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# Gender Representation of Selected Women Politicians in the Digital Era: A Textual Analysis

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## ABSTRACT

The study explored the relationship between Filipino women politicians and their political roles as depicted in media interviews to generate new findings and broader societal perspectives on gender representation. Sandra Harding's Feminist Standpoint Theory was applied to the research, which offers a nuanced understanding of the interplay between gender, power, and political agency, ultimately illuminating how female politicians shape and transform contemporary governance. The study adopted qualitative research and textual analysis to examine the content of media interviews. It seeks to reveal the rich tapestry of meanings embedded within the text, showcasing the multiple interpretations that can arise and the depth of the text's significance.

Research findings showed that women politicians adeptly negotiate power dynamics by balancing their political roles and individual identities. They assert their authority in diverse ways, even in challenging circumstances. Each politician's interactions are shaped by their gender. For instance, they manifested different levels of assertiveness, vulnerability, strength, and confidence between the interviews. Moreover, the interviews contributed to a wide-ranging discourse on gender equality and political empowerment. Women politicians are encouraged to actively use media institutions to highlight their leadership and policy knowledge. Strategically interacting with the media could shift public opinion, refute disinformation, and promote causes significant to women and society in the digital era. The findings highlighted the influence of women politicians on policy-making and their impact on future generations of leaders.

**Keywords:** *digital era, gender representation, Polytechnic University of the Philippines*

## INTRODUCTION

Media in the digital age does not merely reflect reality but constructs it. The portrayal of women in politics is all over online spaces. The media continuously shapes opinions and fuels debates about women's capabilities. With every post, article, and broadcast, netizens absorb narratives that can empower, distort, or redefine the role of women in leadership. Over the past few decades, female leaders' increasing presence and influence have signaled a significant societal shift toward greater gender inclusivity. Yet, despite this progress, many challenges remain.

Gender has consistently gained attention in academic and social discourse in the last ten years. Movements calling for equality in these fields have been the reason for this attention. According to Santoniccolo, Trombetta, Paradiso, and Rolle (2023), there has been an increase in discussions about gender, especially in the field of education. The word "gender" now appears in over twice as many publication titles as before, proving how much the conversation has grown. Writers worldwide are diving into how media shapes how we see gender—what we expect, believe, and even assume about others. With media influencing attitudes at every turn, gender representation is becoming a pressing issue that researchers cannot afford to ignore.

In Philippine politics, women face profoundly ingrained gender stereotypes. Leadership still appears to be a man's domain. Reinforcing biases will make it harder for women to be recognized for their competence rather than their gender. Licudo, Estigoy, Hail, and Vargas (2022) argue that these outdated perceptions continue to shape the political landscape. The labels force women to constantly prove themselves in ways their male counterparts rarely do. However, a noticeable trend is that women are becoming more aspirational to rise to higher positions in elected office, defying these deeply embedded stereotypes and striving for more significant roles within the government machinery.

In the past, many studies have focused on traditional media to explore the topic of gender. At this point, the researcher will explore how their roles and actions were depicted in the media interviews to bring new findings and insights that will benefit the study's recipients. Against this backdrop, the present study investigates the correlation between the media portrayals of *Filipino* women politicians in interviews and their actual political roles. By critically analyzing these narratives, the research aims to generate a nuanced outlook on gender representation. The primary objective is to illuminate women's challenges and achievements in political roles. Examining how these women are depicted in media interviews and broader political discourse not only reveals prevailing societal attitudes toward gender but also highlights their impact on policy-making. Ultimately, this study seeks to underscore

the influence of female political figures on contemporary governance and inspire future generations of leaders.

### **Objectives Of The Study**

The study's conduct is highly relevant and timely, thoroughly analyzing how women politicians are portrayed in media interviews. By analyzing media sources, the study seeks to identify representation patterns and the overall impact of these portrayals on public perception, fostering a more impartial media environment and ensuring that women's voices in politics are appropriately represented.

- To determine how women politicians negotiate power as depicted in the interviews of broadcast journalist Karen Davila.
- To identify the scenes or parts of the interviews that depict a feminist standpoint.
- To examine how women politicians express their political roles as shown in the interviews.
- To analyze the feminist insights that emerged from Karen Davila's interviews with female politicians.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The researcher attempts to explore the portrayal of women politicians in media interviews. The primary research topic aligns with Qualitative Research Design, which generally works with written texts, often transcriptions of individual interviews or focus group conversations, and seeks to understand the meaning of experience in a study sample (Grossoehme, 2014). By employing this approach, the research problems will be addressed.

