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Artículos científicos

La paridad de género como reivindicación impostergable de una salud integral en la democratización del Estado de México, 2015-2021

Gender parity as an urgent demand for comprehensive health in the democratization of the State of Mexico, 2015-2021

Paridade de gênero como demanda urgente por saúde integral na democratização do Estado do México, 2015-2021

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Resumen

La salud integral del ser humano implica vivir en un ambiente sano y en armonía social, de ahí la importancia de llegar a una esfera sociopolítica de sana convivencia social con carácter incluyente e igualitario. En este sentido, se planteó el objetivo de analizar la evolución e impacto que ha tenido la reforma política de paridad de género en el Estado de México, aprobada en el Congreso de la Unión en 2014, para dar cuenta de los obstáculos y avances en dicho tema que coadyuven al proceso de democratización de la entidad y, por tanto, de una mejor armonía social que contribuya a generar un ambiente más sano de convivencia política. Para ello, se llevó a cabo un estudio cuantitativo de la presencia de las mujeres en el congreso local y los municipios mexiquenses, a través de la revisión de las bases de datos de resultados electorales oficiales durante los últimos tres procesos. Entre los principales hallazgos destaca el hecho de que continúan existiendo múltiples obstáculos, tanto normativos como intereses partidistas, que dificultan la efectiva paridad de género durante el periodo 2015-2021. Finalmente, queda nuevamente en evidencia que el comportamiento y toma de decisiones políticas no depende únicamente del marco legal y la aprobación de leyes,

sino de la corresponsabilidad de valores y principios que fundamentan e impulsan la equidad de género, tanto de la clase política como de la sociedad en general.

Palabras clave: democratización, igualdad política, paridad de género, participación política, salud integral.

Abstract

The integral health of the human being implies living in a healthy environment and in social harmony, hence the importance of arriving at a sociopolitical sphere of healthy social coexistence with an inclusive and egalitarian character. In this sense, the objective of analyzing the evolution and impact of the political reform of gender parity in the State of Mexico, approved in the Congress of the Union in 2014, was raised to account for the obstacles and advances of the gender equality that contributes to the democratization process of the entity and therefore a better social harmony that contributes to generating a healthier environment of political coexistence. For which, a quantitative study of the presence of women in the local congress and the Mexican municipalities was carried out, through the review of the databases of official electoral results during the last three electoral processes. Among the main findings, the fact that there are still multiple obstacles, both regulatory and partisan interests, that hinder effective gender parity during the period 2015-2021 stands out. Finally, it is once again evident that political behavior and decision-making does not depend solely on the legal framework and the approval of laws, but on the co-responsibility of values and principles that support and promote gender equality, both of the political class and of society in general.

Key words: Democratization, political equality, gender parity, political participation, integral health.

Resumo

A saúde integral do ser humano implica viver em um ambiente saudável e em harmonia social, daí a importância de se chegar a uma esfera sociopolítica de convivência social saudável com caráter inclusivo e igualitário. Nesse sentido, levantou-se o objetivo de analisar a evolução e o impacto da reforma política da paridade de gênero no Estado do México, aprovada no Congresso da União em 2014, para dar conta dos obstáculos e avanços da igualdade de gênero que contribui ao processo de democratização da entidade e conseqüentemente uma melhor convivência social que contribua para gerar um ambiente mais saudável de convivência política. Para isso, foi realizado um estudo quantitativo da presença de mulheres no congresso local e nos municípios mexicanos, por meio da revisão dos bancos de dados de resultados eleitorais oficiais durante os três últimos processos eleitorais. Entre as principais constatações, destaca-se o fato de que ainda existem múltiplos obstáculos, tanto regulatórios quanto de interesses partidários, que impedem a efetiva paridade de gênero durante o período 2015-2021. Por fim, torna-se mais uma vez evidente que o comportamento político e a tomada de decisões não dependem apenas do enquadramento legal e da aprovação de leis, mas da co-responsabilidade de valores e princípios que sustentem e promovam a igualdade de gênero, tanto da classe política e da sociedade em geral.

Palavras-chave: Democratização, igualdade política, paridade de gênero, participação política, saúde integral.

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Introduction

After a distressing and uncertain period of confinement and restrictions due to the covid-19 pandemic, the “new normal” challenges us to resume our economic, political and social activities, despite the fact that the result of this health emergency has been the regrettable loss of thousands of human lives, among which is probably that of a family member or loved one.

This bitter experience, however, has also allowed us to find strength to embrace resilience and foster values of solidarity, empathy and social awareness, as it has led us to value differently the challenges and problems we face in our various roles within the social structure. In this sense, we have learned not to lose sight of the human factor and to focus on what really matters in life, that is, health care from a holistic perspective.

The search for good comprehensive health leads us to live in harmony on both a social and personal level. This allows us to stop tormenting ourselves over past mistakes, and instead learn from them to grow personally, professionally, and socially. It also helps us stop worrying about a future driven by standards of success imposed by social conventions and consumerism. Indeed, the covid-19 pandemic reminded us that the most important thing is to value and care for our personal and social health, without compromising it for the sake of economic interests.

In this context, it is essential to address one of the structural problems of life that we face in the political sphere, both nationally and internationally. Wars, tensions over natural resources, migration problems, organized crime, and marginalization and poverty are political challenges that affect both the world in general and Mexico. Despite significant advances in plurality and political competition, the country still faces resistance to advance in its democratization process and achieve a more inclusive and representative political life for various social sectors.

In this regard, the United Nations (UN) 2030 Agenda (2016) highlights the importance of an inclusive and deliberative democracy that promotes peaceful societies, as well as access to justice and accountability. Along these lines, gender equality in politics is a central problem in Mexico, since political equality between women and men continues to be a pending debt. For this reason, this article analyzes the progress in political gender parity in the State of Mexico as a result of the electoral political reform of 2014, published in the Official Gazette of the Federation (DOF) (February 10, 2014), which established a 50/50 gender quota for elected positions.

