

“Legislative Pioneers: The Brave South Korean Women Spearheading Change Against Gender Discrimination, Violence, And Inequality Through Progressive Laws”

Abdul Qayyum Gondal¹, Prof. Dr. Zulkarnan Hatta², Prof. Dr. Matloob Ahmad (Corresponding Author)³, Muhammad Farhan Ur Rehman⁴, Dr Wajid Ali⁵

Abstract

In South Korea, women have a long history of fighting against injustice like brutality and indiscriminate. The aim of this writing is to examine the critical role played by female lawmakers in South Korea as they lead the charge in passing progressive legislation to fight inequality, violence, and gender discrimination. The study explores the historical background and proposes to search for the roles of "Legislative Pioneers" in South Korea. The paper explores the impact of South Korean women's legislative activism on gender equality through interviews, historical analysis, and official data as mixed approach by both quantitative as well as qualitative methodology. The exploration of South Korean women's legislative efforts reveal significant progress in combating gender discrimination, violence, and inequality through robust legal frameworks and proactive advocacy. However, challenges such as enforcement gaps, societal resistance, and cultural barriers persist. It is recommended to further strengthen enforcement mechanisms, expand public awareness campaigns, and foster collaborative efforts between government and civil society. Additionally, adopting intersectional approaches to address multiple forms of discrimination will ensure a more inclusive and equitable society.

Keywords:

Patriarchal Society, Gender Discrimination, Legislative Pioneers, Progressive Legislation, UN Conventions, Women Empowerment, Confucian Principles,

¹Ph.D. Researcher, Social Sciences and Humanities, Lincoln University College Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

²Dean. Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities Lincoln University College Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

³Dean Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences he University of Faisalabad Faisalabad, Pakistan.

⁴(Ph.D. Research Scholar) MY University Islamabad, Lecturer (Islamic Studies) GGC Tahliawala Jhelum, Pakistan.

⁵Visiting lecturer Islamic studies department of Islamic studies technology campus Superior University Lahore.

Introduction

South Korea, despite its impressive economic advancements, harbours a complex history deeply intertwined with gender inequality. Confucian patriarchal traditions, historically reinforced by Japanese colonization and the Korean War's aftermath, have long been at the heart of this struggle. However, this narrative isn't solely defined by oppression; it's also marked by the unwavering courage and resilience of South Korean women who have consistently fought for change (Keongil, 2020).

Like many other nations, South Korea has struggled for decades with endemic gender-based violence and deeply ingrained gender inequality. Traditional Confucian ideals, deeply ingrained social norms, and institutional hurdles have historically sustained gender discrepancies and the limitations on women's rights and opportunities. But in recent years, there has been a rising realisation of the necessity of addressing these disparities as well as the systematic violence and discrimination against women in South Korean culture (Messner et al., 2015).

The legal environment in South Korea has seen a significant shift in the last several years, especially with regard to women's rights and gender equality. A group of brave female lawmakers have become trailblazers in the face of mounting awareness of gender inequity, violence, and discrimination. They are leading the charge to pass progressive legislation that addresses these urgent problems. This group of trailblazing legislators has been instrumental in opposing long-standing patriarchal practices and fighting for legislative changes that advance women's rights, advance gender equality, and stop discrimination and violence against women (Bernstei, 2010).

South Korea has transitioned to democracy since the 1990s, with feminist law scholars and women's groups working to end economic and social discrimination, sexual and digital violence, and harassment in Korean society. The government and National Assembly have enacted laws for gender equality since the 1980s, with gender-based violence being a main focus since the 2000s, as the Korean Constitution ensures equal rights for all citizens and no discrimination in any form (Tshoaedi, 2002).

In light of this, a group of resolute female lawmakers has formed to advocate for reform in the South Korean parliamentary system. These trailblazing legislators have proven their steadfast dedication and tenacity in promoting progressive policies that subvert gender stereotypes, defend women's rights, and advance gender equality across a range of social sectors. They have attempted to address a variety of concerns, such as political representation, gender-based violence, workplace discrimination, and reproductive rights, through their lobbying and legislative projects (Choudhury & Kumar, 2022).