The researcher utilized textual analysis. It is a method that looks at media and pop culture content, such as newspaper articles, TV shows, and websites (Fürsich, 2018). Unlike traditional approaches to finding one "right" interpretation, textual analysis focuses on the cultural and ideological messages within a text. It is about uncovering the layers of meaning that are in the content. By examining various elements such as context, language, and structure, textual analysis illuminates the multiple interpretations that can arise, showcasing the complexity and depth of the text's significance.

For this study, the data sources refer to the media interviews conducted by broadcast journalist Karen Davila with the selected women politicians, Senator Imee Marcos, Governor Gwen Garcia, and Senator Cynthia Villar. The data is drawn primarily from media interviews conducted on the ABS-CBN News Channel (ANC), known for its journalistic integrity and comprehensive coverage. ANC provides a wealth of interviews and coverage across various

topics, making it a valuable resource for understanding media narratives and public discourse, as well as a data source for the study.

Although these interviews were produced for broadcasting, they are easily accessible on video-embedded social media platforms. Social media has become a hybrid platform that shapes how content circulates through personal algorithms and social context. Being uploaded, these interviews become part of the ever-evolving digital spaces. The meaning and influence of such interviews evolve through the participatory nature of digital culture.

Online viewers actively participate in spreading these materials. People can easily interact by commenting, sharing, or even remixing the content on platforms. By being uploaded in a transcending space, these interviews can amplify political messages and influence public opinion. The digital afterlife of these broadcast interviews adds a layer to public conversation. The shift of medium fits well with the study's focus on gender representation. The study points out that once traditional media is shared online, algorithms often play a role in how it is received.

Karen Davila was chosen based on several key factors: credibility, public reach, and interview style. Over the years, she has established herself as one of the top broadcast journalists in the Philippines. The "Davila-style" of interviewing is known for asking tough questions about a public servant's political and personal dimensions. Her interviews often circulate widely and spark national conversations. Because of her unique approach, she's a strong choice to explore how media shapes gender in political spaces.

Senator Imee Marcos has established herself as a significant figure in the Senate, known for advocating various socio-economic issues. Governor Gwendolyn Garcia has a strong track record of leadership in her province, emphasizing developmental projects and community empowerment. Senator Cynthia Villar, recognized for her extensive work in agriculture and small business support, has considerably impacted legislative processes.

These three women come from different regions and represent a range of political views. That alone gives a broader picture of how women navigate leadership in different contexts. They have each spent years in politics and are often seen in the media. Because they are often in the public eye, it positions them well in how female leaders are seen and represented. When viewed side by side, their different ways of speaking and leading offer a deeper look at how each approaches power and communication.

As researchers, we exercised utmost impartiality in selecting the three women politicians. By thoroughly examining their interviews, we can compare their distinctive personalities, leadership styles, and perspectives on issues affecting their constituents and the nation as a whole. By analyzing their insights and portrayals in the media, we aim to

reveal the richness of their experiences and how they shape public perception through their interviews.

Instrumentation plays a critical role in the research process. It helps guarantee the integrity and quality of data collected. In this study, the data gathered from media interviews are systematically coded. The coding process aims to identify key patterns and themes that emerge from the interviews for a more extensive information analysis. Comprehensive monitoring and analysis sheets are provided, ensuring all relevant data is thoroughly tracked and evaluated. These tools help the researcher draw meaningful conclusions and insights from the collected data.

Maintaining high ethical standards throughout the study is essential to fostering a culture of integrity for the researcher and providing valuable insights to the study's recipients with credible, trustworthy findings. The conduct of the study reflects the core values of accuracy, transparency, and responsible research methods.

The University Research Ethics Center, part of the Office of the Vice President for Research, Extension, and Development Research Management Office, approved the study's ethical clearance on December 2, 2024. The study successfully passed the evaluation conducted by the PUP Research Ethics Committee (REC) according to the requirements set by the Philippine Health Research Ethics Board (PHREB).