However, to achieve true political gender parity, more is needed than raising political gender parity to constitutional status to guarantee real political equality between men and women, since it also requires both regulations and will and conscience. society of all to prioritize the representation and political leadership of women, historically dominated by men.

Background and theoretical foundations

Gender inequality is a problem rooted in history and has been linked to the biological differences between men and women, as well as their reproductive capacity. Although biological sexuality should not be confused with gender – which includes values, symbols and roles assigned to men and women by social norms – these differences have always had a significant influence on society. Therefore, constant efforts are currently being made to distinguish natural differences between the sexes from gender differences that are the result of social constructions in order to overcome these disparities and move towards greater gender equality.

The history of gender inequality dates back to ancient times and persists in today's society. It is interesting to note how, in the formation of the modern State based on the principles of classical liberalism, some of the great thinkers of the Enlightenment, despite advocating individuality and equality before the law, failed to recognize and make visible the inequality of gender, and even reproduced and justified it. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, for example, considered women to be inherently weak and dependent on men (Sodaro, 2006). This was reflected in the creation of modern States, whether monarchical-parliamentary or republican-presidential, which developed discriminatory representative democratic political systems, which denied women and the less privileged the right to vote and participation in the election of governmental authorities.

Due to these circumstances, the female gender has had to undertake a legitimate and arduous struggle to conquer spaces of power that have historically been denied to them. For this reason, and in accordance with the principles of freedom, equality and fraternity that guided the revolutionary movements and the formation of modern States, it is essential to vindicate the participation of women as an act of social justice and democratization that seeks the representation of diverse sectors in politics.

In the context of the recent democratization process in Mexico, gender parity has become a highly relevant issue to evaluate the progress of democratic political life. We cannot ignore the efforts and struggles undertaken by women in Mexico to conquer political spaces, including the conquest of the right to vote at the federal level in 1953, although it is worth mentioning that in some states women's suffrage was already allowed before that date.

Now, the process of obtaining political rights for women in Mexico began with the constitutional reform of 1947 (art. 115), under the presidency of Miguel Alemán, which granted the right to vote to women at the municipal level. However, although there was an

opportunity to push for universal suffrage, it did not materialize at that time. Therefore, it was in 1953, during the mandate of President Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, when a constitutional amendment was made that allowed women's political participation at the federal level. Some states (such as Chiapas, Tabasco, Yucatán, San Luis Potosí and Puebla) were pioneers in promoting women's participation, with which legislation was developed that was later extended to the federal level (Hernández, 2019).

In other words, women's right to vote in the democratic political context of Mexico has followed a dynamic of development that extends from the local to the federal level. The promotion of plurality, competitiveness and political alternation has had its roots first in the subnational political sphere and subsequently expanded to the federal level. This ascending logic has aimed to question and modify traditional political structures that have historically been dominated by the male gender. In fact, despite the progress in achieving the right to vote for women in Mexico, their presence in the political sphere in terms of representation and leadership has been, in general terms, marginal throughout the 20th century.

Indeed, in the political history of Mexico, only 15 female governors have been elected, of which nine currently occupy the position. In addition, two governors have served as interim or substitute governors. Likewise, it highlights that seven of the nine acting governors belong to the National Regeneration Movement political party (although they came to office through electoral coalitions), which underlines the commitment of this party to the promotion and representation of women as much as candidates as public officials.

The commitment to gender parity is manifested at the federal level, where figures such as Olga Sánchez Cordero stand out, who was the first woman to head the Ministry of the Interior during the first part of the six-year term; Tatiana Clouthier, who held the Ministry of Economy for some years; Rocío Nahle, head of the Ministry of Energy; Luisa María Alcalde, in charge of the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare; Rosa Icela Rodríguez, leading the Secretariat of Security and Citizen Protection; Alejandra Frausto Guerrero, as head of the Ministry of Culture; María Luisa Albores, in the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources; Ariadna Montiel Reyes, as Secretary of Welfare; Delfina Gómez, who was in charge of the Ministry of Public Education; and Raquel Buenrostro, recently appointed to the Ministry of Economy.

Table 1. List of female governors in the history of Mexico

Year	Governor	State	Politic party
1979	Griselda Álvarez Ponce de León	Colima	PRI
1987	Beatriz Paredes Rangel	Tlaxcala	PRI
1991	Dulce María Sauri Rancho*	Yucatan	PRI
1999	Rosario Robles Berlanga*	federal District	PRD
2000	Amalia García Medina	Zacatecas	PRI
2007	Ivonne Ortega Pacheco	Yucatan	PRI
2015	Claudia Pavlovich Arellano	Sonora	PRI
2018	Martha Erika Alonso	Puebla	BREAD
2018	Claudia Sheinbaum Pardo	CDMX	Brunette
2021	Mariana del Pilar Ávila	Baja California	Brunette
2021	Layda Sansores San Román	Campeche	Brunette
2021	Indira Vizcaino Silva	Colima	Brunette
2021	Maru Campos Galván	Chihuahua	BREAD
2021	Evelyn Salgado Pineda	Warrior	Brunette
2021	Lorena Cuellar Cisneros	Tlaxcala	Brunette
2022	Teresa Jimenez Esquivel	Aguascalientes	BREAD
2022	Mara Lezama Espinosa	Quintana Roo	Brunette

*Interim Governor of Yucatán from 1991 to 1994.

