

A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON WOMEN'S WORK OPPORTUNITIES IN THE GOVERNMENT OF COLOMBIA AND PHILIPPINES

Un estudio comparativo sobre las oportunidades laborales de las mujeres en el gobierno de Colombia y Filipinas

Erika Rose Lim; Esteban Ruiz Jiménez; Robert Ojeda Pérez; Hiromi Nakamura; Joshua Nierras; Masahiko Sameda.

Abstract

The following article aims to explain and compare the lack of efficient government policies catering to women's needs in the Philippines and Colombia, which results in further restricting women's work opportunities in the political sphere. The Philippines, home to approximately 54 million women, is one of the leading countries when it comes to closing gender equality. However, it was found that there is an under-representation of females in the government and this can negatively affect women in society as they feel less incentivized to run for government positions. Similarly, to the Philippines, Colombia has also been successful in promoting gender equality and women empowerment, but it also lacks women representation in the government, with only 20% of the seats in the Colombian Congress belonging to women. The article will follow a qualitative approach using comparative analysis to determine if the Philippines or Colombia offer more or fewer work opportunities to women and what is their working condition.

Keywords: Government policies, gender equality, women's work opportunities.

Resumen

El siguiente artículo tiene como objetivo explicar y comparar la falta de políticas gubernamentales eficientes que atiendan las necesidades de las mujeres en Filipinas y Colombia, lo que resulta en una restricción aún mayor de las oportunidades laborales de las mujeres en la esfera política. Filipinas, hogar de aproximadamente 54 millones de mujeres, es uno de los países líderes a la hora de cerrar la igualdad de género. Sin embargo, se descubrió que existe una subrepresentación de las mujeres en el gobierno y esto puede afectar

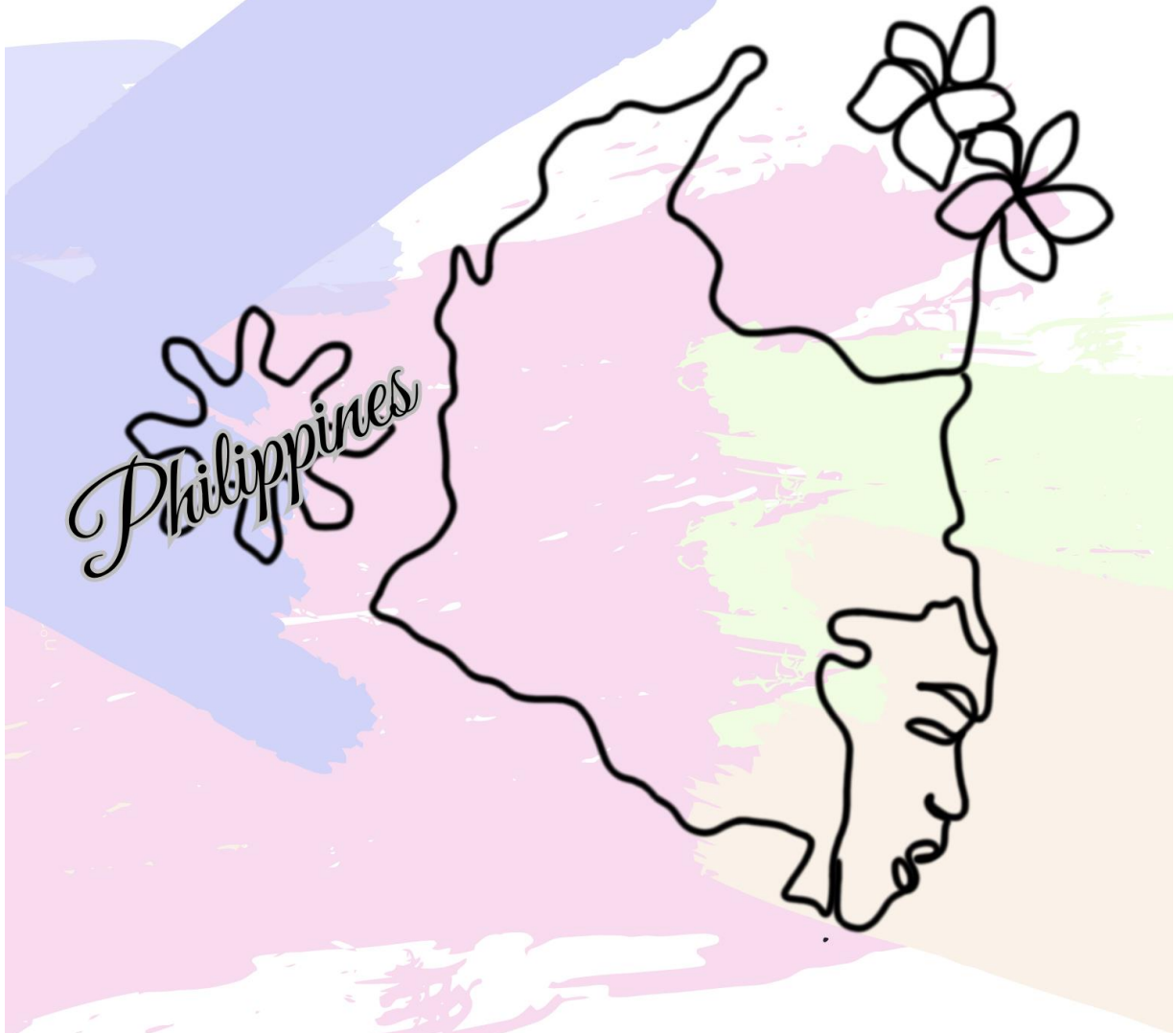
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Palabras claves: Políticas gubernamentales, igualdad de género, oportunidades laborales de las mujeres.