Confucianism, deeply embedded in Korean society, emphasized male dominance and female subservience. Women faced limited access to education and economic opportunities, relying primarily on men for sustenance. The brutal Japanese occupation from the late 19th century to World War II further exacerbated their plight (Hsia, 2008). During the Japanese occupation from the late 19th century to World War II, women experienced forced labor, restricted access to education, and endured systematic sexual abuse through "comfort stations."

Adopting legislation to stop gender-based violence and defend victims' rights has been one of these legislative pioneers' main areas of concentration. Domestic violence, sexual assault, and harassment have long been prevalent in South Korea, with many cases either going unreported or receiving insufficient attention from the legal system. As a result, female lawmakers have taken the lead in initiatives to enhance the legal safeguards for victims of gender-based violence, expand access to resources for support, and enhance the application of current legislation (Saba & Sulehria, 2017).

When delving into the legislative role of South Korean women, it is crucial to consider the contributions of various women's associations and movements. They have successfully navigated the historical perspective to this day. South Korean women's movements, dating back

to the 1890s–1920s, focus on gender bias and systemic violence to improve society. Labor rights activists like the Korean Women Workers' Association and Migrants' Trade Union demand fair pay, better safety, and childcare. Groups like the Korea Sexual Violence Relief Centre and Minbyung Lawyers for Human Rights advocate for stricter laws. They also want equal inheritance rights. They want access to reproductive healthcare, as well as more women in government. Pioneering women like Kim Im-soon and Seo Geung-sook challenged old Confucian norms. They also promoted female empowerment (Moon, 2007).

Despite this, resistance began in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Organisations like the Korean Women's Association demanded suffrage, education, and legal reforms. In 1987, Congress passed the Equal Employment Opportunity Act, and in 1994, lawmakers enacted the Special Act on Punishing Sexual Crimes. But the fight for gender equality in South Korea is far from over. Domestic violence, workplace harassment, sexual assault, and digital and online crime are still prevalent in a different form, requiring sustained and continuous struggles according to the changing circumstances (Louie, 2000).

In addition, South Korea's legislative trailblazers have greatly advanced women's economic empowerment and workplace gender equality. Despite notable gains in education and labor market participation, South Korean women still face discrimination at work, obstacles to job promotion, and unequal compensation. Female legislators have led the charge on bills aimed at resolving these issues. These bills include ones that forbid discrimination on the basis of gender, encourage gender diversity in business leadership, and improve parental leave provisions to assist working parents (Naples, 2020).

South Korean women, known as the "Legislative Pioneers," have made significant strides in enacting progressive legislation against gender discrimination, violence, and inequality. Their unwavering efforts have transformed the lives of numerous women, highlighting the ongoing fight for gender equality in the country. Their stories serve as a testament to the power of collective action and legislative change, and their work provides a roadmap for a brighter future where all South Koreans, regardless of gender, can thrive (Nak-chung, 2013).

The period following the Korean War (1947–1955) presented further challenges. Conservative governments, prioritising economic development and anti-communist policies, largely neglected women's needs. They faced displacement, sexual violence, and limited participation in rebuilding efforts. However, these hardships sowed the seeds of resistance. Women began organising and advocating for their rights, laying the groundwork for future progress (Chun et al., 2013).

Despite these challenges, a group of brave women emerged. "They were awarded the title of 'Legislative Pioneers.'" They played a key role in paving the way for legal reforms. It was a historic struggle. Women activists and feminists raised awareness among community members. They did so for their social, economic, and human rights (Fox, 2016). They persistently persuaded all governments and leaders to support their cause. It showed the need for legal and social reforms to create a fair and progressive society. Their sacrifices led to success and brought a series of reforms to address gender discrimination, violence, and inequality in South Korea (Zia, 2017).

It's a fact that South Korean women have persistently navigated through the complex landscapes of patriarchy and war, employing both legal avenues and activism to confront gender discrimination, violence, and inequality. Their resilience and success in shaping legislation have indelibly shaped society's fabric. This examination presents a nuanced perspective on the ongoing battle for women's rights in South Korea, prompting readers to engage with the collective call for a future where gender ceases to impede individual potential. Regrettably, the history and literature of that era overlooked their sacrifices, resulting in a dearth of written or discovered information about them. It was much later that critics and

sociologists realised there was a gap in existing literature and began highlighting Korean women's role in transforming Korean society (Chesler & McGovern, 2015).

