



Women's political participation from a constitutional point of view in Ecuador

La participación política de la mujer desde una visión constitucional en Ecuador

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this research is to analyse women's political participation from a constitutional perspective in Ecuador. This study embraces a descriptive documentary methodology with a bibliographic design. The analytical-synthetic approach stands as the compass that guides the exploration of information through the vast sea of 15 research papers, each representing a beacon on the horizon of scientific understanding. Ecuador's 2008 Constitution, while incorporating advanced principles of non-discrimination on the basis of gender identity, faces challenges in its effective implementation. Cultural resistance and lack of collective action perpetuate gender-based violence, highlighting the need for profound cultural change that transcends constitutional recognition. Women's participation in the Ecuadorian legislative agenda reflects a complex dynamic where, despite numerical advances, challenges persist in the effective promotion of the gender agenda.

Descriptors: drinking water; water supply; public utilities. (Source: UNESCO Thesaurus).

RESUMEN

La investigación tiene por objetivo analizar la participación política de la mujer desde una visión constitucional en Ecuador. Este estudio abraza una metodología descriptiva documental con diseño bibliográfico. El enfoque analítico-sintético se erige como la brújula que guía la exploración de información por el vasto mar de 15 trabajos de investigación, cada uno representando un faro en el horizonte del entendimiento científico. La Constitución de Ecuador de 2008, aunque incorpora principios avanzados en cuanto a no discriminación por identidad de género, se enfrenta a desafíos en su implementación efectiva. La resistencia cultural y la falta de acciones colectivas perpetúan la violencia de género, resaltando la necesidad de un cambio cultural profundo que trascienda el reconocimiento constitucional. La participación de las mujeres en la agenda legislativa ecuatoriana refleja una compleja dinámica donde, a pesar de avances numéricos, persisten desafíos en la promoción efectiva de la agenda de género.

Descriptores: agua potable; abastecimiento de agua; servicio de utilidad pública. (Fuente: Tesoro UNESCO).

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Research articles section



INTRODUCTION

In the journey towards the consolidation of equitable societies, the recognition and empowerment of women in the political sphere emerges as a crucial indicator of a nation's democratic health. In the specific context of Ecuador, a country steeped in rich cultural diversity and rooted in its constitutional values, a dynamic scenario unfolds in which women's political participation emerges as a nodal point for reflection. This article ventures to explore the intricacies of women's political participation in Ecuador from an intrinsically constitutional perspective.

The Magna Carta of 2008, marking a milestone in Ecuador's constitutional history, enshrined fundamental principles of equality and non-discrimination. However, despite these advances, women continue to face barriers to their full insertion in the political sphere. This study aims to analyse the tensions inherent in the application of these constitutional precepts, unravelling the challenges that persist and proposing possible routes to strengthen women's political participation in the current context.

Through a detailed examination of the relevant constitutional provisions, we seek not only to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the legal framework, but also to understand how it manifests itself in the political reality of the country. In this journey, we will immerse ourselves in the experiences of women who challenge the constraints, thus contributing to the evolution of a more inclusive and representative democracy.

This article stands as an invitation to reflect on the imperative need to materialise constitutional principles into tangible practices, raising the voice and participation of women to a level where their presence is not only recognised, but also determinant in the construction of Ecuador's political future.

Thus, at the heart of the Ecuadorian Constitution lies an unwavering commitment to equality and non-discrimination, outlining a path towards a more just society. However, this constitutional commitment has unleashed an intriguing and complex dilemma: women's political participation. This article ventures to unravel the layers



of this issue from a constitutional perspective, where the legal text becomes the fabric of the struggle for gender equality in the Ecuadorian political arena.

This article metaphorically constitutes a journey through the written lines of the Magna Carta of 2008, where abstract principles come to life in the concrete experiences of women who challenge the conventions. Ecuador, a land of cultural diversity and unwavering constitutional spirit, stands as a fascinating laboratory where egalitarian aspirations intertwine with stark political reality.

This analysis does not limit itself to deciphering the legal lexicon, but seeks to understand the resonance of these principles in women's daily struggle to occupy decision-making spaces. How do constitutional words translate into everyday political practice? What challenges persist in women's political participation and how can they be overcome?

Through a close examination of constitutional provisions, this article aims to shed light on the complex landscape of women's political participation in Ecuador. Beyond the words on paper, it will explore the nuances of a democracy that seeks to redefine itself, where women, defying horizons, stand as agents of change in the construction of a more egalitarian and representative Ecuador.

