

The Complexity of Heuristic Structure of Gender Intersectionality and Statutory Political Participation for Women in India: Exploring Structural Challenges

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Abstract

The intersectionality dynamics associated with the political participation of women outlines a challenging context for policy-makers and political institutions. The friction witnessed within the existing structural systems and sub-systems becomes complex due to the interplay of prevalent inequities such as caste, class, gender, and different forms of intersectionality. In India, statutory reservation guarantees access by historically disadvantaged classes to representation in government and other institutions. While the statutory reservation is viewed as an effective empowering instrument for the equitable political participation of women, the pre-existing and emerging forms of intersectionality and its complex manifestation imply a need for comprehensive analysis of its possible impact. There is a critical need to consider multi-faceted gender intersectionality, its social and institutional modalities, and resultant empowerment dynamics to ensure women's equitable political participation in the constitutional democratic system.

Keywords: intersectionality, caste, gender, politics, policy-making, heuristic structure

India has been struggling to accomplish equitable representation for women in politics since few decades. Despite being a constitutional obligation, building a consensus among the political institutions for women's reservation has remained challenging for plethora of reasons. Women's reservation in the electoral political system goes through a complex social, cultural, and institutional process due to its intricate relationship with several explicit and implicit forms of gender intersectionality. In the Indian context, the social construct of gender is mostly coupled with class and caste; however, there are multiple identities derived from demographic, ethnic, cultural, and other such characteristic features that lead to complex forms of intersectional identities. Although understood minimally with its intersectional form, the multi-modal identities of women from different groups construct the underpinnings of identity-based politics. With the deliberation of statutory reservation for women candidates in politics, the hitherto less explored gender intersectionality dynamics has strikingly made its way into the debate about women's political empowerment, further questioning the ethicality of political institutions.

Contained by the established caste-based and class-based socio-political milieu, the opposition to women's quota in the democratic political system reveals the

impact of unexplored gender intersectionality and its interplay within the pre-existing structural political equations. As an outcome of the country-wide political synthesis, the evident exclusion of women from political participation has led to the politics of structural space and intersectional gender mobility. Alongside these developments, the politics of knowledge production have, due to varied ontological constructs surrounding women's quota, led to numerous public discourses, largely contorted by the media and partially influenced by academia. The propagation of non-epistemological and belief-based conceptions of gender intersectionality are detrimental to the rationalized actions for the redress of historical gender exclusion in political processes. Hence, there is a critically important need to explore and understand the heuristic structure of gender intersectionality and its dynamics with its historicity, as derived from traditional caste-class and from unexplored structural aspects, and to assess its magnitude.

Historically, the caste-based social structure in India carries a hierarchical nature that has resulted in inequitable political representation for a majority of caste-based groups. As a well-established category of analysis, caste has been the dominant focus in the realms of social and political analysis in India. However, in a gradual manner, various other intersectional structural factors such as class, religion, demography, gender, and other unexplored factors have gained an importance. The issue of women's reservation in politics has revealed the limitations of unitary categories such as caste or gender or class in deliberating and accomplishing social justice for the traditionally deprived population groups. On the contrary, intersectional identities such as caste-gender-class have been found to play an influential role in establishing an effective identity and varied degree of bargaining power in the political and social arena. However, as of now, there is a restricted and invisible discourse about the nature and role of gender intersectionality within academia and the media, as well as scholarly debates in India. Partly, the reason is that the dynamic and phenomenological nature of gender intersectionality has been found to be challenging for the policy-making process. Nevertheless, the epistemological importance of intersectionality analysis to inform the ongoing crisis surrounding the women's reservation in the political process cannot be denied.

The epistemological complexity of gender intersectionality exceeds typical normative considerations due to its intricate manifestation within the dynamic context of structural polity and the emerging market economy. Except for few feminist nuances, gender has been a relatively less objectified category for knowledge production with respect to structural analysis using the matrix of intersectionality and its social-political manifestation in India. Moreover, the praxis of gender intersectionality is problematized by the fact that the larger political, economic, social, as well as knowledge-production systems, have been dominated by entities from communities that have been awarded high structural privileges within the historic caste-class hierarchy in India.