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El siguiente artículo tiene como objetivo explicar y comparar la falta de políticas gubernamentales eficientes que atiendan las necesidades de las mujeres en Filipinas y Colombia, lo que resulta en una restricción aún mayor de las oportunidades laborales de las mujeres en la esfera política. Filipinas, hogar de aproximadamente 54 millones de mujeres, es uno de los países líderes a la hora de cerrar la igualdad de género. Sin embargo, se descubrió que existe una subrepresentación de las mujeres en el gobierno y esto puede afectar

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Palabras claves: Políticas gubernamentales, igualdad de género, oportunidades laborales de las mujeres.

Resumo

O artigo seguinte pretende explicar e comparar a falta de políticas governamentais eficientes que atendam às necessidades das mulheres nas Filipinas e na Colômbia, o que resulta em restrições ainda maiores às oportunidades de trabalho das mulheres na esfera política. As Filipinas, onde vivem aproximadamente 54 milhões de mulheres, são um dos países líderes no que diz respeito à igualdade de gênero. No entanto, constatou-se que existe uma sub-representação das mulheres no governo e isso pode afetar negativamente as mulheres na sociedade, uma vez que se sentem menos incentivadas a concorrer a cargos governamentais. Da mesma forma, nas Filipinas, a Colômbia também teve sucesso na promoção da igualdade de gênero e do empoderamento das mulheres, mas também carece de representação das mulheres no governo, com apenas 20% dos assentos no Congresso colombiano pertencentes a mulheres. O artigo seguirá uma abordagem qualitativa utilizando análise comparativa para determinar se as Filipinas ou a Colômbia oferecem mais ou menos oportunidades de trabalho às mulheres e qual é a sua condição de trabalho.

Palavras-chave: Políticas governamentais, igualdade de gênero, oportunidades de trabalho para as mulheres

Introduction

Gender inequality is one of the most prominent societal issues today as it exists in every corner of the world, impacting all states, the Global North and the Global South. Given the sustained predominance of patriarchal beliefs in most countries, women are perceived to be more vulnerable and marginalized than their male counterparts. Consequently, this existing gender disparity leads to the deterioration of human welfare as it contributes to the lack of opportunities in the education, economic, government, and societal sectors. More importantly, the lack of women's representation in decision-making positions makes it difficult for women to voice out their opinions and strengthen the policies that promote inclusive growth for this marginalized group. Apart from this, the lack of social protection and decent economic opportunities and conditions further discourages women from joining the labour force (Asian Development Bank, 2013). Hence, affecting the economic prosperity of their respective countries. As a result, gender inequality is an alarming phenomenon as it contributes to other crucial societal issues while simultaneously deteriorating the state's development and the citizen's welfare, especially women's. Thus, countries today are collectively collaborating to address this gender-based issue by including gender inequality as one of its focused areas in the 17 Sustainable

Development Goals (SDGs) headed by the United Nations (UN).

Surprisingly, the Philippines, home to approximately 54 million women (Philippines Statistics Authority, 2022), is one of the leading countries in Asia when it comes to closing gender inequality. In fact, in the Global Gender Report in 2022, the country ranked 19th out of the 146 listed countries as it closed 79.4% of its overall gender gap (World Economic Forum, 2022). With this, the Philippines surpassed Japan, one of the leading developed countries, in the gender inequality aspect as the country closed at 56.4%, earning the lowest spot in the index. Economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment were the four categories that were used to measure gender parity in a country (Royandoyan, 2022). Nonetheless, the Philippines' gender pay gap, a problem in most countries, is extremely low compared to states with more advanced and developed economies (e.g. the United States). Apart from this, equal opportunities to pursue employment in high-paying positions such as managerial, professional, service, and sales are given to Filipino women. However, the issue arises when it comes to women's lack of representation in decision-making processes in the government. This under-representation of women in the government is due to the lack of women participating in electoral politics. As David, Albert, and Vizmanos (2017) state,

