

WOMEN'S EQUAL RIGHT TO POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN CHINA

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ABSTRACT

The equal rights of Chinese women in political participation mean that women have the same opportunities, evaluation system, and political status as men, allowing them to equally participate in voting, run as government candidates, and engage in political activities. Achieving equal political status for women is not only an important way to realise women's rights, but also an important indicator to measure the status of women and the development of social civilisation. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, China took many measures to promote women's political participation. Chinese women's participation in politics has made historic achievements in terms of legislative protection, actual political participation ratio, participation in grassroots democratic management, and women's organisation work. However, their political participation still faces significant challenges such as the imbalance in the ratio of male and female cadres, the lack of women with cutting-edge power, and the low autonomy of women's political participation. Therefore, by examining relevant laws and regulations in international human rights law, this study analyses the historical development, current situation, and challenges of women's political participation in China. Additionally, it compares the situation in China with other countries and further explores effective countermeasures to improve women's political participation. Improving women's political participation is crucial for advancing the democratic process and promoting gender equality.

Keywords: Political participation, Gender equality, Human rights, China, Women right

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, with the efforts and promotion of various organisations and institutions, women's empowerment and gender equality have garnered increasing attention. Society is constantly developing and changing, and it is gradually realising the importance of different voices in political decision-making process. There is a growing interest in understanding and promoting women's political participation to achieve more inclusive and equitable governance.

Women's political participation refers to the participation of women groups in the management of national and social public affairs. Women's political

participation mainly manifests itself in two levels: power participation and democratic participation. Power participation refers to women's entry into national government bodies to manage public affairs, serve as leadership cadres, and participate in decision-making. Democratic participation refers to women's right to vote and be elected as citizens. It allows women to express their opinions and voices to the power agencies through elections, lobbying, and suggestions, among others, thereby influencing public policy decisions. Women's democratic participation is the basic level of women's participation in politics.

As a rapidly developing country, China has made significant strides in social

and economic development. Women's political participation in China has seen notable progress, particularly in the early stages, in economically developed areas, marginal areas, and at the grassroots level. However, despite this progress, the representation of women in politics remains an area that requires more efforts and improvement, particularly at higher levels of leadership and decision-making. The existence of an invisible glass ceiling has affected its high-quality and comprehensive development. Inequalities and challenges in women's political participation in China mostly stem from the interaction of regulations and culture. From a historical and cultural perspective, traditional gender norms and social expectations often restrict women's access to political power and decision-making roles. These factors hinder the full realisation of gender equality in China and the quality of women's political participation. China has a unique position in the construction of global women's political rights, due to a large population and a signatory to many international treaties. At present, there remains a certain gap between the actual implementation of the relevant international human rights treaties to which China is a party and the corresponding laws and policies within China. The evolution of Chinese women's political participation reflects the complex historical process, influenced by economic, cultural development, and progress of the legal system. This article will conduct an in-depth research of the discrepancies between international human rights treaties and China's legislation and policy practices. It focuses on key aspects such as the representation of women in government agencies and participation in policy development and identifies the multifaceted cultural and institutional factors that contribute to these gaps.

By referring to relevant literature and reports in the past five years, a comprehensive understanding of the development process of women's political

participation in China can be obtained. Currently, the analysis of women's political participation in China is thorough, with detailed insights into the challenges affecting its development. However, there is insufficient analysis of the shortcomings of relevant legal provisions and policies. At the same time, the analysis of the data is not detailed enough and comprehensive. It mostly discusses the participation of the National People's Congress, and less attention is paid to the political participation of grassroots women and the internal employment status of specific government departments. Current academic research focuses on the causes of inequality in women's political participation, the history and current status of their involvement, and strategies to promote women's equal participation in politics. However, there is relatively little analysis of the laws in China that guarantee women's equal participation and the specific reasons affecting it. It should be noted that due to limited resources, specific data are not comprehensive enough, and data from different sources are inconsistent. This inconsistency poses certain difficulties and challenges for previous academic research as well as for this study, which may not be able to cover all potential analysis subjects and influencing factors.