The review type was classified as "Exempted." Ms. Julie Charmain Bonifacio, Chief of the Research Ethics Section, signed the clearance. Following this approval, the researcher was advised to proceed with the research project.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This chapter discusses the textual analysis conducted for each woman politician and the results based on the sub-questions presented in the problem statement.

The data-gathering process was approached systematically. The objective was to examine how women politicians were represented in the interviews conducted by broadcast journalist Karen Davila.

The initial step was compiling the interviews. The researcher selected recorded interviews with women politicians. Once the interviews were selected, they were transcribed for coding and textual analysis. The transcription process was carried out with precision. The researcher ensured that every word, intonation, and nuance was accurately captured. The transcript was essential for thoroughly examining the content, structure, theme, and language used during the interviews. The relevant themes and patterns were identified among the

women politicians. The analysis paid particular attention to the language of the interviewer and the interviewees, the thematic elements, and the overall structure of the interviews.

**Table 1**

*Media Interviews with Women Politicians*

Institution	Group A	Group B
<p>Polytechnic University of the Philippines</p>	<p>Media interview number 1: PH Senator Imee Marcos on People’s Initiative for Cha-Cha, Duterte tirades vs. Marcos - Headstart</p> 	<p>Media interview number 2: One-on-One with Cebu Governor Gwen Garcia - Headstart</p> 
	<p>Media interview number 3: Karen Davila with Rep. Cynthia Villar – Headstart</p> 	

**Table 2**  
Interview Coding Guide of Women Politicians

Name of Politician	Excerpt	Theme	Body Language	Interpretation
<p><b>Senator Imee Marcos</b></p>	<p><i>“Huwag naman sa pamamaraan na ganito. It is misleading, deceiving, there are many issues that are involved... Huwag naman tinatangay yung tao, binobobo tayo.”</i></p>	<p>Exploitation in Political Processes</p>	<p>Leaning in, sustained eye contact, stress on “<i>Huwag</i>,” increasing volume of voice</p>	<p>Assertive posture and vocal emphasis challenge patriarchal political tactics. The response frames resistance to manipulation from systemic exploitation.</p>
	<p><i>“Ang lagi nilang reklamo was infrastructure... A change in the Constitution will not be a silver bullet and magically bring droves of foreign investors here.”</i></p>	<p>Equitable Development</p>	<p>Composed, shaking head, monotone, sustained eye contact</p>	<p>Skeptical head-shaking and controlled tone critique oversimplified solutions. She rejects “silver bullet” solutions that ignore intersectional inequities.</p>
	<p><i>“I’m also a mother, so like you, we have a stake in the future through our children.”</i></p>	<p>Intergenerational Responsibility</p>	<p>Genuine smile, emphasizes the word “mother,” shifting eye contact</p>	<p>Leverages maternal identity to legitimize political authority. She aligns with patriarchal valorization of motherhood.</p>
	<p><i>“I brought [VP Sara Duterte] in and convinced her to be the running mate of my brother... We determined to coin the name UniTeam.”</i></p>	<p>Political Solidarity</p>	<p>Stress on “UniTeam,” genuine smile, sustained eye contact, deliberate pauses</p>	<p>Uses relational language (“UniTeam”) to emphasize collaboration. Confident body language asserts collective power.</p>
<p><i>“The lack of equity, the injustice really. It’s historical and every Mindanaoan will tell you that. Every from Luzon like me, from the region of Ilocos can see the stark contrast.”</i></p>	<p>Regional Inequity</p>	<p>Head shaking, deliberate pauses, sustained eye contact</p>	<p>Frustrated gestures are a reaction to widespread neglect of regions. Thus, the reaction intersects with gendered marginalization. The sustained eye contact demands accountability for historical inequities impacting women in peripheral areas.</p>	

Name of Politician	Excerpt	Theme	Body Language	Interpretation
<p><b>Senator Cynthia Villar</b></p>	<p><i>"I guess I will work on providing livelihood for women."</i></p>	<p>Women's Economic Empowerment</p>	<p>Monotone, soft volume, clasped hands</p>	<p>The subdued delivery reflects gendered constraints on assertiveness. The clasped hands signal determination to address economic disparities. The response is about women's labor as central to pervasive equity.</p>
	<p><i>"I'm strong but he's stronger... Manny goes on his own and I go on my own."</i></p>	<p>Political Autonomy</p>	<p>Leaning in, monotone, soft volume, genuine smile, clasped hands</p>	<p>Leaning in asserts autonomy while soft tone and smile navigate gendered expectations. The response and nonverbal cues are a defiance to femininity.</p>
	<p><i>"It's not ethics. It's politics."</i></p>	<p>Systemic Fairness</p>	<p>Monotone, soft volume, slouched back, stoic face, raises eyebrows</p>	<p>The slouched posture and stoicism reflect resignation. The raised eyebrows critique politicized injustice against her husband. The response exposes how institutional biases can be harmful.</p>

