

Article

The multiple gender barriers faced by women in politics

Manoel Bastos Gomes Neto ¹Carolina Maria Mota Santos ¹Antônio Carvalho Neto ¹Rebeca da Rocha Grangeiro ²

¹ Pontifícia Universidade Católica de Minas Gerais (PUC Minas) / Programa de Pós-Graduação em Administração, Belo Horizonte – MG, Brazil

² Université Paris Nanterre / Laboratoire Parisien de Psychologie Sociale, Paris – France

This study aims to analyze the gender barriers to female participation in Brazilian politics. Data collection was carried out through semi-structured interviews with 22 women from the Southeast and 18 from the Northeast who work in the political arena. The dialogues were analyzed using Gioia's method, and the results show that women face psychosocial, cultural, and party-related barriers, highlighting how gender policies remain insufficient, making it difficult for women to enter, stay, and attract others to a political career. Additionally, this research contributes to the theoretical and practical fields regarding women in politics, helping to understand the challenges faced in the Brazilian context and emphasizing how experiences of violence lead to resistance to political engagement and physical and mental health issues.

Keywords: women in politics; gender barriers; political violence.

As múltiplas barreiras de gênero enfrentadas por mulheres na política

Este estudo tem como objetivo analisar as barreiras de gênero para a participação feminina na política brasileira. A coleta se deu por meio de entrevistas semiestruturadas com 22 mulheres do Sudeste e 18 do Nordeste que atuam no ambiente político. Os diálogos foram analisados pelo método de Gioia, e os resultados evidenciam que elas deparam com barreiras psicossociais, culturais e partidárias, reforçando como as políticas de gênero ainda são insuficientes, de modo a dificultar que mulheres se insiram, permaneçam e atraiam outras para a carreira política. Além disso, esta pesquisa apresenta contribuições ao campo teórico e prático sobre a temática das mulheres na política, auxiliando na compreensão sobre os desafios enfrentados no contexto brasileiro e evidenciando como as experiências de violências resultam numa resistência à inserção política e no adoecimento físico e mental.

Palavras-chave: mulheres na política; barreiras de gênero; violência política.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1590/0034-761220240124x>

ISSN: 1982-3134



Article received on April 19, 2024 and accepted on October 25, 2024.

[Translated version] Note: All quotes in English translated by this article's translator.

Editor-in-chief:

Alketa Peci (Fundação Getulio Vargas, Rio de Janeiro / RJ – Brazil)

Associate editor:

Gabriela Spanghero Lotta (Fundação Getulio Vargas, São Paulo / SP – Brazil)

Reviewers:

Beatriz Molari (Universidade Estadual de Londrina, Londrina / PR – Brazil)

Débora Thomé Costa (Universidade Federal Fluminense, Niterói / RJ – Brazil)

One reviewer did not authorize the disclosure of their identity.

Las múltiples barreras de género que enfrentan las mujeres en la política

Este estudio tiene como objetivo analizar las barreras de género para la participación femenina en la política brasileña. La recolección de datos se realizó mediante entrevistas semiestructuradas con 22 mujeres del Sureste y 18 del Nordeste que actúan en el ámbito político. Los diálogos fueron analizados utilizando el método de Gioia, y los resultados evidencian que ellas enfrentan barreras psicosociales, culturales y partidarias, destacando cómo las políticas de género siguen siendo insuficientes, dificultando que las mujeres ingresen, permanezcan y atraigan a otras a la carrera política. Además, esta investigación aporta contribuciones al campo teórico y práctico sobre el tema de las mujeres en la política, ayudando a comprender los desafíos enfrentados en el contexto brasileño y evidenciando cómo las experiencias de violencia generan una resistencia a la inserción política y problemas de salud física y mental.

Palabras clave: mujeres en la política; barreras de género; violencia política.

1. INTRODUCTION

In Brazil, although women have achieved greater participation in the labor market (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística [IBGE], 2022) and exhibit higher educational levels than men (Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais Anísio Teixeira [INEP], 2022), they continue to face fewer opportunities for advancement in different sectors of the economy. Specifically in the political context, even though women represent more than half of the national electorate, decision-making positions are predominantly occupied by men, while women remain underrepresented in all political levels (Novellino & Toledo, 2018; Pinho, 2020).

Official data presented by the Superior Electoral Court (TSE) in 2024 indicates that only 33% of candidates for elective political positions are women. This inequality becomes even more pronounced after the elections, as women held only 18% of the seats in the National Chamber of Deputies and the Senate and accounted for just 17% of elected deputies (Siqueira, 2022). According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union of the United Nations Organization (2023), Brazil ranks 129th globally in female parliamentary representation, trailing behind many countries with lower development indices.

After nearly three decades of implementing quota systems and other measures of affirmative action to encourage female political participation — such as training programs, financial incentives and reserved time set aside for political campaigning — there is still resistance and significant difficulty in achieving gender equality (Araújo, 2010b; Costa & Navas, 2017; Wylie & Santos, 2016). The evaluation of the number of women elected reveals low results, with no significant changes in the structures of the political system (Araújo, 2010b; Novellino & Toledo, 2018). Additionally, there has been an increase in the use of “ghost” female candidates by political parties to bypass quota regulations or secure the interests of male candidates (Wylie et al., 2019).

There is also a growing perception of political violence against women in the national political system, alongside the strengthening of conservative positions that oppose a more inclusive and less discriminatory system (Fernandes et al., 2021; Sanín, 2022). According to reports from the Observatory of Political and Electoral Violence (OVPE), in 2022 and 2023 177 women reported cases of political violence, including assaults, threats, attacks, kidnappings and homicides.

It is important to highlight acts of violence that delegitimize, disrespect, discourage and explicitly deny the presence of women in political spaces simply because they are women (Biroli, 2016; Fernandes et al., 2021; Krook & Sanín, 2016). In light of this context of inequality and the increased perception of political violence against them, this research aims to analyze the gender challenges faced by women in Brazilian politics.

This work is justified by its socio-political relevance, as it stimulates reflection on the political field as a space for female participation while contextualizing and questioning how psychosocial, cultural and institutional variables impact women's performance and permanence in the political arena. Thus, this article sheds light on a theme still underexplored in the literature, with the potential to contribute to the practices of women and national political parties.

2. GENDER BARRIERS: THE STRUGGLE OF WOMEN IN BRAZILIAN POLITICS

The journey of women to act in Brazilian politics is the result of a struggle that began in the 19th century (Campos, 2019). Only in 1932, during the government of Getúlio Vargas, there was a decree approved that defined voters without distinction of sex, legalizing women's suffrage, which was consolidated in the 1934 Constitution (Bester, 2016). It took exactly 60 years for the country to elect its first female governor, in the Northern State of Maranhão in 1994. Later, in 2010, the first woman was elected president of Brazil: Dilma Rousseff (Nogueira, 2015).