This research examines the following issues: What is the political system in China? Why is women's participation in politics essential? To what extent do women in China enjoy equal political rights? How have laws, regulations, and cultural factors affected Chinese women's equal participation in politics? What lessons can China draw from the political systems of other countries and relevant treaties established by the United Nations? Hence, the objectives of this article are, among others, to comprehensively understand and analyse China's political system and to introduce the basic situation of China's governmental institutions. The list of the rights related to women's political participation stipulated in international

regulations and the Chinese Constitution and laws will be examined. This research conducts critical review of relevant academic materials, as well as statistical data and reports from the United Nations, NGOs, and the Chinese government regarding women's political participation in China. It evaluates the degree of gender equality in China's political field. By comparing and examining the political ecology of progressive regions or countries and international organisations, this research provides several suggestions for China to improve the political ecology and promote gender equality in political participation.

WOMEN RIGHTS AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

The status of women and the degree of gender equality in political participation have always been topics of global discussion, with several countries and regions achieving notable progress. In China's social context, traditional ideas and regulations still pose certain challenges to women's equal participation in politics. A review of relevant literature provides deeper insights into the topic:

Based on the development process of Chinese women's political participation, this article studies and analyses the tradition, history and current status of Chinese women's political involvement. By combining the characteristics of the times and taking equal participation in politics as the criterion, the political participation of Chinese women in different periods is analysed. This includes the examination of the socioeconomic development status, changes in social policies, and other relevant factors to gain a comprehensive understanding of China's political ecology and unique cultural atmosphere (Wang, 2019; Zhou, 2019; Tian, Wu, 2020; Du, 2021). The obstacles and gender discrimination faced by women in political participation are summarised, including specific issues at different levels—from rural

to urban and from provincial to central governments—as well as more general issues such as influences on public decision-making, obstacles to promotion, and struggles in obtaining the right to speak (Qin, 2020; Song, 2020). In China, promoting the fairness of women's political participation is not only an important indicator to evaluate the degree of progress, but also an effective measure to fully consider disadvantaged groups in decision-making and make politics more democratic (Liu, Fan, 2020).

Investigating women's political participation in China is critical in understanding the overall state of the democratic process. Achieving gender equality in political representation ensures that the different perspectives and needs of men and women are taken into account, thereby promoting more representative and inclusive governance. The research has important implications in terms of human rights and gender equality. The right to political participation is a basic human right and a very important right for both the country and citizens. Ensuring equal opportunities for women in the political process is consistent with international human rights standards and contributes to a more just and equitable society. Understanding the barriers that Chinese women face in political participation can help formulate targeted and feasible policy improvements and interventions. This research is instrumental in promoting the creation of a political environment in which women can meaningfully contribute to the political decision-making process. It helps women's voices be heard by more people and promotes the emergence and activity of increasing number of female policymakers and politicians. Research on women's political participation in China contributes to global understanding of gender dynamics in politics. By highlighting the challenges and successes of women's political participation in China, this research can inspire and empower the next generation of young people. Furthermore, it helps in changing

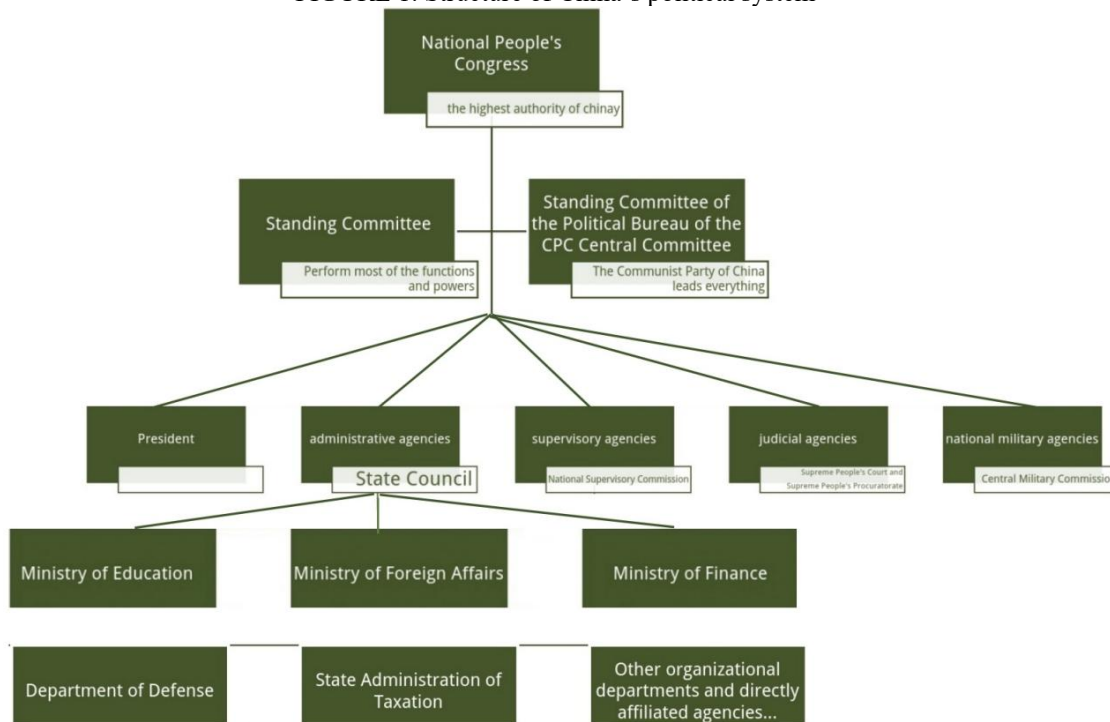
social attitudes towards gender roles, breaking down stereotypes and encouraging young women to pursue leadership roles in politics.

