



## Effect of the electoral system on women's representation: Evidence from national elections of Nepal

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### ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this article is to examine the impact of the electoral system on women's representation in Nepalese elections. The article utilizes a questionnaire-based approach to gather data on women's representation in Nepalese elections. The questionnaire is distributed to individuals from diverse backgrounds and aims to assess the influence of the electoral system on women's success in elections. The obtained data is analyzed to determine the correlation between the electoral system and women's representation. The study reveals that the use of the first-past-the-post (FPTP) electoral system in the initial six elections resulted in limited success for women candidates. The proportional representation (PR) system, employed in the last three elections, led to a significant increase in women's representation. In the CA elections of 2008 and 2013, over 48 percent of women were elected through the PR system. Furthermore, in the 2017 House of Representatives (HoR) elections, more than 76 percent of female candidates emerged victorious. These findings emphasize the crucial role that the electoral system plays in promoting women's representation. This underscores the importance of selecting an electoral system that promotes gender equality and facilitates increased women's representation. The findings of this study have practical implications for electoral reforms in Nepal. Policymakers and electoral authorities should consider the impact of the electoral system on gender equality and design mechanisms to promote women's participation and success in politics. By implementing a more women-friendly electoral system, Nepal can strive towards achieving greater gender parity and inclusivity in its political landscape.

**Contribution/Originality:** This study contributes original insights by systematically examining the impact of the FPTP and PR electoral systems on women's representation. The comprehensive analysis of historical data highlights the stark contrast in women's success under these systems, emphasizing the need for tailored electoral reforms to promote gender equality in Nepal's political landscape.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Nepal, a sovereign nation with a population of approximately 30 million, is located in Southeast Asia, sandwiched between the world's two most populous countries, China and India. While Nepal has a rich history and is considered an ancient land, its borders have undergone modifications over time. History proves that Nepal has always been an independent country. While analyzing the political history of Nepal, it is evident that it has been a patriarchal-based country that has always been ruled by men. Nonetheless, a few women from the royal family had the opportunity to exercise power as regents of the under aged king or with the assistance of the ruling king.

Election is a legal gateway to enter into electoral office. It is a peaceful means to get authority to execute power. So, persons, who seek to involve in politics, have to engage themselves in the elections in every democratic system. Different types of electoral systems have been practiced in democracies around the world. Among them the first-past-the-post (FPTP) and Proportional Representation (PR) are the most popular ones (Reynolds, Reilly, & Ellis, 2005).

In the FPTP electoral system, the country is divided into various constituencies as per the number of members of the electoral office. The popular vote will decide who wins the election. According to Gallagher and Mitchell (2005), voters cast a vote by indicating their support for one of the candidates, and the seat is awarded to whichever candidate receives a plurality of the votes—in other words, has more votes than any other candidate, whether or not this amounts to a majority of all votes.

It is a candidate-centered electoral system. The candidate has to make direct contact with people. The result of the election is largely determined by the candidate's popularity and his or her hard work.

Within the PR electoral system, the List system is more popular around the globe (Reynolds et al., 2005). The List system demands a large territory of the country. The whole country or a province will be considered an election district.

Under the List system -Each party presents a list of candidates, and voters cast a vote by expressing support either for one of these lists or for one or more candidates on a list. Once the votes cast for each list have been totaled, seats are allocated among the parties according to a particular formula (Gallagher & Mitchell, 2005).

Hence, each political party announces the names of its candidates who will represent the office. The names of the candidates should be taken from the list that the party published during the electoral process. So, the PR is a party-centered electoral system. Voters choose the party, not the candidates, directly.

The first national election in Nepal was held in 1959 to elect 109 members of the House of Representatives (Devkota, 2001). As Table 1 shows, Nepal has launched nine national elections to date. Nepal has faced many obstacles while implementing the democratic system. Consequently, the elections were not held at the usual intervals. That is why only nine elections were held within 58 years. Nepal implemented the FPTP electoral system in all of its national elections. PR electoral system was used in the elections of 2008, 2013, and 2017 in parallel with the FPTP.

**Table 1.** National elections of Nepal.

Elections for	Elections' year	Number of seats			
		Total	FPTP	PR	Nomination
House of representatives (HoR)	1959	109	109	-	-
Rashtriya panchayat	1981	140	112	-	28
Rashtriya panchayat	1986	140	112	-	28
House of representatives (HoR)	1991	205	205	-	-
House of representatives (HoR)	1994	205	205	-	-
House of representatives (HoR)	1999	205	205	-	-
Constituent assembly (CA)	2008	601	240	335	26
Constituent assembly (CA)	2013	601	240	335	26
House of representatives (HoR)	2017	275	165	110	-

**Note:** Rashtriya Panchayat was the national parliament of Nepal during the direct rule of the king from 1962 to 1990, however, its members were elected directly by the people only from 1981. Data source: Election Commission (1992); Election Commission (2015); Election Commission (1994); Election Commission (1999); Election Commission (2008); Election Commission (2013a); Election Commission (2013b) and Election Commission (2017).