While these milestones certainly represent feminist movement achievements, Brazil is still far from achieving gender equity in parliamentary seats at any state levels (Campos, 2019). Almost a century after women were constitutionally allowed to join the political arena, thanks to feminist struggles and gender policies, the results in terms of candidacies are partially positive. However, when evaluating the number of women elected, the outcomes remain inefficient, and women continue to be underrepresented in all political levels (Novellino & Toledo, 2018). For example, in 2018 only 77 women were elected as federal deputies, representing 15% of the total (Marques et al., 2021).

Additionally, studies highlight various external factors — psychosocial, cultural and structural — that directly influence women's political trajectory. Violence against them occurs both during election campaigns and after they assume office (Krook & Sanín, 2016). As Sousa (2018) emphasizes, the struggle for gender parity occurs both inside and outside Parliament, as women not only need to be elected but must constantly fight to be heard, respected and granted the same rights as their male colleagues.

Gender barriers in politics stem from various sources, such as society, family and friends, who directly or indirectly discourage, inhibit and delegitimize ideas of entering the political field (Krook & Sanín, 2016). For instance, community or religious leaders play a significant role. Araújo (2010b) points out that while evangelical pastors increasingly enter politics, most churches still do not accept women as leaders. This discouragement also comes from political parties colleagues and the very structure of the open-list proportional representation electoral system, compounded by campaign financing mechanisms (Sacchet, 2016).

On a psychosocial level, one explanation for the numerical underrepresentation of women in politics is the social construction that dictates men and women are naturally different and should therefore perform specific activities based on their gender (Anzia & Bernhard, 2022; Fernandes et al., 2021; Matos, 2020; Sanchez, 2017). From childhood women are encouraged to focus on domestic tasks and family care, while men are directed toward public spaces and positions of greater social prestige, such as in politics (Sousa & Guedes, 2016).

In this context, women remain associated with subordination and servitude to men, confined to domestic and maternal roles, while men are seen as providers (Connel & Pearse, 2015). According to

Araújo and Borges (2013), the family context simultaneously operates as a stimulus and a barrier to political entry, with differing impacts based on gender, favoring men and disadvantaging women.

Women who defy this socially constructed gendered division of spaces and pursue political careers are often seen as intruders (Miguel & Feitosa, 2009) and face a “double burden,” being expected to efficiently fulfill multiple roles in both the public and private spheres (Fernandes & Lourenço, 2023). This leads to incongruence between gender-based expectations and the roles they perform (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

Culturally, two main factors reinforce the perception of politics as an unreceptive space for women. The first is that the political sphere is dominated by men who undervalue and fail to support women’s abilities, perceiving their increased presence as a threat (Allen & Cutts, 2018; Campos, 2019). The second is the influence of media in shaping political culture, often portraying women negatively (Hall & Donaghue, 2013; Miguel & Biroli, 2010b).

Nowadays, in addition to traditional media — television, newspapers and radio — women must contend with even more prejudice, harassment, sexual comments, threats and other negative issues arising from various social media platforms. Fernandes et al. (2021) emphasize that Brazilian female candidates face hate attacks, aggression, and fake news campaigns from society and political peers who believe they violate dominant gender norms.

Structural barriers arise from political parties strategies and the organization of the party system itself, which directly or indirectly exclude female candidates to the advantage of male candidates (Alves et al., 2023; Sacchet, 2018). Peixoto et al. (2016) highlight issues faced by Brazilian women in political parties, such as challenges in: registering their candidacies; forming campaign strategies; accessing financial resources; and dealing with non-transparent resource allocation processes. Party processes that aim to favor the (re-)election of male candidates, who have more influence in governments and/or party leadership.

Research also shows that female candidates in Brazil receive little to no funding from parties (Campos, 2019; Teixeira & Mota-Santos, 2023), while male candidates receive approximately twice their financial support (Peixoto et al., 2016). Moreover, parties tend to allocate women to less prestigious committees (Sanchez, 2017), often using them merely as “vote gatherers” (Pereira & Gelape, 2015).

Despite all these challenges, the few women who attain political positions must fight for leadership roles that challenge established norms (Miguel & Biroli, 2010) and bring about significant changes in the Brazilian political system and party structures (Sacchet, 2018). Gender-based exclusions, barriers and violence hinder the development and consolidation of democracy and compromise justice, transparency, and trust in the political context (Bardall et al., 2020; Miguel & Biroli, 2010). Waylen (2014) points out that institutional reforms are more effective when gender dynamics are efficiently incorporated into both formal aspects, such as laws and norms, and informal aspects, such as interpersonal interactions.

3. METHOD

This study is qualitative in nature, aiming to deepen the understanding of the analyzed phenomenon and to reveal hidden aspects of the reality surrounding a given problem (Gil, 2002). Data collection was carried out through semi-structured interviews, an instrument that allows greater freedom and spontaneity for interviewees, thus enhancing the investigation process (Triviños, 1987).

This research is part of a broader project whose specific objective was to analyze the gender challenges faced by women in Brazilian politics. For this purpose, a script was used, divided into two sets of open questions: the first set explored personal information, professional trajectories and motivations for political engagement; the second set addressed experiences, relationships, activities and challenges in traditionally male-dominated environments. These questions were theoretically based on studies about gender barriers and female participation in politics (Fernandes et al., 2021; Miguel & Biroli, 2010a; Nogueira, 2015; Peixoto et al., 2016; Sanchez, 2017).

The study involved women from Brazil's Southeast and Northeast regions, selected based on two main criteria: (i) these regions represent, respectively, the lowest and highest percentages of female representation in city councils political offices (Bremaeker, 2021); and (ii) accessibility and the researchers' network of contacts.

In total, 390 women in this level of political roles were contacted. Of these, 77 responded to the invitation, 14 declined due to scheduling conflicts, and 63 initially agreed to participate. However, 23 later failed to attend the interviews and formally withdrew. The final sample comprised 40 women: 22 from the Southeast and 18 from the Northeast. Among them, 35 were elected city councilors, one was an elected state/department deputy representative and 4 were state/department secretaries.

The interviews were conducted remotely via Google Meet between February and May 2023, with an average duration of 42 minutes. The remote format was chosen to expand the geographic reach of interviewees while reducing costs and time for the researchers. Before the main data collection, two pilot interviews were conducted with city councilors from Ceará in January 2023 to refine the interview script.

Interviewees were contacted via institutional email and social media platforms (WhatsApp and Instagram), through which the research objectives were presented and their interest in participating was inquired. All interviewees voluntarily agreed to participate, provided consent for academic use of the collected content and signed the Free and Informed Consent Form (TCLE), ensuring adherence to ethical research standards. Additionally, they authorized the recording of their interviews.