women today feel less incentivized to run for government positions

due to the existence of political dynasties, gender stereotypes, and the traditional dominance of men in the government sphere. Although, when women do participate and win a government position, these individuals are immediately assigned to areas that are perceived to be more feminine in nature (e.g. education, health, tourism, and social welfare). On the other hand, women struggle in attaining crucial positions in areas such as defense, economics, foreign affairs, and other male-dominated offices (David, Albert, and Vizmanos, 2017). However, despite the Philippines succeeding in electing two female presidents in the past, currently, only 23% of elected officials are female (Rappler, 2022). Apart from this, out of the 24 seats in the Senate, Filipino women tend to occupy only three to seven of the seats per election. Roughly only 28% of women hold a position in Congress and only 13% hold ministerial positions (Rappler, 2022). As a result, due to the absence of women's voices in decision-making positions, government policies regarding the welfare of women, especially in economic opportunities, continue to be inefficient as women's interests are suppressed.

Gender and women's issues in Colombia have been a significant concern for many years, as gender inequality and violence against women persist in the country. Factors such as cultural norms, lack

of access to education and economic opportunities, and insufficient legal protection contribute to the gender inequality phenomenon. Similarly, to the Philippines, Colombia has been

successful in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment as compared to its neighbouring countries. In fact, out of 153 countries, Colombia ranked 22nd in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index in 2020 (World Economic Forum, 2020). Moreover, the Colombian government together with UN Women has created a gender-focused campaign entitled *More Women, More Democracy: Towards Parity* to raise awareness and increase women's participation in electoral politics (UN Women, 2021). Apart from this, in 2016, a peace agreement was signed with a focus to transform gender relations and voice out the needs and rights of women with respect to the attempt to foster stability in Colombian society. However, in the Colombian Congress, only 55 out of the 279 seats are occupied by women, representing 20% of the total. INFF Colombia (2022) indicates that "This is 10% below the average for Latin America and the Caribbean, which is at 30%. Likewise, at the territorial level, women do not exceed 18% of seats in Assemblies and Councils." Although in 2022, the country has succeeded in electing the first female vice president, Francia Elena Márquez Mina, women's representation in the political scene and decision-making roles still need to be improved. It has been observed that women in

politics tend to experience exclusion, sexualized jokes, interruptions in legislative debates, and insufficient financing for their electoral campaigns as compared to their male counterparts (UN Women, 2021). Though policies such as the Law 1475 of 2011,

a gender quota law (Bedoya, 2022), exists in Colombia to encourage women to participate in politics, women's representation remains low. This lack of economic power deprives Colombian women of practicing their rights and establishing opportunities for their well-being.

Given these backgrounds, we formulated the statement that the lack of efficient government policies catering to women's needs in the Philippines and Colombia further restricts women's work opportunities in the political sphere. Thus, hampering the economic growth of the two developing countries. Consequently, the objectives and findings of this paper are in conjunction with two of the UN's 17 SDGs – SDG 5: Gender Equality and SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth. Nonetheless, women's representation in the government is crucial as this formal institution actively shapes society and serves as a key actor in addressing gender inequality locally and internationally.

In the context of Colombia, the *"History of Women's Participation in Colombian Politics"* (Ojeda Pérez, 2023)

provides valuable insights into the historical struggle for women's political rights. You highlight that despite Colombia's progressive constitution in 1991, which emphasizes gender equality, the practical implementation of these principles has been slow. The article demonstrates how early feminist movements laid the

groundwork for today's gender policies but also points out the persisting cultural and institutional barriers. This is consistent with findings by Ruiz (2002), who argues that Colombia's patriarchal political culture still hinders women from accessing higher positions of power.

Gender inequality remains one of the most pressing societal issues today, pervasive across both the Global North and Global South. Dominant patriarchal beliefs continue to marginalize women, leading to disparities in education, economics, governance, and broader societal sectors. This gender gap diminishes human welfare by restricting opportunities for women and limiting their participation in critical sectors. Particularly, the under-representation of women in decision-making positions hinders the

advancement of inclusive policies that address the needs of marginalized groups (Asian Development Bank, 2013). This exclusion discourages women from entering the labor force, thereby affecting national economic prosperity.

In response, countries have begun to address these gender disparities, with gender inequality positioned as a priority in the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Despite these efforts, the political empowerment of women, particularly in government roles, remains insufficient in both the Philippines and Colombia. The Philippines has closed 79.4% of its overall gender

gap (World Economic Forum, 2022), yet women remain under-represented in government positions, particularly in high-level decision-making roles (David, Albert, & Vizmanos, 2017). Meanwhile, Colombia has launched campaigns like *More Women, More Democracy* to boost women's political participation (UN Women, 2021), yet women's representation in Congress is just 20%, far below the regional average (INFF Colombia, 2022).

