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Review of Related Literature

Introduction

The modern political environment makes discussions about inclusivity, safe spaces, and entitlement fundamental to government decision-making and lawmaking processes. This review of related literature investigates the relationships between legislative measures and political seats regarding their functions to build inclusive environments, maintain safety standards, and protect entitlements. Analyzing this will shed light on how political frameworks incorporate these elements to reveal both the goals and challenges of present-day governance.

Effective democratic governance depends on inclusivity because this practice serves both fairness and crucial democratic execution principles. Legislative measures that promote inclusivity allow diverse interests to find representation while policies embrace the complete range of social requirements. Systemic inequality problems demand this representation framework, simultaneously promoting empowerment for marginalized communities. The legislative framework designs these safe spaces to function as areas where people can communicate without facing discrimination or experiencing hostility. These new legislation initiatives face substantial opposition from various groups. Opposition to the concept of safe spaces argues that an overemphasis on protective measures may lead people to be too entitled, which may slow down free dialogue. Supporters argue that safe spaces play a key role in creating stressful areas where mutual respect enables social transformation.

The objectives of this review of related literature (RRL) are three:

1. **Identify gaps between inclusivity and entitlement:** Analyze where current legislative measures may diverge from their intended outcomes, leading to imbalances in representation and support.

2. **Compare traditional and liberal perspectives on safe spaces:** Explore how different ideological frameworks interpret the role and impact of safe spaces in political discourse.

3. **Establish objective criteria for safe spaces in political settings:** Develop clear, measurable standards to assess the effectiveness of safe spaces in fostering genuine inclusion while preserving the integrity of political dialogue.

This review of related literature investigates multiple objectives through research to deliver complete insights about both the advantages and challenges of incorporating inclusivity, safe spaces, and entitlement rights into legislative practice frameworks.

Inclusivity in Political Context

Inclusivity entails actively incorporating and valuing all individuals and groups from diverse backgrounds across sectors of society, fostering a sense of belonging and engagement (What Is Inclusivity | IGI Global Scientific Publishing, n.d.). This concept serves as the foundation for political inclusion, where all citizens, regardless of class, age, gender, sexual orientation, ability, group, culture, and ethnic or religious background, should have equal access to and participation in the workings of political institutions and processes. This notion was embedded in the idea of democracy, which the International IDEA asserts that for democracy to be sustainable, it must allow all individuals to participate in and engage in political processes as well as to represent and voice their interests and concerns (Cordenillo, 2017). However, significant challenges exist when it comes to fully integrating political inclusiveness in democracy. According to Secretary-General Yves Leterme (2017), the complexity and growing gap between the political world and the citizens hinder people from getting involved and participating in politics. Many countries in the Europe and Central Asia regions continue to face a difficult political and regulatory environment for civil society, and in other countries, the situation has become increasingly hostile (Inclusive Political Processes, n.d.).

Moreover, money is essential for political participation, as aspects like training and campaigning are becoming increasingly expensive. Importantly, numerous discriminatory laws, regulations, policies, and institutional processes hinder marginalized groups from feeling motivated to participate and become involved in politics. This highlights the enduring inequality of opportunity that persists worldwide. Despite comprising half of the global population, women remain underrepresented as voters, political leaders, and elected officials (Cordenillo, 2017). Even with generally high levels of education and employment, women are still denied access to positions of power and leadership throughout the Europe and Central Asia region due to both active and passive discrimination (Inclusive Political Processes, n.d.). Similar challenges are faced by members of the LGBTI community, who encounter obstacles in participating in politics, such as difficulties in candidate nomination, inclusion in political organizations, negative media coverage, and discriminatory practices within their political parties, and they even experience attacks based on their sexual or gender orientation (Antara, 2017).

Furthermore, it is becoming increasingly difficult to connect citizens' needs and aspirations to accountable and representative political institutions, leading them to be mistrusted. Also, some citizens are not interested in voting or participating in a political organization due to a perception that there will be no difference with who is in power and that their opinions will not change or influence the political processes. In addition, there are some cases in which access to political institutions is not even available or feasible because the frameworks for inclusive citizen involvement are not being implemented (Cordenillo, 2017).