**Substitute Head of Government of the Federal District from 1999 to 2000.

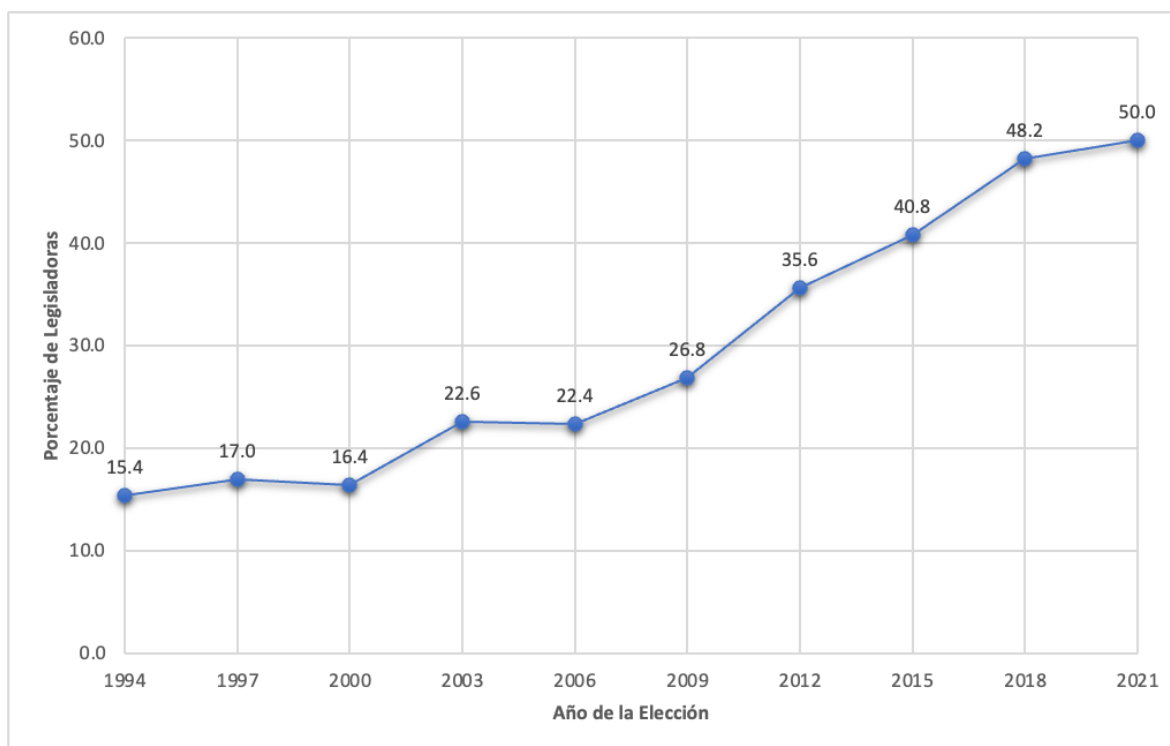
Source: Own elaboration with information from Infobae (June 4, 2022) and Galván (2022)

As it can be seen in table 1, the achievement of political gender parity in Mexico has experienced significant progress in recent decades. Although since 1993 the Federal Code of Electoral Institutions and Procedures (COFIPE) (1993) of the then Federal Electoral Institute began to incorporate gender quotas in the nomination of candidates by political parties, the original provision established that parties They had to contribute, as provided in their internal regulations, to greater female participation in political processes, through their inclusion in popularly elected positions by direct vote. However, this quota maintained a merely recommendatory nature, since political parties were urged to consider in their statutes the promotion of the inclusion of women in the selection of candidates for legislators. In other words, these types of gender quotas had no substantial impact on political parity, since they did not become mandatory and did not carry sanctions for political parties that did not comply with them. Consequently, the female presence in the legislative branch was notably limited.

In fact, the legislation did not provide for sanctions for non-compliance, and the established amount became a simple recommendation for political parties. For example, in 1990 the representation of women in the lower house was 12.4%, and when the adjustments were implemented in 1993 the participation varied to only 15%, which shows that it was not possible to significantly increase their presence (González et al. , 2016).

Subsequently, at the end of the 90s, the female presence in the Congress of the Union was less than 15%, a percentage that would not improve substantially until the second decade of the current century. In the 2012 elections to renew the Congress of the Union, female federal deputies exceeded 35 % of the seats, which constituted a constant increase until reaching 50% of the spaces in the Chamber of Deputies in 2021. In this way, achieved full descriptive representation ¹in terms of gender parity.

Figure 1. Percentage presence of female legislators in the Chamber of Deputies (1994-2021)



Source: Own elaboration with data from González *et al.* (2016) and Parliamentary Bureau (2019, 2021)