In short, examining the equal political participation rights of Chinese women is of great significance in promoting

the democratic process, developing human rights, fostering more scientific and democratic policy decisions, empowering the younger generation, and increasing social well-being.

CHINA'S POLITICAL SYSTEM

FIGURE 1. Structure of China's political system



Source: <https://www.gov.cn/>

China's political organisation is centred on the leadership of the Communist Party of China and implements the People's Congress system. The People's Congress includes two levels: national and local. Deputies to the People's Congress at all levels are elected by citizens. The National People's Congress is the highest authority in China. The national administrative organs (State Council), judicial authorities, prosecutor's offices and courts) and supervisory authorities are generated by it and are accountable to it. When the National People's Congress is not in session, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress will exercise most of its powers instead.

The organisational form of the government is as follows:

1. Central Power: China's central power consists of the President of the State, the State Council (Prime Minister and Ministers), the National People's Congress, the Supreme People's Court and the Procuratorate, the National Supervisory Commission, the Central Military Commission and other institutions.
2. Local government: According to China's administrative divisions, each province, autonomous region, and municipality has a People's Congress and a People's Government. There are differences in the organisational forms of local government in terms of administrative divisions, such as provincial, municipal, and county levels, each of which has People's

Governments and People's Congresses at different levels.

3. Party organisation: The Communist Party of China is the only ruling party in China. Its organisational forms include the Central Committee, the Political Bureau of the Central Committee, and the Central Military Commission. The party organisation and the state power are interconnected, and the party leads everything.

CHINESE WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND DEVELOPMENT STATUS IN POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

PROVISIONS IN INTERNATIONAL TREATIES

The main international treaties related to women's political rights are:

“Universal Declaration of Human Rights”, “Convention on Women's Political Rights”, “Convention on Civil and Political Rights”, “Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women”, “Vienna Declaration”, “Beijing Declaration”, “Beijing Platform for Action” etc.

The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights clarified the principles of equality and non-discrimination, as well as equal rights in political participation. The 1952 Convention on the Political Rights of Women is the first specialised international legal document on women's political rights formulated since the founding of the United Nations, officially confirming that women enjoy completely equal opportunities and rights to participate in politics as men. The Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which entered into force in 1976, re-emphasises the equal enjoyment of all civil and political rights by citizens regardless of their sex, identity or status. In Article 3, it is explicitly stated that States parties should ensure equality between men and women in political rights and that women should enjoy

equal rights in political participation. The 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women further put forward new requirements for the elimination of discrimination against women in political and public affairs, and stipulated women's political rights more comprehensively and specifically. Among them, Article 7 explicitly calls for women to enjoy the right to vote and to be elected on an equal basis with men, the right to participate in the formulation and implementation of policies, as well as the right to hold public office and to participate in political affairs. The 1993 Vienna Declaration and Program of Action clearly stated that enabling women to participate equally in political, civil, economic and cultural life at the national, regional and international levels and eliminating all forms of discrimination based on gender are the primary goals of the international community. The “Beijing Declaration” and “Beijing Platform for Action” adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 further clarified the requirements for women's participation in politics, emphasising giving women equal opportunities to participate in decision-making and control power, improve women's status, and achieve equality between men and women (Sun, 2019).