Interviewees were categorized according to region (SU = Southeast and NO = Northeast) and the order in which the interviews took place. The 40 interviewees had an average age of 42 years, worked in both Executive and Legislative branches and had political experience ranging from 2 to 50 years. The regional distribution was as follows:

- **Northeast (18 interviewees):** Alagoas (2), Bahia (3), Ceará (3), Maranhão (1), Paraíba (1), Pernambuco (3), Piauí (1), Rio Grande do Norte (2), and Sergipe (2).
- **Southeast (22 interviewees):** Espírito Santo (2), Minas Gerais (6), Rio de Janeiro (2), and São Paulo (12).

Other profile characteristics:

- **Education level:** 3 with incomplete higher education, 20 with completed higher education, 4 with postgraduate *lato sensu* degrees, 12 with master's degrees and 1 currently pursuing a master's degree.

- **Marital status:** 14 single, 20 married or in a stable union, and 6 divorced or widowed.
- **Children:** 21 without children and 19 with 1 to 4 children.
- **Racial self-identification:** 17 white, 8 mixed-race, 14 Black and 1 preferred not to disclose.

The interviews were fully transcribed, resulting in 224 pages of textual material. Analyses were conducted using Atlas.ti software, applying the Gioia method, which combines inductive, qualitative and interpretative techniques (Corley & Gioia, 2004).

The analytical process followed three main stages:

1. First-Order Coding: a comprehensive reading of the transcripts and organization of field notes were conducted, with data presented in the interviewees' own terms, without prior categorization (Gioia et al., 2013).
2. Second-Order Analysis: data and theory were interactively analyzed, identifying convergences, divergences and emerging concepts in the literature that helped answer the research question (Gioia et al., 2013).
3. Construction of Aggregate Dimensions: second-order codes were cross-referenced with relevant literature, generating theoretical concepts and a systemic representation of the process of analyzing raw data into themes and aggregate dimensions.

Theoretical saturation, as proposed by Gaskell (2003), was used to conclude data collection after determining that additional interviews did not bring new perspectives or insights relevant to the studied phenomenon.

4. RESULTS

This section presents the psychosocial and cultural violence as well as the political parties barriers experienced by women. Subsequently, the consequences of these gender-related obstacles on their performance in the political arena are also discussed.

4.1. Psychosocial and cultural violence

4.1.1. Intrusion into personal life and imposition of aesthetic standards

The interviewees mentioned more intense pressures regarding professional aspects, social relationships and aesthetic standards. Professional pressure can be observed in the statements of SU.05 (34 years old, from Minas Gerais, white) and SU.12 (59 years old, from Minas Gerais, mixed-race): *"We, women, are much more judged than men. A single misstep on our part is judged much more harshly than a man's misstep, right? So we have to be very prepared [to face that]"* (SU.05). *"I see that we are always required to have triple competence, a thousand times more than men"* (SU.12). This high level of scrutiny reflects the need for female candidates to undergo a process of personal development and achieve higher educational levels compared to male candidates (Novellino & Toledo, 2018).

In turn, NO.08 (24 years old, from Alagoas, white) highlighted severe scrutiny over her personal life: “My personal relationships are questioned and gossiped about. [...] I expected some exposure, but I didn’t imagine it would be this intense.” NO.16 (60 years old, from Ceará, white) mentioned that women in politics face judgment even during leisure moments: “Men are often seen at leisure, drinking, dancing and it’s never an issue. It’s even praised. When a woman is seen in similar situations, the judgments on her behavior are much harsher.”

These pressures can be explained by social norms and the institutional dynamics of politics, predominantly patriarchal, which dictate that women should be encouraged to domestic activities, while men are directed toward external activities (Sousa & Guedes, 2016). This gender-based division reinforces the idea of politics as a male domain and perpetuates the notion that women are naturally uninterested in or incapable of engaging in political decision-making, thus intensifying scrutiny and criticism.

As Araújo (2010a) explains, these judgments are intensified by the expectation that women must efficiently perform multiple roles in the public sphere and their daily lives. Women in public roles face heightened scrutiny regarding their relationships with children, partners and professional activities outside the home while being judged all the time for occupying a space that many still believe is not theirs (Miguel & Biroli, 2015). These findings align with research on the challenges faced by women in other male-dominated fields, such as technology executives (Grangeiro & Gomes, 2023; Mota-Santos et al., 2014), among others.

The pressure to adhere to an aesthetic standard also emerged in interviewees’ statements. SU.01 (32 years old, from Espírito Santo, mixed-race) noted that women face expectations beyond maintaining a positive demeanor: “You have to be beautiful, wear makeup, dress well [...] Various demands that are not imposed on men.” NO.08 (24 years old, from Alagoas, white) remarked: “People analyze everything I do: my hair, how I dress, my shoes, my glasses [...] I am absolutely sure that my male colleagues in parliament don’t face these types of scrutiny.” SU.10 (50 years old, from Minas Gerais, mixed-race) shared: “A [female] colleague once came to me and asked, ‘Don’t you wear lipstick? [...] You need to, as a woman, dress up, wear makeup, so you don’t look sloppy, so you don’t look like a ‘tomboy,’ to show that you’re worth something based on your appearance, right?’”.

Women’s image in society has been constructed differently from that of men, carrying distinct political and historical connotations (Moreira, 2021). The political environment has established a standard of formality from a masculine perspective, which leads to women being pressured to meet this formal standard while simultaneously being expected to embrace their femininity and conform to dominant aesthetic norms.

The demand for conformity in terms of hair, clothing and makeup underscores male privilege in public spaces and undermines women’s work by placing their competencies, performances and achievements in a secondary role. Furthermore, a candidate’s failure to adhere to aesthetic standards can provoke stronger negative reactions than a male candidate’s inappropriate behavior.

4.1.2. Questioning women's professional competence

The interviewees described a culture of questioning their competence and knowledge as public individuals. “Our presence is very challenged, right?” (NO.04 – 25 years old, from Rio Grande do Norte, Black). SU.01 (32 years old, from Espírito Santo, mixed race) illustrated some of these doubts: “Did

she get there because she slept with someone, because she's having an affair with someone, because she did this or that?" Participant NO.03 (31 years old, from Maranhão, Black) explained that women often "get questioned because people think they lack the capacity to be there." NO.11 (41 years old, from Paraíba, Black) reported: "We're on the podium, and they doubt what we're saying. They ask one another if what we're saying is really true."

NO.08 (24 years old, from Alagoas, White) said: "I was constantly questioned about my knowledge, about whether I actually knew what I was talking about. It was something quite ironic because my male colleagues didn't even realize they were questioning me, right?" The participant also mentioned that this culture is so ingrained that her male colleagues didn't even notice the number of times they interrupted her, which compelled her to record and show them the many instances of interruptions and questioning during her speeches.

As Krook and Sanín (2016) describe, these attempts to question and undermine the presence of women in political positions can be seen as symbolic violence. This symbolic violence seeks to delegitimize women through gender stereotypes that question their political competencies. The authors further emphasize that these acts of violence are often perceived not as discriminatory but rather as "the cost of doing politics," while the unequal treatment given to men and women is seen as normal.