This paper aims to analyze the structural barriers women face in accessing work opportunities in government, emphasizing the importance of women's representation in achieving SDG 5: Gender Equality and SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth.

Objectives

This research is a comparative study of the work opportunities of

women in the government in Colombia and the Philippines. To achieve this, the study specifically aims to:

- To examine data on women's workforce in the government of Colombia and the Philippines
- To identify cases of gender parity, equity, and equality on women in workforce in Colombia and the Philippines
- To establish how the work opportunities for women in the government of Colombia and the Philippines are significant facets in achieving SDG 5: Gender Equality and SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth.

Conceptual referents

The Gender Equality Framework (GEF) defines and demonstrates the interrelationships between the concepts of gender parity, gender equity, and gender equality (US Aid, 2008). The three terms are essential to fully understand the aims of the framework. Parity refers to the proportionality of gender distribution in a given field or area. Equity involves strategies that provide fair and equal opportunities for everyone, regardless of gender and circumstances. Lastly, equality discusses the situation where every party involved would have equal rights, freedoms, opportunities, and conditions within the society. At its core, the GEF implies the importance of inclusion by addressing factors that lead to social exclusion such as systemic discrimination, while also

providing an avenue to achieve increased agency for themselves. In the context of work opportunities for women in the government sector, the GEF can be applied in order to determine if these opportunities being offered to women are on-par to what the male counterparts are receiving and analyse the difference in workplace scenarios. Do these opportunities satisfy the standard of equal exchange? Or more so equitable? Or just for the sake of parity? These are some of the questions that this framework could help in

answering when analysing such situations, and with the context of this research, would provide great insight to how we can interpret the current situation of both the Philippine and Colombian government workforce.

The **Gender Equality Framework (GEF)** provides a foundational lens through which gender disparities can be analyzed in various contexts. The framework defines and explains the interrelationships between gender parity, gender equity, and gender equality (USAID, 2008). These terms are crucial for understanding how gender dynamics affect work opportunities for

women in governmental roles.

1. **Gender Parity** refers to equal numerical representation, where women and men are equally distributed in positions of power.
2. **Gender Equity** focuses on fairness and justice in distributing opportunities and resources, considering the systemic barriers women face.
3. **Gender Equality** ensures that all individuals, regardless of gender, have equal rights and opportunities in society, including in governance.

In the context of work opportunities in the government, the GEF helps assess whether women are receiving equal access to opportunities and whether those opportunities are equitable or merely satisfying numerical parity. Applying this framework can shed light on the structural challenges women face in both the Philippines and Colombia, providing a more nuanced understanding of how gender policies impact women in political spheres.

II. Review of related literature

Women's Work Opportunities in the Government: Philippines

Lu (2012) conducted a study highlighting women's participation in small-scale mining, and their work safety and health conditions. Since the Philippines is considered a developing nation, mining plays an essential role for the country since it can

bring a significant amount of income to the economy. Additionally, small-scale mining has been the forefront vocation in the mineral industry. With this in mind, data has revealed that women who belong in this occupation encounter many difficult problems such as increased or double burden work-home responsibilities, exposure to hazardous chemicals specifically cyanide or mercury when extracting gold, respiratory issues, and systemic diseases from toxic chemical exposures. Generally, mining is a labor-intensive job that is highly dangerous, which causes another issue since women also have longer labour hours and are not guaranteed any social safety net. Although mining can be considered a male-

dominated occupation at first glance, women have a high number of participants in this sector, especially the aforementioned small-scale mining. According to the ILO (International Labour Organization), there is an estimate that about 3.5 million to 4 million women participate in mining activities out of the 11.5 million to 13 million small-scale miners. Out of all the countries, Africa has the highest rate of female miners at 40% to 50%. Additionally, in Zimbabwe, 50% of females work in small-scale mining. Meanwhile, in Asia, only less than 10% are miners, which is significantly lower when compared to other nations. In the Philippines, one factor why women work in small-scale mining is due to it being part of the communities

traditional livelihood and is also a family-based activity. The specific tasks that these women perform are mostly hand-picking and processing the ores, which require dexterity and patience, traits that women have. The ILO has stated that mining is considered one of the most dangerous activities in which an individual can participate. Based on a study from IOHSAD in the Philippines (Institute for Occupational Health and Safety and Development), the major types of accidents that occur in mines are being hit by falling objects, suffocation from chemical fumes, and crushing injuries such as being trapped under a fallen object. Investigations in the Cordillera region have revealed that suffocation, drowning, falling, blasting, and rock fall was the leading cause of death among miners in the region. Aside from the

health risk and physical harm that women face in mining, they also suffer from not being compensated fairly. In the

Philippines, women work but are unable to receive income since they help the male members of the family. Safety and working conditions are important for women because they play an essential role in society, especially in a household that includes children.