The diversification of caste-class-gender-based politics involves potential appropriation of intersectional characteristics and hence the identities by respective members to claim and maintain their space in the emerging structural matrix. In view of the complex nature and paucity of knowledge on gender intersectionality, policy-

making on issues such as a statutory quota for women in the political process has become a challenging task. Therefore, it is crucial to explore gender intersectionality and its heuristic structure, whereby such phenomena can be rationally incorporated to ensure equitable gender representation in democratic constitutional politics. Although gender intersectionality is documented in the form of its manifestation to a great extent, a theoretical exploration of the heuristic structure of gender intersectionality in India can provide a reasonable pretext and a point of initiation for further policy-centric inquiry.

The Ontological Complexity of Gender Intersectionality

Debates about the definition of gender intersectionality are explicitly linked to ontological politics in terms of accepting or rejecting multiple dimensions that constitute women's effective intersectional identity. The most dominant form of such ontological politics is about rejecting gender and caste configurations and considering women as unified, and hence a particular representational category within the androcentric political structure. While the nature of ontological politics of gender intersectionality is multi-faceted to recognize, the socially manifested dialectical discourse on gender intersectionality has notable bearing on the interpretive faculties of political and media entities, as seen in case of women's reservation in politics. The typology of caste-gender, as well as other intersectional representations that can be considered as constitutionally legitimate representation amid the great expanse of unexplored intersectionality, outlines a crucial need for knowledge production and operational theoretical framework for the same.

Gradually, "intersectionality" has been taken as an important heuristic for understanding women's issues (Davis, 2008; McCall, 2005). While the Western discourses on gender intersectionality are dominated by race and gender, the Indian case has required eclectic considerations due to the multiplicity of characteristic factors emerging from the diversity of ethnic groups. Except for resemblances in the oppressive characteristics and observable structural forms, race is not an equivalent category to caste that can be called superimposable for the Indian context of caste. As a generic phenomenon, caste and gender in India manifest and dive through a distinct structural system of polity. The fallacy of race-caste equivalence implies a focused exploration of the indigenous forms and nature of intersectionality, which is more likely to resolve the ongoing ontological crisis.

Intersectionality has been theorized in a diverse manner by various experts. Brah and Phoenix (2004) viewed intersectionality as "signifying the complex, irreducible, varied, and variable effects which ensue when multiple axes of differentiation—economic, political, cultural, psychic, subjective and experiential—intersect in historically specific contexts" (p. 76). While conceptualizing intersectionality, Brah and Phoenix (2004) have put temporality as an essential component to position intersectionality analysis within its historical context. Kumar (2010) outlined intersectionality as a "sociological approach which suggests and seeks to examine how various social and cultural categories of discrimination interact on multiple and often simultaneous levels in the making of systems of power, contributing to systemic inequalities" (p. 64). Kumar's definition provides a functional directive about the

mechanics of intersectionality; however, it implies the possibility of appropriation of intersectional identities to form identities that are more acceptable in contemporary discourse. Based on the wide-ranging ontological constructs of intersectionality, it becomes explicit that gender intersectionality, when coupled with overt factors such as caste, can form a challenging and dynamic interplay in the Indian context, exemplified by the process of appropriating intersectionality.