Therefore, this violence is culturally ingrained, making these actions normalized and rarely perceived, playing a determining role in establishing a social hierarchy between men and women. Similar results regarding the questioning of women's knowledge and capabilities were found in other studies involving women in politics (Carniel et al., 2018; Fernandes & Lourenço, 2023) and identified in other traditionally male-dominated environments, such as the technology sector (Grangeiro & Gomes, 2023; Mota-Santos et al., 2014).

4.1.3. Violent culture (physical and virtual environment)

The women interviewed highlighted that gender-based violence is embedded in the political culture and acts as a reaction to women's presence, constantly seeking to reaffirm that this space does not belong to them. This violence manifests in various forms, from incidents during the electoral process through daily parliamentary activities, to occurrences on social media and other communication platforms. As NO.04 (25 years old, from Rio Grande do Norte, Black) declared: "Gender-based political violence is no coincidence. The months when the highest levels of gender-based political violence were detected coincided with those following the elections that saw the largest number of women elected. It's no coincidence. Gender-based political violence is a reaction to our entry." NO.15 (43 years old, from Bahia, Black) stated: "Violence is a normalized reality for women in politics. We deal with it daily because the spaces we occupy are organized and structured around these oppressions."

Similarly, NO.01 (32 years old, from Ceará, Black) affirmed that women, "when entering the formal political arena, are shouted at, belittled and intimidated." NO.08 (24 years old, from Alagoas, White) recounted that while she had not yet received "rape or death threats," she had experienced profoundly painful situations that made her question whether she could endure staying in that environment. SU.20 (33 years old, from São Paulo, Black) remarked: "Unfortunately, the practice of political violence against women today is very common. It's not normal — we cannot normalize such absurdities — but it is very common, and I'm sad to say it's very difficult."

Campos (2019) pointed out that this violent culture, aimed at driving women away from political spaces, can be understood as a reaction to the perceived threat of occupying a traditionally male domain. As such, hegemonic men, who comprise the vast majority of political officeholders, may use violence to maintain politics under male control (Bardall et al., 2020).

Abade and Freitas (2023) confirmed that contemporary democratic systems have failed to eradicate structural political violence, which serves to silence and hinder the transformative achievements of groups traditionally excluded from power. Similarly, Bardall et al. (2020) argued that widespread political violence harms not only women but also men who fail to conform to the hegemonic standard, i.e., those who do not embody the behavior valued in the political context.

Unlike other professional male-dominated contexts, the interviewees emphasized how communication channels, media and social networks reflect a violent culture by exposing women to negative situations. SU.07 (34 years old, from Minas Gerais, White) noted that her personal data was leaked and observed a group of individuals frequently commenting on her social media posts: “My name was spread around, my personal phone number, my emails, my office phone, my photos [...] Every single one of my posts had massive, coordinated comments.” NO.18 (48 years old, from Pernambuco, Black) stated: “I even received threats on social media, including threats to my own life.”

SU.15 (42 years old, from Espírito Santo, White) also spoke about virtual violence: “I’ve received insults and offensive messages — like ‘If I catch you on the street, I don’t know what I’ll do to you.’ People insult me, call me a slut, an idiot [...] It’s routine, right? [...] sexual offenses directed at women. This is alarming, isn’t it? It’s sexual and violent.”

In this context, the internet and other communication platforms occupy a central role in perpetuating expressions of hatred, aggression and other forms of symbolic violence against women. Carniel et al. (2018) identified and demonstrated how humor on social networks also serves as a tool for depersonalization or invisibilization, humiliation or ridicule, objectification or sexualization and aggression or violence against women in the political context.

Additionally, the interviewees cited fake news practices. NO.17 (43 years old, from Piauí, mixed race) reported: “I was a victim of fake news that had a significant impact on my campaign. Parliamentarians accuse me of spreading several fake news stories, which I have to counter by shouting and confronting head-on. [...] There are videos and reports about me. I’ve even been featured in UOL [a Brazilian Newspaper] in a story about political persecution.” Fernandes et al. (2021) help us understand the hatred, aggression and fake news directed at women. These attacks can be seen as a backlash from members of society and party colleagues who are entrenched in traditional gender roles and, consciously or unconsciously, believe that women are violating the gender norms upheld by patriarchy.

Araújo and Borges (2013) highlighted that successful campaigns may be linked to the political trajectory and social networks in which these women are embedded. Thus, considering that the internet, virtual communication platforms and social networks are crucial for political careers, our findings underscore the urgent need for policies to combat and penalize fake news and other forms of virtual violence to prevent women from becoming ill or being driven away from political institutions.

4.2. Political parties measures to exclude women

4.2.1. *Politics: a space built by men and for men*

The findings of this study indicate that the lack of gender parity in politics is perpetuated by barriers that reinforce the perception of politics as a male-dominated space, where women are seen as outsiders. NO.15 (43 years old, from Bahia, Black) states: “Political parties are mostly designed and organized by men. We, women, are still seen as subservient, even if it is not openly said.” SU.19 (34 years old, from Rio de Janeiro, Black) mentions that “institutional politics is never designed for women.”

The difficulty in recognizing politics as a space for women underscores how female participation in Brazilian politics has historically been, and continues to be, marked by their own struggle (Campos, 2019). This lack of recognition is rooted in a social construct that designates certain spaces and activities as male-specific, thus normalizing the absence of women in political contexts (Biroli & Quintela, 2021). This normalization, combined with the lack of incentives for women to engage in politics, hampers their interest and entry into the field. Building public trajectories in social and institutional spaces is a fundamental way of accumulating prior capital for future candidacies and increasing electoral potential (Araújo & Borges, 2013).

NO.04 (25 years old, from Rio Grande do Norte, Black) highlights that “parliaments normalized the nonexistence of women within them, even though they are supposed to represent the people.” SU.10 (50 years old, from Minas Gerais, multiracial) recounts having heard in the Chamber that women are invading the space, “as if it were a space for men.” Similarly, SU.06 (52 years old, from São Paulo, Black) declares, “It is a space historically and culturally organized to exclude women. At every moment, we are told we do not belong here.”

NO.11 (41 years old, from Paraíba, Black) points out a critical aspect of women’s underrepresentation in politics: “The political space is not designed by or for women. We face a lot of difficulty navigating it. Moreover, all the rituals favor men.” This historical disparity is corroborated by Miguel and Biroli (2015), who emphasize that for a long time women did not participate in decisions regarding laws and public policies, even those directly affecting them, as such decisions were exclusively made by men.