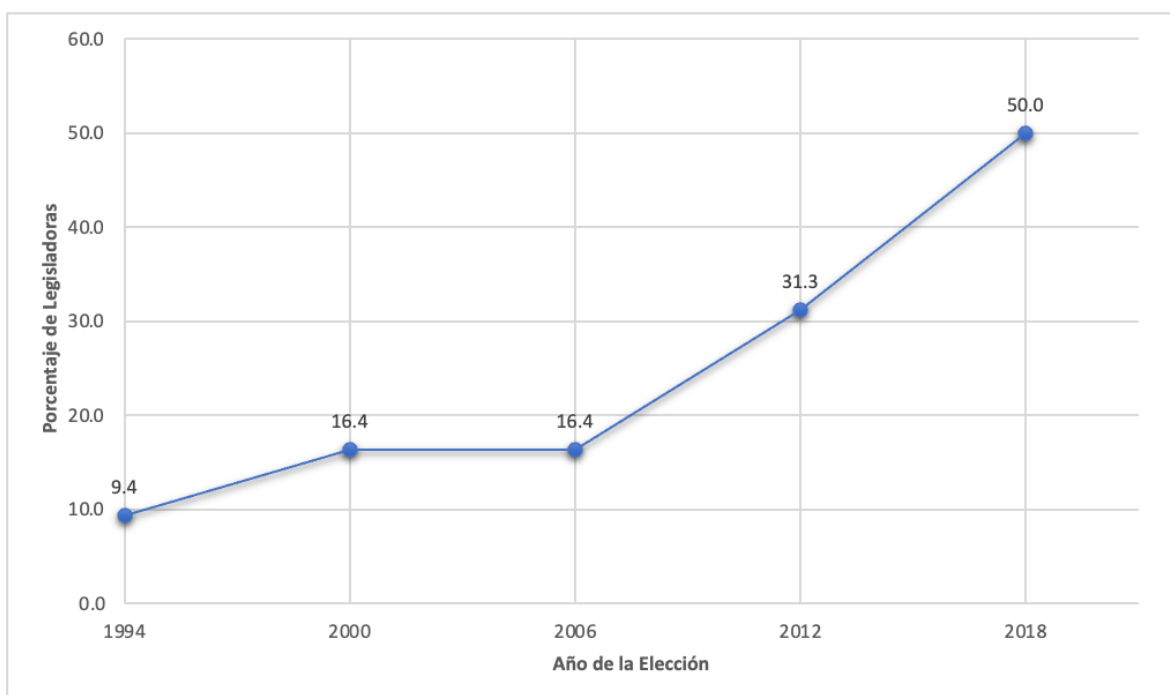
It is interesting to note, in Figure 1, that since the 2009 electoral process there has been a sustained increase in the percentage of female deputies who access the Chamber of Deputies. This trend reflects affirmative actions as strategies to achieve greater political parity between women and men, which have contributed to the improvement of electoral regulations regarding gender representation quotas, supported and influenced by the regulations of international organizations that promote gender parity, such as the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW),

¹ Descriptive representation is evaluated taking into account the extent to which the gender electoral regime, that is, the rules of the game that establish the way in which parties must register their candidacies, to contribute to reversing historical patterns of underrepresentation, as well as the way in which they interact with the type of electoral system that affects said representation in quantitative terms (Freidenberg and Gilas, 2020).

ratified by Mexico in 1981. In its article 6, CEDAW establishes that “States must fight for the elimination of discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country” (Durango, 2016, pp. 147-148).

Along these same lines, the senators of the Republic have experienced a similar evolution and trend in their legislative presence, as can be seen in figure 2. For example, in 1994 the representation of women in the Senate of the Republic barely reached 9%; However, in the 2012 and 2018 elections there has been a notable increase, reaching between 31% and 50% of representation in the upper house, respectively.

Figure 2. Percentage presence of female legislators in the Senate (1994-2021)



Source: Own elaboration with data from González *et al.* (2016) and Parliamentary Bureau (2019, 2021)

Of course, the evolution and development of political gender parity in the country have been considerably influenced by advances in the regulations of affirmative actions aimed at promoting gender equality, where parity quotas have played a crucial role in the achievement of full equality in the federal legislative sphere. Gender quotas, in fact, have evolved to provide more effective conditions for the implementation of political gender parity. In 1996, for example, with the electoral reform the gender quota was adjusted, since a numerical ratio of 70% was established between legislative candidates for men and women. However, this quota remained, in essence, a recommendation for political parties. An example of them is article 175 of the Federal Code of Electoral Procedures, which indicated

that the party statutes should not allow more than 70% of their candidates for legislators to be of the same gender.

Later, during the 1996 electoral reform, the quota was slightly modified, as it was specified that parties could not nominate more than 70% candidates of the same sex. Although no sanction was imposed for violations, a significant increase was observed, from 4.8% to 18%, in the presence of women in the lower house. However, this improvement did not reflect a substantial change, since political parties continued to introduce female candidates as “bargaining chips” whom they placed at the end of the proportional representation lists (González et al., 2016) .

The laxity of electoral regulations in relation to gender quotas gave political parties the opportunity to take advantage of regulatory gaps to favor male candidates to the detriment of female candidates. In this way, they proposed formulas of mixed candidatures in which men were prioritized once they obtained the legislative seat. Likewise, they placed women at the bottom of the proportional representation lists or nominated them in electoral districts with unfavorable history, which drastically diminished the possibilities of moving towards descriptive political gender parity.

With the 2002 reform, the gender quota underwent substantial changes by establishing the 70-30 ratio as mandatory for both regular and substitute candidates, as well as for proportional representation, with the imposition of sanctions for non-compliance. In this way, political parties were denied the registration of candidates who did not meet this gender quota.

This reform introduced new measures to encourage minority gender representation in political candidates. Previously, the calculation of 30% of candidatures was based on the total number of candidates, including owners and alternates. However, a significant change was implemented by calculating this percentage exclusively from proprietary candidates. In addition, the gender quota in proportional representation was strengthened, since the formation of lists in segments of three was required, which guaranteed the presence of at least three women in the first nine places on each list, with a candidate of a different gender. in the first three segments. In this regard, it is crucial to highlight the obligation to comply with this gender quota, supported by the possibility of denying the registration of candidates that do not meet these requirements. These modifications achieved a modest but significant increase in participation, with an approximate increase of 23 % (González et al., 2016).

In 2008, the reform raised the parity quota to 60-40 and maintained the exception clause that allowed political parties to justify non-compliance with the parity quota if they internally agreed on a democratic method of candidate selection. In addition, it introduced changes in the integration of candidate lists through the multi-member proportional representation route, which required that they be composed of groups of five candidate formulas arranged alternately between women and men to limit the inclusion of more than three formulas of a single gender. Unfortunately, this reform did not have a significant impact on gender parity, since political parties used the exception clause or presented mixed candidate formulas, and once the seat was obtained, they made women candidates resign as owners to give up their place to men registered as substitutes. In fact, during the period of the LXI Legislature of the Chamber of Deputies until February 2010, a total of twenty women from various political parties (PAN, PRI, PRD, PVEM, PT, PANAL) requested a license to give up their positions to their male substitutes (González *et al.*, 2016).