Diverse perspectives on intersectionality explicate its political function as characterized and controlled by the interpretive politics surrounding it. Gender intersectionality has taken a shape of the most active political typologies with the deliberation of women's quota in politics. Crenshaw (1991) put forth intersectionality as a way of "mediating the tension between assertions of multiple identities and the ongoing necessity of group politics" (p. 1296). The caste-based assertion of identities in the political stream has been prominent in India, and intersectionality analysis can provide a realistic heuristic structure of it. Quite vividly, Crenshaw's (1991) conceptualization of intersectionality informs the struggle of historically oppressed communities within the caste-based identity politics that exists in the larger framework of social justice imperatives of the constitutional democratic system. Nevertheless, the multi-modal exchange of intersectional identities as a way of bargaining for political representation induces reactionary appropriative actions from various social groups within the larger structural matrix. In the context of women's reservation in politics, the appropriation of identities may appear generic yet largely controlled by the patriarchal polity. As a result, within the androcentric norms, the appropriation of identities for claiming identity-based intersectionality leads to two-fold ontological politics: in its manifested socio-political form with the appropriative charter, and at the knowledge-production level due to the interpretive dynamics. Furthermore, the characteristic appropriation of intersectionality-based identity is likely to be structured through psycho-genetic or socio-genetic processes, revealing the possibility of a multiplicity of intersectionality factors and interrelationships in which the constituents are intertwined and interlinked (Brewer, Conrad, & King, 2002).

The social construction of intersectionality using constituents such as race, class, and gender happens within a temporal and spatial context, simultaneously changing its interpretations over time and context due to the influence of social forces, further politicizing the relationships among the intersectionality constituents (Brewer et al., 2002). Within the caste-based polity, caste intersectionality and gender intersectionality assume a complex process of appropriation of caste and gender. Referring to the work of major sociologists in India, Kumar (2010) underscored that "the intersectionality perspective assumes that the classical systems of oppression in society do not act independent of each other; instead, these forms of oppression interrelate, creating a system of oppression that reflects the 'intersection' of multiple forms of discrimination" (p. 64). While being ignored in a stereotypical manner, the identity-based oppression and social justice imperatives attached to integrated caste-gender intersectionality require evidence-based policy-making in India to ensure equitable political participation of women coming from the oppressed

caste groups. However, gender intersectionality cannot be assumed to carry only two-fold caste-gender coupling but rather involves multiple unexplored aspects.

Intersectionality has remained at the core of a critical lens and understood to have failed to meet the “good theory” criteria in the sociological sense (Davis, 2008). Nevertheless, the feminist heuristic utility of the conceptual tool of intersectionality has been widely accepted. Further, Davis (2008) has suggested the need for a well-structured definition, parameters, and a methodology to attain the benefit of intersectionality through the research process. Particularly, when political participation must be ensured for women coming from different groups that carry multiple identities based on caste, language, demography, and so on, intersectionality frameworks have to be rooted within appropriate and consistent epistemological approaches. In India, ontological politics within knowledge production on gender intersectionality has great potential, considering the minuscule representation of women from oppressed castes in knowledge-production spheres and visible demographically imbalanced feminist representation.

Women’s Reservation in Politics and the Intersectionality Dynamics

In India, the deliberation for women’s reservation in politics has challenged the patriarchal polity and its foundational value systems by revealing its androcentric underpinnings. The discourse on women’s under-representation in politics has been largely associated with the patriarchy and partly associated with the low functional ability of women due to the lack of education and exposure. However, there has been incremental evidence leading to a more rational understanding of gender and aligned intersectionality discourse. Chattopadhyay and Duflo (2004) have shown that mandatory political representation of women changes the nature of political competition, whereby women political representatives are found to invest more in women-centric infrastructure and activities. Gradually, the fact has been established that women’s mandatory political representation will have quantitative as well as a qualitative effect on the constitutional democratic polity. However, gender intersectionality and its political manifestation are yet to be explored in terms of how it would affect the intersectionality-based representation of women in the Indian political system.