4.2.2. *Veiled impasses*

This study also reveals, through the voices of the interviewees, the mechanisms employed by political parties to disadvantage female candidacies. The ways in which political parties structure themselves and define strategies directly and indirectly contribute to excluding women and privileging men. NO.01 (32 years old, from Ceará, Black) shares, “I ran for office and saw an age range created to favor a single person, a man, claiming that I didn’t have the political and social capital he had. As a result, I received less support than he did.” Another instance is shared by SU.07 (34 years old, from Minas Gerais, white): “I faced persecution during my campaign by male candidates from my political party and indifference from the party leaders.”

Waylen (2014) explains how informal institutions, understood as socially shared, operate within gender interactions, often present unwritten rules communicated outside officially sanctioned channels. These informal rules coexist with formal ones but often go unnoticed, reinforcing gender inequality. Thus, in practice, female candidates encounter informal mechanisms within their own

parties, often hidden, making it challenging to identify dynamics that establish gender hierarchies and formulate strategies to combat inequality.

Souza (2018) highlights how the lack of transparency in the allocation of funds between male and female candidates, as well as the misappropriation of party financial resources, perpetuates inequality. Diverting resources often benefits male candidates or those with greater political capital, as men spend approximately twice as much party resources during campaigns than women (Peixoto et al., 2016).

When evaluating the influence of political capital among elected and re-elected female deputies, Marques et al. (2021) suggest that women who are re-elected or return after a hiatus in office show stronger ties to family political capital than newly elected women. Financial inequality reinforces economic violence, making public work more challenging, discouraging and frustrating for women entering politics (Krook & Sanín, 2016).

Therefore, interviewees highlight the lack of transparency in the distribution and allocation of party resources, which disproportionately favors male candidates. As NO.17 (43 years old, from Piauí, multiracial) explains, “Political parties themselves have little interest in giving space to women. There is still a significant disparity because party incentives are always greater for men.” Facing difficulty in accessing financial resources, NO.12 (34 years old, from Sergipe, Black) shares her fight against these barriers: “They tried to take away my electoral TV and radio time, removed my TV slots and diverted my campaign funds from the electoral fund. But even so, I said I wasn’t going to give up.”

Studies confirm that for women to compete on an equal footing with men, they need access to resources (Peixoto et al., 2016; Sacchet, 2018). Alves et al. (2023) emphasize the role of public electoral funds in increasing the number of women elected, showing that female candidates had more successful campaigns and that the increased competitiveness of women’s candidacies is at least partly explained by greater campaign financing.

In addition to receiving fewer financial resources and having less access to political networks, interviewees note that they are rarely chosen or viewed as strong candidates to represent their political parties. This marginalization confirms a sexual division of politics (Sanchez, 2017). As NO.03 (31 years old, from Maranhão, Black) notes, “The party never prioritizes women as the main candidates for the ticket, right? We are always the ones building, debating the issues, contributing to the discussions. But when it comes down to it, the chosen names are always other males, right?”

Similarly, NO.15 (43 years old, from Bahia, Black) observes, “Even left-wing parties don’t develop female candidates. The names they prepare are always male. When in government strategy meetings, power spaces naturally mobilize the names of these men.” She also points out that “it’s the men who sit down to discuss strategies and the political scenario. They are the majority at the tables and in party leadership positions.”

4.2.3. Political party fraud

The interviewees highlight the practice of political parties using “placeholder” female candidates to circumvent affirmative action policies: “The competition is unfair from within the party. The quota is only met so men can secure [their own] candidacies” (NO.06 – 48 years old, from Bahia, white). “The quota in political parties, whether for the composition of directories or for elections, is often just a formality to comply with the rule, right? Many times, ‘placeholder’ candidacies have even been reported?” (NO.16).

NO.15 (43 years old, from Bahia, Black) shares: “Quotas were ensured, which was important. We’ve progressed to discuss funding, but there are still many battles to fight. The issue of placeholder candidacies, even though criminalized, is still a reality, even in our left-wing circles, given that female candidates are not genuinely developed to effectively compete in electoral processes.”

Women also point out the difficulty of often being seen as “vote-pullers” for male colleagues. SU.21 (23 years old, from São Paulo, multiracial) states: “Parties still look at many women as ideal for fulfilling these rules, without the intention of truly ensuring they win and are elected.” SU.10 (50 years old, from Minas Gerais, multiracial) explains that parties look for women who can draw votes but don’t pose a risk of being elected and taking a man’s place: “They look for women who have less chance because otherwise she would be a threat, right?” NO.12 (34 years old, from Sergipe, Black) notes, “Women are still seen as stepping stones. They are there to make up the ticket, to pull votes, to give that [...] that romanticized vision of politics and simply serve as support for [male] candidates.”

In addition to channeling party resources to favor male candidates’ careers, this study sheds light on and denounces another party practice that violates the fundamental right to women’s political participation: the use of placeholder candidates to comply with quota laws. This fraud, even if widely reported in the media, must be addressed in academic research as it poses a significant obstacle to women’s political participation (Wylie et al., 2019).

Thus, even if new laws are implemented to reduce gender inequality and combat political party fraud, these measures will only be effective if the rules are enforced rigorously enough to prevent subversion during their application (Waylen, 2014).

4.3. Consequences of violence

4.3.1. Women’s Resistance to entering political party politics

Because politics is structured in a way that excludes women, as discussed so far, the interviewees reported difficulty envisioning themselves in this arena and experienced personal resistance to engaging in institutional politics. NO.05 (48 years old, from Rio Grande do Norte, White) says: “Personally, I never thought about entering public life as a mandate holder.” NO.11 (41 years old, from Paraíba, Black) agrees: “There was an initial resistance because I understood the challenges and had seen what other women went through.”

NO.18 (48 years old, from Pernambuco, Black) explains: “I was active in the Black women’s movement, but I resisted putting my name or face on campaign flyers. I had this resistance [...] to putting my face out there, dealing with people’s reactions, the way they handle politics or politicians.” SU.20 (33 years old, from São Paulo, Black), involved in the fight for youth inclusion in politics, recounts how people would ask her, “Why aren’t you a candidate?” She would reply, “I didn’t see myself as a candidate. But I also saw in myself the same fears we were trying to combat in our youth — like fear of failure, fear of not having funding.” NO.15 (43 years old, from Bahia, Black) reflects on the reasons for her initial resistance: “If someone wanted to argue with me, suggesting I should run for office, I would resist. It wasn’t until I was immersed in the election in that I realized that my resistance, unconsciously, stemmed from those violent narratives I’d heard.”

This data underscores how psychosocial and cultural barriers, as well as exclusionary party practices, create a gap between women and institutional politics. This resistance cannot be interpreted

as a lack of interest in participating in the political environment, given that many women were already politically active in lower-profile roles, such as secretaries, advisors, or in informal politics, such as union, social, and activist groups. This discouragement from institutional politics reflects the normalization of decision-making seats as hegemonic spaces, which strongly exclude other identities, even when women recognize their own competencies to occupy these positions.

