

Myth and Fallacy: The Alternative Model of Women's Political Empowerment

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Abstract:

Despite the rise of various women in the political arena, myths and fallacies about women's political empowerment still exist. This study aimed to assess women's political empowerment status and build an alternative model of women's political empowerment. It employed a descriptive phenomenology research design where the data from the interviews with the women local leaders in Region XI, Philippines, were analyzed using thematic analysis. The results show two essential stages of being an empowered woman in the Philippine political arena. The first stage is women's political participation with two significant elements, namely, (1) leaders capabilities composed of political values, personality, direction and knowledge, and (2) sources of powers entail the women's personality characteristics, financial conditions, and organizational connections. The second stage is women's political empowerment, with two significant elements - access to information and budget resources. However, even if they are already politically empowered women, they still act as the agents of their politically inclined families. Thus, women's political empowerment denotes women's representation in the legislative and executive posts not by number but according to their purpose, influence, competencies, political values, and presence of powers. The results suggest that the alternative model of women's political empowerment will champion issues concerning women.

Keywords: women's political empowerment, myth, gender equality, fallacy, alternative model

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The participation of women groups and individuals in many professions around the world is in progress, but politics is not one of them. Women are not involved relatively in any political activities like policymaking. However, the majority understood that there is a woman's political empowerment because they saw the rise of various women in the political arena and even in other fields. Tundi (2013) emphasized that politics is practically everywhere a male-oriented, male-dominated enterprise, but this claimed remains a myth nor a fallacy.

The world population constitutes almost half of the women but is discriminated against in various spheres of life and more subjected to problems in many aspects because of gendered social structure (Daraz, 2012; Ahmad, W., Ibrahim, and Naz, A., 2012). Women continue to empower and dominate the political arena with the common understanding that women's political empowerment is the autonomy of women to cast their vote based on their consent, contest election, political participation, authority, political expression, political demonstration, power politics, decision making and implementation regarding their actions, needs and priorities (Ahmad et al., 2012). However, empowering women in the political aspects is not a goal in itself, but it is instrumental in stimulating society.

To shed some light on women's right to political participation, let us review the roots. The root of the involvement of women traced back to the 19th-century reform movement. Still, it is only during the British era in the early 20th-century, the crusade for the political participation of women became a significant part of the evolution of Indian women. The women did not share an equal position with men and that their job was subordinate to men. From the Indian perspective, there are three types of women empowerment: political, social, and financial (Das, 2012). While in Bangladesh, women who attempt to engage in community decision-making face considerable discrimination that tended to wane over time as they demonstrated their 'ability to speak' and to contribute to community life. Their ability to pursue this kind of work despite this opposition is commonly related to their political connections, family status, level of education, and involvement in NGO networks (O'Neil and Domingo, 2016).

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In the Philippines, it was from the day the Bill of Rights during the American colonial period which allowed the people to exercise the freedom of speech, association, and assembly for redress of grievances, women's political participation has been quite visible. When women were granted the right of suffrage in 1935 which was the gain made by the demonstrations and lobbies by the women suffragettes, some women did not just stop at voting and campaign participation but also launched their candidacies for elective offices despite the odds that they had to face (Aguilar, 1993). Women politicians have come a long way since then. The world has seen this through the rise in power of two women as Presidents of the country. Women's concerns are positioned at the heart of the government agenda with the integration of the gender equality principle in the 1987 Philippine Constitution (Philippine Commission on Women, 2009). There is still a high gender imbalance in the political participation of women. Women are faced with numerous obstacles to partake in a more significant role in politics and decision-making. These obstacles include gender stereotyping, multiple burdens, and lack of political education and support from political parties. Because the Philippines is mainly a patriarchal society, politics is still a man's world.

Based on the report of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (2016), the Philippines ranks 47th out of 193 countries in terms of the number of female Members of Parliament (MPs), with only 87 (29.8%) women seated out of 292 seats in the lower house, while there are 6 (25%), women out of 24-seats which are in the Upper House. Given the international rankings, the country continues to monitor the status of women and implements more laws and programs to empower them. While in Region XI, according to the master list report of the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), an average of 24% of women constituted in the executive and legislation post from 2010 to 2019 elections. In the recent polls conducted in 2019, only 20% or 92 women out of 452 seats in the executive and legislative posts in the Provincial and City/Municipal levels. Despite the country's initiatives on Gender and Development, the gaps in women's representation in politics are still one of the Philippine social contemporary developmental issues.