Notably, the friction about women’s reservation in politics has led to unexplored caste dynamics in Indian politics. Ray (1999) analyzed debates about the women’s reservation bill, in which it emerged that the 33% reservation for women in the legislative system has been mainly opposed by the Other Backward Castes (OBCs). Further, Ray (1999) highlighted that OBC politicians fear that women’s reservation would reduce the OBC seats in the legislative assembly and would increase upper-caste representation through women politicians from upper-caste communities. With a pragmatic logic to secure sufficient representation, OBC politicians might have demanded adequate reservation for OBCs within the proposed quota for women. Contrarily, the representation of OBC women as a separate intersectional category can be logically argued for legitimate allocation within the proposed quota. Furthermore, there is sufficient scope for exploring the caste-based deficit by OBCs

that could lead to the claims for additional representation to ensure social justice. It should be noted that the caste-based census is still being opposed in India.

Gender-caste intersectionality indicates that caste considerations are integral to gender in its political representation. However, the larger policy system has not been able to employ an evidence-based strategy to incorporate it and to further ensure intersectionality-based reservation for women. Women's participation in politics has remained substantially low in India, which shows that historical caste-based political institutions have more or less operated within the broader patriarchal political structure. At the federal level, until the decade of the 1990s, women's participation in Lok Sabha (the lower house of the Parliament of India) has not exceeded 10% of the total seats in India; the situation in Rajya Sabha (the upper house of the Parliament of India) also appeared grim; moreover, at the state level, participation of women is even lower as compared to the federal level (Rai, 2011).

Regardless of debates surrounding legislative reservation for women, the statutory caste-gender-based representation in politics carries a notable impact on the constitutional democratic governance system. Nussbaum (2002) mentioned that caste-based politics has displaced national issues, and further, the proliferation of caste-based politics has affected political stability to some extent. Observations by Nussbaum (2002) underscored the importance of caste intersectionality in politics. A few decades before, Rudolph and Rudolph (1960) revealed the nature of institutional means for political integration through political parties in India. The particular feature, as highlighted by Rudolph and Rudolph, showed that parties encourage caste interests, act as brokers for caste interests, and allow representation within it. The institutionalization of caste among the political institutions through the multi-party system apparently carries generic caste dynamics due to the prevalent feudal and the so-called upper-caste dominance in politics. In implicative terms, women's reservation in Indian politics has triggered the complex system of caste-based politics in India.

Within the caste-based political matrix, all castes are unable to bargain for an equitable representation. It has been seen that the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Muslims carry a substantially visible group identity linked to their higher political participation (Gleason, 2001). Notably, caste-based alliances and their dynamics were strikingly visible in the recent election and post-election developments in Bihar, a state known for its caste-based political dynamics (Yadav, 2011). However, on the great Indian political canvas, this fact—that parties tend to consider the intersection of caste as prominent rather than gender—leads to a less political inclination toward women's reservation. Prasad (1997), who reviewed the 1996 Bihar state election, mentioned that elections play a structural role in establishing the dominance of some castes over others. Such a scenario outlines challenging struggles for women's political participation and representation, as caste-gender intersectionality has not been established sufficiently yet. Kishwar (1996) argued that since women from the backward classes carry lowest social status, party-level approaches for women's inclusion in politics should be emphasized. The instrumentality of such approaches is questionable, as the dominant

patriarchal nature of Indian political system is capable of reinforcing age-old structural equations from time to time.

The intricate nature of gender intersectionality outlines the role of intensive in-depth scholarship that can provide analytical tools to understand the dynamics involved in women's political empowerment. As reservation of women in politics has policy implications for women's empowerment as well as social justice for the oppressed castes, the issue of women's reservation can be more evidently addressed through knowledge production as a constitutional obligation. The role of feminists, indigenous scholars on religion and caste, sociologists, and constitution experts is prominent, considering their ability to outline analytical tools and evidence-based directives for policy-making. At present, the ontological assumptions about gender-caste intersectionality involve fallacies due to the lack of understanding about the phenomenological manifestations of the diverse forms of intersectionality in an Indian social-political context.