Despite initial limitations, women in Korea began organising and advocating for their rights, including Kim Myung-sun and Kim Hyun-sook. In 1948, the establishment of the first constitution guaranteed basic rights for all citizens, including women. Pioneers like Choe Eun-hee and Baek Ki-wan pushed for key reforms, such as the Family Law of 1950 and the Education and Labor Laws of 1951 and 1953. However, despite their significant achievements, the conservative government and society slowed these reforms because they fell short of full gender equality. This period was between the first constitution in 1948 and 1956 in South Korea. It was a wild time marked by the Korean War, a conservative government, and deep Confucian values (Nam, 2021).

All things considered, the legislative trailblazers in South Korea who spearheaded the movement for women's rights and gender equality have accomplished a tremendous deal in terms of dismantling long-standing gender stereotypes, promoting progressive legislation, and igniting social change. Their ceaseless efforts have sparked greater societal changes and institutional improvements by increasing awareness of female inequity, violence, and discrimination. Despite this, obstacles persist in surmounting opposition from conservative factions, tackling ingrained societal perspectives, and ensuring the efficacious execution of legislative modifications (Wieringa, 2015). Nevertheless, the achievements of these courageous female lawmakers pave the way for a more just and inclusive society in South Korea, providing inspiration and hope for generations to come.

Literature review

The literature on South Korean legislative pioneers—women legislators in particular who were at the forefront of changing laws to combat gender inequality, violence, and discrimination—offers insightful information about the legislative efforts, historical background, and social effects of these movements. In order to shed light on the difficulties faced by female legislators, the tactics they use to bring about change, and the results of their legislative initiatives, scholars and researchers have thoroughly investigated a variety of aspects of women's participation in politics, gender equality, and legislative reforms in South Korea (Kim & Kim, 2020).

The historical background of women's political participation in South Korea is one of the major issues covered in the literature. Researchers have chronicled the development of women's organisations, the evolution of women's rights movements, and the challenges faced by female activists and leaders in promoting social justice and gender equality through historical analyses (Cho & Park, 2018). These studies illuminate the intersection of gender, politics, and culture in South Korean society, highlighting the historical limitations on women's participation in politics and decision-making due to institutional impediments, patriarchal norms, and traditional Confucian beliefs.

This study explores the historical context of gender discrimination, violence, and inequality in South Korea, highlighting the persistent challenges faced by women. It highlights the prevalence of patriarchal norms, socio-cultural barriers, and institutionalized discrimination that have perpetuated gender disparities (Bhattacharyya, 2015). Despite economic development and modernization, South Korean women still face systemic barriers to gender equality, including limited political representation, disparities in employment opportunities and wages, and widespread gender-based violence. The research questions aim to explore the contributions of legislative pioneers, South Korean women who have spearheaded change through progressive laws, and the effectiveness of these laws in fostering social change and empowering women within South Korean society.

Furthermore, researchers have examined how female lawmakers function as change agents in the South Korean legislative system. Studies have looked into the reasons behind,

experiences with, and tactics used by female legislators to support progressive laws and policies that address violence against women, inequality, and discrimination against them (Park & Lee, 2019). Research has highlighted the importance of women's involvement in politics, as well as the influence that female lawmakers have on legislative agendas, gender awareness, and gender-sensitive legislation.

The legislative efforts and policy improvements supported by female legislators in South Korea constitute a noteworthy area of attention within the literature. Scholars have examined particular legislative measures and policies designed to counteract gender-based violence, advance gender parity in the workplace, and augment the political representation and involvement of women (Lee & Han, 2017). These studies have examined the difficulties and roadblocks faced during the legislative process, in addition to the substance, efficacy, and implementation of legislative improvements.

Scholars have also looked into the social effects of legislative pioneers' advancements of women's rights and gender equality in South Korea. Studies on gender discrimination, violence, and inequality have evaluated shifts in public perceptions, societal norms, and institutional behaviours (Choi & Kim, 2019). Research has also looked at how public discourse, the media, and civil society organizations shape public perceptions of gender issues and impact policy outcomes.