Name of Politician	Excerpt	Theme	Body Language	Interpretation
<p><b>Governor Gwen Garcia</b> <b>Governor Gwen Garcia</b></p>	<p><i>“It merely states that in open, well-ventilated areas, the use of masks shall be optional. Optional is the operative word here.”</i></p>	<p>Local Autonomy</p>	<p>Leaning in, stoic facial expression, animated gesture</p>	<p>The stoic expression and animated gestures assert authority in male-dominated spaces. Advocates decentralized governance and gives emphasis on local agencies. It is a feminist critique of centralized, often patriarchal control.</p>
	<p><i>“I said that is anti-poor. The only people that you would apprehend would be those walking on the streets because they cannot afford to ride in expensive cars.”</i></p>	<p>Anti-poor Policies</p>	<p>Visible frustration, stoic face, rapid speech, animated gesture</p>	<p>Animated gestures and rapid speech intensify a critique of oppression. The stoicism present in her face masks emotional labor through her demand for empathy.</p>
	<p><i>“Why was this not ever done during the campaigns when hundreds of thousands were gathered and many of them without face masks?”</i></p>	<p>Hypocrisy in Governance</p>	<p>Head shaking, visible disbelief, stoic face, deliberate pauses</p>	<p>Headshaking and pauses expose performative governance against the poor. She calls out hypocrisy from public health theatrics targeting marginalized groups while excusing elite gatherings.</p>
	<p><i>“Give them face masks. Let us not make this punitive.”</i></p>	<p>Pro-poor Solutions</p>	<p>Animated gestures, sustained eye contact, brief flashes of frustration</p>	<p>Sustained eye contact and gestures advocate redistributive justice over punishment. The excerpt channels feminist ethics of care. She antedotes to patriarchal, carceral governance.</p>

The following results are derived from textual analysis of three women politicians with varying personalities and backgrounds based on the interviews of broadcaster Karen Davila.

### **1. Scenes or parts of the interviews that depict a feminist standpoint.**

Most of the interviews showed strategic communication influenced by certain viewpoints of female leaders. Common themes highlighted the significance of their personal experiences in influencing their leadership. The interviews also emphasize how their words and deeds reflect feminist ideals.

The following scenes or parts of the interviews depict a feminist standpoint:

- Senator Imee Marcos intentionally frames constitutional reform to attain regionally equal development. In response to criticism from the Duterte family, she asserts her independence while maintaining her political background.
- Governor Gwen Garcia argues that centralized mandates are unrealistic and stress local authority. She portrays her leadership as mindful of local demands. She can use straightforward language to draw attention to social injustices brought about by top-down policies. Her actions demonstrate a form of political agency grounded in her situated knowledge.
- Senator Cynthia Villar displays her identity as a supportive spouse and government official by handling the C-5 crisis with a poised tone and body language. However, she keeps her unique political identity while humanizing her husband with personal stories. The interviews discreetly mirror society's tendency to judge female leaders using a gendered lens despite their assertive positions. Their behavior is frequently portrayed in a way that supports ideas of empathy, compassion, and sensitivity — all of which, while admirable, run the risk of perpetuating traditional Filipino gender norms.

### **2. Women politicians express their political roles, as shown in the interviews.**

The interviews reveal that traditional gender norms and women's ability to defy these expectations influence their leadership or political roles. The women interviewed, Imee Marcos, Gwen Garcia, and Cynthia Villar, showed different ways of establishing their political identities by embodying their power, personal histories, and political resistance.

**Authority and Leadership.** Female politicians showed leadership and authority by addressing critical policy issues with action and expertise. Imee Marcos made a persuasive case for constitutional reform by reflecting on her experiences. Her arguments regarding the

apparent neglect of Mindanao and its inequality defend her stance. The strategic structuring of her political stance shows leadership rooted in an informed, almost authoritative perspective as she assesses governing structures and argues for reform.