Labonne, Parsa, and Querubin (2019) administered an investigation regarding political dynasties, term limits, and female political empowerment in the Philippines. During the latter years

of the 20th century, it was more common to see women breaking gender roles and stereotypes in all aspects of life. Even with a huge movement, one area that lacked women's representation was leadership positions, specifically in politics in both developed and developing nations. In the year 2019, it was discovered that only 24.3% of national legislators in the world are women. With this, policy-makers and scholars are curious in understanding women's journey to elected officials. In the Philippines, the state is ranked among the top countries in the world that has female representation in politics; currently, women hold a percentage of 29% of seats in the Senate and the House of Representatives. Although this may be a positive sign, the Philippines did not always have a high rate of female politicians. After the end of the infamous administration of Ferdinand Marcos's autocratic regime

during the mid-1980s, data revealed that only 9% of women were elected to the Senate and the House of Representatives. Additionally, a similar start showed that only 9% of municipalities

had a female mayor, although that statistics changed wherein in 2010 the rate increased to 21%. The authors have argued that this increase in female political representation was due to the term limits that were introduced in the 1987

constitution. The authors also answered the question of what is the explanation for the dramatic increase of female dynastic politicians, they explained how recent studies revealed that family ties are an important instrument for women's access to politics in both developed and developing nations. With the information provided, it can then be generalized that political dynasties are more prone to contain female candidates. The investigation data has also presented that female relatives are 3 times more likely than male relatives to hold office for more than 1 term. Jalalzai (2019) argued that women politicians might acquire their political identity from their male relatives and are expected to continue the political goals of the male relatives they have replaced. In addition, if women were elected due to their political dynasty then it is highly unlikely that they would have the power to implement policies that would benefit women's needs and preferences. This would however be different if they were elected to gender quotas

instead. Lastly, women who were only elected due to them being in a political dynasty can potentially damage the youth, in such a way that young women will have this perception that women can only participate in politics through their male relatives and cannot create a political career on their own which would

discourage them from working in the government sector.

Cabegin and Gaddi (2019) conducted a study on the determinants of female labour participation in the Philippines. Among the 193 member states of the United Nations in 2015, the Philippines was part of the many countries that adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which included achieving gender equality and full and productive employment and decent work for both men and women. With the Philippines being able to end the gender gap in the educational sector, the country was able to maintain its top rank in the world in successfully achieving gender equality in education. Although this is a huge milestone, it only ranks 106th out of 149 countries in gender equality in labour force participation according to the WEF (World Economic Forum) in 2018. In the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) region, this result makes the Philippines the third-worst country among its neighbours in gender inequality in labour force participation. For a better understanding, Indonesia was ranked 118th while Myanmar was ranked 109th. Over the past two decades, the rate of workforce participation of Filipino women has

stagnated around 49% to 50%. However, with the changes in the statistical redefinition of work and unemployment, it was found that there was a minor increase in the workforce participation rate in the year 2001, but there was also a slight decrease in 2005. Moreover, in 2018, there was another decline for both men and women in the workforce participation rate, this was due to several

factors such as mainly the growing working-age population and the recent K to 12 program which made students stay longer in school. The model of the ILO (International Labour Organization) estimated the rate of workforce participation of women in 2018 and presented that the Philippines have the lowest labour participation rate among women in the ASEAN region at 46%. For comparison, Malaysia which is a neighbour of the Philippines and is mostly composed of Muslims had a higher rate than them at 51%. One prominent issue that women face in the employment industry regardless of the sector they belong in is that there are consequences of pregnancy and motherhood. The authors were able to interview women to gather data, and they were able to deduce that pregnancy and motherhood are likely to be penalized in the workplace. The authors revealed that pregnancy is often linked to a reduction of employment by 13%, there also seems to be discrimination in the hiring process for pregnant women as stated by FGD Human Resources Personnel participants, it is said that pregnancy causes lower productivity, an increase of taking sick leave, absences, tardiness, and resignation after childbirth.

Anonuevo (2000) created a paper on the overview of the gender situation in the Philippines, he introduced his paper by stating that the gender situation in the Philippines is full of contradictions. At first glance, the country presents examples of women's advancement in politics, academic, and professional excellence,

and legislation. In reality, however, the country also showcases an image of women working as prostitutes, physically abused women in the household, economically disadvantaged women, and exploited migrant workers. These dark images could be attributed to the long history of colonialism, which has implanted a patriarchal culture among the citizens. With this, the tradition of women being full-time housewives, less superior to men, and treated only as sexual objects is an idea of the past and is now being ended by modern women since they have been asserting themselves in all aspects of society. However, the trend continues since there are still women being marginalized, discriminated against, and exploited due to the harsh reality of the global economy. Throughout the years, the Philippines has made an effort in helping women address these issues with several local women's movements, and numerous organizations including NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) created specifically to advocate gender equality and raise awareness on other women's issues. The 1987 Constitution especially supported women to be