Very few women were elected to the sixth national election in Nepal. Only one woman won the elections of 1959 out of 109 members of the House of Representatives. Two women were elected as members of the *Rashtriya Panchayat* in 1981, and three women could win the direct election in 1986 out of 112 elected members (Election Commission, 2015). There were seven elected women members in the House of Representatives in 1991 (Election Commission, 1992), and the same number of women were in the House of Representatives in 1994 (Election

Commission, 1994). The number of elected women increased slightly in 1999's election. Twelve women could enter the HoR through the elections held in 1999, out of 205 members (Election Commission, 1999). Only the FPTP electoral system was allocated in these elections. Altogether, 30 women could win the CA elections that were held in 2008 through the FPTP electoral system out of 240 seats (Election Commission, 2008). However, it dropped to 10 seats in the elections CA held in 2013. In the HoR elections in 2017, only six women out of 165 women were elected to FPTP seats (Election Commission, 2013a).

The PR electoral system had also been implemented in the last three national elections of Nepal. This system increased the number of women in the electoral office. There were 161 women members in the Constituent Assembly in 2008 (Election Commission, 2008) and 162 women members in the Constituent Assembly in 2013 out of 335 members through the PR electoral system (Election Commission, 2013b). Similarly, 84 women members could win the House of Representatives' seats in 2017's elections out of 110 seats through the PR electoral system (Election Commission, 2017).

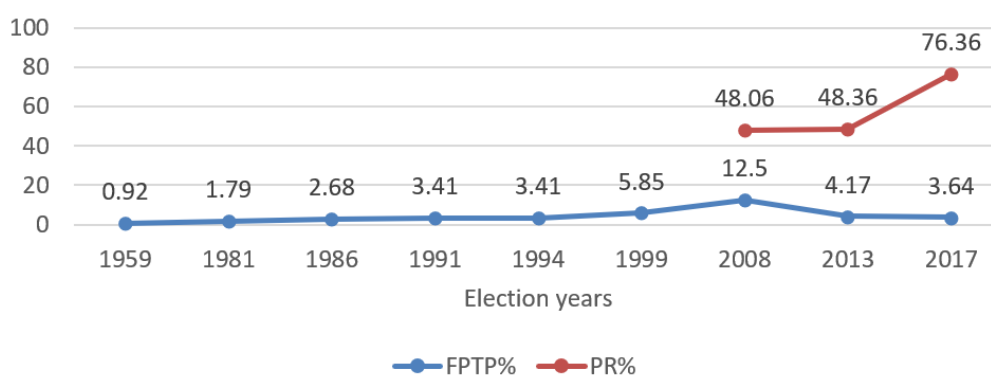


Figure 1. Percentage of women representation in national assembly through FPTP and PR electoral systems.

As Figure 1 shows, a small percentage of female candidates won the national assembly of Nepal through the FPTP electoral system. The highest percentage of female representation was in the CA election held in 2008, although it was 12.50% of the total FPTP seats. The implementation of the PR electoral system has increased women's representation at a national level. Despite this, out of 110 PR seats, 76.36% of female candidates could enter the hall of the House of Representatives.

The number of elected female members in the electoral office of Nepal raises some questions. Does the electoral system matter to women entering office? Is it more difficult to win FPTP elections for women politicians? Does the PR system favor female candidates? These are the researchable questions in the field of politics and elections in Nepal. This article tries to seek answers to these questions to explore this subject. Almost all of the existing literature proves that the field of politics is harder for women than for men. Because the norms and values of politics are formatted along the masculine line, women are treated as "Other" in this field.

Shvedova (2005) notes: Politics is often based on the idea of 'winners and losers, competition and confrontation, rather than on systematic collaboration and consensus, especially across party lines. It may often result in women either rejecting politics altogether or rejecting male-style politics. Thus, when women do participate in politics, they tend to do so in small numbers.

The majority of both men and women in the United States acknowledge that the electoral arena presents greater challenges for women than for men. Many women express hesitancy to run for office solely because of their gender (Lawless & Fox, 2010). Nancy Pelosi aptly described the campaign as akin to a battle, implying that women must exert more effort than men to attain comparable electoral outcomes (Fulton, 2012; Herrnson, Lay, & Stokes, 2003). Given this framing of elections as a competitive and potentially masculine domain, women may perceive it as less accessible.

Political parties play a crucial role in electoral politics under democracy. The strongest influences on voters voting decisions are party identification and ideology (Dolan, 2004; Smith & Fox, 2001). However, the party does not have a positive attitude towards female candidates, as men dominate the party. Those men act as "gatekeepers" and do not want women to enter the electoral office. So, they mostly deny providing party tickets to women. Then who gets the permission of the party is a pertinent question. Bhasin (2002) observed that in most cases, women seem to be mere "proxy" candidates, puppets in the hands of male politicians. They are taken as gap fillers.

In practice, the parliamentary representation of women has been filtered through political parties (Sineau, 2008). Parties and their male gatekeepers tend to discourage many potential female candidates in the selection process (Conway, 2001). They favor men as their candidates. Similarly, candidate selection is a zero-sum game in the FPTP electoral system; the selection of a woman candidate means that a man candidate is not selected (Childs, Campbell, & Lovenduski, 2008). Hence, male gatekeepers prefer to select male candidates. Contrarily, practices of local elections in the USA show that women candidates are more likely to be nominated when the gatekeeper—the local party president—is a woman rather than a man (Cheng & Tavits, 2011).