There is a paucity of literature documenting experiences of women from different castes about their political participation through independent and party-based political representation. The class factor has a notable role in attaining political representation; hence, women from the politically and economically valued classes receive substantial representation, leading to class-gender intersectionality and hierarchy within gender-based representation. Similar concerns were voiced, and emphasis was given to explore effective strategies to avoid such policy-induced hierarchy within the political institutions leading to the class-centric political representation of women (Rai, 2002). For the equitable and social-justice oriented representation of gender-caste intersectionality, there is a need for evidence-based strategies to avoid the manipulative use of reservation as a political instrument for excluding oppressed caste groups. To date, urban-based feminist groups have not been able to contribute in the debate effectively to address caste-gender intersectionality in India. Randall (2006) has pointed out that the divisions and elitism of the women's movement and the distance between women politicians and women at large are important factors explaining the standstill of women's political participation through the reservation.

The political opposition to women's reservation can be seen as patriarchal behaviours of political institutions and entities; particularly, those who are coming from the so-called lower caste groups face such opposition more due to the infiltration of social biases. The inquiry about patriarchal tendencies among OBCs resisting women's reservation needs to be viewed in light of the synthesis of caste-based oppressions in the power matrix of contemporary politics in India. Randall (2006) observed that OBCs-dominated political parties shared sentiments about the space attained by them in the parliament and feared that political space is going to be reduced due to the women's reservation bill. Unfortunately, due to the unavailability of a caste-based census in India, it is difficult to stipulate the actual, evidentiary, quantitative representation required for oppressed castes in the legislative system, including women coming from same groups. So far, the impact of exclusion of women with intersectional identities and its effect on marginalization are not sufficiently explored. Notably, Pande (2003) indicated that the possible marginalization of

minority representatives might lead to their intimidation, further leading to intensely active political roles, thus forming extreme forms of political dynamics.

Political Participation, Voting, and Gender Representation

The patriarchal polity is less likely to view women as a separate vote bank; hence, typical democratic power as a voting citizenry can be partially or fully diminished for women. However, within policy-making activities and local-level decision-making, where the process of voting is used to take a call on certain issues, women are likely to practise their democratic voting rights to make sure about their political, hence developmental interests. Using local council-based evidence, Chattopadhyay and Duflo (2004) found that the gender of politicians influences decision-making and that women politicians are more likely to serve different interests of women. Along the same lines, Clots-Figueras (2011) found that female legislators belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes more often support education as compared to men from their community as well as to other female legislators. Arguably, women's reservation with intersectional features (mainly the caste or tribe), has an effective instrumental role in ensuring policy-making in which women are seen as a competent and deserving group that requires social and economic justice. Furthermore, Chattopadhyay and Duflo (2004) indicated that political communication increases when representatives and voters are of the same sex. Pande (2003) has shared similar findings of the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe communities. However, policy incorporation of a gender-centric political communication system has not gone beyond Women's Gram Sabha (Women's Special Village Council Meeting). Notably, Deshpande (2009) pointed out that regional-level dynamics had a bearing on women's voting, which reveals the effective existence of demographic intersectionality in the voting behaviour of Indian women.

The list of factors associated with women's political participation has been gradually expanding. Gleason (2001) indicated that literacy and income are correlated with the voting gender gap, which shows that voting is closely associated with the empowerment process through instrumental outcomes emerging from education and economic activities for all women. The voting participation of women has been increased in India (55%), almost meeting the national collective average; and there is a visible attention due to the legislative and constitutional provisions of reservation (Nussbaum, 2002). However, Deshpande (2009) observed that Indian women do not vote as gendered subjects and carry a very limited influence on the electoral outcome. On the other hand, Beaman, Chattopadhyay, Duflo, Pande, & Topalova (2009) discussed bias among male voters on the effectiveness of female representatives, showing that such bias reduces with a gradual demonstration of visible performance by the female politicians.