However, despite the limitations of the 2008 gender quota reform, for the 2012 electoral process, the Superior Chamber of the Electoral Tribunal of the Judicial Branch of the Federation (TEPJF) issued a ruling (SUP-JDC- 12624/ 2011) that eliminated the exception clause to comply with 60/40 gender quotas and force political parties to present candidate formulas of the same gender. This ruling had a positive impact by significantly approaching descriptive political gender parity, since more than 35% female presence was achieved in the Chamber of Deputies and more than 30% in the Chamber of Senators.

Finally, with the gender parity reform approved as part of the package of political modifications during Peña Nieto's six-year term, the principle of gender equality was incorporated for the nomination of candidates for legislators, both federal and local, as well as in public bodies of leadership of the political parties, with which priority was given to the vertical and horizontal parity of said candidates. Vertical parity is used in the lists of candidates for proportional representation, while horizontal parity is applied in nominations through the single-member system.

Consequently, the obligation is imposed on political parties to nominate an equitable number of candidates, men and women, for elected positions in the federal Congress and state legislatures. This responsibility applies both to individual nominations and to the lists of candidates presented by the parties, whether in single-member or proportional representation elections. Likewise, it is required that all candidate formulas, whether nominated by political parties or independent candidates, be composed exclusively of people

of the same gender. In the case of senatorial candidates, each political party or list of independent candidates must register a list of two formulas, each representing a different gender. Furthermore, in candidate lists under the principle of proportional representation, gender alternation must be applied. These provisions seek to guarantee gender equality in political nominations and promote the equal participation of men and women in electoral processes, both in single-member and proportional representation elections.

As can be seen, the gender parity political reform implemented sought to address various aspects with the purpose of significantly advancing descriptive parity between women and men. These aspects include a) the incorporation of vertical and horizontal parity in the nomination of candidates and in the organizational structure of political parties, b) the presentation of lists of candidates by proportional representation with formulas of the same gender and in an alternating manner, c) the imposition of sanctions by the electoral authorities on political parties that do not comply with gender parity, including the rejection of the registration of their candidates, d) the elimination of any exception clause that allows political parties to evade the gender parity, regardless of the criteria and procedures used for the selection of candidates, and e) the prohibition of political parties from nominating female candidates in a biased manner in electoral districts with a losing tendency.

However, despite the benefits of the gender parity political reform approved in 2014, which decisively promoted descriptive equality between female candidates and male candidates, outstanding debts were identified in relation to gender parity for the election of municipal authorities. and the prioritization of criteria to ensure that descriptive parity accurately reflected the spirit of the reform in search of 50/50 equity. For this reason, the reform has been reinforced through affirmative actions to guarantee parity in the Chamber of Deputies in the recent midterm election of 2021. In this regard, Vázquez (2022) points out:

The Electoral Tribunal of the Judicial Branch of the Federation (TEPJF) modified the allocation of deputies by the principle of proportional representation to increase from 248 to 250 the seats assigned to women in the Chamber of Deputies, in order to guarantee parity in the integration of the legislative body (250-250), on August 29, 2021. The resolution was historic because it constitutes a transition from parity in the candidates to parity in the integration of the spaces of power and, therefore, is an advance in the construction of parity democracy by pointing out that: “the principle of parity of Gender is not limited to the nomination of candidates, but can transcend the

integration of the legislative body [...] at the time of delimiting the (sic) seats by the principle of proportional representation (p. 2).

Consequently, Mexico has achieved, at least in the legislative field, full descriptive gender parity, which is why it has placed itself in a prominent position internationally in this regard, although it is still necessary to move from descriptive to substantive parity.² That is, the equal presence of women in spaces of power and decision-making must be translated into public policies that strengthen and consolidate the gender perspective. This approach seeks to overcome the androgynous nature of politics in the country to encompass various areas of government and political institutions, including political parties.

Method

This case study aims to analyze the relationship between formal descriptive equality through neoinstitutionalism. Specifically, the research addresses both formal (written) rules and informal (unwritten) rules with the aim of understanding how these combine and contribute to the progress and obstacles in achieving effective gender parity, initially in terms descriptive and subsequently in a substantive parity that permeates the principles, values and behaviors of citizens, both civil society and members of political parties. This approach aspires to consolidate a quality democracy and, therefore, a society with high civic principles and values that promotes healthy social and political coexistence for social development and humanistic health.

In this context, through neoinstitutionalism, the impact of the political reform of gender parity is examined, elevated to constitutional rank by the Congress of the Union in 2014. However, to ensure gender parity, it is argued that measures that transform the conditions of women's participation. These measures must address the obstacles associated with informal rules of coexistence and social behavior that persist in Mexican society and transcend the public sphere. Therefore, the importance of promoting not only legislative change, but also cultural change, is highlighted, which promotes representative equity for women in all areas of public life and allows them to overcome the inertia of an androgynous policy.

²According to Zermeño (sf), substantive equality (also called “de facto” or “de facto”) refers to the “modification of the structural conditions that prevent the full enjoyment of the rights of women and men, guaranteeing equal access to opportunities and achievement of results, which will be achieved through legal, affirmative actions and public policies that favor women, since historically and in all social spheres they are at a clear disadvantage (p. 11).