Based on a comprehensive analysis of electoral structures, political parties, socioeconomic factors, and women's parliamentary representation across twenty-three countries, Rule (1987) initially established that "district magnitude positively correlates with the percentage of women in parliament." This seminal observation has continued to find support in 21st-century research, with numerous scholars such as Dahlerup (2005), Kellow (2010), Matland (2005), Tremblay (2008), and Tripp and Kang (2008) reaffirming the superiority of proportional representation systems over plurality/majority systems in enhancing women's political representation. Recent studies in Spain (Gonzalez-Eiras & Sanz, 2021) and Italy (Profeta & Woodhouse, 2022) have further substantiated these findings.

There are two distinct approaches to enhancing women's participation in political institutions: the 'incremental track' and the 'fast track' (Dahlerup & Freidenvall, 2005). The incremental track involves a gradual, albeit slow, increase in the number of women elected from one election to the next, emphasizing adaptation and assimilation mechanisms. However, this approach may not satisfy the growing impatience of women, who demand immediate gender balance in politics. To address this, proponents advocate for the 'fast track' methods, which entail implementing gender quotas to ensure women's representation in electoral offices. This approach aligns with Marxist feminism (Tong, 2009), which advocates for the redistribution of resources and opportunities between society and the state.

The quota system, a form of affirmative action designed to overcome barriers hindering women's entry into politics, primarily favors women candidates (Fleschenberg, 2008; Larserud & Taphorn, 2007). Widely adopted across Latin America, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, it promotes women's political participation and representation (Tripp & Kang, 2008). For instance, Rwanda's 2003 constitution mandated 'at least' 30 percent women's representation, leading to nearly 50 percent in 2003, 56.3 percent in 2008, and a record-breaking 63.8 percent in 2013 (IPU, 2015; Powley, 2005). In Uganda, before 1989, women's parliamentary participation was only 2.2 percent, but in the 2006 elections, 29.8 percent of women secured seats (Bauer, 2008). This evidence underscores the positive impact of quotas on enhancing women's parliamentary participation.

In 2012, over a hundred countries embraced gender quotas in their candidate selection processes (Murray, Krook, & Opello, 2012). Among them, 60 countries and territories worldwide employ legislated candidate quotas, while 36 use reserved seat systems. Additionally, in 37 countries and territories, at least one political party represented in parliament voluntarily adopts party quotas (Dahlerup, Hilal, Kalandadze, & Kandawasvika-Nhundu, 2013).

The contentious debate over gender quotas in electoral politics reveals a spectrum of opinions (Dahlerup, 2005), with some activists and scholars opposing this system. In Italy, for instance, critics humorously referred to quota laws as "Panda laws," suggesting women needed preservation (Leyenaar, 2008). However, quotas counteract

obstacles hindering women's political participation. Afghanistan, despite being a new democracy and a Muslim country, boasts 27.3 percent female representation in its lower house, surpassing established democracies like the UK, US, and India (Fleschenberg, 2008). Similarly, some of the world's poorest nations, such as Mozambique, Burundi, and Tanzania, exhibit high levels of female representation (Tripp & Kang, 2008). This system empowers women to run for office and addresses historical patriarchal norms (Lawless & Fox, 2010), ultimately promoting gender parity in electoral politics.

Nepal's *Government of Nepal (2017)* includes crucial provisions aimed at ensuring women's representation in local-level elections. As reported by *Shrestha and Phuyel (2019)*, these provisions led to groundbreaking results in the 2017 local elections, with seven women elected as mayors, 276 as deputy mayors, 11 as rural municipality presidents, and 424 as vice presidents out of 753 local levels in the country. Ward committees also achieved near gender-parity, with approximately 50 percent female members, marking an unprecedented milestone in Nepal's history. However, the absence of mandatory provisions for women's candidature resulted in only 0.92 percent of women serving as ward chairpersons. Similarly, in the 2017 provincial and federal elections, a notable number of women candidates secured victory through the PR electoral system, with gender reservations outlined in the constitution of Nepal.

The literature review and the analysis of Nepal's past elections underscore the effectiveness of the proportional representation (PR) electoral system in enhancing women's participation and access to politics. It also suggests that implementing a women's quota system could be even more beneficial. This article seeks to provide a systematic examination of the data collected, with a specific focus on these aspects. It aims to fill the gap in research regarding Nepal's electoral system and its influence on women's political engagement, an area that has not received comprehensive scrutiny before.

### *1.1. Objectives*

The general objective of the article is to analyze the effect of the electoral system on women's candidature and their representation in the context of Nepal. The specific objectives of the article are as follows:

- To analyze the effect on women's representation in the FPTP electoral system and its consequences.
- To examine the impact of women's candidates on the PR electoral system and its consequences.
- To study the necessity of quotas for women entering the political field.

### *1.2. Research Methods*

The questionnaire method was used to collect the views of respondents during the preparation of this article. Politicians, educators, lawyers, and journalists were the respondents to this research. Questionnaires were developed on MS Forms and sent to the respondents via emails and social networks, like Facebook, Messenger, etc. Altogether, 286 questionnaires were returned. The received data was inserted into software like SPSS and MS Excel and analyzed. The secondary data were extracted from documents of government agencies. Views expressed in academic articles, books, and research reports were also used in the article.