Gwen Garcia positions herself as a leader prepared to question centralized power. She displayed leadership by challenging the national mask mandate. She conveyed assertiveness and readiness to defy higher authorities through her strong position on localized governance. She claimed that national requirements are unrealistic for her constituents. The disobedience not only demonstrated her leadership abilities but also her dedication to meeting the needs of her people. She established her persona as someone who is not hesitant to use her power for the good of her constituents.

**Social Expectations.** The women in the interviews manage complicated gender-related social expectations despite their assertive leadership. These expectations go against conventional views and frequently clash with their political roles. Women leaders must possess empathy, compassion, and communication skills —often associated with stereotypically feminine characteristics. Cynthia Villar’s accounts of her resilience and support to her husband during his campaign were presented as assets. She highlighted her role as a devoted wife and a politician. This contrast depicts women’s political dilemmas when they attempt to balance their power and conventional gender norms.

In Gwen Garcia’s instance, she challenged the notion that women in politics should merely submit to authority by criticizing the government’s mandate to public health regulations. She defends her local governing approach by opposing these regulations and defies being limited to the gendered stereotypes of being meek or soft-spoken. The act of defiance is an example of how women negotiate and occasionally go against social norms.

**Challenges and Resistance.** As demonstrated in the interviews, women politicians frequently face challenges they can overcome with resilience and strategic thinking. Gwen Garcia’s opposition to national public health regulations shows that she opposes the centralized authority, which, in her opinion, undermines local government. Garcia criticized the policy and the more extensive power system that upholds it by presenting the mandates as unjust and unrealistic, particularly for those from low-income backgrounds. Although her opposition is an obvious demonstration of her power and leadership, it also draws attention to the challenges faced by women in politics when they challenge established perceptions.

Imee Marcos also faced opposition when she attempted to walk around her political views with her family’s political past. She supports regional equity and constitutional reform but frequently finds herself torn between political reality and expectations from her family. She opposed the political system and the pressures of her family and personal life that tried

to influence her choices. The interview enables her to overcome this opposition by reaffirming her political autonomy while embracing the significance of her family's tradition.

### **3. Feminist insights that emerged from Karen Davila's interviews with female politicians.**

The interviews clarified how women in politics experience and question established power hierarchies. Senator Imee Marcos' tactic stresses how difficult it is to maintain political and personal credibility. Her role as a female politician is intrinsically connected to her familial legacy and political agency. She is challenging traditional gender roles and expectations in the Filipino political sphere.

Governor Gwen Garcia emphasizes the difficulties faced in establishing an agreement between local and national concerns from a feminist perspective. Her strategic foresight helped Cebu lead the country in pandemic responses and post-pandemic recovery efforts. Despite being tormented by sundry contentions during her years in governance, Garcia, "the Iron Lady of the Southern Philippines," continues to demonstrate strength and perseverance.

Senator Cynthia Villar's remarks on her husband's political ambitions conflicted between personal identity and political power. The interview captured the changing story of a woman in political leadership. Senator Villar's composed manner and determined expression exude authority and resolve. She plays a crucial role in political discourse and decision-making, which defies conventional gender norms. The interviews disclosed how women manage and construct political narratives in their respective circumstances.

About the reviewed literature and studies, the media interviews highlighted the changing standards for powerful women, who are now leading with both effectiveness and compassion. They represent gender roles as a force for change rather than as passive participants in political affairs. They are paving the way for other women politicians to be proactive through actions that transcend rhetoric. They also demonstrate the changing nature of women politicians and the continual change in society's views of gender roles.

Women politicians, as the subject of this study, can survive and thrive in a world driven by rapid technological advancement by adapting to realistic strategies such as embracing lifelong learning and staying updated on new technologies (maximizing the use of digital media to their advantage), developing digital savvy, building flexible and active mindset, leveraging collaborative networks can guide their adaptation efforts, and fostering an innovative culture. This way, they can remain at the forefront of the political sphere. It's important to remember that adaptability is pivotal.

### **Critical Essay**

Women in politics continue to face barriers because of deeply embedded gender norms. Despite growing participation, they must work within a patriarchal system. How female politicians assert their leadership indicates broader gender dynamics. Their communication styles, body language, and rhetorical devices are crucial for negotiating power. The challenge is maintaining credibility in an environment where women are held to different standards than men. A comprehensive examination of how women in politics are portrayed and reshaped in political leadership is necessary due to the connection between gender, politics, and public opinion.