more involved in building society, It is stated in the first Declaration of Principles Article 2 Section 14 that the "State recognizes the role of women in nation-building and shall ensure the fundamental equality before the law of men and women". The labour force statistics also revealed a mixed image regarding the situation, even though there has been an increase in feminization

in the workplace years ago, during the year 2000, data presented that there were nearly 2 million unemployed women while they were nearly 2.5 million unemployed men. Although this figure may paint a different picture, women were more likely to work in a flexible arrangement than men, which resulted in employment insecurity and unfair compensation.

Women's Work Opportunities in the Government: Colombia

Women's work opportunities and conditions in the government sector in Colombia have seen progress in recent years, but challenges remain. Here are some key points:

Representation: Colombia has made efforts to increase women's representation in the government sector. As of 2023, women hold important positions in the Colombian government, including the Vice Presidency, Cabinet Ministers, and other high-level decision-making roles.

Gender mainstreaming: The Colombian government has implemented gender mainstreaming strategies, which aim to incorporate a gender perspective in the development and implementation of government policies, programs, and projects. This includes analysing the differential impact of policies on women and men and promoting gender equality across all

government sectors.

Gender-responsive budgeting: Colombia has also made efforts to implement gender-responsive budgeting, which involves allocating resources in a way that addresses gender gaps and promotes gender equality. This includes budget allocations for policies and programs aimed at improving women's access to education, healthcare, social protection, and other essential services.

Maternity rights: Colombian government has enacted laws that protect maternity rights, including paid maternity leave and other measures to support women during pregnancy and childbirth. However, implementation and enforcement can still be challenging, particularly for women working in the public sector.

Gender-based violence and discrimination: Women working in the government sector in Colombia may still face gender-based violence and discrimination, including sexual harassment, discrimination based on gender or pregnancy, and other forms of mistreatment or unequal treatment.

Leadership opportunities: Despite progress, women in the government sector in Colombia may face challenges in accessing leadership positions and decision-making roles, particularly at higher levels of government. Gender biases, cultural norms, and

other barriers can limit women's opportunities for career advancement and leadership roles in the public sector.

Intersectional challenges: Women from marginalized groups, such as Afro-Colombian women, Indigenous women, and women with disabilities, may face additional challenges in accessing work opportunities and facing discrimination and violence in the government sector, due to intersecting forms of discrimination.

Efforts are ongoing in Colombia to promote gender equality and improve women's work opportunities and conditions in the government sector. Continued efforts are needed to address remaining challenges and ensure equal opportunities for women in all aspects of government employment.

Government Policies in the Philippines: Gender Equality

In line with the promotion of gender equality and women empowerment in the country, the Philippines has crafted Republic Act No. 9710, also known as the Magna Carta of Women. As stated by Investing in Women (2019), this women-focused human rights law aims to eradicate gender discrimination “through the recognition, protection, fulfilment and promotion of

the rights of Filipino women, especially those belonging to the marginalized sectors of the society.” Under Section 11. Participation and Representation, it encourages women's

participation in the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of policies, plans, and programs in all branches of the government. Moreover, it aspires to create a fifty-fifty gender balance in third-level government positions; establish a 40% quota of female membership in development councils from the regional, provincial, city, municipal, and barangay levels to guarantee participation in development planning and implementation; Represent women's group in international, national, and local special and decision-making bodies; and encourage the integration of women in political parties where women are given equal opportunities for roles in leadership, internal policymaking structures, appointive, and electoral nominating processes (Republic Act 9710). Nonetheless, the Act promotes the concept that all individuals, regardless of gender, have the right to participate in decision-making processes that influence Filipino citizens' overall well-being. However, despite the existence of the Magna Carta of Women since 2009, women's political representation in the Philippines continues to be low as in 2022, women only account for 23% of the government (Rappler, 2022). Apart from this, in 2013, 4 years prior to the enactment of R.A. 9710, only 11% of elected local officials were female while 19% were for barangay captains and 27% for councilperson posts (Investing

in Women, 2019). Although the number of female

candidates have increased from 16.7% in 2010 to 20.6% in 2022 (Garcia & Ramachandran, 2023), these numbers are still below parity.

Government Policies in Colombia: Gender Equality

Colombia has implemented several policies and laws which aim at promoting gender equality and women's rights and improving women's work opportunities. Among the policies that specifically address the promotion of gender equality and protection of women's rights are the following:

Law 1257 of 2008: Seeks to prevent and punish forms of violence and discrimination against women. It establishes measures to promote gender equality, prevent gender-based violence, and protect the rights of women in Colombia.