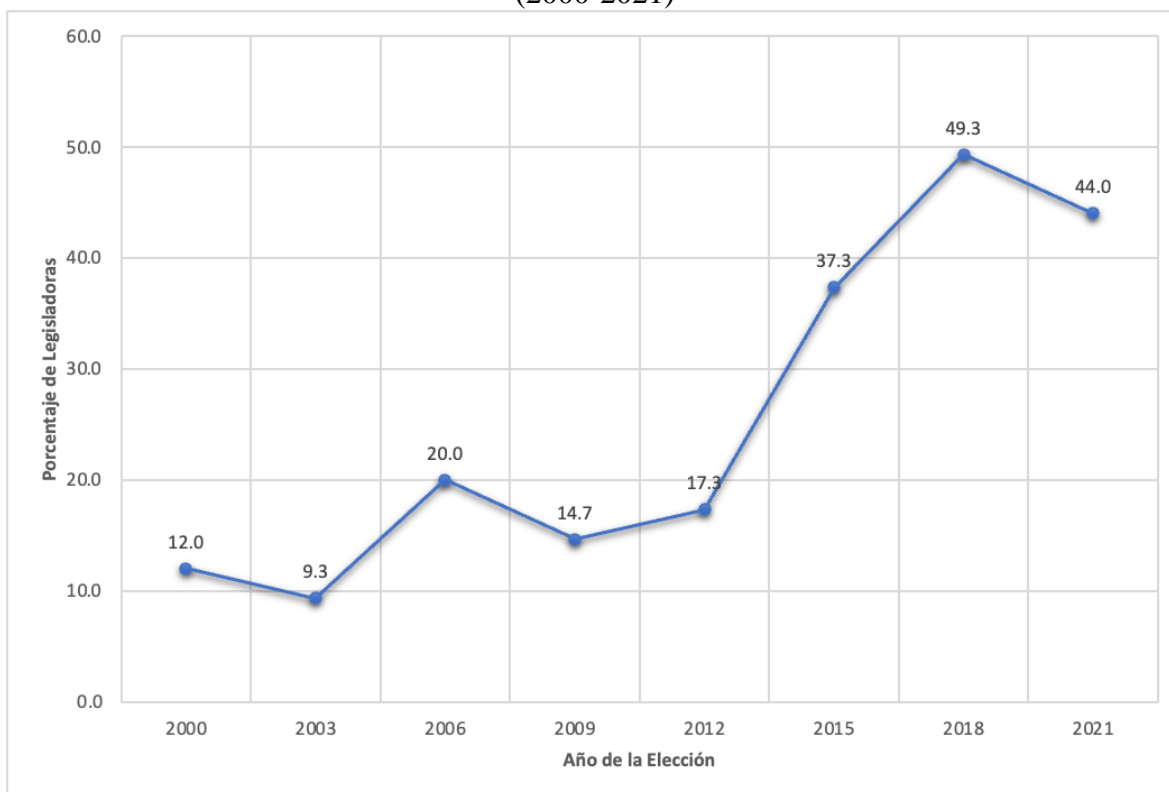
In the execution of this work, in addition to carrying out a documentary review, the statistical and comparative control method was used, which made it possible to evaluate the changes generated by the political reform in terms of gender parity in the State of Mexico, with emphasis on its particularities with respect to national political life. This analysis is based on the review of the Electoral Results database of the Electoral Institute of the State of Mexico of the latest local electoral processes to renew the local congress and the municipal presidencies.

Within this framework, the progress of gender parity in the State of Mexico is examined, both in the legislative branch and in municipal governments, with the purpose of offering an evaluation of vertical and horizontal parity and, therefore, of the descriptive parity, starting from the electoral processes of 2015, 2018 and 2021.

Results

The presence of women in the Chamber of Deputies of the State of Mexico maintained a marginal character, at least until the 2012 election, as can be seen in figure 3. Of the 75 seats that make up the local congress, the maximum number of female deputies It was recorded in 2006, when 15 of them obtained the victory. However, this number decreased to eleven female deputies in 2009 and 13 female deputies in 2012. Starting with the 2015 electoral process, the legislative representation of women in the State of Mexico experienced a significant increase, reaching 28 seats and occupying more than the third of the local councils.

Figure 3. Percentage presence of female legislators in the Congress of the State of Mexico (2000-2021)



Source: Own elaboration with data from González *et al.* (2016) and IEEM (2023)

The gender parity political reform, approved in 2014, began to produce results in the Congress of the State of Mexico, which is evident in both vertical and horizontal terms. Then, in the 2015 elections, the criterion of avoiding biasedly assigning candidates to women in less competitive territorial demarcations was not fully applied due to the lack of specifications in the guidelines of the Electoral Institute of the State of Mexico and the absence of the use of the distribution of seats. by proportional representation as a corrective mechanism to achieve gender parity ³.

In the 2018 electoral process, descriptive gender parity reached a new level by achieving 37 women to occupy seats in the local Congress, thus achieving virtual full gender parity. It is crucial to highlight that since this election, the Regulations for the Registration of Candidacies for the different Popular Election Positions before the Electoral Institute of the State of Mexico (IEEM) were implemented, approved in 2016, which clearly specified the criterion of not exclusively assigning to one gender the less competitive territorial

³ In the State of Mexico “gender was completely ignored in the distribution of seats by the principle of proportional representation, since of the thirty seats granted by this principle, only nine were for women, 30%, and twenty-one for men, the 70%” (Cedillo, 2016, p. 194).

demarcations, so the candidates were distributed into blocks of lower, medium and higher competitiveness.

However, in the 2021 elections, gender parity experienced a slight decrease, as the number of wins by women seeking a seat was reduced to 33, representing a small setback in the legislative representation of the Mexican Congress.

Likewise, it should be noted that, according to article 369 of the Electoral Code of the State of Mexico (2020), first paragraph, the process of assigning proportional representation deputies is carried out by alternating the candidates from the list presented by the political parties with those that, without obtaining a relative majority, they obtained the highest vote in absolute numbers per district. This alternation, without considering gender, makes it difficult to achieve full descriptive gender parity in legislative representation, since it prioritizes non-winning relative majority formulas, but with greater voting, which disrupts the possibility of adjusting and balancing representation legislative by gender, as the National Electoral Institute did in the 2021 election in the Congress of the Union. That is, as long as the priority of relative majority formulas is maintained in the State of Mexico over the criterion of gender parity in the distribution of proportional representation seats, it will be almost impossible to achieve full equity in legislative representation between women and men.