### **Media Portrayal and Political Narratives**

The media plays a decisive role in shaping public perception of women politicians. Coverage often emphasizes personal attributes such as motherhood, family roles, and emotions — rather than competence. Female politicians are scrutinized in ways that their male counterparts rarely experience. Assertive women are labeled as aggressive, while those who show emotion are seen as weak.

Interviews and public appearances force women to defend their legitimacy in leadership roles rather than focus on governance. Selective framing influences voters by reinforcing stereotypes, claiming or diminishing their authority. While some women reclaim narratives through rhetoric, the challenge remains: the media's portrayal of female politicians is rarely neutral. The biases against being a woman continue to shape their political life.

In her interview, Senator Imee Marcos asserted her independence from her family's political history. She redefined constitutional reform as a tool for regional equity. Governor Gwen Garcia used blunt rhetoric to highlight structural inequality. The governor argued for local authority to challenge the centralized governance. Meanwhile, Senator Cynthia Villar softened her firm stance calmly by discussing political issues and personal anecdotes. These representations highlight the media's dilemma: women in politics must be intelligent, not controlling, and strong without appearing unapproachable.

### **Gender Stereotypes in Politics**

Stereotypes about women's leadership persist, casting them as either too emotional or too cold, too passive or too aggressive. This double bind forces women to balance authority with likability—a demand rarely imposed on male politicians. Women who challenge traditional norms by asserting power are often met with resistance, while those who embrace conventional roles risk being sidelined.

There are also gendered assumptions regarding decision-making. Although empathy is expected of women in politics, these qualities are written off as flaws rather than assets in politics that value power and decisiveness. These stereotypes affect how female politicians administer their careers. Such assumptions affect their rhetorical choices and placement in leadership roles to appeal to most voters.

Arrogance is often confused with strength. Aggression is the term for assertiveness. While empathy is expected, too much of it is interpreted as a sign of weakness. Senator Marcos' position on constitutional reform was looked at not only for its merits but also for how it fit—or didn't fit—with being a daughter of a political dynasty. Governor Garcia's refusal to follow centralized health regulations made her appear reckless or decisive, depending on who was watching. On the other hand, Senator Villar handled political controversy by being a supportive wife.

### **Challenging Traditional Gender Roles**

The deeply embedded gender roles influence the perception and self-expression of female politicians in society. A nurturing, accommodative leadership style is frequently expected of women. Such a style restricts their capacity without facing criticism. Patriarchal political institutions reinforce societal limitations. The machismo-rooted environment dictates the qualities that are appropriate for female leaders.

However, some women politicians challenge these roles by breaking free from expectations. Some intentionally integrate assertiveness and femininity to avoid criticism. Women in politics must constantly maintain the line between their identities and careers. They often adjust to changing expectations while attempting to lead on their terms.

Philippine politics is still male-dominated, and women are supposed to prove themselves. The interviews show how female politicians challenge these roles. Governor Garcia's disobedience of national directives challenges the notion that women in leadership should yield to superiors. Senator Marcos' focus on economic regionalism focuses on political strategy and conventional assumptions. Although Senator Villar conforms to traditional gender stereotypes, she eventually controls her position within political discourse. These women each create their definition of leadership.

### **The Fight for Gender Equality in Politics**

Women are still underrepresented in executive, legislative, and decision-making roles. The so-called gender equality in politics is still elusive. Due to structural obstacles, women

find entering and maintaining political careers more challenging. Women are subjected to more scrutiny and harsher criticism than men, even when they are in high positions.

The battle for gender parity in political representation should involve changing the conditions impeding women's success. To achieve gender equality in politics, systemic change must occur. Such changes must include electoral reforms and cultural changes in the definition and value of leadership.

The interviews prove the battle women wage in silence to be heard in policy and governance. Despite being bound by her family, Senator Marcos reclaims her independence in her stance. Governor Garcia refuses to follow passive governance. She is adamant about policies that she believes are unrealistic. Senator Villar's interview emphasizes the fine line women must walk to thrive. The experiences of these women show that political power is still an unequal field that requires proof rarely expected of men.