## **2. PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION**

### *2.1. Clusters of Respondents*

During the survey, we asked about the working areas of the respondents. According to the received form, demonstrated in *Figure 2*, out of the 286 respondents, 33% were self-employed, housewives, and students of the university. Thirty-three percent of the respondents were from related political and social fields. They were leaders of political parties, elected members of the constituent assembly, federal parliament, provincial assemblies, executive heads, deputies, members of local governments, and social activists. Similarly, 15% of the respondents were government employees and public service holders, 14% were lawyers, and 7% were journalists.

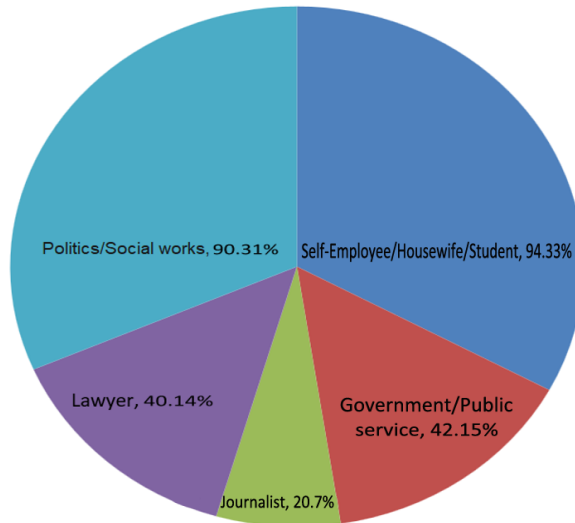


Figure 2. Cluster belonging to respondents.

2.2. The Interest of Nepalese Women Politicians to Participate in the Election

We had asked a question about whether Nepalese women, who like to enter the political field, wanted to participate in the elections. As Figure 3 shows, the majority of respondents believed that Nepalese women politicians were ambitious to run for office. Only slightly more than one percent of respondents said that women politicians in Nepal are uninterested in electoral politics; however, no one choose the "very uninterested" option of the questionnaire. Twenty-three percent of respondents were neutral in the case of this question.

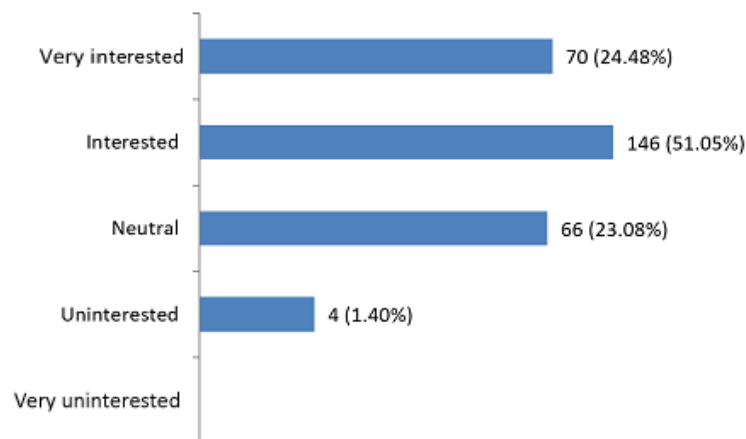


Figure 3. The interest of women politicians to run for office.

2.3. Appropriate Electoral System for Female Candidates

There are many types of electoral systems that have been used around the globe. Among them, first-past-the-post (FPTP) and proportional representation (PR) are popular in many democracies. Nepal has used the FPTP electoral system for a long time. Since 2008, Nepal has adopted both the FPTP and PR electoral systems simultaneously to elect representatives of the federal and provincial governments.

As Table 2 shows, the majority of the respondents to the survey agreed that the PR electoral system is more appropriate than the FPTP electoral system for women politicians in Nepal; however, 16% of the respondents were in favor of the FPTP electoral system. Thirty-three percent of the respondents said that both were appropriate, and 6% of the respondents were against both electoral systems. Out of 286 respondents, 5 respondents gave their views except for these given options. The examination of Italy's governmental levels from 1987 to 2013 has also demonstrated that proportional electoral systems are linked to a greater degree of female representation compared to majoritarian systems (Profeta & Woodhouse, 2022).

Table 2. Women candidates and appropriate electoral system.

Electoral system	Number	Percentage
Both of them are appropriate	95	33.22
Both of them are inappropriate	18	6.29
First-past-the-post (FPTP)	46	16.08
Proportional Representation (PR)	122	42.66
Others	5	1.75
Total	286	100.00

They wrote that it depends on the women candidates and how they perform in the election fray. The electoral system does not matter. It is better to optimize the capacity of women politicians and make them ready to run for the FPTP election; after that, a PR quota would be unnecessary for them, they claimed. They indicated that many national figures and senior female politicians had used the PR system for easy access to the hall of power. These respondents urged that those types of women leaders take part in the FPTP election race. They vowed that the role of the political party will be a more important factor for women candidates than the electoral system; so, political parties have to play a positive role in favor of women politicians.

