes and reduce gender discrimination through school and social

education. School curricula can include gender equality education that can help students understand the importance of gender equality and encourage respect and inclusion. Second, cultural change is necessary to reduce gender discrimination and inequalities in social cultures. Media, arts and advocacy campaigns can spread positive gender equality messages, challenge stereotypes and encourage society to be more inclusive.

### 7.3.3 Support for Women's Work and Family Life Balance

Governments can develop family support policies, including the provision of flexible work arrangements, nurseries and parenting holidays. These policies can help women better balance their career and family life and reduce their family stress; businesses can also take proactive steps to support women in the workplace. This includes providing equal opportunities for promotion, fair pay, and a family-friendly work environment. With these measures, women can be more easily involved in politics and leadership.

Strategies to improve gender politics and power structure require the joint efforts of government, political parties, educational institutions, media, enterprises, and social organizations. Through political quota systems, gender equality education, cultural change, and measures to support the balance between work and family life, a more equal and inclusive society can increase the representation and influence of women in the political and power structure.

## 8. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study thoroughly examined the intricate dynamics between gender politics, power structures, gender equality, and institutional barriers. It began by defining and highlighting the importance of gender politics, uncovering its complex interplay with power structures, and emphasizing its close connection with institutional barriers. The analysis delved into the impact of legal systems on gender equality, the potential consequences of legal reform on gender politics, and the persisting challenges of gender discrimination in law enforcement. Furthermore, the influence of the political system on gender equality was explored within the context of cultural and social factors. The findings illustrated how gender politics, power structures, and institutional barriers collectively hinder the

achievement of gender equality. Gender politics not only shapes but is also shaped by institutional barriers. The study emphasized the need for a robust theoretical framework for gender equality and highlighted the multifaceted nature of institutional barriers. Cultural and social factors were recognized as crucial determinants in shaping gender politics, serving either as obstacles or opportunities for change. The research provided strategic recommendations to strengthen gender politics and power structures. These recommendations included promoting political quotas for increased female representation, implementing gender equality education, fostering cultural change to challenge stereotypes, and supporting work-life balance for women. Successful implementation of these strategies requires collaborative efforts from governments, political parties, educational institutions, media, businesses, and social organizations to cultivate a more equitable and inclusive society. Such efforts aim to elevate female participation and influence in political and power structures, contributing to the advancement of a fairer and more equitable society.

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