### **Status of Political Participation and Empowerment**

Women are participating in politics, but empowerment is still a problem. Women continue to face discrimination from institutions and society. Representation is only one aspect of political empowerment; another is directing political movements and laws, and subverting power structures. When women achieve political power, they put in more effort to establish authority. Despite monumental advancements, female politicians must show their value in ways that men are rarely asked to.

Women's political participation should always be about being free from discrimination. The challenges of upholding credibility are made clear by the said interviews. There is political opposition and family scrutiny of Senator Marcos' constitutional reform efforts. Governor Garcia's fight for local autonomy is a systemic discrimination. Senator Villar uses her strategic poise as a buffer against gendered criticism. The following accounts demonstrate that, despite advancements in representation, the fight for empowerment continues.

### **Achievements and Resilience in Leadership**

Female politicians have made strides despite obstacles. They have led countries, shaped laws, and challenged practices. They have broken down barriers and demonstrated that leadership is not a gender issue. Female politicians have advocated essential human rights, healthcare, and education issues. They contribute fresh perspectives to the development of public policy.

Their accomplishments show resilience in a field dominated by men. Their achievements, however, should not be viewed as anomalies. They are proof of what can

happen when structural obstacles are eliminated. The current challenge is ensuring these victories become part of a more significant movement.

Garcia's leadership during the pandemic demonstrated the efficacy of her resistance to centralized directives. She placed Cebu at the forefront of localized governance. Marcos persists in advocating for economic reform and regional development. Opposing positions were publicized despite the specter of her family's dynasty. Villar maintains her power in politics by projecting a calm public persona. These women show that female leadership is not an exception but a requirement. They are directly influencing politics rather than merely existing in it.

### **Feminist Leadership Outside the Elite**

Although the focus of this study is elite politicians, the study acknowledges the limitations of the structure. Leadership and resistance can also emerge from the margins. Women are subjected to exclusions based on their class, culture, identity, and gender. They participate in politics under conditions entirely different from those of the elite. They frequently pose more immediate threats and have fewer resources. Their accounts provide insights into how political systems are practiced on the ground.

Leni Robredo drove one of the largest grassroots campaigns in Philippine electoral history during her 2022 Presidential Campaign. Leni Robredo was already a well-known public figure, being the sitting vice president. However, she positioned herself outside of the enacted elite power blocs. She depended instead on civic engagement and grassroots mobilization. She was portrayed in public as a protective "mother" figure, which fulfilled gendered norms but also worked against her. She was the focus of disinformation campaigns and gender biased attacks (**Baizas, 2022**). The most unsettling of these was a deepfake sex video that purportedly included her daughter (**Acosta, 2022**). The harassment points out how women in political systems with a male-preponderance cause a strongly gendered reaction.

Amira Lidasan is a Moro activist and a 2025 senatorial candidate. She represents a living example of how diverse identities come together in politics. As a Muslim woman, she has consistently spoken out against Islamophobia and the marginalization of the Moro people (**Lidasan, 2025**). Lidasan is the exact representation of how a different identity can coexist in politics. She works for greater representation and opposes Islamophobia. She speaks out against offensive statements, particularly those that target her religion and culture. The Moro leader draws attention to the ways that the Philippine political system frequently misrepresents Muslim experiences. Lidasan's political experience shows that feminism, at its core, includes the fight for cultural and religious dignity.

Geraldine Roman is the first transgender member of the Philippine Congress. Beyond symbolic presence, Roman actively challenges heteronormative and patriarchal norms. The congresswoman publicly condemned the sexist remarks made by a local candidate regarding single mothers (**Quismorio, 2025**). In addition to advocating for the LGBTQIA+ community, she uses her platform to advocate for women's rights more broadly. Roman's leadership shows how politics can challenge traditional gender roles and strengthen feminism to include more diverse identities.

### **Implications on Women's Political Representation**

The representation of women in politics impacts society at large. Female politicians debunk prejudices and establish inclusive governments. However, their obstacles reveal the work that still needs to be done. The current patriarchal systems are reinforced by unequal representation. The system restricts a variety of perspectives in policymaking. Ensuring that governance represents the entire range of societal needs should be the goal of gender equality in politics. Restructuring the political system and removing obstacles are necessary to address these problems. Once these problems are addressed, women can lead without compromise. Women's political representation affects how future female leaders are viewed and treated. The interviews indicate the struggle between political ambitions and social standards. These women's achievements provide a model for overcoming gendered barriers. The realities point out the prejudices that make leadership difficult for women. Their capacity to redefine political power challenges the systems that aim to restrict them.