Kudva (2003) captured gender intersectionality dynamics in a more objective manner when he underscored that "the intersection of gender with class, caste, and ethnicity determines the manner and impact of women's political participation, mirroring a process of exclusion experienced by other marginalized groups" (p. 447). Earlier discourses about gender intersectionality sweepingly considered gender as a stand-alone category without coupling it with the then-established factor such as

caste. For example, Manikyama (1986) indicated that caste has no implication to women's participation. However, Manikyama (1986) highlighted higher education, economic class, and previous governmental experience as prominent features of women who participate in politics. Notably, there is substantial evidence that highlights that the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Minorities carry less attractive economic profile, low education, and poorer health. However, it should be noted that Muslims and Scheduled Tribes have less participation, while Scheduled Castes have high participation rates (Gleason, 2001). It has been known that, at a more micro level, women's socio-economic status, and their status within households, has a bearing on their political participation (Chhibber, 2003). Effectively, the negotiation power of women to attain the required space in their family and social sphere is a determinant of their political participation (Chhibber, 2003) and reveals further layers of intersectionality and its dynamics.

Highlighting the complex manifestation of gender intersectionality dynamics within the same caste and among other castes, Deshpande (2004) observed that opinions of men and women from the same group are identical. Deshpande's claim outlines the overriding nature of caste and ethnicity over gender. In view of a uniform socio-economic status among the so-called deprived social groups, it is likely that patriarchal discrimination and restrictive household behaviors are less intense or loosely effective as compared to historic caste-based socio-political oppression. However, since there is less empirical evidence, it is difficult to conclude further until such caste-gender intersectional identity and appropriation dynamics are discovered in detail. Clots-Figueras (2011) emphasized that although a politician's gender affects the policy, their caste (as an indicator of socio-economic status) need to be taken into consideration due to its impact. More importantly, Deshpande (2004) added that as group identity is more valued than gender identity by certain groups, caste-gender intersectionality becomes prominent where gender-based legislative allocations are considered. Furthermore, Deshpande mentioned that, to some extent, gender acts as an independent variable while exploring women's role in mainstream politics. However, in many cases, it is linked to other variables. Such observations indicate the possible existence of implicit intersectionality factors highlighting epistemological challenges for researchers and policy-makers.

The most challenging aspect of research on women and their intersectionality with respect to their political participation is the phenomenon of proxy representation on behalf of their male kin (Kudva, 2003). In such a context, conceptualizing gender as a variable would be extremely challenging, as the male entities would control the trajectories of women's political participation and policy-making. In such a scenario, the intersectionality associated with the male control through proxy representation would be an epistemologically explicable factor to capture the effective role and impact of the phenomenon. The methodological challenges involved in identifying gender intersectionality in the political context, thus, need a comprehensive ontological perspective and understanding of the underlying structural processes.

Vyasulu and Vyasulu (1999) mentioned that caste and class carry some but not much overlap; and they indicated that caste and gender play an important role, such that it is difficult to say that upper-caste women would function to serve the so-called

lower-caste interests. Notably, Vyasulu and Vyasulu have not rejected caste-gender intersectionality, but rather have objectified their function as established categories with some overlap. A decade before, analyzing the situation in the state of Bihar in India, Verma, and Yadav (1996) observed that upper-caste women have a higher chance of surviving in male-dominated politics, but they have not been able to influence the androcentric political institution (party) or legislature structure. The gender intersectionality of so-called upper-caste women, with overruling of caste interests over their gender, outlines another challenging dimension of gender-caste intersectionality. Importantly, Vyasulu and Vyasulu (1999) showed that gender hardly appears as a unitary phenomenon, and always coupled with caste, class, religion forming a complex category; however, in a situation of conflict with caste or religion women are less likely to compromise their non-gender loyalties. The evidence presented here shows that gender-caste intersectionality is manifested and appropriated in a dynamic manner based on the situation, compelling policy-makers to create an enabling environment at the decentralized level for ensuring women's political participation as candidates and voters.