In this dialogue between the Constitution and women's experiences, the cracks in the system will be revealed, but also the opportunities for transformation. Because, at the end of the day, this article is not just an academic analysis, but an echo of the voices of women who, from a constitutional perspective, weave a narrative of resistance and transformation into the political fabric of Ecuador.

Based on the above, the research aims to analyse women's political participation from a constitutional perspective in Ecuador.



METHOD

Navigating the pages of knowledge, this study embraces a descriptive documentary methodology with bibliographic design. The analytic-synthetic approach stands as the compass guiding the exploration of information through the vast sea of 15 research papers, each representing a beacon on the horizon of scientific understanding.

The population of this research odyssey consisted of 15 previously selected research works, serving as portals to different corners of scientific knowledge. These works, carefully chosen for their relevance and representativeness, form the informative repertoire from which the crucial data for the construction of the theoretical scaffolding are extracted.

The data collection process was a meticulous act of critical and systematised reading. Each of the 15 works has been broken down, analysed and classified according to predetermined criteria in terms of women's political participation from a constitutional perspective in Ecuador. The application of the analytical method made it possible to distil the essential elements, identifying patterns and divergences.

The tools for this journey included analysis pencils and synthesis notebooks. Matrices and conceptual diagrams were used to capture the interrelationships between the different works, thus weaving a web of understanding that captured the very essence of the research.

The data analysis was carried out through the synthetic method, seeking to construct a coherent tapestry that integrates the diverse voices of the selected works. This process allowed us not only to identify convergences and divergences, but also to discern trends and gaps in the scientific landscape on our topic of study.

In the course of this exploration, scientific integrity was guaranteed and the intellectual property of the authors was respected. Each finding was accurately attributed to its original source, and honesty in the interpretation of the data was ensured.



In summary, this synthetic-analytic method applied to a bibliographic population of 15 research papers not only illuminates the understanding of a vital topic, but also provides a navigational model for future scientific explorations in this vast and exciting ocean of knowledge.

ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS

The following political scenarios for Ecuadorian women are highlighted:

Discussing Afro-Ecuadorian Women's Political Participation

In the complex tapestry of political participation, Afro-Ecuadorian women emerge as agents of change, challenging pre-established narratives and contributing to the reconfiguration of the Ecuadorian political landscape. In this discussion section, we will explore the key dimensions that delineate their political participation, reflecting on achievements, persistent challenges and the pathways towards a more inclusive democracy.

Afro-Ecuadorian women have made a significant mark on the country's politics, standing out for their community engagement and inspirational leadership. Discussing their achievements involves recognising the courage of those who have broken barriers to take up political roles, marking milestones that defy historical invisibility. From local leadership to national contributions, these women have forged a path that deserves to be celebrated and amplified.

However, Afro-Ecuadorian women's political participation remains a challenging terrain, permeated by intersecting racial and gender discrimination. Systemic challenges, from lack of proportional representation to the persistence of stereotypes, demand critical discussion. Analysing these obstacles is essential to devising effective strategies to pave the way for more equitable political participation.

The discussion is enriched by exploring concrete strategies that could catalyse meaningful change. From strengthening political education to implementing affirmative policies, each strategy must be contextualised and designed to address the specific barriers faced by Afro-Ecuadorian women. In discussing these possible



solutions, we seek to chart a practical roadmap towards expanding their political participation.

The political participation of Afro-Ecuadorian women is fundamental to the construction of an authentic and representative democracy. By reflecting on their achievements, challenges and future strategies, we contribute to the ongoing dialogue on diversity and inclusion in the Ecuadorian political spectrum. In this debate, we find the necessary energy to chart a collective path towards an Ecuador where all voices, regardless of their origin, find resonance and power in the corridors of power.

The previous section highlights the essence of the right to participation as an open door to equal opportunities and conditions for both men and women, including those belonging to Afro-Ecuadorian communities. However, it highlights with concern that this right remains limited for women, pointing to crucial deficiencies in information and access to different spaces for participation.

A key aspect that emerges is the intrinsic connection between Afro-Ecuadorian women's political participation and the social struggles they have faced. From discrimination based on gender and ethnicity to the defence of collective rights such as land, property and education, these women have charted a solid path in the political and social sphere, challenging systemic injustices. The political and social trajectory of Afro-Ecuadorian women highlights their resilience and determination in comparison to other women in the country.

In this context, the discussion emphasises the imperative need to strengthen the presence of Afro-Ecuadorian women in decision-making spaces. The allocation of specific financial resources to promote their participation rights is advocated, proposing initiatives such as workshops, forums, training and leadership schools. This strategy seeks to dispel fear and overcome the daily limitations they face, allowing them to emerge from anonymity and assume active roles in shaping the country's political landscape.