Furthermore, this resistance shows how patriarchal and sexist norms are internalized in society, failing to teach, encourage, or stimulate women to engage in politics. Fear of adverse reactions, imposed throughout their political trajectory, plays a significant role in this resistance. Thus, the data reveal how the additional challenges faced by women hinder their interest in and identification with political representation.

4.3.2. Physical and mental health deterioration

National politics is a violent and unhealthy environment for women. Gendered political violence manifests through physical, psychological, sexual and symbolic constraints, along with reduced career longevity and threats to physical integrity and life (Biroli, 2016). The interviewees reported physical and mental health issues arising from daily hostility, noting that many colleagues opted for other professional paths.

They revealed being exposed daily to exhausting, oppressive and harmful situations. NO.07 (30 years old, from Alagoas, white) shares: “Women have to work fifty times harder than men to be recognized. When I say ‘harder,’ I mean mental exhaustion, stress, lack of inner peace. It’s mentally draining, you know? We make ourselves sick just to bring up a discussion that, when proposed by a man, would take a minute to be accepted.”

NO.05 (48 years old, from Rio Grande do Norte, white) states: “The culture of the political space ages you, stresses you out and makes you sick. For instance, I’m relatively new to this, but I’ve already had two ischemic strokes, have a heart valve implant and suffer from anxiety. It’s constant—everyone’s on antidepressants. It’s a complicated thing.”

Participant NO.17 (43 years old, from Piauí, multiracial) adds, “A large number of women leave psychologically unwell.” Interviewees NO.01 (32 years old, from Ceará, Black) and SU.05 (34 years old, from Minas Gerais, white) recount how their health has suffered: “Today, I’m on medication, undergoing psychiatric and psychological treatment, all because of the criticism and dealing with everything people throw at us” (NO.01). “I gained 15 kilos last year and ended the year on sleeping pills and mood stabilizers. I was completely destabilized” (SU.05).

NO.14 (36 years old, from Sergipe, white) claims that her colleagues from other states have suffered significant violence and are leaving politics: “These acts of violence have affected their mental health. In the last election, some women from my party didn’t run because they weren’t emotionally capable of dealing with the confrontations they’ve faced in the legislature.”

Similarly, NO.15 (43 years old, from Bahia, Black) states: “Most of my colleagues and friends are unwell. And we’re not addressing this: ‘What’s happening to us?’ We’re normalizing this violent space and dehumanizing ourselves.”

The violence faced by women in politics seems more severe than that encountered in other professional environments, consisting of unique challenges inherent to this field (Teixeira, 2022). These acts of violence go beyond parliamentary and public life, leading to emotional and physical

problems that directly contribute to the withdrawal of the few women occupying decision-making political positions, as well as discouraging other women from entering this field.

5. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This research aimed to analyze the gender challenges faced by women in Brazilian politics. The political sphere is characterized as a male-dominated and violent environment, imposing barriers to women's participation. The interviewees reported experiencing intrusions into their personal lives, impositions of dominant aesthetic standards, a culture of questioning their capabilities, violence in physical and virtual spaces, as well as partisan obstacles.

The findings of this article show that even when women possess all the necessary skills and abilities they encounter unique and specific impediments in the political field. A lack of commitment by political parties to gender justice was observed, with frequent illegal practices and even fraud that go unpunished. Gender policies remain ineffective, rendering the environment predominantly male and discouraging other women from pursuing a political career.

In addition to the barriers presented, this study highlighted and contributed insights into two consequences arising from such political violence. The first is that the current social and party framework distances women from the political arena while normalizing the absence of their identities in institutional decision-making spaces. This makes it difficult for women to recognize themselves as representatives. Even when engaged in political environments — such as activist groups, grassroots movements and union struggles — experiences of and heightened awareness of violence often result in a lack of interest and resistance to partisan politics.

The second consequence reveals that, within this hostile national political environment, the result is withdrawal, high stress levels as well as physical and mental health issues for women active in this field. While some studies in the literature have already mentioned emotional and mental impacts on women in politics, the emergence of physical illnesses and the increased use of medication to cope with the political environment stand out as particular findings of this study.

This article contributed to a better understanding of the challenges faced by women in the Brazilian political context, illustrating how psychosocial, cultural and partisan barriers — such as societal pressures, questioning of abilities, violence in physical and virtual spaces, normalization of female absence and the use of “placeholder candidates” — interfere with and perpetuate women's underrepresentation in politics.

This research underscores the need for female representation in politics, as their absence at all levels of institutionalized politics hinders the work of those who manage to attain political positions. It discourages other women from entering the field, reduces policies and measures addressing gender-based violence and impoverishes democracy, limiting the inclusion of essential public policies — such as those related to education, healthcare and security — that reflect the lived experiences of underrepresented groups in parliament.

Supported by empirical data, this research validated the importance of women's participation in the political field for the development of women's rights, addressing social inequality and advancing gender democracy. Furthermore, the data can be utilized to develop policies to combat gender discrimination, while also enabling women to define strategies and strengthen women's collectives.

The findings can help raise awareness among individuals, activists, political collectives, social groups and political parties about issues that are often neglected in decision-making spaces.

It is necessary to highlight some limitations, such as the fact that this study did not deepen the debate on the intersectionality of gender and race. Although more than 50% of the interviewees identified as Black or mixed-race, intersectionality was not adopted as an analytical tool in the theoretical framework or data collection instrument. Recognizing that trajectories and experiences are shaped by gender, race and class, future studies could deepen the discussion initiated here through the lens of intersectional theories.

The territorial scope—focused on the Southeast and Northeast regions—and the predominance of interviewees from leftist parties also represent limitations. For future research, it would be interesting to collect data with a different territorial scope or include all Brazilian states, enabling a comparative analysis of macro-regions or states. Additionally, studies aiming to evaluate the experiences and violence faced by women active in left-wing, right-wing and centrist parties would also be valuable.