Inclusivity Measures

International

Efforts to promote diversity and inclusion in policymaking often fall short, leading to the continued exclusion of marginalized groups and reinforcing systemic inequalities. Marginalization is the systematic exclusion of certain groups, depriving them of dignity and influence. The Academic Wheel of Privilege framework illustrates how factors such as race, class, and gender shape access to power, weakening public trust and policy effectiveness when ignored. The

policymaking process, comprising agenda-setting, policy design, implementation, and evaluation, often excludes marginalized groups due to structural barriers. Civil society organizations (CSOs) can amplify these voices, but limited resources and restricted access to policymakers weaken their influence. Without meaningful engagement, policies risk being ineffective or harmful. To ensure inclusivity, governments should adopt systemic inclusion, genuine engagement, and valued participation as core principles. Strategies such as accessible public forums, digital transparency tools, and localized community approaches can enhance representation and trust in governance (Sajeev-beena et al., 2025).

Gender inclusiveness in policymaking ensures that gender perspectives are integrated into decision-making, aligning with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 5 (Gender Equality) and Goal 10 (Reduced Inequalities). A gender-inclusive approach addresses the distinct needs of various social groups through targeted strategies. Conducting gender analysis helps identify disparities, while engaging women in consultations ensures their perspectives shape policy decisions. Collecting gender-disaggregated data enables policymakers to design effective interventions, and gender-balanced representation in decision-making bodies fosters inclusivity. Implementing gender-responsive budgeting ensures adequate resource allocation and addresses structural inequalities, such as sexism and gender-based violence, which creates an environment where marginalized voices are recognized. By adopting these measures, policymakers can develop more equitable and effective policies that reflect diverse societal needs (Srinivas, 2023).

Local

The Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) Plan 2019-2025 is a strategic framework aimed at promoting gender inclusivity and strengthening women's participation in governance in the Philippines. It supports the implementation of the Magna Carta of Women (RA 9710) to eliminate discrimination and ensure equal opportunities. Additionally, it aligns with national policies such as the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2017-2022 and AmBisyon Natin 2040, as well as long-term initiatives like the Philippine Plan for Gender-Responsive Development (PPGD) 1995-2025. Internationally, the GEWE Plan reinforces commitments to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA), and UN resolutions on Women, Peace, and Security. It also aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 5 on Gender Equality. By guiding government agencies in developing Gender and Development (GAD) plans and budgets, the plan ensures that gender inclusivity remains a key priority in policymaking and legislative reforms (Philippine Commission on Women, 2019).

The Magna Carta of Women is a landmark law that protects women's rights and ensures their inclusion in political and decision-making processes. It mandates the government to review and amend discriminatory laws while creating policies that promote gender equality. A core requirement of the law is gender mainstreaming across all government institutions, including local government units and state-owned corporations. This involves incorporating gender considerations into planning, budgeting, and policy implementation, establishing Gender and Development (GAD) focal points, and maintaining gender-disaggregated data to inform policies. Recognizing women's rights as fundamental human rights, the law ensures equal treatment for all individuals, regardless of gender, ethnicity, or social status. By enforcing these principles, the Magna Carta of Women strengthens efforts to create an inclusive political environment, particularly for

marginalized women, ensuring their active participation in governance and policy development (Philippine Commission on Women, 2009).

Perspectives on Inclusivity and Safe Space

Traditional/Conservative Views

Social and moral values affect political ideology in the Philippines because they derive from both religious and cultural influences in the territory (Abecilla, 2024). The religious beliefs of the Philippines strongly influence negative reactions against same-sex marriage (Ochoa et al., 2016). Liberals and conservatives use different values to shape their positions on free speech and inclusivity: liberals emphasize human rights combined with social equity, while conservatives focus on national identity together with family values (Abecilla, 2024). Ochoa et al. (2016) stated that entitlement disputes related to free speech exist alongside social norms based on religious and cultural traditions. They also mentioned that the powerful strength of Catholics in the Philippines drives backward-thinking perspectives about social issues, which determines Filipinos' interpretation of entitlements regarding personal liberties and social policy matters. The successful understanding of contrasting ideological positions becomes vital for managing the intricate debates around Philippine free speech and inclusivity.