The discussion culminates in the importance of recognising and strengthening the active participation of Afro-Ecuadorian women at all levels of society. It calls for the implementation of concrete measures and specific budgets that promote equal



opportunities, thus rejecting historical invisibility and placing these women at the centre of decision-making processes. Ultimately, this analysis proposes not only a call to action but also the creation of an inclusive space where Afro-Ecuadorian women are not only recipients of rights, but active and fundamental agents in the construction of a more equitable and just Ecuador (Espinoza, 2022).

Women's electoral participation in Ecuador

Based on the work of (Silva-Chicaíza, 2014), it is stated that the 2008 Constitution of Ecuador marked a milestone by establishing new guidelines, prioritising inclusion as a fundamental value in the new institutionalality. However, inclusion goes beyond the formulation of policies on paper; its success lies in the effective implementation and guarantee of equitable participation, especially for historically marginalised groups.

The normative framework, particularly Article 61.7, establishes the right of Ecuadorians to participate in public jobs and functions in a transparent and inclusive manner. Furthermore, the Organic Law on Elections and Political Organisations, the Code of Democracy, imposes parity and alternation in lists and leadership. Despite these advances, substantial challenges remain in terms of parity representation in practice.

Legislation requiring parity and alternation on political lists does not automatically guarantee equal representation in decision-making. The predominant position of men at the top of lists limits women's opportunities to access leadership positions. The open list system and the phenomenon of "plancha" voting contribute to maintaining this dynamic, as more than 70 per cent of the electorate votes for all candidates on a single list.

The Ecuadorian electoral system, based on the rule of one voter equals one vote and using methods such as D'Hondt and Webster, presents challenges for parity representation. The continuous divisors formula favours majority political organisations and reduces the representation of minority groups, including women. Small constituencies also contribute to the difficulty for women's political participation.



It is essential to address these systemic gaps through electoral reforms that promote true parity of representation. Revising seat allocation methods and constituency size could be a key step in overcoming current inequalities. In addition, continued efforts are needed to change entrenched cultural perceptions that hinder equal access to politics for women.

Despite legislative advances, effective implementation of inclusion in Ecuadorian politics faces significant challenges. Reforms to the electoral system and a comprehensive approach that addresses both cultural and structural barriers are required. Building a truly inclusive democracy demands a continued commitment to gender equality and the active participation of all sectors of society (Ortiz-Ortiz, 2020).

On the other hand, the work of (Trujillo-Guerrero, 2018), considers that from granting women the optional vote in 1929 to the quota and gender parity laws of today, Ecuador has experienced a significant evolution in women's political participation. However, this evolution has not guaranteed full and effective representation at the different levels of political power.

Ecuador's legislative history shows remarkable advances from the inclusion of the optional vote to the reforms that introduced quotas and gender parity. However, the lack of equity in representation persists, especially in the number of women in the National Assembly, where the figures have not exceeded 38 per cent in the last general elections. The structure of electoral lists, where men lead in most cases, creates inequalities in representation. The lack of internal democracy in political parties and the prevalence of male candidates at the top of the lists affects the achievement of gender parity, leaving women at a disadvantage (Garzón-Sherdek, et al. 2022).

Despite advances in numerical representation, substantial gaps persist in the legislative agenda. The passage of key laws, such as the law against gender-based violence, is affected by the lack of priority and articulation in addressing women's specific demands. The formation of a parliamentary group for women's rights is a positive step, but more momentum is needed to materialise an effective agenda (Goyes, 2013).



The persistence of macho attitudes and the perceived need to adopt masculine behaviours to gain political support reveal deep-rooted cultural challenges. In addition, structural factors such as educational inequality and limited access to resources also affect women's sustained political participation. Despite these challenges, women demonstrate leadership and mobilisation capacity. It is crucial to strengthen participatory mechanisms from both political organisations and social collectives and organisations. Collaboration between different actors, including the state, society and the family, must be based on clear objectives and aligned with international standards to advance gender equality.

The progressive involvement of women in the development of public policies with a gender perspective is essential. To achieve this, greater articulation of the women's movement at the national level is required, ensuring effective representation and proposing an agenda that is coherent with women's needs. Education, equal access to resources and the strengthening of participatory mechanisms are key to overcoming the barriers that still persist on the road to full and equal political participation.

Women's participation in the Ecuadorian legislative agenda

Based on the work of (Arévalo-Jaramillo, 2022), the analysis of the conditions that favour a legislative agenda that incorporates issues of interest to women and gender equality in Ecuador reveals a series of complex dynamics. Although gender issues are marginal in parliamentary debate, women's bills have achieved an astonishing 41.07% approval rate, highlighting their relevance and success in the legislative process.