While the Filipino women's role in politics gives the impression that the nature of their political participation has achieved a lot, this study has gone on a more realistic inquiry about the status of women's empowerment in the political arena, specifically in the Local Government Units (LGUs) in Region XI, Philippines. This study also aimed to assess the women's political leaders about their political participation, capabilities, access to resources, and sources of power taking off from the myth and fallacy perspectives—lastly, the researcher designed to build an alternative model of women's political empowerment.

1.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The principal purpose of this study is to build an alternative model of women's political empowerment. It also provides an understanding of how women leaders lead and fight their rights in the political arena to achieve women's political empowerment. The researcher also determined the present situations of women's political empowerment as to myth and fallacy perspectives.

1.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The participation of women in politics requires decision-making that is essential in the advancement of the real and influential democratic political culture that contributes achievement of sustainable development and most importantly to good governance conditions (United Nations Women, 2014). There are various definitions of women's empowerment based on its context. In this study, the researcher opted to focus on the political aspect. Women's political empowerment refers to the state domain, in which a person is a civic actor (World bank, 2007); creating the conditions for women to be able to make choices; participation and decision making at formal institutions; the process of increasing capacity for women, leading to greater choice, agency, and participation in societal decision-making (Wang & Ligberg, 2017).

The researcher defines women's political empowerment as a representation of women in the legislative and executive posts not by numbers but according to their purpose, influence, competencies, political values, and presence of powers.

The concept of this study focuses on the status of women's political empowerment that covers the three aspects, namely: (1) women participation; (2) women capabilities and social structure; and (3) access to resources. The three parts serve as the elements of women's political empowerment. At the same time, the sources of power act as the backbone of the women leaders in governance. Further, this study is anchored to Congruity Theory that explains the role of women in leadership, and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal number 5 on achieving gender equality and empower all women and girls, specifically on empowering women including in the political arena to help improve the economic growth and development.

The researcher formulated the following assumptions:

1. Women political empowerment is not based on an equal number of men and women;
2. Women political leaders from popular, rich, and educated families have the potential to promote women political empowerment;
3. Women political leaders have less access to resources than men political leaders; and
4. Sources of power promote women's political empowerment.

1.4 METHODOLOGY

Research design. This study employed a descriptive phenomenological research design. Giorgi (2009) and Moustakas (1994) defined phenomenological research as a method of inquiry coming from philosophy and psychology in which the researcher describes the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon as expressed by participants. This description culminates in the essence of the experiences for several individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon. This design has strong philosophical underpinnings and typically involves conducting interviews. This kind of study focuses on the meaning of everyday life, like the women's political experiences in fighting for women's political empowerment in the local political arena, specifically in Region XI. The tools of this method are interviews both Face-to-Face Interview (F2F) and Focus Group Interview (FGI). In conducting a qualitative study, it is also necessary to perform or incorporate a particular exit procedure into the research design. Typically, validity is ascertained by taking the write-up of the results back to the research participants for review.

Role of the Researcher. The goal and function of the researcher are to get into the experience of the participants and see it as they see it. In this sense, the researcher and the research participants are co-researchers. It is useful to think of the researcher as a sort of medium or facilitator in the process (Vanderstoep and Johnston, 2009).

Sources of Data. One of the most popular research tools is interviewing. The information obtained for this study consisted of primary data from the responses of the participants during the interviews, both F2F and FGI. Guided interview was used for this study. A guided interview is a compromise technique that has some of the benefits of both informal and structured interviews. The guided interview follows an outline of questions, but not all of the prescribed probes, transitions, and follow-ups are established before the interview. The interviewer/researcher is given the freedom to deviate from the interview questions as needed to pursue serendipitous findings and fruitful directions. The first part of the interview is getting the background information of the respondent includes demographics (age, marital status, education level, socio-economic status), pertinent personal history, and factual information questions. The second part of the interview focuses on the meaning, interpretation, perceptions, and experiences of the respondents about women's political participation, capabilities, social structures, access to resources, and sources of power. Further, the researcher asked follow-up questions depending on their responses. The secondary data were gathered from the available documents of women's political empowerment, books, and relevant internet sites. Other related studies and existing theories were also utilized in deepening the discussion of the research.

Participants of the Study. This study used the network sampling technique in generating the list of qualified participants to obtain information about women's political empowerment. Network sampling is considered an alternative to the previous ways of estimating rare populations on which the sampling frame is almost impossible to gather.

The participants of this study were determined using the following criteria:

1. Political women leaders in the municipality, city, or provincial level (present or past) within Region XI;
2. Women leaders in the executive or legislative posts;
3. Age 18 and above (Based on the age qualifications to run for Mayor, Vice-Mayor, Councilors, Board Members, Vice-governor, and Governor); and
4. Filipino citizen.

