

Abstract

The theme of this paper is mutual support between women in political parties as one of the means to improve equal representation of women in politics. The theoretical part of the paper illustrates that the causes of low representation of women do not lie within women themselves. Using the theory of historical institutionalism, it shows how difficult it is to change deeply rooted institutions like a political party, political environment, as well as the whole society. It also considers the importance of monitoring representation not only by numbers, but also by the division of power in terms of gender. It studies the queen bee phenomenon which manifests itself in male-dominated environments. It introduces basic types of women's mutual support such as sharing, networking, women's platforms, and mentoring.

The goal of the paper is to discover, by means of the qualitative research method, what experiences women in political parties have with mutual support and which barriers stand in its way. It identifies several forms of mutual support that appear among women, from informal sharing to robust women's platform. It establishes a series of characteristics which can be used to distinguish between the forms of support. It divides barriers to mutual support into five categories - denial of the problem, strategic barriers, individual barriers, lack of resources, and false evidence. The paper does not place the burden of removing the causes of low representation on women themselves, instead it introduces women's mutual support as an instrument which is under their control.