REFERENCES

- Abade, D. N., & Freitas, J. R. (2023). Violência política de gênero no sistema internacional e no ordenamento interno: o estado constitucional cooperativo sob enfoque. *Revista Direito Mackenzie*, 17(1), 1-31. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5935/2317-2622/direitomackenzie.v17n115967>
- Allen, P., & Cutts, D. (2018). Women are more likely than men to blame structural factors for women's political under-representation: evidence from 27 countries. *European Journal of Political Research*, 58(2), 465-487.
- Alves, M. V. C., Sacchet, T., & Matheus, T. (2023). O efeito do financiamento público de campanha na eleição de mulheres no Brasil. *Revista Feminismos*, 11(2), e11223017. <https://doi.org/10.9771/rf.v11i2.57749>
- Anzia, S. F., & Bernhard, R. (2022). Gender stereotyping and the electoral success of women candidates: new evidence from local elections in the United States. *British Journal of Political Science*, 52(4), 1544-1563. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123421000570>
- Araújo, C. (2010a). Rotas de ingresso, trajetórias e acesso das mulheres ao Legislativo: um estudo comparado entre Brasil e Argentina. *Revista Estudos Feministas*, 18(2), 567-584.
- Araújo, C. (2010b). The limits of women's quotas in Brazil. *Ids Bulletin*, 41(5), 17-24.
- Araújo, C. M. D. O., & Borges, D. (2013). Trajetórias políticas e chances eleitorais: analisando o "gênero" das candidaturas em 2010. *Revista de Sociologia e Política*, 21, 69-91.
- Bardall, G., Bjarnegård, E., & Piscopo, J. M. (2020). How is political violence gendered? Disentangling motives, forms, and impacts. *Political Studies*, 68(4), 916-935.
- Bester, G. M. (2016). A luta sufrágica feminina e a conquista do voto pelas mulheres brasileiras: aspectos históricos de uma caminhada. *Revista Argumenta*, 25, 327-344. <https://doi.org/10.35356/argumenta.v0i25.907>
- Biroli, F. (2010). Mulheres e política nas notícias: estereótipos de gênero e competência política. *Revista Crítica de Ciências Sociais*, 90, 45-69. <https://doi.org/10.4000/rccs.1765>
- Biroli, F. (2016). Political violence against women in Brazil: expressions and definitions. *Revista Direito e Práxis*, 7(15), 557-589.
- Biroli, F. (2018). Violence against women and reactions to gender equality in politics. *Politics & Gender*, 14(4), 681-685.
- Biroli, F., & Quintela, D. F. (2020). Divisão sexual do trabalho, separação e hierarquização: contribuições para a análise do gênero das democracias. *Revista de Ciências Sociais*, 53, 98-115.
- Bremaeker, F. E. J. de. (2021, fevereiro). *Perfil dos prefeitos eleitos em 2020: Brasil e Regiões* (2a ed.). Observatório de Informações Municipais.
- Campbell, R., & Winters, K. (2008). Understanding men's and women's political interests: evidence from a study of gendered political attitudes. *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties*, 18(1), 53-74.
- Campos, L. F. (2019). Litígio estratégico para igualdade de gênero: o caso das verbas de campanha para mulheres candidatas. *Revista Direito e Práxis*, 10(1), 593-629.
- Carniel, F., Ruggi, L., & Ruggi, J. D. O. (2018). Gender and humor in social networks: the campaign against Dilma Rousseff in Brazil. *Opinião Pública*, 24, 523-546.
- Corley, K. G., & Gioia, D. A. (2004). Identity ambiguity and change in the wake of a corporate spin-off. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 49(2), 173-208.
- Costa, A. P., & Navas, I. G. (2017). Da casa ao Congresso — A inserção das mulheres na política partidária: ações afirmativas para inclusão feminina nos parlamentos. *Revista Quaestio Iuris*, 10(4), 2904-2925.
- Fernandes, C., & Lourenço, M. L. (2023). Lugar de mulher é... na política: reflexões sobre micro e macroagressões de identidades. *Journal of Contemporary Administration*, 27(5), e220252. <https://doi.org/10.1590/1982-7849rac2023220252>. por
- Fernandes, C., Lourenço, M. L., Frohlich, S., Silva, D. E. D., & Kai, F. O. (2021). Mulheres na política: emoções e desafios em dinâmicas institucionais complexas. *Cadernos EBAPE.BR*, 18(4), 1071-1081. <https://doi.org/10.1590/1679-395120200006>

- Gaskell, G. (2003). Entrevistas individuais e grupais. In M. W. Bauer, & G. Gaskell (Eds.), *Pesquisa qualitativa com texto, imagem e som: um manual prático*. Vozes.
- Gil, A. C. (2002). *Como elaborar projetos de pesquisa*. Atlas.
- Gioia, D. A., Corley, K. G., & Hamilton, A. L. (2013). Seeking qualitative rigor in inductive research: Notes on the Gioia methodology. *Organizational Research Methods*, 16(1), 15-31.
- Grangeiro, R., & Gomes, M., Neto. (2023). Women startups founders: an examination through the prism of the Queen Bee Phenomenon. *Review of Business Management*, 25(3), 387-404.
- Hall, L. J., & Donaghue, N. (2013). "Nice girls don't carry knives": constructions of ambition in media coverage of Australia's first female prime minister. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 52(4), 631-647.
- Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística. (2022). *Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílio Contínua* (PNAD 2021). <https://www.ibge.gov.br/estatisticas/sociais/trabalho/9171-pesquisa-nacional-por-amostra-de-domicilios-continua-mensal.html>
- Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais Anísio Teixeira. (2022). *Sinopse Estatística da Educação Superior 2020*. <https://www.gov.br/inep/pt-br/aceso-a-informacao/dados-abertos/sinopses-estatisticas/educacao-superior>
- Krook, M. L., & Sanín, J. R (2016). Género y violencia política en América Latina: conceptos, debates y soluciones. *Política y Gobierno*, 23(1), 127-162.
- Matos, M. (2020). *Mulheres e a violência política sexista: desafios à consolidação da democracia. Mulheres, poder e ciência política: debates e trajetórias*. Editora Unicamp.
- Marques, D., Celini, T. P., & Santos, L. F. dos. (2021). Carreiras políticas de mulheres no Brasil: aprofundando o debate a partir da nova bancada feminina da câmara dos deputados (2019-2022). *Revista Feminismos*, 9(2), 24-55. <https://doi.org/10.9771/rf.v9i2.43297>
- Miguel, L. F., & Biroli, F. (2010a). Práticas de gênero e carreiras políticas: vertentes explicativas. *Revista Estudos Feministas*, 18, 653-679.
- Miguel, L. F.; Biroli, F. (2010b). A produção da imparcialidade: a construção do discurso universal a partir da perspectiva jornalística. *Revista Brasileira de Ciências Sociais*, 25(73), 59-76.
- Miguel, L. F., Marques, D., & Machado, C. (2015). Capital familiar e carreira política no Brasil: gênero, partido e região nas trajetórias para a Câmara dos Deputados. *Dados*, 58, 721-747.
- Miranda, A. R. A., Mafra, F. L. N., & Cappelle, M. C. A. (2012). Relações de gênero e poder: um estudo com professoras-gerentes em uma universidade pública. *Revista Administração em Diálogo*, 14(3), 110-113.
- Moreira, C. D. P. S. M., Jr. (2021). Problematizando: por que a política parecer ser um universo masculino? *Emblemas — Revista da Unidade Acadêmica Especial de História e Ciências Sociais*, 18(1), 57-66.
- Mota-Santos, C. M., Tanure, B., & Carvalho, A. M. de, Neto. (2014). Mulheres executivas brasileiras: o teto de vidro em questão. *Revista Administração em Diálogo*, 16(3), 56-75.
- Nogueira, C. M. (2015). A mulher na política: um estudo sobre a participação da mulher nas eleições de 2014. *Cadernos de Gênero e Diversidade*, 1(1), 307-319.
- Novellino, M. S. F., & Toledo, M. L. G. (2018). As mulheres no campo político: uma análise das candidaturas femininas às prefeituras brasileiras (2000-2016). *Inclusão Social*, 11(2), 67-79.
- Observatório da Violência Política e Eleitoral. (2023). *Observatório da Violência Política e Eleitoral no Brasil*. <http://giel.uniriotec.br/?file=observatorio-violencia-politica-e-eleitoral>
- Panke, L., & Iasulaitis, S. (2016). Mulheres no poder: aspectos sobre o discurso feminino nas campanhas eleitorais. *Opinião Pública*, 22, 385-417.
- Peixoto, V. M., Goulart, N. L. M., & Silva, G. T. (2016). Cotas e mulheres nas eleições legislativas de 2014. *Política & Sociedade*, 15(32), 126-144.
- Pinho, T. R. D. (2020). Debaixo do tapete: a violência política de gênero e o silêncio do Conselho de Ética da Câmara dos Deputados. *Revista Estudos Feministas*, 28(2), e67271. <https://doi.org/10.1590/1806-9584-2020v28n267271>

