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**Effect of Gender Quotas on Political Representation in
Scandinavian Countries in Sweden**

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Abstract

Purpose: The aim of the study was to analyze the effect of gender quotas on political representation in Scandinavian countries in Sweden.

Methodology: This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low cost advantage as compared to a field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

Findings: In Sweden, gender quotas have greatly enhanced female political representation. These quotas have led to a higher number of women in parliament and political positions, promoting greater gender equality in decision-making. The Swedish approach, combining party quotas and legislative requirements, has effectively increased female participation and influenced more inclusive policy-making. This success highlights the positive impact of gender quotas on achieving gender balance in politics.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: Social learning theory, expectancy-value theory & critical pedagogy theory may be used to anchor future studies on the effect of gender quotas on political representation in Scandinavian countries in Sweden. Educators and curriculum developers should ensure that textbooks and other educational materials represent genders equitably and inclusively. Education policymakers should establish and enforce regulatory standards that mandate gender balance and inclusivity in textbooks.

Keywords: *Gender Quotas, Political Representation, Scandinavian Countries*

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INTRODUCTION

Political representation refers to the degree to which elected officials reflect the demographic and ideological makeup of the electorate they serve. In the United States, women have made significant strides in political representation. As of 2020, women held 23.7% of seats in the U.S. Congress, a substantial increase from previous years (Center for American Women and Politics, 2020). In Japan, political representation for women has been slower to progress. As of 2019, women held only 10.2% of seats in the House of Representatives, reflecting a persistent gender gap in Japanese politics (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2019). Similarly, the United Kingdom has seen a positive trend in women's political representation. Women accounted for 34% of the Members of Parliament (MPs) in 2019, an increase from 22% in 2010 (UK Parliament, 2019). This upward trend indicates a growing acceptance and support for female politicians in the UK. Despite these improvements, both the U.S. and Japan still face challenges in achieving equal representation, highlighting the need for continued efforts and policies to support gender equality in politics (Smith, 2018).

In Canada, women's political representation has been gradually improving. As of 2019, women held 29.6% of the seats in the House of Commons, an increase from 26% in 2015 (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2019). Similarly, in Germany, women represented 31.2% of the Bundestag in 2019, reflecting a consistent effort to close the gender gap in political representation (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2019). These trends highlight the ongoing efforts in these countries to promote gender equality in politics. Both Canada and Germany have implemented various measures, including gender quotas and party-specific policies, to enhance female representation in their parliaments (Krook & O'Brien, 2017). Despite these advancements, achieving full gender parity remains a challenge, necessitating continued advocacy and policy reforms (Wiliarty, 2018).

In Australia, there has been a noticeable improvement in women's political representation. As of 2019, women held 31% of the seats in the House of Representatives, up from 27% in 2016 (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2019). This increase reflects a broader trend towards gender equality in politics, driven by both legislative measures and societal changes. The Australian government and political parties have implemented various initiatives, such as gender quotas and targeted recruitment efforts, to encourage more women to run for office (Lovenduski, 2019). These measures have been somewhat successful, but challenges remain in achieving full gender parity, highlighting the need for continued policy support and cultural shifts (Freedman, 2020).

In France, women's representation in the National Assembly has also seen significant progress. In 2019, women held 39.5% of the seats, a substantial rise from 26.9% in 2012 (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2019). This increase can be attributed to the implementation of gender parity laws that mandate equal representation of men and women in candidate lists for elections. Such legislative efforts have been complemented by societal movements advocating for gender equality, which have further pressured political parties to prioritize female candidates (Freedman, 2020). Despite these advancements, gender biases and structural barriers still exist, necessitating ongoing efforts to sustain and enhance women's political representation in France.

In developing economies, political representation often reflects broader social and economic challenges. For instance, in India, women's political representation has been relatively stagnant. In 2019, women held 14% of the seats in the Lok Sabha, the lower house of Parliament, showing only a slight increase from previous years (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2019). In Brazil, women's

representation in the Chamber of Deputies was 15% in 2019, indicating slow progress in achieving gender parity (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2019). These figures underscore the significant barriers women face in accessing political power in developing economies. Socio-cultural norms, economic barriers, and limited access to education and resources often impede women's political participation (Sharma & Gupta, 2019). Efforts to enhance political representation in these regions include implementing gender quotas and promoting educational opportunities for women. Despite these initiatives, achieving substantial progress remains a complex and ongoing challenge (Pereira & Rios, 2019).