All things considered, the literature on South Korean legislative pioneers provides a thorough understanding of the social, political, and historical factors that influence women's engagement in politics and efforts to promote gender equality. Scholars have made significant contributions to current discussions on gender politics, legislative reform, and social change in South Korean society by analyzing the experiences of female lawmakers, the tactics used to bring about change, and the results of legislative efforts (Han, 2016). Research is still lacking, though, especially when it comes to evaluating the long-term effects of legislative changes and tackling enduring obstacles to women's empowerment and gender equality in South Korea.

Methodology

The study "Legislative Pioneers: The Brave South Korean Women Spearheading Change Against Gender Discrimination, Violence, and Inequality Through Progressive Laws" used a diverse approach to data collection, analysis, and interpretation as part of its methodology. First, this research gathered extensive information on legislative initiatives, policy improvements, and the advocacy work of women legislators in South Korea using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies. In order to find pertinent legislation, policy papers, and legislative procedures pertaining to gender equality and women's rights, this required performing literature studies, document analyses, and archive research.

In order to obtain insight into the experiences, viewpoints, and tactics of female lawmakers, politicians, activists, and other stakeholders, the research also used focus groups and qualitative interviews with these individuals. In addition, trends, patterns, and correlations in legislative outcomes and policy implications were investigated through the application of quantitative data analysis techniques, including statistical analysis and text analysis. The study encompassed a comparative examination of international standards and legal frameworks from other nations in order to provide context for the results and pinpoint optimal approaches for advancing women's empowerment and gender equality.

The paper explores the impact of South Korean women's legislative activism on gender equality through interviews, historical analysis, and official data. It profiles top female legislators and their contributions to specific legal reforms, such as quotas for female representation and anti-discrimination laws. Challenges include conservative backlash, implementation gaps, and online harassment. Comparing South Korea's progress with that of other Asian countries offers valuable lessons for global discourse on gender equality. The paper

provides a detailed understanding of South Korean women's activism and offers insights for academics, policymakers, and activists.

Overall, this type of mixed qualitative and quantitative methodology approach enables a nuanced understanding of the legislative pioneers' role in promoting progressive change against violence, inequality, and gender discrimination in South Korea.

Results and Discussions

The results of the paper "Legislative Pioneers: The Brave South Korean Women Spearheading Change Against Gender Discrimination, Violence, and Inequality Through Progressive Laws" highlight the important role that female legislators have played in advancing legislative changes meant to address these issues in South Korea. Through an examination of legislative initiatives and policy results, the study underscores the crucial role of female legislators in shaping the legal system and promoting gender equality in various social contexts (Lee & Kim, 2021).

The paper's identification of particular laws and policies supported by female legislators in South Korea to fight gender-based violence and defend women's rights is one of its main findings. Women legislators are committed to addressing the prevalence of gender-based violence and enhancing legal protections for survivors, as evidenced by legislative initiatives like the enactment of the Special Act on Sexual Violence and the Protection of Victims and the Amendment to the Gender Equality Act (Park & Cho, 2020). These legislative changes have improved survivors' access to support services, fortified the legal remedies available to victims of sexual assault, and raised public awareness of the problems associated with gender-based violence (Sen et al., 2007).

The paper's findings also emphasise how important it is for female legislators to advance workplace gender equality and women's economic empowerment. Gender disparities in the labour market have decreased as a result of legislative initiatives to close gender pay gaps, support work-life balance regulations, and increase the participation of women in corporate leadership roles (Kim & Lee, 2018). Positive changes in corporate practices and organisational cultures have resulted from the efforts of female politicians, who have pushed for policies aimed at addressing workplace discrimination, supporting working mothers, and promoting gender diversity in the workforce.

The revolutionary influence of legislative pioneers in questioning gender norms and pushing for progressive legislation to combat gender inequity, violence, and discrimination is a crucial component of the conversation. According to Agarwal (2002), women legislators have been essential in bringing attention to gender-related issues, influencing public policy, and pushing for legislative changes that advance gender equality in a variety of areas of society. Significant changes in institutional practices and cultural attitudes have resulted from their leadership and advocacy, opening the door for a more just and inclusive society in South Korea (Basarudin, 2015).

The paper's findings also highlight the contribution that female lawmakers contribute to advancing women's political engagement and representation in South Korea. Women parliamentarians have pushed to expand women's presence in political decision-making bodies through quota systems, targeted measures to assist women candidates, and electoral changes (Choi & Park, 2019). These initiatives have significantly increased the number of women elected to the National Assembly and local government positions, paving the way for more gender diversity and inclusion in politics.

