

The Representation of Gender-Related Issues in Politicians' Discourse Over Social Media

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ABSTRACT

Although women's presence in parliament has significantly grown worldwide, women still constitute the largest underrepresented social group in the political arena. Some explain this by pointing at national-level cultural and institutional factors. Others emphasize the role parties' characteristics play in facilitating women's representation. Specifically, scholars contend that candidate selection methods affect female representation. Such work usually refers to the descriptive dimension of women's representation, meaning to what extent female politicians occupy realistic slots in the party's candidates list. However, representing women is not only a matter of holding political positions but also of the extent to which women-related issues are addressed. This paper examines whether the type of intra-party candidate selection method affects the amount of discourse party members (whether men or women) dedicate to women-related issues. We explore whether the candidate selection method but improves the substantive representation of women. Utilizing a supervised deep learning model, we analyze a data set

comprising all national-level aspiring politicians' Facebook posts during four election campaigns of the Israeli Parliament (65,061 posts). Our analysis indicates an overall gap in issue attention between different selection methods. Results show that a more inclusive (rather than exclusive) method is correlated with greater women's substantive representation.