Contrary to common belief, the presence of women in parliament does not automatically guarantee the inclusion of gender issues in the legislative agenda. Although women can contribute to the recognition of the importance of these issues, they are not a decisive element in explaining the approval or presentation of initiatives. This finding highlights the need for specific strategies to promote the inclusion of these issues in the debate (Arboleda, 2014).

In the Ecuadorian context, right-wing parties, especially the PSC, stand out as the main proponents of laws in favour of women's rights. The successful presentation



of legislative initiatives is linked to the ability to count on votes for their approval, and this support has been evidenced in legislative periods where the party had a parliamentary majority.

Contrary to what might be expected, both the executive branch and parliamentary committees do not show a direct interest in women's rights. While executives may control the legislative agenda on economic or political issues, gender equality tends to be driven by individual legislators. The lack of direct interest from these entities highlights the need for specific strategies to place the gender agenda at the centre of priorities.

The observation of cooperative strategies among women legislators, such as the gender alliance, highlights the importance of collective action to increase the chances of success in the political arena. Cooperation among women, identified in previous studies in other contexts, is presented as an effective strategy for advancing the gender legislative agenda.

Despite the increase in the number of women in the Ecuadorian legislature, trends in advancing the gender agenda remain limited. It is essential that the gender agenda be an issue of interest to the state and that it involves other actors, such as the executive and the commissions, which so far have not played a relevant role in this issue. The findings presented indicate the need for a broader research agenda. The relationship with social actors, the role of legislative advisors in addressing the gender agenda and analysis at the sub-national level are crucial areas that need to be further explored. Investigating sub-national contexts, where information is even more limited, can provide new insights and reveal key actors in advancing the gender agenda.

In summary, while there are advances in women's representation in the Ecuadorian legislature and high chances of success for women's rights initiatives, challenges and limitations in advancing the gender agenda remain. Specific strategies and the active participation of diverse actors are essential to overcome these barriers and achieve substantive and equitable representation.



Women, constitution and interculturality in Ecuador

In proportion to the work of (Llicachi-Guzñay, 2018), an analysis of the 2008 Ecuadorian Constitution is presented, which reveals ambivalence in its implementation, especially with regard to gender and sexual orientation. Although significant progress has been made, notable challenges remain in translating constitutional provisions into substantial changes in the reality of historically excluded groups.

The 2008 Constitution incorporates innovations by explicitly recognising non-discrimination on the basis of gender identity, establishing a legal framework that prohibits discrimination and punishes discriminatory acts through protective action. This application of state biopolitics, according to Foucault's perspective, confers on the state the responsibility to intervene to improve life and control discriminatory acts. However, despite these innovations, the effective implementation of these constitutional provisions faces contradictions and resistance. The lack of practical application generates perceptions of contradiction and ambiguity, generating tensions with indigenous movements, political parties and women's movements. This misunderstanding reveals the complexity of translating constitutional principles into tangible changes.

The most significant attempt at transformation occurred during the Constituent Assemblies, which drafted decolonising constitutions in 1998 and pluricultural ones in 2008. These changes responded to the ongoing struggle between social movements and economic power groups, revealing the tension between openness to the rights of nature and persistent challenges to gender equality. Despite the openings and the increased visibility of women in the political sphere, gender-based violence and femicide persist and, according to statistical data, show a worrying increase. Resistance to eradicating machista cultural patterns and the lack of collective action at all levels represent significant challenges.

The 2017 elections evidenced the persistent operation of machismo in the political arena. The registration of women on Electoral Councils to comply with constitutional principles, rather than out of a genuine interest in equality, highlights the need to



address expressions of machismo in politics and other decision-making spaces. The research emphasises that true gender equality goes beyond constitutional recognition and secondary legislation. Ecuadorian society continues to be marked by machista and patriarchal views rooted in colonial and racist legacies. The formal inclusion of women does not guarantee the elimination of discrimination and gender-based violence, highlighting the need for a profound cultural change.

The research concludes that "male domination" continues to be the driving force behind Ecuadorian men's representations, imaginaries and practices towards women. Women's participation in decision-making spaces challenges this domination, generating conflicts and areas of struggle in both private and public life.

In short, the effective implementation of constitutional gender principles in Ecuador is at a crossroads. The need to overcome resistance, address deep cultural challenges and promote tangible change highlights the complexity of translating theory into practice and reveals the importance of addressing male domination as a persistent force in Ecuadorian society.