- Sacchet, T. (2018). Why gender quotas don't work in Brazil? The role of the electoral system and political finance. *Colombia Internacional*, 95, 25-54.
- Sanchez, B. R. (2017). Onde estão as mulheres na política institucional. *Cadernos Adenauer*, 18(4), 155-16
- Sanín, J. R. (2022). Criminalizing violence against women in politics: innovation, diffusion, and transformation. *Politics & Gender*, 18(1), 1-32.
- Schelbauer, V. G. (2020). O patriarcado, ações afirmativas e a sub-representatividade da mulher no Poder Legislativo. *Paraná Eleitoral — Revista Brasileira de Direito Eleitoral e Ciência Política*, 9(1) 1-21.
- Silva, M. G. D., Chaves, V., & Barbosa, L. (2023). Mulheres eleitas e capital político familiar na Câmara dos Deputados: uma análise da 56ª legislatura (2019-2023). *Sociedade e Estado*, 38, 95-124.
- Siqueira, C. (2022). Bancada feminina aumenta 18,2% e tem duas representantes trans. *PCD*. <https://www.camara.leg.br/noticias/911406-bancada-feminina-aumenta-182-e-tem-duas-representantes-trans/>
- Sousa, L. P. D., & Guedes, D. R. (2016). A desigual divisão sexual do trabalho: um olhar sobre a última década. *Estudos Avançados*, 30, 123-139.
- Sousa, T. P. (2018). Mulher e política: a dificuldade da sub-representação no contexto brasileiro. *Estudos Eleitorais*, 13(1), 131-146.
- Teixeira, M. B. M. (2022). *Elas fora do lugar? Influências e dificuldades na inserção e na atuação das mulheres deputadas federais na política no Brasil*. PUC Minas.
- Teixeira, M. B. M., & Mota-Santos, C. M. (2023). Mulheres na política institucional brasileira: inserção e capital político das deputadas federais. In *Anais do 8º Encontro de Gestão de Pessoas e Relações de Trabalho*, São Paulo, SP, Brasil.
- Triviños, A. N. S. (1987). *Introdução à pesquisa em ciências sociais: a pesquisa qualitativa em educação*. Atlas.
- Tribunal Superior Eleitoral (2024). *TSE Mulheres: estatísticas*. <https://www.justicaeleitoral.jus.br/tse-mulheres/>
- Inter-Parliamentary Union. (2023). *Women in politics*. <https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/about-ipu/2024-03/impact-report-2023>
- Waylen, G. (2014). Informal institutions, institutional change, and gender equality. *Political Research Quarterly*, 67(1), 212-223.
- Wylie, K., & Santos, P. D. (2016). A law on paper only: electoral rules, parties, and the persistent underrepresentation of women in Brazilian legislatures. *Politics & Gender*, 12(3), 415-442.
- Wylie, K., Santos, P. D., & Marcelino, D. (2019). Extreme non-viable candidates and quota maneuvering in Brazilian legislative elections. *Opinião Pública*, 25, 1-28.
- Yang, L. K., Connolly, L., & Connolly, J. M. (2022). Is there a glass cliff in local government management? Examining the hiring and departure of women. *Public Administration Review*, 82(3), 570-584.

Manoel Bastos Gomes Neto

Ph.D. candidate and Master in Business Administration from the Pontifical Catholic University of Minas Gerais (PUC Minas); Postgraduate in People Management from the University of São Paulo (MBA USP/Esalq); Bachelor's degree in Business Administration from the Federal University of Cariri (UFCA). E-mail: neto26bastos@gmail.com

Carolina Maria Mota Santos

Ph.D. and Master in Business Administration from the Pontifical Catholic University of Minas Gerais (PUC Minas); Professor in the Graduate Program in Business Administration (PPGA) at the Pontifical Catholic University of Minas Gerais (PUC Minas); Adjunct Professor IV at the Faculty of Psychology at the Pontifical Catholic University of Minas Gerais (PUC Minas). E-mail: cmmotasantos@gmail.com

Antônio Carvalho Neto

Ph.D. and Master in Business Administration from the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG), with a sandwich doctorate at the Institute of Economics of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ) and the Institute for Advanced Studies in Social Sciences of Rio de Janeiro (IUPERJ); Research Productivity Fellow at CNPq; Permanent Professor in the Graduate Program in Business Administration (PPGA) at the Pontifical Catholic University of Minas Gerais (PUC Minas). E-mail: carvalhoneto@pucminas.br

Rebeca da Rocha Grangeiro

Ph.D. and Master in Psychology from the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA) with a doctoral internship in Psychology at Paris Descartes University; Professor at Paris Nanterre University in the Department of Economic and Social Administration (AES) and researcher affiliated with the Parisian Laboratory of Social Psychology (LAPPS). E-mail: rebeca.grangeiro@ufca.edu.br

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Manoel Bastos Gomes Neto: Conceptualization (Lead); Data curation (Lead); Methodology (Lead); Project administration (Equal); Validation (Lead); Visualization (Lead); Writing - original draft (Lead); Writing - review & editing (Equal).

Carolina Maria Mota Santos: Methodology (Supporting); Project administration (Equal); Validation (Supporting); Visualization (Supporting); Writing - review & editing (Supporting).

Antônio Carvalho Neto: Validation (Supporting); Visualization (Supporting); Writing - review & editing (Supporting).

Rebeca da Rocha Grangeiro: Methodology (Supporting); Validation (Supporting); Visualization (Supporting); Writing - review & editing (Supporting).

DATA AVAILABILITY

The dataset supporting the results of this study is not publicly available due to privacy concerns involving the participants of the research.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES).

PEER REVIEW REPORT

The peer review report is available at <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.14018245>.