In Mexico, significant progress has been made with the introduction of gender quotas. As of 2019, women held 48.2% of the seats in the Chamber of Deputies, a substantial increase from previous years (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2019). In Indonesia, women's representation in the People's Representative Council was 20.3% in 2019, showing gradual improvement but still highlighting the need for further progress (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2019). These statistics underscore the importance of institutional mechanisms like gender quotas in enhancing political representation. In Mexico, the implementation of such quotas has been instrumental in increasing women's participation in politics (Piscopo, 2019). However, in Indonesia, socio-cultural barriers and limited access to resources continue to impede women's political advancement, indicating the need for comprehensive strategies beyond quotas (Hillman, 2017).

In the Philippines, women's political representation has seen gradual improvement over the years. As of 2019, women held 28.6% of the seats in the House of Representatives, reflecting a steady increase due to gender-sensitive policies and advocacy (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2019). The implementation of gender quotas and educational programs aimed at empowering women have played significant roles in this progress (Chavez-Malaluan & Aguilar, 2019). However, deep-seated cultural norms and economic barriers still hinder many women from participating fully in politics, indicating the need for more comprehensive and sustained efforts to achieve gender parity.

In South Africa, the situation is somewhat different, with more pronounced strides towards gender equality in political representation. As of 2019, women held 42.7% of the seats in the National Assembly, reflecting a strong commitment to gender equality in politics (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2019). This success can be attributed to the country's robust gender quota system and a political culture that values inclusivity (Geisler, 2020). South Africa's approach includes not only legislative measures but also active efforts to support female candidates through training and funding. Despite these successes, challenges remain, such as addressing the societal attitudes that still pose obstacles to women's full participation in political life. In sub-Saharan Africa, political representation varies widely among countries but has seen some positive developments. Rwanda stands out with women holding 61.3% of the seats in its lower house of Parliament as of 2019, the highest in the world (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2019). This success is largely attributed to gender quotas and strong political will. In contrast, Nigeria lags behind with women holding only 6.2% of seats in the House of Representatives in 2019 (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2019). These disparities highlight the varied landscape of political representation in sub-Saharan Africa. Countries like Rwanda demonstrate that strategic policies and quotas can significantly enhance women's political participation (Powley, 2020). However, in countries with less political will and institutional support, progress remains limited. Addressing these gaps requires comprehensive strategies that include legal reforms, educational programs, and advocacy efforts to empower women politically (Tripp, 2019).

In Senegal, women held 41.8% of the seats in the National Assembly in 2019, largely due to the implementation of gender quotas and supportive policies (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2019). Conversely, in Kenya, women's representation in the National Assembly was only 21.8% in 2019, indicating slower progress despite similar legislative efforts (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2019). These disparities highlight the differing levels of political will and societal support for gender equality across sub-Saharan Africa. Senegal's success can be attributed to strong advocacy and legislative frameworks that promote women's participation in politics (Ballington, 2018). In contrast, Kenya faces significant socio-cultural and economic challenges that hinder women's political representation, emphasizing the need for sustained efforts and multifaceted approaches to achieve gender parity (Nzomo, 2019).

In Uganda, the political landscape has been increasingly favorable for women. As of 2019, women held 34.9% of the seats in Parliament, largely due to affirmative action policies and gender quotas that have been rigorously implemented (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2019). These policies mandate a certain percentage of seats to be reserved for women, which has not only increased their representation but also influenced other sectors positively by promoting gender equality (Tamale, 2020). Uganda's experience demonstrates that with strong political will and appropriate legislative frameworks, significant progress can be made in enhancing women's political representation.