Liberal Views

To Salla et al. (2023), the advocacy of structural inclusivity aims to remove marginalizing structural barriers by making policies actively work for and elevate the voices of affected groups. Meanwhile, Thompson (2017) says that safe spaces create essential zones that allow marginalized people to freely voice themselves without fear of discrimination, yet they aim to build inclusive exchanges, not for censorship. The advocacy process must actively address power imbalances by providing marginalized groups with the power they need to defend their rights and give validity to their lived knowledge and possess truth-telling justice (Salla et al., 2023). Protecting marginalized voices is vital for both social justice and equality by recognizing established systemic inequalities while promoting equal policies for dismantling them (Song, 2024). Support services need to integrate cultural understanding along with intersectional perspectives to deliver specific assistance to different communities because various elements like racism and gender bias create additional marginalization. Through advocacy, people gain the power to transcend established narratives while fighting systemic power structures, thus establishing a fairer legal system and society (Salla et al., 2023).

Furthermore, according to Cortez (2021) and Pagulayan (2022), the Safe Spaces Act (RA 11313) protects individuals, especially women and LGBTQ+ members, from gender-based harassment, while Oxfam Pilipinas and PANTAY lead initiatives for promoting gender justice alongside organizational efforts to establish inclusive spaces. The Comprehensive Anti-Discrimination Bill (CADB) works to establish legal penalties against every form of discrimination that guarantees access rights for all users, while the SOGIE Equality Bill protects people from being discriminated against because of their sexual identity, gender identity, or gender expression (ILGA Asia, 2024; Amnesty, 2020). Under RA 11650, the Inclusive Education Act, the Philippines reinforces its country-wide commitment to equal opportunities by requiring all disabled children to attend mainstream education (Situation of Children Philippines, 2022).

Safe Space in Political Context

Safe space is generally defined as a place or environment where a person or group can feel confident that they will not be exposed to discrimination, criticism, harassment, or any other emotional or physical harm (Rsmojica et al., 2022). There is an increased demand for different voices at political tables. These calls are met with the preexisting narrative that politics is dangerous, inaccessible, inflexible, repulsive, and divisive. Hence, there is a need to change the narrative by creating an atmosphere that is more receptive to the demands of all forms of diversity, visible and invisible. In this setting, everyone is free to express themselves and have their own opinions (Rsmojica et al., 2022).

Freedom of Expression

International

Balancing free speech with efforts to prevent hate speech is a significant challenge in policymaking. Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights guarantees the right to express opinions and access information freely, which is essential for democracy (United Nations, 1948). However, concerns arise when regulating hate speech, as restrictions can be perceived as threats to free expression. Digital platforms have expanded communication rights but have also facilitated the spread of harmful content. The UN stresses that speech limitations should be exceptional and guided by principles such as harm prevention and equality, as outlined in the Rabat Plan of Action, which distinguishes lawful speech from incitement to violence or discrimination (United Nations, 2019). Gender-based hate speech and disinformation disproportionately target women and marginalized groups, particularly journalists, politicians, and activists, undermining their participation in public discourse. UN Special Rapporteur, Irene Khan has urged governments and social media platforms to create safer digital spaces while ensuring that measures against online abuse do not unjustly restrict free speech. Effective policies must strike a careful balance between protecting individuals from harmful expression and safeguarding the right to free speech (Khan, 2021).

Local

The Philippine Constitution upholds free speech and press freedom, ensuring individuals can express opinions, share information, and assemble without government interference. However, maintaining these rights while addressing harassment and discrimination remains a challenge (Cu, 2024). The Safe Spaces Act specifically addresses gender-based sexual harassment (GBSH) in public spaces, workplaces, educational institutions, and online platforms. In public areas, GBSH includes unwelcome sexual actions, sexist or homophobic remarks, persistent comments on appearance, and behaviors that threaten personal safety, such as stalking and public indecency. In online, GBSH takes the form of cyberstalking, non-consensual sharing of explicit content, impersonation, and other digital harassment tactics. By defining and prohibiting these acts, the Safe Spaces Act seeks to protect individuals from harm while ensuring that policies do not unjustly limit free expression (Philippine Commission on Women, 2021).

Policy Recommendations

International

Creating inclusive and safe spaces requires policies that promote equal participation, protect marginalized groups, and uphold human rights. Key principles such as social integration, inclusion, and cohesion ensure that individuals feel valued and can fully engage in society. Essential elements include legal protection against discrimination, active participation in decision-making, equitable access to services, and the promotion of diversity and tolerance. Effective strategies involve recognizing marginalized groups, ensuring their voices influence policy, and allocating resources to facilitate social, economic, and political inclusion. Addressing poverty, employment discrimination, geographic disadvantages, and climate vulnerability is crucial for fostering inclusivity. Additionally, legislative efforts should prioritize the rights and well-being of women, youth, older persons, persons with disabilities, and ethnic minorities. These practices can create environments where all individuals are empowered to contribute to social progress (DESA, 2019).