In the Key Informant Interview (KII), 11 participants were composed of board members, councilors, and mayors in Region XI. Further, there were three (3) board members from Davao de Oro who participated during the conduct of the Focus Group Interview. In terms of the participants' educational attainment, four (4) finished their Bachelor of Laws, six (6) with Master's Degree, and four (4) finished their college degrees.

Data Analysis Procedures. The data analysis and interpretation of this study are patterned from the proposed design of John Creswell (2014). *Step 1 - Organize and prepare the data for analysis. Step 2 - Read or look at all the data. Step 3 - Start coding all of the data.*

Step 4 - Use the coding process to generate a description of the setting or people as well as categories or themes for analysis. Step 5 - Advance how the description and themes will be represented in the qualitative narrative. Step 6 - A final step in data analysis involves interpreting qualitative research of the findings or results.

Ethical Considerations of the Study. The researcher anticipated the ethical issues that may arise during the conduct of this study. Before the study, the researcher sought the approval of individuals (women political leaders) who are the participants of the study by writing a letter that specifies the problem of the study, the purpose, the extent of time, the potential impact, and the outcomes of the research. During data gathering, the researcher did not force the participants to participate in the study. The researcher awaited the go signal of the confirmed participants. Before the formal interview, the researcher informed the participants that they are actively participating in a research study about women's political empowerment. Interviewing in qualitative research is increasingly being seen as a moral inquiry. Interviews should begin from the premise that a power imbalance exists between the data collector and the participants (Creswell, 2014). The researcher also anticipated the possibility of harmful, intimate information being disclosed during the data collection process. In analyzing the data, the researcher reported the full range of findings, including findings that maybe contrary to the themes. As Creswell (2014) cited, the hallmark of good qualitative research is the report of the diversity of perspectives about the topic.

1.5 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Stage 1. Women's Political Participation. Every human being in this world has the right to participate in decisions that define his or her life. It is considered the foundation of the ideal of equal participation in decision-making among women and men. However, male dominance and gender stereotypes are identified as significant barriers that hinder women from accessing political leadership (Maloiy, Jonck, & Goujon, 2016). As cited in Chafetz and Dwork in (1986), leadership is predominantly a male prerogative in corporate, political, military, and other sectors of society. Despite these political situations, women's political participation believes to be an act of empowering women. Thus, this study proves that *Politics is a male-oriented enterprise* is a **myth**.

Role 1. Women's political involvement. This study helped justified that it is indeed a myth that *politics is a male-oriented enterprise* because the participants claimed that women could be a politician or they called it "Women's Political Involvement". Women are more active in public life compared to previous situations. Globally, more women have access to any positions of authority than they did 30 years ago – from the judiciary to parliament, from professional associations to the boardroom (O'Neil & Domingo, 2015). This information is correct as the participants believed that women are already engaged in politics, of which they are part. Aside from women are educated, they also slowly dominated the world of politics regardless of their gender. However, it is noticed that economic reason is one of the reasons why only a few women embraced politics. Despite the claim that women can lead the government, it is still evident that the number of women in the legislative and executive posts is far from the numbers of men based on the data of the Department of Interior and the Local Government (DILG) on the executive and legislative positions in the provincial, city, and municipal levels. Since the 2010 to 2019 elections, an average of 22% of women constituted the executive and legislative posts in the Local Government Units (LGUs) in Region XI. These are mayor and governor positions in the local executive levels. The result clearly shows that women are already present in the political arena, but the numbers of women lag from men politicians. It implies that there is a big challenge to those women advocates and aspiring women leaders to fight for women's political empowerment in the executive posts in the LGU. While at the legislative level, both in the provincial and municipal/city revealed that there is a varying number of women who actively participated in politics. It entails that achieving equal numbers in the local legislative is a challenge to women sectors. The number of women matters most in the legislature because the votes of the majority are the only basis of all the matters discussed in the august body. Robert's Rule of Order is the standard for facilitating discussions and group decision-making. It is indeed a significant challenge to those women advocates and aspiring women leaders to fight for an equal number of women and men in the legislative posts in the LGU. Despite the poor participation of women in the LGU, women local leaders believed that number is only a factor to bring their voice and be part of decision-making.

This belief about politics is partly based on the assumption that traditional societies are characterized by sharply differentiated gender roles that discourage women from jobs outside the home, as explained in the Development Theory of Realignment. This theory assumes that the process of societal modernization has altered women's and men's lifestyles and cultural attitudes with a significant impact on their political preferences. Thus, women try to invade the world of politics to empower women to establish the autonomy of women to cast their vote, participate in politics, obtain political power, and be part of the decision-making aspect.