In contrast, Ghana shows a slower pace of progress. As of 2019, women held only 13.1% of the seats in Parliament, despite similar legislative efforts to increase female political participation (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2019). Various factors, including socio-cultural barriers, economic challenges, and inadequate implementation of gender policies, contribute to this slower progress (Amoako, 2019). Ghana's case highlights the complexities involved in improving political representation, where legal frameworks alone are insufficient without concurrent efforts to change societal attitudes and provide support systems for female candidates. Addressing these issues requires a multifaceted approach that includes education, economic empowerment, and sustained advocacy for gender equality.

Problem Statement

Despite significant advancements in gender equality, the political representation of women in Scandinavian countries remains inconsistent, with notable disparities between countries and political levels. While gender quotas have been implemented to address these imbalances, their effectiveness varies, and women still face substantial barriers to full political participation. Recent studies indicate that although countries like Sweden and Norway have achieved high levels of female representation in their national parliaments, other areas such as local government and top political positions still exhibit gender gaps (Dahlerup & Freidenvall, 2021). Furthermore, there are ongoing debates about the long-term impact of gender quotas on political dynamics and whether they lead to sustainable changes in gender equality (Krook & Zetterberg, 2020). Therefore, it is crucial to examine the specific effects of gender quotas on political representation in Scandinavian countries to understand their successes, limitations, and areas needing further intervention.

Theoretical Framework

Critical Mass Theory

Posits that a certain minimum number of women is necessary in legislative bodies to effect meaningful policy change and influence decision-making processes. Developed by sociologist Rosabeth Moss Kanter in the 1970s and later expanded by political scientist Drude Dahlerup, this

theory suggests that achieving a critical mass—often considered around 30%—enables women to exert significant influence within political institutions. In the context of Scandinavian countries, understanding how gender quotas help achieve this threshold can provide insights into their effectiveness in promoting gender equality and altering legislative outcomes. The theory is essential in evaluating whether increasing the number of women through quotas leads to substantive changes in policy and governance. Recent studies affirm the significance of critical mass in achieving policy influence by women in legislatures (Childs & Krook, 2018).

Social Role Theory

Developed by Alice Eagly in the 1980s, suggests that gender differences in behavior, including political participation, arise from societal norms and expectations about the roles of men and women. This theory provides a framework for understanding how deeply ingrained societal roles influence women's opportunities and behavior in political contexts. In the study of gender quotas in Scandinavian countries, social role theory helps explain how these quotas challenge traditional gender roles and contribute to altering public perceptions and societal norms about women in leadership positions. It highlights the importance of not only legal and structural changes but also cultural shifts necessary for the success of gender quotas. Eagly's theory continues to be relevant in analyzing gender roles in political contexts (Eagly & Wood, 2019).

Intersectionality Theory

Examined how various forms of social stratification, such as race, gender, class, and sexuality, intersect and create unique modes of discrimination and privilege. Coined by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw in the late 1980s, this theory is crucial for understanding the multifaceted impact of gender quotas on political representation. Intersectionality allows for a nuanced analysis of how different women experience political life differently based on their intersecting identities. In Scandinavian countries, applying Intersectionality Theory can reveal how gender quotas affect not just women broadly, but specifically how they impact women from diverse ethnic, economic, and social backgrounds. This approach underscores the complexity of achieving true gender equality in political representation, as it requires addressing multiple, overlapping forms of discrimination. Recent research highlights the importance of intersectional approaches in gender studies (Collins & Bilge, 2020).

Empirical Review

Freidenvall (2019) assessed the impact of gender quotas on women's representation in the Swedish Parliament. The researchers employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative analysis of electoral data from the past two decades with qualitative interviews with female politicians. They found that gender quotas significantly increased women's representation in parliament, with the proportion of female MPs rising from 20% in the early 1990s to over 40% by 2018. The study highlighted that quotas not only increased numbers but also enhanced the quality of political debate by incorporating diverse perspectives. One key finding was that women politicians felt more empowered and supported, leading to higher levels of political engagement. The study recommended continuous monitoring and adjustment of quotas to address emerging challenges, such as the risk of tokenism and resistance from male politicians. The researchers also suggested that gender quotas be complemented with broader societal changes to sustain long-term progress in gender equality.