CHINA'S LEGAL PROVISIONS

Legal provisions related to women's political rights are as follows:

“Constitution of the People's Republic of China”, “Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Women's Rights and Interests”, “Election Law of the People's Republic of China on the National People's Congress and Local People's Congresses at All Levels”, “Organic Law of the Villagers Committees of the People's Republic of China.”

Among them, Article 33 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of China clearly stipulates: “Women enjoy

equal rights with men in political, economic, cultural, social, family and other aspects.” This is a constitutional affirmation and confirmation of women’s political rights and equal rights. The “Law of the People’s Republic of China on the Protection of Women’s Rights and Interests” is a law that specifically focuses on protecting women’s legitimate rights and interests and promoting equality between men and women. Articles 9 to 14 of it are provisions on political rights. It stipulates the principle of ensuring equal participation of women in the political field, encourages women to participate in the work of state power agencies, and stipulates that state agencies and social groups need to have an appropriate number of female leaders and female participants. The Election Law of the People’s Republic of China specifies that women shall enjoy equal rights in voting and being elected and shall not be discriminated

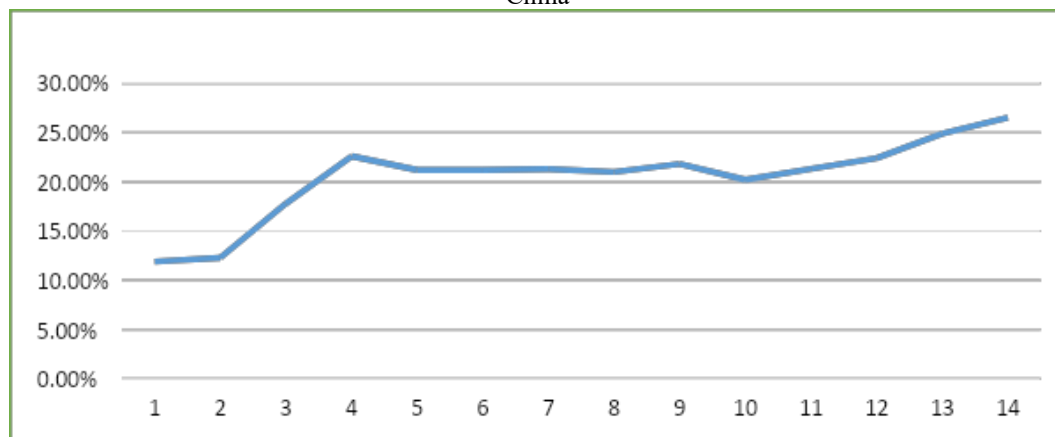
against on the basis of gender. The Organic Law of Villagers Committees of the People’s Republic of China clearly outlines that women should participate in village committee membership and guarantees the participation rights of female villagers.

These laws and treaties explicitly state that women in China enjoy the same rights as men to participate in politics and to equal political status. They aim to build a more equal and just society, encourage and guarantee women’s active participation in the political field, and promote gender equality and women’s political status.

STATISTICS ON WOMEN’S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN CHINA

1. Women in parliament

FIGURE 2. Statistical Line Chart of the Percentage of Female Delegates to the National People’s Congress of China



Source : Share of women in Chinese national parliament 2012-2022 Published by C. Textor, Dec 12, 2023.
14th : <http://politics.people.com.cn/n1/2023/0225/c1001-32630907.html>.
https://www.humanrights.cn/html/2023/5_0227/69610.html

The proportion of female delegates to the Chinese People’s Congress has greatly improved compared to the first session rising from 12% initially to the current 24.9%. However, in recent years, the growth in the proportion of female delegates has slowed significantly, remaining stagnant and not surpassing 30% for an extended period.

2. Women in local government

In 2018, the proportion of female cadres in full-time leadership positions within provincial, municipal, and county-level governments was 9.7%, 6.1%, and 6.9%, respectively. In 2019, these figures increased to 9.7%, 7.5%, and 9.2%, respectively. In 2021, the proportions had shifted to 6.5%, 8.4%, and 10.6%, respectively.