It is relevant to note that the gender parity political reform focuses on the candidacies of federal and local legislators, without including the candidacies of the municipalities. A similar situation occurs in general laws, specifically in article 232 of the General Law of Electoral Institutions and Procedures, which establishes the obligation for political parties to promote and guarantee gender equality in the nomination of candidates for office of popular election for the formation of the Congress of the Union, the state Congresses and the Legislative Assembly of Mexico City, although this article does not explicitly mention the city councils.

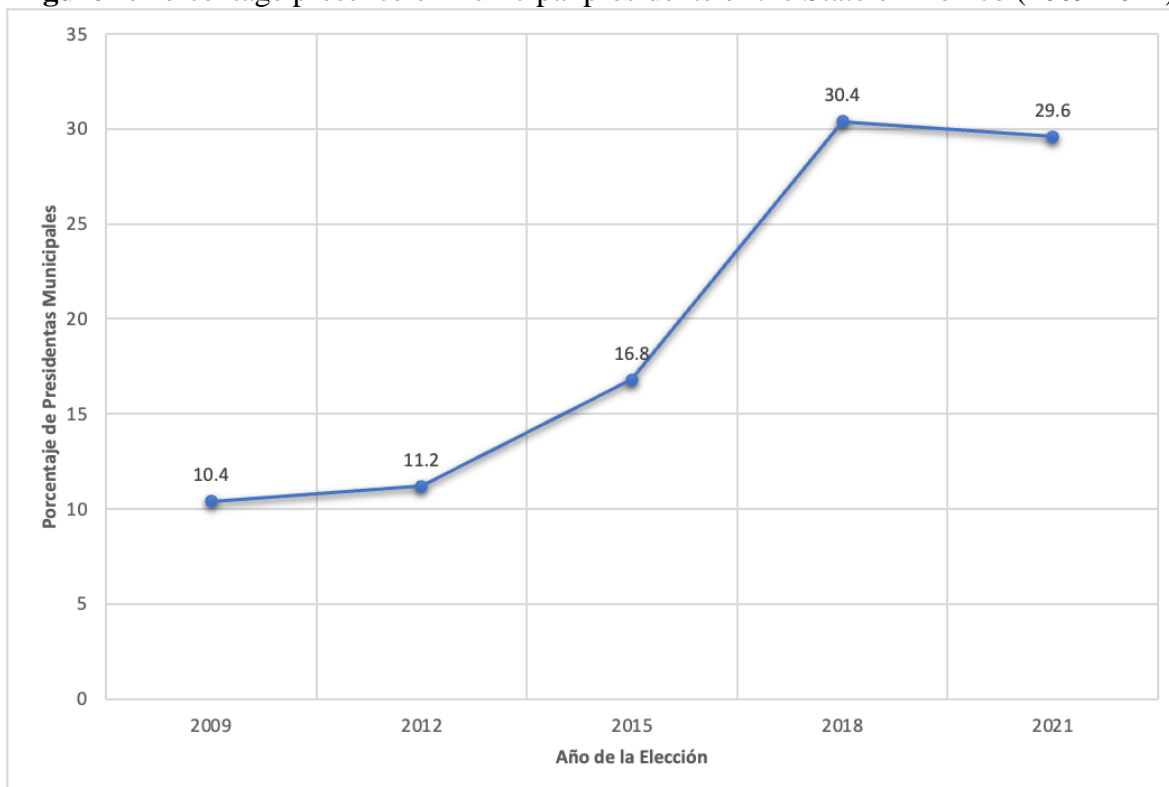
However, following the analogy of the political reform of gender parity, the Supreme Court of Justice of the Nation, in the unconstitutionality actions 35/2014 and the accumulated ones 74/2014, 76/2014 and 83/2014, established that the Parity is not only a constitutionally valid objective, but also a requirement demanded by the Constitution. The chambers of the Electoral Tribunal of the Judicial Branch of the Federation supported this principle by stating that article 41 of the Constitution is of a general nature and applies to all popularly elected

positions, without depending on a specific regulation in a secondary law (González *et al.*, 2016).

However, this regulatory vacuum on gender parity at the municipal level allowed local legislation to interpret this principle in a variable manner. In certain cases, as happened in the State of Mexico in the 2015 elections, vertical parity was contemplated but not horizontal, which restricted parity in the presentation of candidates for municipal positions, where the lists had to be presented equally, alternating formulas of women and men. That is, horizontal parity was not included, which would have required political parties to present candidates to city councils with lists headed equally by women and men in the 125 Mexican municipalities, that is, each party must have presented lists led by women in at least 62 municipalities. Furthermore, gender parity was not applied in the integration of city councils through the distribution of trustees and councilors of proportional representation.

Consequently, the gender parity political reform showed minimal progress in the 2015 elections to renew municipal presidencies in the State of Mexico, see figure 4. The number of female municipal presidents increased from 14 in 2012 to 21 in 2015, although this female presence at the head of Mexican city councils was still significantly low, considering that there are a total of 125 municipalities.

Figure 4. Percentage presence of municipal presidents of the State of Mexico (2009-2021)



Source: Own elaboration with data from the IEEM (2023)

Fortunately, for the following electoral processes of 2018 and 2021, through the approval of the Regulation for the Registration of Candidacies for the different Popular Election Positions by the Electoral Institute of the State of Mexico, gender parity began to be considered not only of vertically, but also horizontally. This forced political parties to present candidates for city councils with lists headed equally by women and men (50/50) in Mexican municipalities.

