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Woman in Development and Politics

Providing a Framework for Empowering Women in Governance Based on Cognitive Science Studies

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
Article type: Research Article **Article history:** Received 28 April 2024 Received in revised form 2 June 2024 Accepted 20 July 2024 Published online 06 October 2024 **Keywords:** *Empowerment,* *governance, women,* *cognitive sciences*	**Introduction:** Women's empowerment and the promotion of gender equality have been recognized as key factors in achieving sustainable development and reducing global poverty. Despite significant progress in recent years, gender inequalities persist in areas such as education, employment, health, and political activities. Understanding the factors influencing these inequalities and finding solutions is essential. One research area that has recently garnered significant attention is cognitive science. This interdisciplinary field, through examining multifaceted interventions, has brought important achievements in various domains. Cognitive science, by investigating the mechanisms of mental concept formation and combining it with behavioral studies, offers methods for analysis and improvement in various contexts. Cognitive science is an interdisciplinary study of the mind and its processes, including perception, attention, memory, language, and problem-solving. Research has shown that cognitive skills can be improved through education and practice, which is crucial for empowering women. Cognitive skills can help women overcome barriers they face in different aspects of life. Developing cognitive skills such as strategic thinking, decision-making, and creativity can boost women's self-confidence and self-belief, making them more successful in facing challenges and obstacles. These skills enable women to overcome gender-based discrimination and misconceptions and gain access to opportunities that may be closed to them. In governance, the development of cognitive skills plays a vital role. Cognitive skills such as strategic thinking, problem-solving, and effective communication are essential for women's success in governance roles. Strong cognitive abilities help women make optimal and rational decisions and challenge gender-based misconceptions and biases. This research aims to demonstrate how cognitive science can enhance operational knowledge in the field of women's empowerment, particularly in governance, and provide an implementation model for this process. Given the novelty of this research area and the lack of sufficient practical studies, this research can provide valuable insights for policymakers and researchers. **Methodology** This research aims to develop a model for women's empowerment in governance based on previous studies within the context of cognitive sciences. Accordingly, the present research employs two combined methods: first, a scoping review to identify key themes and topics within a broad range of studies in cognitive science under the specified theoretical framework, and second, content analysis to select the thematic path and formulate the final research model. A scoping review is a type of literature review conducted to identify and map key concepts, evidence sources, and research gaps within a research topic (Pham et al., 2014). Unlike systematic reviews that focus on answering specific research questions with comprehensive and precise search processes, scoping reviews encompass a broader range of issues and information sources, including grey literature and unpublished studies (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005).

Results

Using a library research approach, the present study examined existing documents and found that in the past decade, specific topics in cognitive science have received special attention. These topics, identified as the main research themes, were filtered and categorized through the collection of related keywords from databases such as Web of Science, Scopus, and Google Scholar. In this process, related keywords were identified in two stages, and thematic areas were filtered. Results at each stage were determined with specific percentage ratios.

The main research topics in cognitive science over the past decade include areas closely related to governance. Table 1 shows the range of these topics related to governance. Subjects such as decision-making and judgment, reasoning and problem-solving, and behavioral economics directly impact governance. Additionally, social cognition, group decision-making, communication, and language processing are fundamental areas for understanding interactions and the dynamics of institutions and political agents.

One significant study area in this research is ethics in decision-making, which plays a crucial role in promoting ethical and responsible governance practices. Using cognitive science concepts, political processes and outcomes can be better understood and improved.

This research also examined topics related to cognitive science and governance studies in the context of women. In this regard, cognitive science plays a significant role in understanding the formation of gender and discrimination in women's governance experiences. Studies show that unconscious biases can affect cognition and policymaking, leading to negative attitudes toward female leaders. These biases can also impact women's hiring decisions and job opportunities.

Cognitive science can help identify and reduce these biases and provide strategies to increase awareness and promote diversity. Additionally, cognitive science helps understand how female leaders communicate in male-dominated environments and offers strategies for building networks and coalitions. Furthermore, cognitive science can help understand the barriers and challenges women face in governance and provide recommendations for supportive policies and interventions. Table 2 shows the range of topics related to cognitive science and governance studies in the context of women.

The main areas of women's empowerment were also extracted and categorized based on previous studies. This was done to create a meaningful connection between the concept of empowerment and the governance context based on cognitive studies. Table 3 shows the main areas of women's empowerment according to research from the past ten years.

Based on the theoretical framework designed in this research, the review of previous studies identified 18 main categories as fundamental concepts in developing women's empowerment in governance, in line with theories and findings related to cognitive science. These categories include topics such as cognition and decision-making, social cognition, perception and attention, language and communication, memory and learning, emotion and motivation, neuroscience, developmental psychology, social psychology, personality psychology, evolutionary psychology, and philosophy of mind. Table 4 describes each of these categories.

This research shows that cognitive science can create active knowledge in the field of women's empowerment, especially in governance, and provide an operational and practical model for this process. Given the novelty of this research area and the lack of sufficient practical studies, this research can offer valuable insights for policymakers and researchers.

Conclusion

The present research showed that by implementing evidence-based strategies that prioritize cognitive skills and diversity in governance, we can create a more inclusive and effective decision-making process. Furthermore, empowering women in governance can lead to positive social and economic outcomes, as studies have shown that gender-balanced leadership results in better policymaking and greater social and economic development. Additionally, empowering women in governance can help eliminate systemic gender inequality and challenge traditional gender roles and stereotypes, creating a more just society. Overall, providing a framework for women's empowerment in governance based on cognitive science studies offers a suitable development-oriented capacity for creating positive and sustainable changes for women and society as a whole. Therefore, the findings of this research can be used by a wide range of policymakers and planners, especially those involved in governance.