Law 1618 of 2013: Guarantees the right to education for persons with disabilities, including women with disabilities. It promotes inclusive education, accessibility, and reasonable accommodations for women with disabilities in educational settings.

Law 1712 of 2014: Establishes the right of access to information held by public entities, including information related to gender equality and women's rights. It promotes transparency and accountability in the implementation of gender-related policies and programs.

Law 1751 of 2015: Establishes the comprehensive framework for the prevention, care, and eradication of violence against women. It includes measures such as prevention strategies, protection measures for victims, and specialized care services for survivors of violence.

Moreover, the National Gender Equality Policy, which was adopted in 2017, seeks to promote gender equality in all areas of Colombian society, including the workplace. It includes measures to promote women's participation in the labour market, address occupational segregation, and ensure equal opportunities for career advancement. Equally important, the Law 1822 of 2017 also promotes equal pay for work of equal value and aims to reduce the gender pay gap. It establishes measures to promote pay transparency, ensure equal pay for men and women in the same job positions, and promote gender equality in the workplace.

In addition to these legislations, a law that specifically promotes women's work participation in politics is implemented through the Law 1475 of 2011. This promotes the political participation of women and establishes mechanisms to ensure their representation in decision-making positions. It also requires political parties to have at least 30% of female candidates in their electoral lists and provides measures to promote women's participation in political processes. In spite of this law, compliance to this quota was not met by every political parties

that form the

Senate and the Representative Chamber. According to Bedoya (2022), only 4 of the 10 parties in the Senate and 8 out of 20 parties in the Representative Chamber have met the 30% quota.

III. METHODOLOGY

The research investigates the unequal work opportunities of women in Colombia and the Philippines, utilizing a qualitative approach to the study as we examined the circumstances of the affected and the work conditions that are currently in place within the government sector specifically. To further understand the situation of women in the government workforce of both countries, we decided to conduct a comparative analysis in order to determine if either states offer more or less in terms of work opportunities to women and what their working conditions are compared to the average of both countries. We believe that a comparative analysis would be greatly beneficial to this study as we aim to identify key issues within the individual workforces of both countries, pointing out the main differences and similarities, while providing general and specific recommendations when appropriate.

According to a report published by the Philippine Institute of Development Studies (2017), the Philippines does better in the

international metric of gender equality, especially in the varying workforces. Since the end of the Marcos Dictatorship, two female presidents and vice presidents have been placed and women in leadership positions have been less uncommon since then. Even in the constitution of the nation, there are key elements that dictate the importance of women in nation-building and emphasize the importance of representation (Republic Act 7192). Even if the Philippines is doing better on the international metric of gender equality, women in the nation still face severe under-representation. In the current Philippine senate, women only take up 7 out of the 24 seats (approx. 29%) while data from the same report showed that the number of female candidates running for local elective offices has not exceeded 20% since 2013 (even dropping to as low as 11%).

Similar to the Philippines, Colombia has one of the highest percentages of women in the public sector compared to the other Latin American Countries at 44% (OECD, 2020). “The 1991 Constitution provides that women and men are equal before the law, that both will receive the same protection and treatment from the authorities, and shall enjoy the same rights, freedoms and opportunities” (Ruiz, 2002) ideally creating an environment where there is parity between men and women electorates, however that is far from the reality of Colombian politics. Law

251/2000 recognizes and regulates that women should hold at least 30% of the highest administrative decision-making levels within the three sectors (legislative, executive, and judicial) as well as other levels involved in the planning and implementation of actions and policies but at current times, women only occupy 20% of congress and the provision is only being applied in 137 out of 1,174 state institutions (UN Women, 2021; Ruiz, 2002). Female candidates face a number of issues when it comes to their candidacy for their position, including constant harassment, withheld funding, discrimination, and violence to name a few.

This study employs a **qualitative comparative analysis** to examine the work opportunities for women in the government sectors of Colombia and the Philippines. Comparative analysis is beneficial as it allows for a contextual examination of how differing policies, cultural norms, and socio-economic conditions impact gender equality in each country.

Using data from governmental reports, international indices such as the **Global Gender Gap Report** (World Economic Forum, 2022), and policy analyses, this study identifies key differences and similarities in women's work conditions in both nations. Qualitative data from interviews and case studies provide a more in-depth understanding of how gender-based barriers manifest in

the political sphere.

Women's Work Opportunities in Government: The Philippines

Research conducted by **Lu (2012)** on women's participation in small-scale mining illustrates how Filipino women face increased work-home responsibilities, exposure to hazardous conditions, and systemic exclusion from social safety nets. Mining, traditionally a male-dominated sector, reveals deep-seated gender imbalances, where women work longer hours under dangerous conditions with little to no compensation. While the Philippines has made significant strides in gender equality, especially in education and healthcare, the political landscape continues to marginalize women.