In 2020, the proportions of full-time female cadres in the leadership teams of provincial, municipal, and county-level government departments were 9.9%, 13.1%, and 11.6%, respectively. In 2021, these figures increased to 10.1%, 14%, and 12.3%, respectively.

The proportion of women among village committee directors was 11.5% in 2015, 11.9% in 2019, 9.8% in 2020, and 11.1% in 2021.

In 2015, the proportion of women among neighbourhood committee directors was 49.2%. Meanwhile, it was 39.9% in 2017, 50.9% in 2019, and 41.4% in 2021.

Judging from statistical data, women's political participation in local governments has also made great progress, but it is still not enough, and the development is very uneven. Among the government leadership at the provincial, municipal, and county levels, more than 50% have women as members. However, the proportion of women as full-time cadres is very low, and there is a downward trend from the grassroots to the top. From 2018 to 2021, the data shows that they are all around 10%, which is very low. This suggests that the inclusion of women in these teams is mostly due to formal quotas, appearing more as political correctness or symbolic representation with no real authority. As important grassroots autonomous organisations, there are notable differences between village committees (in rural areas) and neighbourhood committees (in urban areas), both of which are residents' self-governance organisations. Only about 10% of village committee directors are women. In urban areas, the proportion of women serving as neighbourhood committee directors exceeded 30% in 2015.

It can be seen that women in political roles have far less participation and influence than men in policy decisions, including when faced with the development of gender-

sensitive legislation, which exacerbates the unfairness and invisible obstacles in the political environment.

CHALLENGES

There are many gaps between women's rights and the protection of women's political participation stipulated in laws and international treaties to which China is a party, and their actual implementation and effects in reality. Policies to promote women's political participation are not effective enough at the central, regional, and departmental levels, and the actual effects still need to be evaluated. Chinese women are lacking in cutting-edge rights. In Chinese history, as the highest leadership body of the Communist Party of China, the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China has only had 6 women among its 25 members in each term from the 9th to the 19th term. As a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and as a national leader, the country's higher leadership body has never included a woman.

The development of women's political participation is uneven. The higher the level of government agencies, the lower the proportion of female representatives. At the same time, the proportion of women at the decision-making level in government agencies is also relatively low, and their influence on decision-making is also reduced. As the proportion of female leaders in relevant government departments is low, they are mostly concentrated in less important departments such as education, culture, and sports. In more focal departments such as economics, law, and security, most leaders are men, and the participation rate of women is low (Wang, 2019). At the same time, the situation of women's political participation in the economically developed eastern regions is generally better than that in the economically underdeveloped central and western regions

and remote areas. Women's political participation in urban areas is generally better than in rural areas.

FACTORS RESTRICTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE

MINIMUM RATIO SYSTEM

Since 1988, the National People's Congress has only stipulated that the proportion of female deputies in each session of the National People's Congress "should not be lower than" the previous session. However, up until the latest People's Congress, the proportion of female representatives remained only 26.54%. Based on the male-to-female sex ratio of the Chinese population, the figure shows inequality and deficiency. The Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, the State Council and other political power agencies have not adopted gender quotas. In governments at the provincial, prefectural and municipal levels, the CPC Central Committee recommended in 2001 that 'there should be at least one female cadre in the leadership groups of the CPC committees, Governments, People's Congresses, and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC)'. All departments, in principle, are required to meet this standard. But in practice, this minimum gender quota is often interpreted literally. In fact, many government departments use this minimum ratio standard as an actual ratio, utilising only one female cadre. Because of the low proportion of this setting, there are problems with male-dominated politics, and it has instead hindered women's political participation. At the same time, women who are subject to quotas are mostly concentrated in marginal departments such as civil service and literature and art and face the problem of not having real power (Wang,2019).

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL FACTORS

Distrust in women's ability to participate in politics, double evaluation standards, and a male-dominated political and cultural ecology have seriously affected women's equal participation in politics. For the same position, women need to work harder to win the opportunities. When working in the same department and rank, men are generally considered to be more capable and convincing. Additionally, it is easier for men to be in a dominant position than women of the same level. At the same time, society places more emphasis on women's qualities such as gentleness, respect, obedience, and assistance. These traditional social expectations also affect women's enthusiasm and self-confidence in participating in politics (Zhang, 2021; Jin, 2019).