Local

Increasing women's representation in politics is crucial for inclusive decision-making and sustainable development, yet social, economic, and structural barriers persist. To address these challenges, the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW) recommends key affirmative actions. These include implementing gender quotas to ensure balanced political representation, establishing campaign funds to support women candidates, and integrating gender perspectives into political party agendas. Additionally, applying gender-alternating lists in party-list systems and enacting laws for local sectoral representation can further promote women's participation. These measures aim to create a more inclusive political environment by ensuring women, especially those from marginalized sectors, have equal opportunities to engage in governance and policymaking (Enacting a Woman's Political Participation and Representation Law, n.d.).

Entitlement in Political Context

An entitlement is a governmental benefit to which a person is legally entitled if they meet specific eligibility requirements. For instance, if a person is charged with a major offense and cannot afford an attorney, he or she is entitled to legal representation at public expense. Similarly, a person who loses their work may be eligible for unemployment benefits from the state in which they live. Entitlements contribute significantly to the advancement of sustainability in a variety of ways. First, social and economic justice is an essential component of sustainability. Sustainability entails more than just survival; it is survival within the framework of an equal social, political, and economic value system. In modern democratic countries, the value system that provides for equal voting rights and equal legal protection leads us in the direction of fair distribution of commodities and services. The challenge of promoting sustainability into the future will repeatedly bring us face to face with issues of limited resources, and managing the difficult tradeoffs between economic vitality, environmental protection, and social equity core values of sustainability will necessitate extreme caution and skill (Simon et al., 2019).

Identifying Gaps Between Inclusivity and Entitlement

Minkin (2023) states that Black workers, alongside women, tend to hold more positive views about diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives (78% and 61%, respectively) than both White workers, alongside men (47% and 50%, respectively). Although Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) programs encounter multiple intersectional issues, diversity quotas can help solve some problems of exclusion yet unintentionally create additional forms of discrimination (Brulé & Tóth, 2022). Negative public reactions towards affirmative action programs include allegations of discrimination that target White males and triggered protests and racist incidents like the distribution of racist flyers at UC Berkeley between the time of affirmative action policy consideration. Opposition from Republican structures and their supporters generates political resistance against such policies while they argue the measures both incur economic burdens and damage merit-based admission frameworks because of underlying tension around equity and fair treatment in the nation (Mollins, 2014). While it acknowledges that women tend to hold more positive views on DEI initiatives, it does not explore how these views translate into political participation or leadership opportunities. The discussion of affirmative action focuses on racial dynamics and opposition from Republican structures but lacks an analysis of how gender entitlement influences political resistance to such policies. It also overlooks the intersection of race and gender in political spaces, failing to examine whether Black workers, women, and other marginalized groups experience unique challenges in leadership.

Affirmative action is a policy designed to improve opportunities for historically underrepresented groups in education and employment. It aims to counteract systemic discrimination by considering factors such as race, gender, and disability in hiring and college admissions. This approach has been widely used in the United States, particularly in higher education. However, in the 2023 case Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that race could no longer be a factor in college admissions, citing the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment (Kenton, 2019). Critics argue that this decision undermines efforts to achieve racial equity, while supporters claim it promotes a merit-based system where admissions are based solely on academic qualifications. Some scholars, such as Derrick Bell, have also pointed out that affirmative action has not necessarily addressed deeper structural inequalities, as traditional admission standards continue to favor wealthier, predominantly white applicants (Jefferson-Jones et al., 2023).

The debate on affirmative action goes beyond race-based admissions, touching on legacy admissions, financial barriers, and how merit is defined. Supporters of the Supreme Court ruling argue that removing race-conscious policies ensures admissions are based on academic qualifications, while critics worry about reduced opportunities for marginalized students. Some also point out that affirmative action has benefited white women more than racial minorities. As universities adjust to the ruling, they may need to find new ways to promote diversity, such as considering socioeconomic factors or providing more support for disadvantaged students (Baldwin, 2024). The discussion is primarily centered on race, overlooking how gender entitlement operates in political spaces. Additionally, it mentions that white women have benefited significantly from affirmative action but does not analyze how this has influenced gender dynamics in political participation. The absence of a discussion on how affirmative action policies shape power structures within political institutions leaves a gap in understanding how inclusivity and entitlement intersect in political development.

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