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

As portrayed in the media interview, women politicians expressed their political roles differently by embodying their power, personal narratives, and individual stances. Persistent challenges in achieving equitable representation underline the need to consider diverse perspectives on women's political roles.

What stands out in these interviews is the consistent resistance these women express to the idea that women must occupy subservient political roles. They reject the notion that women should be submissive, which is a gendered standard. Women can challenge conventions, lead confidently, and express their political identities in ways that defy constricting gender boundaries. As women continue asserting their influence, their leadership is a monument to the changing landscape of women in politics.

The study gives us valuable insight into the experiences of elite women politicians, but it is important to be clear about its limitations. By focusing only on women at the elite level, the study leaves out the lived experiences of marginalized groups. Grassroots leaders,

Muslim women, and LGBTQIA+ women, for example, experience political lives that are very different. Exploring their stories in a follow-up study would show how women lead political structures in often difficult ways. Including these perspectives would give us a clearer, fuller picture of women's political leadership. Future studies could turn to marginalized women in local politics to understand how power is built outside the spotlight.

In light of the study's conclusions, the following recommendations may be beneficial:

**Media Organizations and Journalists.** Representing female politicians truthfully and genuinely could be a top priority for media outlets and journalists. They could end preconceptions and emphasize their leadership abilities and achievements. An authentic and accurate representation will promote gender parity in media portrayal. They can help the public achieve a comprehensive and fair view of women in politics. The Presidential Communications Operation Office (PCOO) has developed a Gender-Fair Media Guidebook, which can offer helpful resources for delivering messages in a gender-neutral manner. The Philippine Commission on Women has likewise launched a similar initiative. A standardized guidebook will guarantee an inclusive representation.

**Women Politicians.** The Philippines' patriarchal political system can be conquered and changed by female politicians actively participating in capacity-building programs. Such programs will improve public speaking, policy knowledge, and leadership skills. In this sense, taking part in initiatives with training and mentoring for female leaders is beneficial. Creating strong support systems with organizations and fellow female leaders offers a forum for exchanging best practices. Female politicians can consider actively using media outlets and social media platforms to increase the visibility of their voices and viewpoints. They could highlight their resilience, leadership, and policy knowledge. Maintaining authenticity and policy advocacy will challenge traditional gender norms. Strategically interacting with the media could shift public opinion, debunk disinformation, and promote significant causes to women and society.

**Educational Institutions.** Education plays a role in eliminating gender stereotypes and progressing equality. Raising awareness of gender issues and empowering students to question conventional norms are two benefits of incorporating gender studies into curricula at all levels. The approach will guarantee that classrooms are places where all genders are respected and valued. Female students' confidence and leadership abilities can be developed early by seeking leadership positions in school organizations. Digital literacy can be improved so that young women can be better equipped for the digital landscape. This step can be achieved through collaborations with groups that support the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) for democratization and popular empowerment. One

recommendation is to invite women politicians to a “Conversation with Students” or organize a “TED-Style Talk: Campus Edition” to equip young leaders to recognize and confront gender representation in media and society.

**Policymakers.** Legislation that legislators pass and enforce could guarantee women’s equal participation in media and politics. One way to do this is to support programs that encourage equitable access to media outlets. Policymakers can improve democratic processes and governance by making gender equality a top priority in policy frameworks. This includes ensuring that current laws, like the Magna Carta of Women (R.A. 9710), are fully implemented. Laws encouraging political parties to include women in their leadership can improve women’s representation.

**Civil Society Organizations.** Civil Society Organizations play a part in promoting equality and women’s rights. Women’s concerns could be heard in public discourse and policy discussions. The discourse will give women a platform for their sentiments. They can empower women, especially in marginalized communities, by providing effective training to engage in advocacy and governance. The impact and reach of advocacy campaigns can be increased using digital platforms. This will emphasize the significance of digital literacy in contemporary activism. Using technology will enable women to raise digital awareness about their advocacy.

Moreover, civil society organizations could support inclusionary media practices and laws that advance gender equity, encourage public support, and push for structural changes that will render the media environment more pluralistic and inclusive.

## STATEMENTS AND DECLARATIONS

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