GENDER DIVISION OF LABOUR

The gender division of labour in society affects the content and recognition of women's division of labour. In China, women generally need to take on more family responsibilities, such as taking care of children and the elderly, and assisting their husbands in their work. Their contributions are often not recognised, and even become a kind of "motherhood punishment". They have to reduce other people's discussions and responsibilities by expressing the image of "wife" and "mother" under social gender norms. The complexity of family responsibilities increases women's work intensity and poses challenges for women to better participate in politics (Liu, 2022).

DEGREE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Upper decision is usually decided by the economic background. In more economically developed areas, people have access to better education, and women's economic status improves, allowing them to play a more prominent role in political participation. With fewer institutional barriers, the overall situation for women in these regions is comparatively better. In economically backward areas, the social environment is

relatively closed, which affects gender equality in political participation (Huang,2021)

LEVEL OF EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The level of educational development in a region is extremely important to the social atmosphere of the entire region. In areas with high education quality, people's recognition of gender discrimination and traditional division of labour is relatively low. In terms of political participation, women can enjoy equal rights and participate equally. In addition, education is also extremely important for personal development. The improvement of women's educational level can also promote the improvement of women's political participation capabilities, including improving women's own quality, political competitiveness, and political management capabilities (Liu, 2023).

GLOBAL INSIGHT AND RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS

GLOBAL INSPIRATIONS

In regions or countries adjacent to China, such as Taiwan, South Korea, Myanmar and Pakistan, women have served as the top leaders of the country in modern history or currently. Six countries around the world have 50% or more women in single-house or lower-house parliaments: Rwanda (61%), Cuba (53%), Nicaragua (52%), Mexico (50%), New Zealand (50%) and the United Arab Emirates (50%) (UN Women, 2021). Another 23 countries have reached or exceeded 40%, including 13 countries in Europe, 6 countries in Africa, 3 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, and 1 country in Asia. In Latin America and the Caribbean, women hold 36% of parliamentary seats while in Europe and North America, they hold 32% of parliamentary positions. In a political parliament, a group's representatives need to exceed 30% to have influence on

parliamentary decision-making. Therefore, 30% should be a primary goal that China urgently needs to strive to achieve first.

There are many successful practices in other countries (Zeng, 2021; Gao, 2021; Li, 2002). The main measure is through enactment of gender equality laws and policies. Through the implementation of gender equality laws and policies, emphasising the importance of promoting gender equality in the political field is the basis for ensuring women's political participation. This includes formulating and enforcing laws to ensure that political parties adopt the principle of equal opportunity in nominations and elections. Promotion of equal representation on candidate lists is the second measure. Some countries have taken steps to adopt gender-equal lists to ensure adequate representation of women on candidate lists. This system can be implemented through regulations or internal regulations of political parties, which will help increase the proportion of women participating in politics from the system setting.

Some countries provide political training to women to enhance their abilities and confidence in political movements. This helps break down traditional beliefs and promotes more women's participation in elections and public office. At the same time, advocacy and awareness-raising campaigns is enhanced. There should be an enhancement of the role of women in politics, advocacy for equal representation, and changes to social perceptions through awareness campaigns and promotional materials.

Some other countries emphasise the maintenance of continuous encouragement of the nomination and election of female candidates by setting up a reward and reward system. This could include providing women with additional political resources or recognising their achievements in politics. Additionally, there needs to be a support

network serving as a platform for women to support each other. This helps create an environment conducive to women's political participation and alleviates the gender inequality and discrimination they may face.

Finally, some countries established gender equality advisory bodies to oversee and promote the implementation of gender equality policies, including within political parties.

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

In response to the above issues, the authors put forward the following recommendations:

The guarantee of the legal system is the basis for the protection of women's right to equal political participation. Through the improvement of the legal system, an effective gender quota system should be introduced to clarify the proportion of women's political participation and outline measures for ensuring their equal involvement. Strengthening institutional guarantees and ensuring their full implementation, as well as providing more opportunities for women to hold leadership positions, are key steps toward enhancing women's representation in Chinese politics (Lin, 2021). The implementation of laws and international treaties should be strictly enforced to address obstacles such as recruitment standards and educational disparities for political participants, ultimately achieving a diverse and democratic political atmosphere.