2.4. The intention of the Political Party of Nepal Regarding Women's Candidature

A political party can play a decisive role in the democratic process, especially in elections. It distributes candidates, conducts campaigns, raises funds, and provides any type of help needed to become victorious in the election. If so, would the political parties in Nepal like to field women as their candidates in the FPTP election race? According to Figure 4, around 40% of the respondents disagreed, and five percent strongly disagreed with the statement. Whereas 37% of the respondents were neutral, and only 18% of the respondents believed that political parties were in favor of women's candidature in the FPTP race. No one smashed the strongly agreed-upon option of the question.

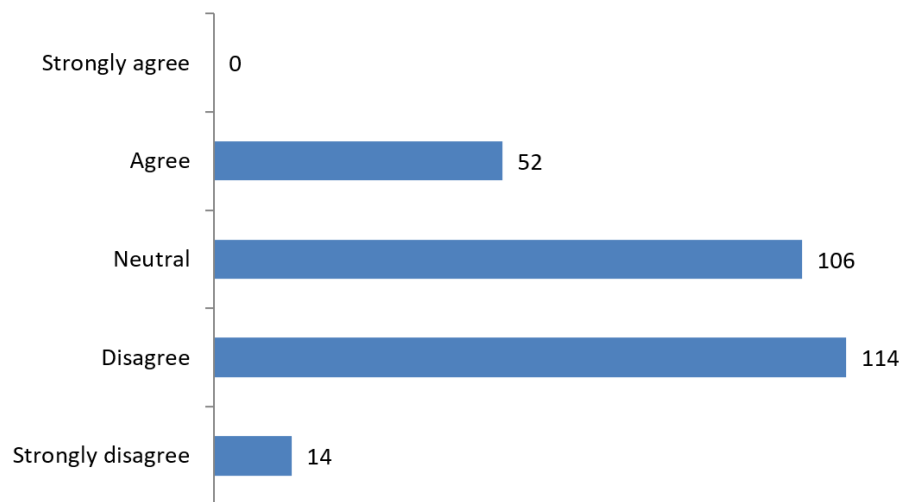


Figure 4. Political party and women candidacy.

2.5. Support of Political Parties, their Leaders, and Cadres for the Women Candidates

Do the political parties, their leaders, and cadres support the women candidates in the same way as they support the men candidates during the election campaign? Answering the question, as demonstrated in Table 3, about the two-third majority (65.48%) of respondents claimed that women candidates do not get support from political parties, their leaders, and cadres during the election campaigning as much as the men candidates get. Only 27.76% of the respondents accepted that women candidates also receive support in election campaigns like men. However, a few respondents (6.76%) agreed that female candidates get more support than male candidates. The

remaining 5 (1.75%) respondents answered differently than these options. They said that it would depend on female candidates and the leaders of the political party in a particular constituency. It would not be fair to generalize the same treatment across the whole country.

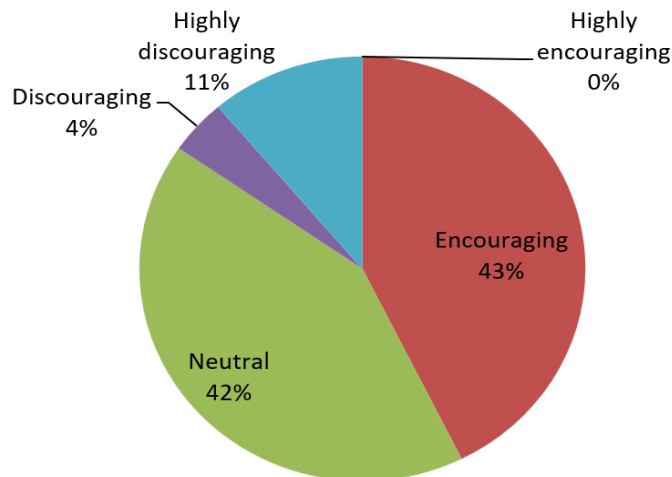
According to the [Nkereuwem \(2023\)](#) study, it was found that smaller political parties in Nigeria have fewer obstacles for women to participate. During the 2019 elections, nearly all female candidates running for federal seats belonged to small parties. In the 2023 electoral cycle, on average, women made up 11 percent of candidates from small parties, and several small parties exhibited better gender representation than larger parties. The difference in gender representation was notably more significant in dominant parties compared to newer or smaller parties when it came to national positions such as the presidency, the Senate, and the House of Representatives. In contrast, subnational elections had a lower gender gap, particularly for small parties, compared to national positions.

**Table 3.** Supports for the women candidates.

Descriptions	Number	Percentage
Equals to men candidates	78	27.76
Less than men candidates	184	65.48
They do more than men candidates	19	6.76
Total	281	100.00

*2.6. The attitude of people and voters towards the female candidates in the FPTP race*

The attitude and treatment of the common people and voters towards the female candidates are not highly encouraging, according to respondents, as [Figure 5](#) shows. However, 42.66% claimed that it is encouraging, and about the same number (41.96%) of the respondents believed that common people neither encourage nor discourage the female candidate; they seem neutral in this case. According to 4.20% of the respondents, women candidates have to face discouraging behavior and according to 11.19% of respondents, they encounter highly discouraging treatment from common people.