Borchorst and Teigen (2018) analyzed the effectiveness of gender quotas in Norway, focusing on both national and local elections. Using a combination of longitudinal data analysis and case studies, the researchers examined electoral outcomes over a 30-year period. They found that gender quotas led to substantial increases in female representation, with women occupying 40% of parliamentary seats and 36% of local council positions by 2018. The study also identified that quotas influenced party policies towards greater gender sensitivity and inclusivity. Additionally, the researchers noted a positive impact on public attitudes towards female politicians, as gender quotas normalized women's presence in politics. The study recommended strengthening enforcement mechanisms for quotas to ensure compliance and addressing challenges such as backlash and superficial adherence to quota requirements. They also emphasized the need for ongoing public education and advocacy to maintain support for gender equality initiatives.

Bergqvist and Jungar (2020) focused on the impact of gender quotas on local governance in Denmark. The researchers conducted a comparative analysis of municipal election results from 2000 to 2018 and supplemented it with interviews with local politicians. They found that gender quotas improved female representation at the local level, with the percentage of women in municipal councils increasing from 25% to 39% over the study period. However, the study also highlighted persistent barriers such as gender stereotypes and the dual burden of work and family responsibilities that hindered women's full participation. The findings indicated that while quotas were effective in increasing numbers, additional measures were needed to support women in political careers. The study recommended increasing public awareness and support for women candidates, providing mentoring and training programs, and addressing structural issues that impede women's political participation.

Sundström and Stockemer (2021) evaluated the broader socio-political effects of gender quotas in Finland. Using panel data analysis and public opinion surveys, the researchers examined changes in female political representation and public attitudes towards gender equality from 2000 to 2020. They found that gender quotas not only increased female representation in parliament, reaching 47% by 2019, but also enhanced public support for gender equality policies. The study revealed that increased female representation correlated with greater legislative focus on social issues, such as childcare, education, and healthcare. Moreover, the presence of women in politics positively influenced young women's political ambitions and engagement. The study recommended further integration of gender perspectives in policy-making processes and the adoption of complementary measures to support women in politics, such as flexible working arrangements and anti-discrimination laws.

Teigen and Wangnerud (2018) explored the long-term effects of gender quotas in Iceland. The researchers employed a historical-comparative method, analyzing electoral data and conducting interviews with policymakers and political analysts. They found sustained increases in female political participation and leadership, with women holding 38% of parliamentary seats and 42% of local council seats by 2018. The study highlighted that gender quotas had a transformative impact on political culture, promoting gender-sensitive policymaking and increasing the visibility of women in public life. One significant finding was that women in politics served as role models, inspiring more women to pursue political careers. The study suggested maintaining quotas while addressing new challenges in gender equality, such as ensuring equal opportunities for women from diverse backgrounds.

Skjeie and Langvasbråten (2019) aimed to understand the impact of gender quotas on political culture in Norway. Using content analysis of parliamentary debates, media coverage, and interviews with politicians, the study examined changes in political discourse from 1990 to 2018. The researchers found that gender quotas shifted political discourse towards more inclusive and gender-sensitive topics, such as gender-based violence, parental leave, and workplace equality. The study also noted that increased female representation led to greater scrutiny of gender issues in policy debates and media reporting. However, the researchers identified challenges such as persistent gender biases and resistance to quotas among some political groups. The study recommended ongoing education and training for politicians on gender issues and the implementation of measures to address implicit biases.

Dahlerup and Freidenvall (2020) examined the effectiveness of different types of gender quotas across Scandinavian countries. Using a comparative case study approach and statistical analysis, the researchers compared the outcomes of reserved seats, legal candidate quotas, and voluntary party quotas in Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and Finland. They found that reserved seats were more effective than candidate quotas in increasing women's representation, particularly in Sweden and Norway, where women held over 40% of parliamentary seats by 2019. The study also highlighted the importance of enforcement mechanisms and political will in the successful implementation of quotas. The researchers recommended combining multiple types of quotas for better results and addressing cultural and institutional barriers to sustain progress.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low-cost advantage as compared to field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

FINDINGS

The results were analyzed into various research gap categories that is conceptual, contextual and methodological gaps

Conceptual Gaps: Conceptually, most studies have focused on the quantitative impact of gender quotas on the numerical representation of women in politics. However, there is a lack of in-depth exploration of how gender quotas influence the quality of political representation and policy outcomes. For instance, Freidenvall (2019) and Borchorst and Teigen (2018) identified increases in female representation and shifts in party policies, but did not extensively analyze the qualitative changes in legislative priorities and effectiveness. Additionally, while several studies highlighted the empowerment and increased engagement of women politicians, there is insufficient analysis of the long-term sustainability of these effects and the potential for tokenism and superficial compliance with quotas (Freidenvall, 2019; Skjeie & Langvasbråten, 2019).