In other words, political parties were forced to nominate, at least in 62 of the 125 municipalities, female candidates for municipal presidencies, heading the lists to occupy city councils. In addition, the balance of joint candidacies began to be considered, taking into account the levels of electoral competitiveness of the political parties with the aim of equitably guaranteeing the opportunities for victory of the candidates for municipal presidents.

Given these measures, the presence of municipal presidents in the State of Mexico experienced a significant increase, since in 2018 the number of Mexican city councils led by women was 38, which represents 30.4% of the total number of municipalities. In 2021, this female presence as Mexican mayors was practically maintained, since 37 women achieved victory in the city councils. This shows that it is necessary for political parties to continue promoting women's political leadership to advance political gender parity, first in a descriptive way and subsequently impacting substantive parity.

Finally, it is essential to keep in mind that, to date, the Electoral Institute of the State of Mexico has not established regulations for full gender parity within city councils through the distribution of councilors by proportional representation, a situation that is already present at the federal level with legislators. Therefore, the possibility opens up that in the next local electoral process in the State of Mexico progress will be made in this area.

Discussion

Undoubtedly, the gender parity political reform approved in 2014 formally marked significant progress towards achieving equal opportunities for women to access spaces of political power, since, throughout history, women have been systematically undervalued and marginalized from political decision-making positions.

However, it is worth highlighting that this reform has not been sufficient to achieve descriptive and much less substantive parity between women and men in the public sphere, since even though gender parity was elevated to constitutional status, progress towards a descriptive parity has been gradual. This is due to various obstacles related to the interpretation and application of regulations, as well as political-partisan interests, whose management bodies still remain largely dominated by men. Therefore, it is essential that the principle of gender parity permeates both political parties and the political class as a whole, which would allow joint progress towards complete descriptive parity and, consequently, towards substantive parity.

Likewise, it is crucial to highlight and reiterate that a substantial gap persists between descriptive and substantive parity, because although the presence of women in legislative and executive bodies has increased, they still face obstacles to leading an authentic legislative agenda or government performance with a gender approach that strengthens female political participation. For example, gender differences persist in legislative committees, where the idea prevails that the most sensitive committees are for women, revealing how traditional gender roles continue to influence legislative work. An example of this is that the most relevant decision-making bodies, such as the Government and Political Coordination Board, are led mainly by men (Freidenberg and Gilas, 2020). Therefore, to move solidly towards substantive parity, it will be necessary for this to transcend the integration of legislative commissions so that women can preside over the commissions considered strategic and of greatest relevance.

In addition to the aforementioned obstacles, substantive gender parity is notably restricted by partisan interests, especially through the phenomenon of partyocracy. In this context, the power leadership of political institutes remains largely under male domination, and agreements and negotiations lack transparency and democratic values. This phenomenon affects the participation of women, historically excluded from these negotiating practices traditionally led by men. Even in informal contexts of coexistence, these practices can be uncomfortable and even aggressive for women, since partyocracy also influences the exercise

of women's power at the local level, which is why agenda and policy projects remain in the background. feminists.

For all this, it is evident that achieving descriptive and substantive equality in women's political participation requires more than the enactment of constitutional laws that promote gender parity, since a change of consciousness that supports the values and principles is also vital of gender equality. From the perspective of neoinstitutionalism, the importance of co-responsibility between written and unwritten rules is highlighted to achieve the desired objectives. The spirit of the gender parity law can transcend both descriptively and substantially when the political culture of citizens internalizes its symbols, values and principles to generate a synergy that promotes effective political gender parity.

In this context, it is crucial to learn from the experience during the Covid-19 pandemic, as humanity seems to require extreme and traumatic experiences to become aware of the importance of vital assets such as health. For example, in the political sphere, a similar awareness of gender political participation is needed to improve the standards of democratic politics and contribute to a healthier, harmonious and fair socio-political coexistence for the benefit of the comprehensive health of humanity.

In short, the relevance of this study lies in demonstrating that, despite legislative advances towards gender parity and women's access to spaces of public power, both formal-normative and sociocultural obstacles persist in the political class that make it difficult to achieve effective gender parity. Therefore, it is suggested that future research focus on sociocultural aspects to understand the obstacles that prevent women from having greater weight and significance in their political performance, as well as delve into qualitative aspects of patriarchal political culture through interviews with political actors.

Conclusions

The gender parity political reform represents substantial progress to establish more equitable conditions in the political participation of women and men. However, the mere enactment of laws does not guarantee the success of these measures, since it is essential that citizens share co-responsibility in the values and principles that underpin and promote gender equality. Therefore, these laws require social legitimacy to achieve effective political equality between women and men not only in the formal and quantitative aspect, but also to transcend the substantive sphere of public decision-making by women.

Unlike plurality, competitiveness and political alternation, gender parity has yielded more favorable results at the federal level compared to the local level, at least this has been the case in the State of Mexico since the implementation of the political reform of 2014. In this entity, other electoral criteria have been prioritized over gender parity, such as the distribution of positions according to the principle of proportional representation or relative majority deputies who, without winning their districts, obtained the highest votes for their parties, without considering gender parity.

This leads to the imposition of the interests of the party leaders on political equality. In this context, for women not only to reach spaces of power/ for women's access spaces of public power, but also to exercise said power effectively and lead an authentic political agenda that reinforces their gender struggle, both in the legislative and executive branches, they need to develop and strengthen its political leadership. This will allow them to confront the Mexican partyocracy dominated mostly by men.

Future Future lines of research

It is imperative to continue delving into research of this type with the purpose of identifying the sociocultural and partisan obstacles that have hindered, in the first instance, the progress of gender parity in quantitative dimensions and, in the second instance, in qualitative dimensions to achieve equality. substantive policy. This should translate into genuine empowerment of women in crucial political decision-making bodies, both in public spheres and in party structures.

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