**Figure 5.** Social attitude to women's candidacy.

*2.7. Positive Aspects of the FPTP Electoral System for Women Candidates*

There are both positive and negative aspects of the FPTP electoral system for women as well as for male candidates. What would be the positive results of the FPTP electoral system for women candidates in the context of Nepal? It was a question in our survey. According to [Table 4](#), 47.55% of the respondents claimed that it was an opportunity to go out in public. Similarly, 36.71% of the respondents argued that it increases the leadership capacity of women candidates and that they will be empowered, and 9.79% of the respondents agreed that it provides an opportunity for women candidates to learn new and various knowledge regarding elections and politics. According



to 3.85% of respondents, it develops the rhetorical skills of female candidates. However, 2.10% of respondents claimed that it shows women need not reserve quotas; they are capable of running in the FPTP race.

**Table 4.** Positive aspects of FPTP.

Descriptions	Number	Percentage
Development of rhetorical skills	11	3.85
Increment in leadership capacity and empowerment	105	36.71
Opportunity to go among the public	136	47.55
Opportunity to learn new and various knowledge	28	9.79
Others	6	2.10
Total	286	100.00

### 2.8. Negative Aspects of the FPTP Electoral System for Women Candidates

Regarding the negative aspects of the FPTP electoral system, as Table 5 shows, the majority (54.20%) of the respondents accepted that it is costly for female candidates. In terms of the economic condition of Nepalese women, the cost of the election seems very high. They cannot afford the election expenses. Similarly, 20.63% of respondents believed that the stereotyped thinking of Nepalese society does not accept women as leaders. So, they have to face many obstacles to win the FPTP race. Among the respondents, 14.34% of them argued that the FPTP electoral system is based on a male lifestyle. The whole electoral system is made for male candidates. That is unfit for female candidates. Similarly, criminal activities have occurred in the elections. Though they are against the law, these criminal activities are growing. They are not acceptable for male candidates, either, but they are unbearable for female candidates. Likewise, female candidates have to go far from home, work with male partners, and be active until late at night during the election campaign. These activities create a fear of social scandals for female candidates in a conservative society like Nepal. Altogether, 3.85% of the respondents pointed out it as one of the negative aspects of the FPTP electoral system for women candidates. Seven (2.45%) respondents gave different opinions on these options. They argued that political parties in Nepal field women candidates in those constituencies, where the parties have no strongholds. Parties expect the female candidates to lose. Similarly, they added that because of the burden of household responsibilities, women could not face the FPTP race.

**Table 5.** Negative aspects of FPTP.

Descriptions	Number	Percentage
Based on the male lifestyle	41	14.34
Costly	155	54.20
Criminalization in election	13	4.55
Fear of social scandals during the campaign	11	3.85
Stereotyped thinking that does not accept women as the leader	59	20.63
Others	7	2.45
Total	286	100.00

### 2.9. Reservation of a Constituency for Female Candidates

Is it right to reserve a constituency out of three only for women candidates in the FPTP electoral system? It would be a solution to increase the number of female representatives through the FPTP electoral system. A constituency among every three constituencies must be reserved only for female candidates. In response to this question, the majority (62%) of the respondents chose the "yes" option, and 34% of the respondents chose the "no" option Figure 6. A minority (4%) of the respondents have different opinions on the yes or no option. They wrote that women need an opportunity, not pity.

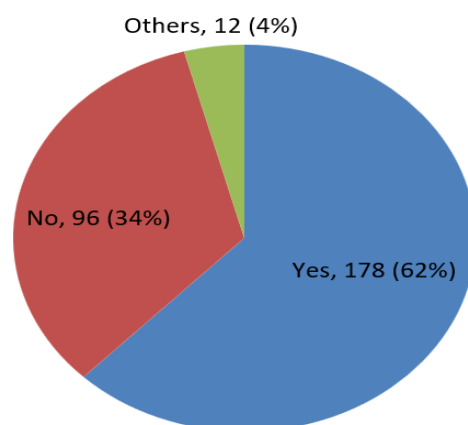


Figure 6. Reservation of constituency for women candidates.

### 2.10. Positive Aspects of the PR Electoral System for Women Candidates

Proportional Representation (PR) is one of the best electoral systems because it encourages women's participation in politics. There have been many positive aspects of this electoral system. We have tried to find out the positive aspects of the PR electoral system during our survey. As Table 6 demonstrates, 44.76% of the respondents agreed that the PR electoral system is an easy way to reach office. It does not need to work rigorously for the campaign. Similarly, 22.38% of the respondents claimed that it is more economic for women candidates than the FPTP electoral system. Likely, 16.78% of the respondents accepted that the PR electoral system is appropriate in the context of Nepalese society, and 16.08% of the respondents argued that the PR system is friendlier for women candidates than the FPTP system.

Table 6. Positive aspects of PR electoral system.

Descriptions	Number	Percentage
Appropriate in the context of Nepalese society	48	16.78
Economic	64	22.38
Need not work rigorously for the campaign	128	44.76
Women friendly	46	16.08
Total	286	100.00

### 2.11. Negative Aspects of the PR Electoral System for Women Candidates

We search for negative aspects of the PR electoral system, too. As Table 7 shows, about 70% of the respondents claimed that it is a party- and leader-centered electoral system. Those who are close to the leaders of the party get a chance to be elected through the PR system. Similarly, 24.48% of the respondents argued that the PR system does not develop the expected leadership capacity of women. Some respondents (2.10%) believed that PR candidates could not make their identity known among the people. Ten (3.50%) respondents have other views than these options. They argued that women leaders cannot show their capacity if they become candidates through the PR system. Similarly, women leaders became passive, less responsive to society and people, and tried to be near and dear to the supreme leader of the party. These are some of the negative aspects of the PR electoral system.