Today, women have limited access to positions in the government. According to National Democratic Institute (n.d), in the past 20 years, women doubled their numbers in parliaments around the world, from 11 to 22 percent that in 2015 there were 18 women as heads of government.

Their participation is called socially transformative, which research shows that women in politics raise issues that others overlook as women can participate in peace processes. Women faced many struggles in their political participation. At current rates of progress, the political party will not be reached until 2080, making equality in politics the highest hurdle women face. It is indeed a massive challenge to the world's women leaders. Therefore, to achieve an equal number of men and women in any political position is undoubtedly considered to be a prolonged agony of any woman advocates.

Another significant motivational factor for women's participation in the political arena is community support. It concludes that having a voice with appropriate knowledge and stance as the leader is the central element of women's political empowerment with the help of women's organizations and the rest of the people in the community. Research shows that women may not be heard when they voice their demands and articulate feminist interests. Further, the governments call to empower women by creating the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW) and encouraging another group of women to form an organization. It implies that politics is also for women.

Role 2: Women's Political Leadership. Part of the women's participation in the claimed that *Women's political representation is equated to women's political empowerment*” remains a **fallacy**. This statement is false as justified in the findings of this study because women representative in politics does not promote women political empowerment if there is a failure on the so-called Women's Political Leadership. Political leadership is vital in achieving women's political empowerment as the participants emphasized that women political leaders should know how to raise their voice, how to deliver their ideas, strong on their stand, and able to defend their proposed legislations, programs, projects, or activities. Women's political empowerment is about the ability to talk and influence others. Leadership is about having decision-making power. This power is the ability to influence decisions that affect one's life – both private and public. Given the circumstances that not all women leaders have good political leadership skills, it is also necessary to re-orient their thinking about women empowerment — re-orientation on their role as a woman leader. Re-orientation on women's political empowerment does not mean an equal number of men and women in politics; it is only a representation of women for them to raise their voice, prove their leadership, and be part of the decision-making aspects. Women political leaders should know their rights, roles, and obligations. Thus, the researcher defines *Women's Political Leadership* as the ability of a woman to influence the ideas and behavior of others and is useful when it is translated into outcomes, whatever the content of those may be.

The results of the study proved the first assumption of the study is incorrect as *Women's political empowerment is based on an equal number of men and women*. Further, the researcher formulated the Four Points of Women's Political Empowerment, to wit:

1. Leadership, voice, and decision-making are the core elements of women's political empowerment;
2. Women's voice, access to, or participation in decision making will give them actual influence over decisions and outcome;
3. The women with a strong influence will champion issues of concern to women, including gender equality; and
4. Effective voice and leadership of women are associated with an ability to reason out.

Element 1. Women Leaders Capabilities. From a global perspective, women face a few critical challenges as they are not advancing enough to management roles and more active in influential decision-making roles (UNESCO, 2012). Capabilities and social structures are necessary for achieving women's empowerment, especially in politics. O'Neil and Domingo (2016) determined the six women's capabilities and social structures that make it more likely they will have genuine decision-making power: socio-economic status, personal economic power, education, gender norms, political skills and connections, and organizational strength. But one of the major problems of women's political empowerment is the double burden syndrome. It is a syndrome that women are still responsible for the majority of the chores and caregiving duties. This syndrome is experienced mostly in the Asian and African regions, which reflects the responsibility for both household chores and work. European women are twice responsible for the household task rather than men (McKinsey, 2007). Hence, this study finds out the truth behind the **myth** on *Political kinship is the main reason for access of women in politics*, and a **fallacy** that *Capabilities and social structures are the main elements in achieving women's political empowerment*.

The myth of political kinship as the main reason to engage in politics does not exist. There is empirical evidence that shows there are women political leaders who are not coming from political clans. Women have been leaders throughout history. From the pharaohs of Egypt to the queens of England, women rulers were found in nearly every culture and period. In almost all circumstances, male leaders greatly outnumber female leaders.

Moreover, customs and laws against female leadership found throughout history, most notably in every dominant religion (Christ, 2014). Traditionally, just about the only avenue of political influence open to women was spousehood. According to Watson (2000), as cited in Watson, Jencik, and Selzer (2005), the political system would seem to have been a mixed situation for women world leaders. The lack of women serving in elected office, the lack of political party support for women, and other traits of the political system worked against nearly every woman leader.