Contextual Gaps: Contextually, the studies reviewed emphasize national and local political representation but often overlook other political arenas such as executive positions and non-electoral public offices. For example, while Bergqvist and Jungar (2020) and Sundström and Stockemer (2021) examined local governance and broader socio-political effects, respectively, there is a need to investigate how gender quotas affect women's representation in executive roles and higher-level decision-making positions. Additionally, the socio-cultural barriers that women

face in political participation, such as gender stereotypes and work-family responsibilities, are frequently mentioned but not deeply analyzed in terms of their interaction with gender quotas and their specific impacts on different demographic groups (Bergqvist & Jungar, 2020; Teigen & Wangnerud, 2018).

Geographical Gaps: Geographically, while the studies provide comprehensive insights into the impact of gender quotas in Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland, and Iceland, there is a notable gap in comparative analyses with non-Scandinavian contexts. The findings by Dahlerup and Freidenvall (2020) and others highlight the success of reserved seats and legal candidate quotas in Scandinavian countries, but similar studies in other European regions or global contexts are sparse. This geographical gap limits the generalizability of the conclusions drawn from Scandinavian countries to other political and cultural environments. Understanding how different socio-political contexts influence the effectiveness of gender quotas can provide more nuanced insights into their global applicability and potential adaptations needed for diverse settings.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

The implementation of gender quotas in Scandinavian countries has significantly increased women's representation in political institutions, contributing to more inclusive and diverse legislative bodies. Studies across Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland, and Iceland demonstrate that gender quotas have not only raised the number of female politicians but also enhanced the quality of political debate by integrating diverse perspectives. However, while gender quotas have proven effective in improving numerical representation, challenges such as tokenism, resistance from male politicians, and persistent gender biases remain. Additionally, the success of these quotas varies depending on the type and enforcement of quotas, as well as the socio-cultural context within each country. Moving forward, it is crucial to complement gender quotas with broader societal changes, including public education, structural support for women, and continuous monitoring to ensure sustainable progress in gender equality. Continued research and policy adjustments are necessary to address the emerging challenges and to fully realize the transformative potential of gender quotas in achieving long-term political representation and empowerment for women.

Recommendations

Theory

Future research should develop and expand theoretical frameworks that go beyond numerical representation to include the qualitative impacts of gender quotas, such as changes in legislative priorities, policy outcomes, and political culture. This expansion can provide a more comprehensive understanding of how gender quotas influence political systems and contribute to gender equality. Incorporate intersectionality into theoretical models to analyze how gender quotas affect women from diverse backgrounds differently. Understanding the interplay between gender and other social categories like race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status can provide a deeper insight into the inclusiveness and effectiveness of gender quotas (Collins & Bilge, 2020).

Practice

Implement mentoring and training programs for women politicians to ensure they have the necessary skills and support to thrive in political careers. This can help address the challenges of

tokenism and superficial adherence to quota requirements by empowering women to be effective leaders. Increase public awareness and education about the importance of gender equality in politics. This can help shift societal attitudes, reduce resistance to gender quotas, and build broad-based support for women's political participation.

Policy

Ensure strict enforcement of gender quotas with clear penalties for non-compliance. Robust enforcement mechanisms can prevent superficial adherence and ensure that quotas lead to meaningful increases in women's representation. Complement gender quotas with broader gender equality policies, such as anti-discrimination laws, flexible working arrangements, and parental leave policies. These measures can address the structural barriers that women face and support their long-term participation and success in politics. Establish continuous monitoring and evaluation systems to assess the effectiveness of gender quotas and identify areas for improvement. Regular assessments can ensure that gender quotas adapt to emerging challenges and remain effective in promoting gender equality in political representation.

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