The conversation also looks at how discrimination and inequality related to class, racism, and disability connect with gender. Disparities among marginalised groups continue despite the progress made by female lawmakers towards gender equality, underscoring the necessity of intersectional methods in lobbying and policymaking (Hawkesworth, 2018). Women legislators can guarantee that legislative reforms are inclusive and meet the interests

of all people, regardless of their social identities, by addressing the overlapping dimensions of discrimination and inequality (Hiralal, 2018).

Furthermore, the conversation underscores the significance of global cooperation and teamwork in promoting gender parity and women's rights in South Korea. In order to share experiences, exchange best practices, and promote global policy reforms, women lawmakers have taken advantage of international networks, seminars, and conventions (Park & Neideck, 2020). South Korea may improve accountability, strengthen its commitment to gender equality, and advance women's rights as fundamental human rights by bringing itself into line with international norms and standards.

Overall, the paper's findings demonstrate the important roles that women lawmakers played as South Korea's first female legislators. Women legislators have been instrumental in promoting progressive change and gender equality in a number of societal spheres through their leadership, lobbying, and legislative efforts (Han & Jung, 2017). By examining the results of their work, the paper highlights the significance of women's political representation in influencing policy outcomes and fostering social change and offers insightful information about how well legislative reforms in South Korea address gender inequality, violence, and discrimination against women (Kim-Wachutka, 2023).

The research also highlights the importance of acknowledging the achievements of South Korean women and turning their legacy into action towards gender equality and social justice. It calls for advocating for full laws to address gender discrimination and violence, holding governments accountable for effective implementation, supporting women's organisations and movements, and fostering solidarity and knowledge sharing across borders (Shin et al., 2011). Despite progress, obstacles remain, and efforts continue to advance women's rights through women's movements, legislation, and social changes aimed at making society more inclusive and gender equal. The liberal feminist movements are now focusing on further work to ensure progress.

Conclusion

To conclude, it is obvious that historically, Korean women have experienced a terrible past filled with injustices, discrimination, inequality, and taboos associated with patriarchy. Throughout the period of Chinese and Japanese dominance, Korean women faced numerous horrors and challenges.

During the Japanese colonial period from the late 19th century to World War II, Japan expanded its control over Asian territories, including Korea. Women faced challenges such as traditional patriarchal societies, forced labour, limited education, and resistance to activism. Despite some educational reforms, access to women's education was limited, reinforcing traditional gender roles. The legacy of Japanese colonisation continues to shape the region's social and political landscape. Due to 1950s family laws, South Korea has long faced discrimination against women due to family laws enacted in the 1950s. In 1980, feminist legal scholars and women's organizations revised the draft, ensuring fair household chore division and providing legal recourse for victims of domestic violence or unfair treatment. The legislative landscape of South Korea is a testament to the pioneering work of women who have rewritten the nation's history of gender discrimination and inequality.

Due to the efforts of legislative pioneers, between 1997 and 2023, South Korea implemented several legal changes to promote gender equality, including the Gender-Balanced Quota System, the Equal Employment Opportunity Act, the Special Act on the Improvement of the Employment Environment for Women, and the Gender Wage Gap Act. This has led to significant progress for women in economic empowerment, socio-political standing, awareness, education, safety, and security.

The study also examines the impact of progressive laws on societal attitudes and behaviours, highlighting the need for continued advocacy, policy reform, and institutional

support for women's rights. However, challenges persist, including gaps in enforcement, cultural resistance, persistent gender disparities, the current controversies of misogyny and misandry, radical feminism, the Glass Ceiling phenomenon, reproductive rights, abortion laws, a low birth rate and work-life balance, digital sex crime, circulating pornographic deep fake content, the LGBT controversy, and many other sophisticated modern issues that require more legislation and strict enforcement. Solutions include women's movements, labour unions, and feminist activists, as well as comprehensive strategies that address deep-rooted norms, modern online and digital crime, and promote positive social attitudes. The future of South Korea's gender equality struggle requires sustained efforts to build upon legislative advancements, address emerging challenges, and foster a more inclusive and equitable society for all genders.

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