The capabilities and social structures that are the main elements in achieving women's political empowerment remain as a fallacy because women leaders (participants) who are in the political arena proved that leadership, voice, passion, and the like could be their elements in achieving women political empowerment. Research shows that social norms are another dimension of the world of informal institutions that either enable or constrain political voice and influence. Patriarchy and gender hierarchies are primary constraints on women's view, leadership, and impact both in public and private life across the social, economic, and political spheres (Domingo et al., 2015).

Further, this study proves that political kinship is not the soul of women's political participation and so as with capabilities and social structures. The study revealed through the identified themes that women leaders should have the following elements:

1. Women Political Values. Women leaders should have the following essential values such as compassion, passion, love, and credibility, be it in the legislative or executive political post. They should have the desire to serve the people without hesitation; compassion for the people who are in need without looking at the boundaries; and the credibility to serve the public to gain their trust quickly. Women leaders also need to have the heart and willingness to fight for people's rights. It denotes that values are essential in serving the people.

2. Women Leaders Personality. This study also discovered that having a strong, determined, and focus personality may contribute to achieving the duties and responsibilities of being a leader. The focus should not be missed because along the way according to them there are many temptations, others started at a good, but in the end, they give up, or they became a traditional politician. Women need to be brave and strong enough to stand, no matter what. Participants also highlighted that women leaders are hardworking because they want things done; the woman's action is different. It implies that having a strong and good personality is the determinant of being a woman political leader.

3. Women's Political Direction. The participants highlighted that a woman leader who has strong advocacy in place and has a political will has the potential to have an excellent impact on becoming an empowered leader in the context of politics. In this country, the practice is platforms are presented during the election aside from the track record of the candidates. Political advocacy is one of the bases of the voters in selecting their candidates, so as the political will. Women political leaders need to have the right frame of mind, meaning advocacies are in place; political agenda would be for the benefit of the women and of the people in general, and political will as well to implement despite all the odds because the society still has the bias, the discrimination as reflected in the common line, "You are a woman".

4. Women Political Education. Public speaking, educational attainment, experiences in governance, and women's organizational strength are the pathways of women leaders to achieve their goal in leading the people and become a public voice. Those are the capabilities answered by women local leaders both in the executive and legislative. These capabilities serve as the factors that encourage the voters to choose them and be part of the decision-making process in the world of governance. It is also important to note that a woman political leader should have a good educational background to understand the scope of governance duly.

If the abovementioned elements are present to those aspiring women leaders, they have a higher opportunity to become one of the future women political leaders in this country. However, it is a struggle on the part of women leaders because voters may not be persuaded of their competencies since the Philippines is still in a patriarchal society.

The findings proved the assumptions of the study on *Women political leaders from popular, rich, and educated families have the potential to become leaders rather than those who are not* is not acceptable because leaders characteristics are not linear. Politics defines as 360 degrees.

It means that becoming a woman political leader is not about money alone; it is all about experiences in governance, political values, connections, capabilities, and leadership orientation.

Element 2: Sources of Power

The sources of power of women political leaders promote empowerment. Power, when developed, is meant to be used to achieve a particular purpose. If it is appropriately used, it will also lead to the achievement of desired goals and objectives.

Ineffective method of power or failure to use power when the need arises is described as the primary cause of poor system functioning. It is possible among inexperienced leaders or managers and those who lack self-confidence. Women tend to avoid power, preferring to pass problems with difficult employees and the like to others (Obisi, 2003; Omisore & Nweke, 2014). Lasswell (1951) emphasized that politics is essentially the struggle to get power and influence by which those who succeed in monopolizing such positions in society can make decisions that affect the lives of every citizen within the country. Women's political power differs from a geographical perspective both between regions and countries and, within countries, between sectors and socioeconomic groups (O'Neil & Domingo, 2015). The key to women's political power is access to education and material assets, more equal and inclusive politics, strong women's movements, and being useful political operators.

One of the considered fallacy is *Women can be empowered if they have money* or a **myth** that *Wealth is the key to win in the election and be part of women's political empowerment*. This belief does not exist in the present political arena. The study shows that women's capabilities and resources, at both individual and collective levels, are essential in invading the political arena, not just the money alone. The political liberalization, increased mobility, the spread of primary education, and a growing proportion of women working outside the home provide new opportunities for women of all backgrounds and income levels to have a public voice.

The socio-economic class matters concerning political power. Elite women, therefore, tend to fill political, public, and professional positions.

The study overwhelmingly proved that it is indeed a myth that only wealth can empower women and a false statement that money also helps women. Based on the identified themes, there are significant sources of power to be considered such as **(1) personal characteristics**, **(2) financial conditions**, and **(3) organizational connections** that are necessary to help women to be empowered in the political arena.