Table 7. Negative aspects of PR electoral system.

Descriptions	Number	Percentage
Lack of expected development in a leadership capacity	70	24.48
Party and leader centered	200	69.93
Lack of identity among people	6	2.10
Others	10	3.50
Total	286	100.00

2.12. Representatives Elected from the FPTP or PR Electoral System and Treatment of Society with them

According to the constitution of Nepal, there are two types of members in the House of Representatives (lower house of the parliament), 165 from the FPTP and 110 from the PR electoral system. In the provincial assembly, there are two types of members, too. Both types of members have equal status according to the constitution; however, whether society or people treat them equally is also a subject of discussion. As Figure 7 shows, most (85%) of the respondents disagreed with this statement. It means most Nepali people honor the representatives who came through the FPTP more than the PR electoral system.

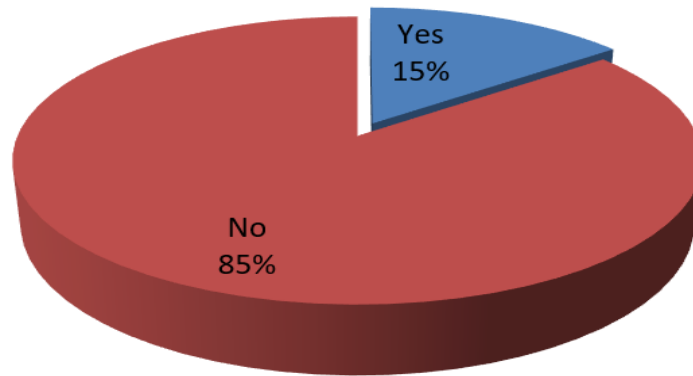


Figure 7. Equal treatment of representatives from FPTP and PR electoral system.

2.13. Constitutional and Legal Provisions for the Reservation of Women in Various Elective Offices

There are mandatory provisions in the constitution and laws of Nepal for women's representation at the federal, provincial, and local levels. Are these provisions necessary? This is also a debatable issue in the current situation in Nepal. Answering the question, two-thirds (66.43%) of the respondents claimed that it is necessary for Nepal to encourage the effective participation of women in politics. However, only 29.37% of the respondents agreed that it was extremely necessary Table 8. Seven (2.45%) respondents argued that it is necessary, but for a short period, not forever. The remaining three respondents chose the "others" option and wrote that it was necessary for the time being, but now it is enough. It is a time to develop women's capacity, become a self-reliant woman, and grab the opportunity rather than depend on the mercy of the supreme leaders for the posts and power.

Table 8. Necessary of reservation seat for women.

Descriptions	Number	Percentage
Extremely necessary	84	29.37
Necessary	190	66.43
Necessary for a short time	7	2.45
Unnecessary	2	0.70
Others	3	1.05
Total	286	100.00

2.14. Impact of Reservations on Women's Representation

After the promulgation of the constitution of Nepal in 2015, elections were held in 2017 at the federal, provincial, and local levels. There are noticeable female representatives at these three levels of government. How was it possible? In response to the question, as Figure 8 shows, almost 95% of respondents agreed that it was possible because of mandatory provisions of the constitution and laws for women's representation.

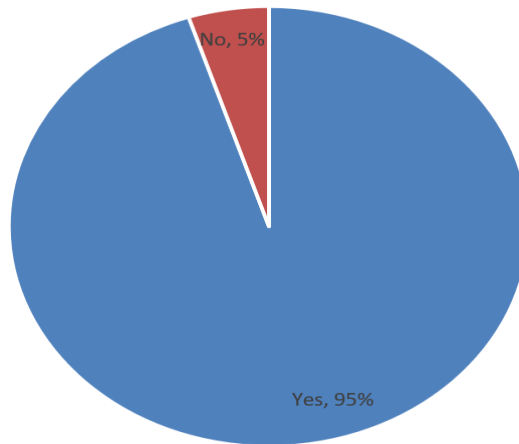


Figure 8. Impact of constitutional and legal provision on women's representation.

### 2.15. Advantages of the Quota in Elections for Women Candidates

Pointing to the advantage of the quota in the election for women, as Table 9 shows, 41.61% of respondents claimed that it is a justifiable compensation for gender discrimination to date, and 39.51% of respondents argued that it is an immediate way to enter the political field and an opportunity to develop leadership capacity for women. Some respondents (10.45%) thought that it reduced men's hegemony in the political field. Similarly, 8.39% of respondents believed that it was easy to access public posts for women as newcomers to the political field. Athukorala, Ramanathan, Applegate, and Bibler (2021) found that the reservation system proved fruitful for women's representation in electoral office in Sri Lanka.

Table 9. Advantages of quota.