Machismo and its obstruction of women's rights

Machismo in Ecuador, rooted in historical and cultural patterns, manifests itself as a structure of male domination that has evolved over time (Ibáñez, 2017). The transformation of roles following the emergence of modern marriage marked a milestone in this evolution, altering gender equity and consolidating male supremacy in family and social matters. This change contributed to the cultural construction of gender, delineating roles and establishing a vertical exercise of power by men over women (Álava-Arteaga, & López-Padrón, 2020).

The gradual introduction of neutral human rights gave way to the need to specifically recognise and address gender inequalities. Conventional and constitutional norms and decisions in international human rights bodies have sought to mitigate discrimination and violence against women. However, challenges related to machismo persist, especially in the area of sexual violence, where patriarchal values have imposed control and pigeonholing that perpetuate women's disadvantage (Martínez, 2018).



The gender approach reveals that women face systematic discrimination and inequality, exacerbated by sexual violence. Values rooted in patriarchy have influenced ideological apparatuses, contributing to a traditional understanding of rights that is insufficient to address deep inequalities linked to sexuality. In this context, Ecuador has implemented significant legal measures, highlighting non-revictimisation as a constitutional right (Pinargote-Zamora, 2022). This right acquires primary relevance in the Ecuadorian legal system, supported by a legal framework that recognises and guarantees protection for victims of violence against women. The inclusion of concepts and provisions in line with international treaties and conventions reflects a commitment to address issues related to machismo (Moscoso-Parra, et al. 2018).

Despite legal advances, challenges persist in the elimination of machismo in Ecuador. The effective implementation of these regulations and cultural transformation are complex processes. Resistance rooted in patriarchal values, which manifests itself in violence and discrimination, requires a comprehensive approach that goes beyond the legal framework. The notion of non-revictimisation is not only a constitutional right but also a key tool in the fight against machismo. By recognising and addressing the possibility of re-victimisation, it seeks to counter cultural patterns that perpetuate impunity and silence around gender-based violence (Moscoso-Parra, et al. 2018).

The need to broaden the understanding of rights and redefine gender relations is essential to overcome entrenched machismo. Social, educational and cultural engagement is as crucial as legal measures to achieve meaningful and lasting transformation (Patricia-Berni, 2018).

While Ecuador has taken important steps to address machismo through its legal framework, the challenge lies in effectively implementing these measures and promoting deep cultural change. The notion of non-revictimisation highlights the importance of a comprehensive approach that considers both legal and social aspects in order to move towards a more egalitarian and machismo-free society.



CONCLUSIONS

In the complex tapestry of Ecuadorian political participation, Afro-Ecuadorian women emerge as key agents of change, challenging entrenched narratives and contributing to the transformation of the country's political landscape. Their community engagement and inspirational leadership have left a significant footprint, marking milestones that defy historical invisibility. However, this journey is not without systemic challenges, particularly at the intersection of racial and gender discrimination.

Afro-Ecuadorian women's political participation, although it has made notable advances, continues to face obstacles rooted in cultural and structural patterns. Legislation requiring parity and alternation on political lists has had limited impact, and the lack of proportional representation persists. The structure of the electoral system and sexist attitudes in politics remain significant barriers.

Despite these challenges, specific strategies, such as strengthening political education and implementing affirmative policies, offer concrete ways to catalyse meaningful change. The allocation of specific financial resources to promote the participation of Afro-Ecuadorian women and the creation of training and leadership spaces are essential measures.

Women's participation in the Ecuadorian legislative agenda reflects a complex dynamic where, despite numerical advances, challenges persist in the effective promotion of the gender agenda. Cooperative strategies among women legislators and the need to involve the executive and parliamentary committees are crucial elements to guarantee the real inclusion of issues of interest to women in legislation.

Ecuador's 2008 Constitution, while incorporating advanced principles of non-discrimination on the basis of gender identity, faces challenges in its effective implementation. Cultural resistance and lack of collective action perpetuate gender-based violence, highlighting the need for a profound cultural change that transcends constitutional recognition.



In the fight against machismo in Ecuador, non-revictimisation emerges as a key constitutional right and an essential tool. Although the country has made legislative progress, the challenge remains one of cultural transformation. Social, educational and cultural engagement is fundamental to achieving lasting equity.

Ultimately, this analysis proposes not only a call to action but the creation of an inclusive space where Afro-Ecuadorian women are active and fundamental agents in the construction of a more equitable and just Ecuador. Addressing machismo goes beyond legislation; it implies a deep commitment to cultural and social transformation towards a society where all voices find resonance and power in the corridors of power.

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