1. ***Personal Characteristics.*** This refers to public speaking, or the ability of a woman to talk in front of the people is necessary to every politician. Politicians should know their rights and freedom to speak. Having the right to speak is an advantage. The results show that women leaders believed that money is the key to seat in any position of the government, but lately, they discovered politics is 360 degrees. Politics involved competence, political knowledge, and leadership. Building the right image or having a good track record is also an advantage. Good educational attainment and political experiences also promote women's political empowerment. The results imply that women political leaders should have the abovementioned personal characteristics to become empowered women. As Max Weber indicates, the charismatic leader has power by extraordinary and often mystical features. However, relevant personal characteristics include (a) public speaking skill, ability to argue for positions, or even physical attributes; (b) Wealth (money and assets); and (c) Organizations (Political party, women's organization, religion) (Judge, Woolf, Hurst, & Livingston, 2006).
2. ***Financial conditions.*** Women must be engaged in a range of capabilities to take advantage of the institutional and structural changes. O'Neil and Domingo (2015) in their study about gender and women, discussed those female politicians tend to be often professional, educated, well-off, particularly those who are exposed to politics. A woman's future political power is sometimes directly connected to the socioeconomic status of the family and her educational attainment. The results of this study found out that the family's financial condition is one of their sources of power as women political leaders. Technically, money is one of the requirements for women during the campaign. Further, obtaining an education requires money. It implies that those women who are economically independent, from an elite family, and a politically-oriented family are considered as the factors of producing a woman leader since we are living in a patriarchal society.
3. ***Organizational Connections.*** The study revealed that family is one of the sources of power. The Filipino community is a family-oriented individual. Participating in politics has many different ways. The common to all are family roots because living in a politically active household can equip the person's abilities and build more confidence in governing. Involvement in any political activity is a huge help. Another strategy is exposure in the academic life, for example, student politics and volunteerism considered as opportunities for potential women to build their political careers. Cornwall and Goetz (2005) explained that political apprenticeship, like joining any political party or formal training program, could develop one's political skills.

Different organizations can strengthen women political leaders. Organizational connections build women's confidence and authority to govern.

It connotes that family as a group that excels in politics is a huge factor in becoming a leader, and that would serve as their source power in governance. The government recognizes the role of women in society. As a result, all women political leaders have their organization both at the local and national levels. Women organizations improve the participation of women in politics. Because of the strong family connections, a political dynasty in the country is very common. Voters will vote for those candidates who already build their name in the industry. As a result of this practice, the majority of the women political leaders are “breakers”, meaning they are those leaders who followed the concept of the social structure. *"Breakers" indicating they were made to run and they won because they were taking the place of their father, uncle, brother, or relative who is male and who at the time temporarily disqualified from running.* For example, the father can no longer run because the three terms are over, who he allows running - either his wife, his daughter, or a niece.

Stage 2: Women's Political Leaders' Access to Resources

Access to resources is significant in empowering women in the world of politics. The United Nations Millennium Project Task Force on Education and Gender Equality (2005) developed a Gender Equality Framework that conceptualizes gender equality. One of its domains is the access to resources and opportunities domain. The access to opportunities and resources domain refers to equality in the opportunity to use or apply necessary capabilities through economic assets access (e.g., land, housing, and infrastructure); resources (e.g., income and employment); and political decision-making (e.g., representation in parliaments and other governmental bodies). Many women do not have access to resources, specifically on the economic side. The study of Awour (2012) on the Factors Influencing Women's Participation in Political Leadership, in Rongo Constituency, Migori Country, Kenya found out that women are economically disadvantaged hindering their chances of ascending to political office. Economic empowerment is also critical when women will participate in any political leadership, which is highly commercialized. This situation requires the government to strengthen the implementation of the inheritance bill, which allows women to have collateral to access the use of funds.

The belief related to access to resources is *Women political leaders have less access to resources than men political leaders* is a **fallacy**. John Friedmann, author of *Empowerment: The Politics of Alternative Development (1992)*, explains the empowerment of women in the field of entrepreneurship. Empowerment includes three different aspects of power: psychological, political, and social. Psychological power refers to an individual's sense of self-esteem and potency, which may influence her access to political and social power. Political power is the participation in decision making particularly those decisions that affect a person's future. In contrast, social power is access to resources such as information, knowledge, and skills. Thus, the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) developed a framework to address Friedmann's theory, where one of the concerns is providing women access to resources like schooling and micro-credit. Access helps women to progress in meaningful ways (Marat, 2003). Thus, access to the resource of a woman leader is the same as the men political leaders. It is a matter of how a woman leader outsourced some resources aside from the allocations and privileges given by the government.