In order to better implement the relevant laws and create a fairer and more equal environment, public awareness campaigns should be widely conducted to promote gender equality within the government institutions, the political parties, and at the societal level. Reducing gender-based social expectations and traditional stereotypes about women, while making a more inclusive and egalitarian atmosphere within government agencies, will help

improve the political climate. It is also very important to promote political democratisation and give full play to the role of the China Women's Federation, which will help women gain more say in politics. (Xu, 2020; Jiao, 2021). Enhancing cultural propaganda and promoting a positive social environment are essential for reducing prejudice and discrimination against women in politics. Education is pivotal in advancing gender equality; implementing gender equality education can significantly raise awareness about the importance of equal rights for all. At the same time, women pursuing higher education will help improve their political knowledge and professional skills, enabling them to participate more effectively in the political process (Chen, 2022).

Economic factors are also important in influencing political development. Increasing women's income can help them get more opportunities to participate in political activities on an equal footing. Further promotion of gender equality in the workplace and the improvement of women's economic status will amplify their voices, thereby increasing their influence and reducing resistance to women's equal participation in political activities. It should also be noted that the high cost of childbearing for women is another important factor that hinders women's equal participation in politics. Promoting the joint participation of couples in parenting and increasing social care can reduce the pressure of being a mother.

A scientific and comprehensive gender-equality evaluation system should be set up to conduct regular and systematic reviews of political units, parties and government organisations. Those that meet the requirements will be commended and publicised. Otherwise, recommendations for corrective action, administrative penalties, and supervision and reorganisation will be made. This is conducive to the genuine implementation of the relevant laws and

human rights treaties and the reduction of gender inequality and hidden discrimination in the political sphere. Other supporting measures should also be implemented, including the establishment of a reward system. This system would provide incentives to political institutions, internal organisations of the Communist Party of China, administrative division governments, and individual women who excel in the political field. It can encourage relevant political organisations to take the initiative in improving the political participation of women within their units. Moreover, it will also stimulate women's individual self-confidence and strong willingness to participate in politics, hence, forming a virtuous cycle of political ecological development, social atmosphere and personal development.

CONCLUSION

Over the years, Chinese women have made great progress in realising equal rights to political participation. The Chinese government has implemented various policies and initiatives to promote gender equality and encourage women's participation in the political process. The representation of women in political institutions has increased, with more female participation in national parliaments and growing recognition of the importance of gender diversity in decision-making positions. Awareness of gender equality is increasing widely, and gender equality is gradually being realised across various fields.

Due to the rapid economic development, the gap between the two genders in the distribution of social resources and access to opportunities in China has been continuously narrowing in recent years. However, gender inequality still objectively exists in various fields. The advancement of women's political status is hindered by issues such as slow progress and uneven development across different regions and

sectors. By investigating existing problems and learning from the wise practices of other countries, along with the adhering to international human rights treaties, China should intensify efforts to enhance equality and democratisation in the political sphere.

While women's political participation in China has seen remarkable growth in recent decades, significant challenges and gaps persist, hindering the country from achieving a high level of gender equality in political involvement. The challenges include serious political marginalisation of women, low proportion of political participation, less say in policy and public affairs decisions, and severe gender discrimination in the political field of rural areas. Stereotypes, cultural norms and traditional gender roles may still hinder women's full and equal participation in politics. These issues are still waiting to be resolved. By examining the political practices in Chinese society, a deeper understanding of potential improvements can be gained. Learning from and drawing on policies from other countries or regions can also promote progress, enhance female leadership, and ensure that women have equal opportunities to contribute to and shape China's political landscape. Policymakers, civil society and the public need to work together to break down barriers and create an inclusive political environment where Chinese women can participate actively and effectively.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest. The research was conducted in the absence of any business or financial relationship that could be considered a potential conflict of interest.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

The first author was responsible for several key aspects of the research: conceiving and designing the research, collecting and analysing the data, preparing the literature review and manuscript. The second author supervised the research and provided critical revisions on the manuscript. All authors have reviewed the final manuscript.

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