Labonne, Parsa, and Querubin (2019) explore how political dynasties and term limits shape female political empowerment in the Philippines. They find that women, particularly those connected to political dynasties, are more likely to gain political office, yet this does not necessarily translate into an ability to address women's needs effectively. Women elected through dynastic ties may perpetuate patriarchal structures rather than

challenge them, thereby limiting broader political participation for women.

Similarly, **Cabegin and Gaddi (2019)** analyze determinants of

female labor participation, highlighting how motherhood and pregnancy penalize women in the workplace. Despite the Philippines' success in closing the gender gap in education, the country ranks poorly in terms of female labor force participation (WEF, 2018). This disparity underscores the need for deeper structural reforms to allow women to fully engage in public life, especially in political roles.

Women's Work Opportunities in Government: Colombia

In Colombia, women's representation in government has improved, yet significant barriers remain. As of 2023, women hold key political positions, including the Vice Presidency. However, gender biases and cultural norms continue to limit their access to higher-level decision-making roles (OECD, 2020).

Law 1475 of 2011 mandates that political parties have at least 30% female candidates on electoral lists. Despite this legislation, women occupy only 20% of seats in Congress (Bedoya, 2022). Discrimination, harassment, and unequal access to campaign

funding create additional barriers for women running for office (UN Women, 2021).

Gender mainstreaming policies, such as **gender-responsive budgeting** and **maternity rights legislation**, have also been implemented to address disparities in both representation and working conditions for women. However, enforcement remains inconsistent, particularly in rural areas where cultural and institutional resistance is stronger (Ruiz, 2002).

IV. Conclusion and recommendations

While legislations for women's work opportunities are implemented, there still remains a few representations of women in the field of government that push forward not only in opening the opportunities for women to work in politics but to rightfully represent, encourage, and promote women's participation and rights in the society. Progress has been made to prove a point that the path towards gender equality is achieved. These are through the policies implemented in Colombia such as the National Gender Equality Policy on promotion of gender equality and women's equal access to career opportunities, Law 1822 of 2017 on promotion of equal pay and gender equality in the workplace, and Law 1475 of 2011 on promotion of women's political participation; and in the Philippines through the Magna Carta of Women (R.A. 9710) on empowering women's human rights.

However, as data showed that participation of women — specifically in political roles, presents the gap in the gender parity of political participation in Colombia and the Philippines.

A focus on the quantity of women involvement through the

policies in Colombia and the Philippines is consequential in empowering a gender equal participation in the governance of these states. On one hand, Colombia has presented a remarkable law in increasing the participation of women in the slate of political parties' election candidates. Yet there needs a better actualization that this quota law does not signify as simply filling in of candidates of different genders to be achieved, this is to encourage women and their representation in the government. On the other hand, the Philippines can adopt a similar percentage rule in promoting women's participation in the government, specifically in terms of political candidacy. Political parties in the Philippines can adopt a 40-60 rule in which political party slates are suggested to compose of neither less than 40% and nor more than 60% of each gender candidate (Philippine Commission on Women, n.d.). However, as these quota policies can be helpful in increasing the participation of women in the government, gender equality in governance goes way beyond the numbers but more on the representation and empowerment of rights.

Achieving gender parity, gender equity, and gender equality in the

workplace, especially in the field of politics, is important to better realize the role of women in leading through a more gender empowering and rights-based approach in governance. Furthermore, achieving these are also significant in progressing towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

According to the United Nations (2022) report on the achievement of SDG 5, equal representation of women and men in national political leadership will take 40 years to happen. In order to promote the achievement of SDG 5 on Gender Equality, state policies need to be more specific in the participation of women in the government. Moreover, on the achievement of SDG 8 on Decent Work and Economic Growth, the increase of participation of women in the political workforce reflects the attainment of providing for a more inclusive representation and realizing equal work opportunities among genders for a career field that is predominantly occupied by men.

While both Colombia and the Philippines have implemented progressive gender equality laws, representation of women in government remains limited. Policies such as **Law 1475 in Colombia** and the **Magna Carta of Women (RA 9710) in the Philippines** aim to promote women's participation in politics, but structural barriers, including gender stereotypes,

political dynasties, and inadequate support for working mothers, continue to restrict women's full engagement in public life.

To close the gender gap in political representation, it is essential that both countries go beyond quotas and numerical representation. **Colombia** should strengthen the implementation of gender-responsive budgeting and ensure that gender quotas are met by all political parties. **The Philippines**, on the other hand, should consider adopting policies similar to Colombia's quota law to enhance women's representation in political leadership roles.

Finally, both countries must ensure that women's participation is not limited to traditionally feminine sectors such as education and health but extends to decision-making roles in areas like defense, economics, and foreign affairs. Only by addressing these systemic barriers can true gender equality in political representation be achieved.

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