The study also found out that when a woman entered the world of politics, it observed that access to resources is not a problem. One of which is her access to information resources. There is easy access to information resources because of her political power or authority. Today, gender in politics does not hinder their access to information. Having access to information is one of the essential resources of a politician as part of the decision-making aspect. If you are informed, then you can decide. Other rights of women political leaders are access to budget resources. Women leaders in the parliament have easy access to the budget if the administration supports them. Another factor is the gender and development code that helps the women's sector promote and sustain the programs because of the standard set of the budget given to them.

Investing in women leaders has excellent effects on a country's Gross Domestic Product and the welfare of the next generations (Booz & Company, 2012). Women political leaders provide opportunities to the people in the community. This study discovered that having a woman political leader is one way of boosting the economic aspect of a particular city, province, or municipality. The priorities of the women leaders are economic. Still, before achieving this, the health aspect should come first so that the rest of the priorities will follow like education, politics, peace and order, and even the economical side.

In the Philippines, the importance of women in nation-building resonated with the passage of laws, bills, and other initiatives that to date has been beneficial to Filipino women. There are laws in the country that allows women to run without the qualification about wealth.

R.A. 7160 encourages women to join politics, while RA 9710 promotes women empowerment and enables them to improve equal opportunities for women and men and ensure equal access to resources and development results and outcomes.

Further, RA 7192 mandates government agencies to implement a Gender and Development (GAD) mainstreaming policy that requires them to integrate the gender perspective in all lenses of development in programs, projects, and activities. It implies that women in politics have the same access to men regardless of their gender.

The research assumption of this study on *women political leaders has less access to resources than men political leaders* is not valid. Women and men, political leaders, have equal access to resources. It is the strategy of the women political leaders to realize their plans on programs, projects, policies, and activities. Gender is not an indicator of accessing information and budget resources, but women leaders create economic opportunities for women and girls in local communities. Gender is not a determinant of equal access to resources in the government.

Alternative Model of Women's Political Empowerment

Based on the empirical evidence, this study proves that women can be political leaders. To help empower the women political leaders, the researcher formulated the alternative model of women's political empowerment (See Figure 1). The model aims to end the wrong belief and practice about women's political leadership in this country and to stop the "breakers concept" in the political arena to achieve women's political empowerment.

Women's political empowerment is a process of social change where voices are heard, and leadership skills are developed. Advancing gender responsiveness is, therefore, mostly the outcome of political work.

The researcher highlighted the two main stages as follows:

Stage 1. Women's Political Participation. In this stage, a potential women leader should have the following significant elements.

a. Leaders' Capabilities. Women political leaders should have *political values, political personality, political direction,* and *political knowledge.*

b. Sources of Power. Women leaders acquired their power from their *characteristics, financial conditions,* and *organizational connections.*

These elements contribute to the participation of women in the political arena. The following roles when she seats in any political posts should be developed to improve her leadership skills.

a. Political Involvement. This refers to the participation of women in the political arena both at the legislative and executive levels. Participation entails the ability to be part of the decision-making aspects, their roles, and responsibilities. Involvement means her influence in decision-making.

b. Political Leadership. This refers to a woman's ability to inform, educate, and persuade people about her plans. Her voice is necessary for any political activity.

Stage 2. Women's Political Empowerment. In this stage, a woman leader will now be empowered if she passed the first stage. Once she's elected, became part of the legislative or executive departments because of her sources of power and capabilities, and most importantly she influenced the majority, she can have now easy access to information resources and access to budget resources.

Women's political participation proves that it can contribute to women's political empowerment. Thus, the results of the study show that women's political empowerment is the involvement and leadership of women in politics with a strong foundation of political capabilities and powers. This model applies to all types of women leaders in the government. The model explains that politics is 360 degrees, where a woman political leader should be well-versed in all its dimensions.