Descriptions	Number	Percentage
An immediate way to enter the political field and opportunity to develop leadership capacity for women	113	39.51
Easy access to the public post for women	24	8.39
Justifiable compensation of gender discrimination to date	119	41.61
Reduction of men's hegemony in the political field	30	10.45
Total	286	100.00

### 2.16. Disadvantages of the Quota in Elections for Women Candidates

The quota system has many advantages as well as disadvantages, too. Pointing to the disadvantages of the quota system, 47.55% of the respondents claimed that it encourages women to be more obliged to party to be leaders than to people because of their kindness in choosing them for the post. Similarly, 38.11% of the respondents argued that it hinders enhancing women's leadership capacity. It makes women psychologically dependent on others, especially on the leaders of the party, rather than independent and self-sufficient. Among the respondents, 10.14% of them claim that it supports the saying that women cannot compete with men, and 4.20% of them believe that women representatives get a stigma of reservation Table 10.

Table 10. Disadvantages of quota.

Descriptions	Number	Percentage
It encourages women to be more obliged to party and leaders than to people	136	47.55
It hinders women's leadership capacity	109	38.11
It supports the saying that women cannot compete with men	29	10.14
Women get stigmatized for reservation	12	4.20
Total	286	100.00

### 2.17. Performances of Women Representatives

After the promulgation of the constitution of Nepal, many women representatives have been able to enter the hall of power at the federal, provincial, and local levels. How were their performances on those levels? It is also a critical question in Nepali politics.

**Table 11.** Evaluation of women representatives.

Descriptions	Number	Percentage
Extremely satisfactory	14	4.90
Less than expectation	98	34.27
Satisfactory	89	31.12
Success to create a feeling of newness	82	28.67
Others	3	1.05
Total	286	100.00

Evaluating the performances of women representatives, only 4.90% of the respondents claimed that Nepalese women representatives performed extremely satisfactorily, and 31.12% of the respondents believed that they worked satisfactorily, whereas 34.27% claimed that they performed less than people's expectations. However, 28.67% of respondents argued that they were successful in creating a feeling of newness. Three respondents (1.05%) gave their answers differently from the given options in Table 11. According to them, it creates a belief that women, too, can be leaders, and the distinction between public and private spheres based on gender has been blurred. Nonetheless, they also claim that the Nepalese political field is still dominated by male leaders, so women leaders cannot work as freely as they want.

### 3. CONCLUSION

A review of the national elections in Nepal reveals that not more than 12.50% of women could win the elected seat in comparison to their counter partners through the FPTP electoral system. In the election of HoR held in 2017, only six women (3.64%) out of 165 seats won through the FPTP electoral system, whereas 84 women (76.36%) were elected out of 110 seats through the PR electoral system. Both CA elections (held in 2008 and 2013) also produced similar results. It proves that the PR electoral system is more women-friendly in the context of Nepal. Most of the respondents also agreed that the PR electoral system is appropriate for women.

The FPTP electoral system has some positive aspects. It is an opportunity to go among the public; it increases leadership capacity and empowers women. It is an opportunity for them to gain various new knowledge, and it also develops rhetorical skills in women politicians. However, it fails to elect more women in the election. It has some negative aspects. The FPTP electoral system is very costly for female candidates. Stereotypical thinking in Nepali society does not accept women as leaders. That is why women candidates could not win the FPTP election fray. Similarly, it is based on the male lifestyle: criminalization in the election and fear of social scandals during the campaign discourage women from running for office.

One of the conclusions of this article is that to reduce the defects of the FPTP electoral system and to increase the participation of women under this electoral system, every three constituencies should be considered a cluster, and provision should be made that only women can be candidates in a constituency of a cluster. A circular system should be implemented in this. That is, in one of those three constituencies of a cluster, the first constituency in one election, the second constituency in the other, and the third constituency in the next election should be separated for women candidates. To ensure equitable treatment for all individuals who have made contributions to a certain constituency, it is important to prevent any instances of unfairness or bias. Equitable dispensation of justice is a fundamental principle that should be upheld in every democratic society.

There are various positive aspects of the PR electoral system. Candidates need not work rigorously for the campaign. It is economic and appropriate in the context of Nepalese society. These are the woman-friendly

characteristics of the PR electoral system. It has some negative aspects, too. It is a party- and leader-centered system. It does not develop the leadership capacity of women or create their distinct identity among people. However, the PR electoral system favors female candidates. The result of the past elections in Nepal and the survey in this article prove this fact.

The PR electoral system with quotas catalyzes women's representation a lot. However, the quota has positive aspects as well as negative sides, too. On the one hand, the provision of quotas for women is a justifiable compensation for gender discrimination to date. Similarly, it is an immediate way to enter the political field and an opportunity to develop leadership capacity for women. On the other hand, the provision of quotas encourages women to be more obliged to the parties and their leaders than to people. Likewise, it hinders women's leadership capacity; it supports the saying that women cannot compete with men; and it stigmatizes women of reservation. Regardless, for the time being, a country like Nepal needs a proportional electoral system with a quota for women to create a gender-just society.

#### 4. IMPLICATION

While the FPTP system has some positive aspects, such as providing opportunities for women candidates to engage with the public, develop leadership skills, and gain knowledge, it falls short in terms of electing a significant number of women. The costliness for women candidates, societal stereotypes that discourage women from leadership roles, and the influence of a male-centric lifestyle contribute to the lower representation of women in FPTP elections. Overall, the implication is that adopting or prioritizing the PR electoral system in Nepal could lead to increased gender parity in elected positions and better representation of women in the political sphere.

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