The negative media attention and stigma coming from connotations such as "quota" can be detrimental and distressing for elected women (Franceschet, Krook, & Piscopo, 2009) as well as their women voters. John (2007) observed the silence about reservation quotas among Dalit women and the discontent among Dalit men indicated that collective identities such as caste could have lower roles in certain cases. Furthermore, John (2007) identified that caste associations, when coupled with other religious and social associations, showed that women were less vocal about their gender interests. Pande (2003) claimed that the policy preference for individuals from minority groups is likely to serve preferences of special-interest groups, which highlights the prevalence of leeway for a group-specific structural pattern within the political participation process. Interestingly, Pande (2003) revealed that, for members of particular tribes and castes, their leaders enhance the power transfer to their own ethnic groups. Such dynamics can be explained based on context-specific group theory. With such anthropological features of intersectionality, the role of gender intersectionality is likely to inform existing theoretical conceptualizations about it and guide the policy-induced social justice system.

Heuristic Considerations for Gender Intersectionality in Policy-Making

Provision of quotas for women without considering the power structures and hierarchy constituted by compounded gender intersectionality with factors such as class, caste, demography, and other characteristics is detrimental to the sustainability of democratic polity. Any adverse incorporation of women's intersectionality implies the proliferation of power dynamics rather than comprehensive political reform. Feminist scholars have seen the implications of legislative quotas for women differently. Krook (2008) noted that quotas "advance neoliberal projects, demobilize women's movements, result in the election of non-feminist women, promote a static view of 'women' as a group, and decrease the effectiveness of women as political actors" (p. 360). Therefore, there is a need for in-depth analysis of intersectionality-

based identities and their interplay with electoral politics, considering the conjoined context of an emerging market economy and rural diversification in India.

The implications of intersectionality on the long-term development of constitutional democracy and social justice for women from diverse groups require attention from the intelligentsia and activists. Nevertheless, it is an avenue for reflection for the political parties and policy-makers about the foundational values of their institutional realms. Further, the constitutionality of policies meant for the empowerment of women can be questioned in the event of less qualitative and quantitative representation of existing diversity among women in electoral politics and policy-making processes. The policy epistemology about women's issues inherently carries flaws that can be evidenced by women's less, no, or proxy representation. The complex forms of women's exclusion and adverse inclusion can be effectively captured through the interplay and appropriation practices surrounding their gender intersectionality. As the nature of intersectionality is appropriative in its manifestation, the resultant identity revealed through intersectionality processes remains equally dynamic. However, for the exploration of such identities, subjective as well as extra-subjective dimensions of female political representatives and their lived experience need to be understood. Quite vividly, exploration and evidentiary demonstration of gender intersectionality is a long-term project that demands approaches of comprehensive and integrated knowledge production equally supported by the political will to envisage such evidence-based policy-making to ensure equitable representation of women in the democratic polity in India.

Conclusion

Findings from various studies mentioned in this paper show complexities involved in analyzing and incorporating gender intersectionality in policy and practice. Adopting intersectionality analysis as a formative tool for creating social-justice-oriented policy interventions assumes a comprehensive understanding of the heuristic structure of gender intersectionality. The existing evidence base about intersectionality with respect to gender, class, caste, and other such unexplored aspects outlines the possible fallacy involved in the caste-based or gender-based quotas in politics for women in India. The nature of the heuristic structure of gender intersectionality reveals a need to document the spatial and temporal context of the effective identities of women that are being deliberated by their respective social groups and political institutions. There is a need for rationalizing the instrumentality of reservation as a social justice tool aimed at the empowerment of historically and contemporary deprived groups in India. However, in the context of structural and identity-based politics, the reformative use of reservation can take place by incorporating gender intersectionality beyond the dominant categories such as caste, class, demography, and religion. For the same purpose, the emerging heuristic structure of gender intersectionality and underlying dynamics is required to be incorporated in policy-making. It will help to determine the nature of reservation and size of quota required to ensure equitable political participation of women.

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