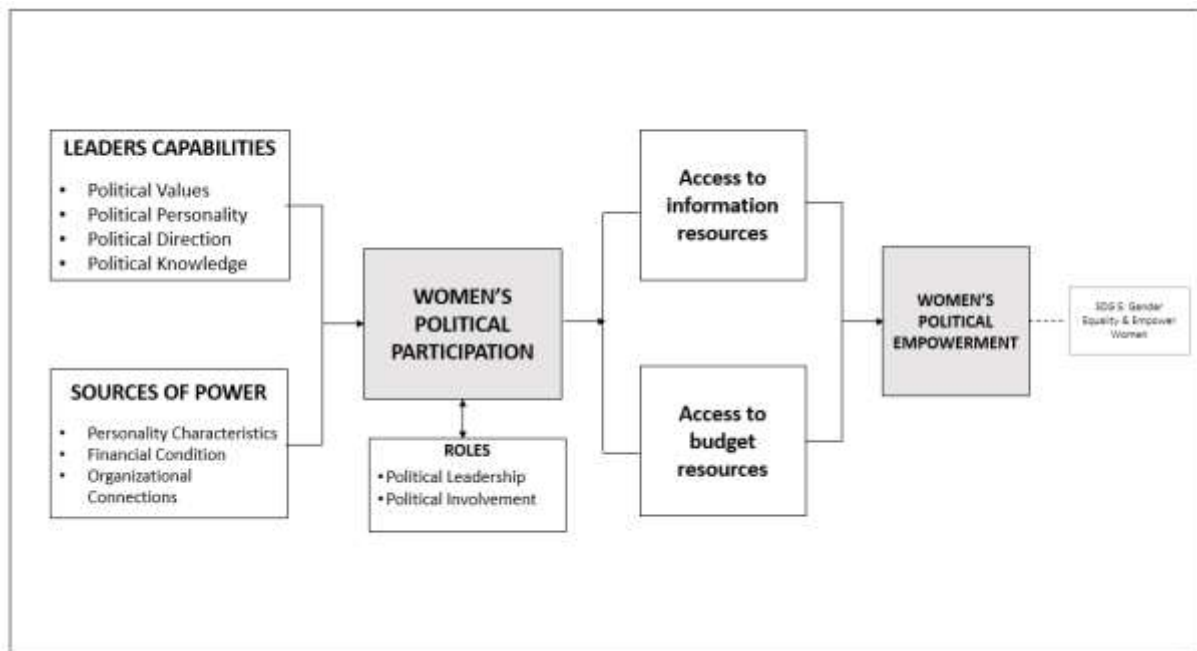


Figure 1. Alternative Model of Women's Political Empowerment

1.6 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

Gender equality and women's empowerment are not only human rights; they are also imperative for achieving inclusive, equitable, and sustainable development. Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that women political leaders need a re-orientation of their understanding of political participation. In the Philippines, if you are a woman candidate, it doesn't follow that women will vote for you. It is because they may not be ready to accept you as a woman who can carry out a political agenda or many of these women are still working in the patriarchal mindset that they think that the woman should live for the home only. Hence, the question is on the ability of the woman to lead. Access to information resources and access to budget resources are obtained when a woman participates in politics. Political leadership, leaders' capabilities, and sources of power are understood as elements of women's political empowerment. Further, the formulated alternative model can help improve the country's condition on women's political empowerment. This study empowers not only the present political leaders but also those women who have potentials to become a leader with distinct capabilities and reliable sources of powers rather than considering their political bloodlines and money.

In line with the findings of the study, the following recommendations are formulated:

1. To the present Women Political Leaders, they may strengthen their leadership style, enhance advocacies, and uplift their competence especially the "breakers" who need a re-orientation of their mindset in politics. Present and previous women political leaders should create more activities, programs, and projects that provide opportunities to the aspiring women leaders of the country. By working politically, women have driven progressive changes in women's rights and gender relations in countries around the world. A woman politician should not be content with having won in the elections. She should make her mark and she should use her position to advocate issues that would help other women.
2. Women's rights are how a dignified living is ensured thereby safeguarding her privileges. Women empowerment can only be facilitated if she can exercise her right in the socio-economic spheres of decision-making. Thus, the Education Sector should integrate the role and significance of women in the development of the country. They need to help the women sector to educate the young generations about knowing their rights and be an empowered woman by being an economically independent individual.
3. To the National and Local Government, may they provide more programs, projects, and activities with the law as a support to strengthen the women not only in political aspect but also the economic, social, spiritual, and ecological aspects of development.
4. Women Organizations may identify women willing to run for office; provide training and other types of support for women candidates; lobby to ensure issues of special concern to women are addressed in party platforms; lobby for legislative changes to advance women's empowerment; develop cross-party networks of women; develop and disseminate gender-sensitive messages for voter and civic education; advocate improved media coverage of women's issues and women candidates.

5. The media may provide gender-sensitive coverage of elections, avoiding negative stereotypes and presenting positive images of women as leaders, and undertake voter and civic education programs aimed specifically at women.
6. Future researchers may conduct a study about what group or sector voted for women and men.

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