



Women's sustainable representation and the spillover effect of electoral gender quotas in South Korea

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Abstract

This article explores the indirect impact of gender quota legislation on the election of women to the South Korean national parliament. Although quotas mainly apply to the proportional representation portion of the mixed electoral system, pressures on parties to comply with quotas for single-member districts has brought about a 'spillover effect', whereby women elected via proportional representation quotas are later nominated and re-elected to single-member district seats for which parties do not apply quotas. This effect stems from a 'no re-election' norm in the proportional representation system that emerged after electoral reform in the 2000s, combined with the fact that being elected through quotas enhances women's political experience and thus their chances to run for district seats. While the 'no re-election' norm initially exerts a negative impact by preventing women from winning the same seat at the next election, it has a positive prolonged impact on women's sustainable representation by relocating women incumbents to district seats while also continuing to elect women via quotas.

Keywords

Candidate selection, gender quota, mixed electoral system, South Korea, spillover effect, sustainable representation

Introduction

Since electoral gender quotas were first introduced in South Korea in 2000, four parliamentary elections have been held under the new electoral laws. During this period, earlier party quotas gave way to legislative candidate quotas with legal sanctions for non-compliance for regional elections and financial incentives for fulfilment at all levels of election. Quotas were instituted for the parties' national lists for proportional representation (PR) and single-member district (SMD) seats under the new mixed electoral system. Women now comprise 15.7% of the National Assembly as

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of the 2012 election, compared with 3% in 1996, when no electoral quotas were in place. This outcome confirms the findings of existing studies that the institutionalisation of strong electoral quotas is a 'fast track' for increasing the number of women in legislative bodies (Dahlerup and Freidenvall, 2005).

Despite these positive initial achievements, debates continue over the effects of current quota practices on women's representation and empowerment. Critiques centre on the effectiveness of quota legislation in district seats, where parties have been very passive about employing quotas. While quotas are respected for PR lists, which constitute only 18% of the total seats, parties have not fully implemented quotas in SMDs, even though the legislation stipulates quotas in both parts. From this aspect, critics maintain that quota legislation in South Korea has only had a limited impact on women's political representation (Kim, 2012; Kim et al., 2013; Kim and Oh, 2010).

While recognising the validity of these critiques, this article argues that the impact of gender quotas on women's political representation is still left largely unexplained. This is because, although the increase in women in elected offices has slowed, women's election has nonetheless continued to increase since the introduction of gender quotas. Furthermore, the full potential of the current quota laws could be realised readily if parties complied with quotas for SMD candidates.

Previous studies of gender quotas have paid great attention to the immediate outcomes of quota laws on women's descriptive representation. Yet, current research suggests that the institutional effect does not always appear immediately, or straightforwardly. New institutions interact with existing institutions as well as with informal rules, which often results in unintended outcomes (Bjarnegård, 2013; Franceschet et al., 2012; Kenny, 2013; Krook and Mackay, 2011). These studies imply that to gain a better understanding of the impact of quotas, as a new institution, there is a need to examine the more nuanced and indirect institutional effects regarding how new gender quotas influence parties' election strategies and the incentives for candidate selection over a longer period of time (Bhavnani, 2009).

Related to these insights, another relevant body of literature is found in electoral studies of mixed-member legislative systems. These studies bring attention to an interaction between the PR and SMD parts of mixed electoral systems called 'contamination' (Cox and Schoppa, 2002; Ferrara et al., 2005; Pekkanen et al., 2006). They argue that mixed electoral systems create a different strategic environment, whereby parties have different incentives for candidate nomination from those in 'pure' PR or SMD systems. Although contamination theorists hardly take into consideration a gendered effect of contamination,¹ their attention to the interaction between the two electoral systems provides useful insights into how or if legislative gender quotas in mixed electoral system might have a different impact from those in other electoral systems.

Drawing on both bodies of literature, this article examines the impacts of gender quotas in the PR and SMD parts of the electoral system and their interaction over time in South Korean national elections.² It focuses on how the combined institutional effects of the mixed electoral system and gender quotas influence political parties' strategic implementation of gender quotas in the two parts of the electoral system, and how parties' quota practices in turn shape women's access to PR and SMD seats in different ways.

This article finds that gender quota legislation and the pressure for parties' full implementation have produced a positive and prolonged impact on women's representation through a 'spillover effect', whereby female legislators who step down from PR seats are nominated and elected to SMD seats. The spillover effect is facilitated by the 'no re-election' norm of the PR system that has been informally developed in the particular political history of democratic consolidation in South Korea. More specifically, when political parties are pressured to fulfil gender quotas in SMD seats, they tend to look for female incumbents who have already demonstrated their calibre during their PR terms. In this way, gender quotas contribute to opening up initial opportunities for women to

access the legislature through PR, then, later, for women to be elected to SMD seats in the next round of elections.

The following section begins with a brief overview of the institutional characteristics of the mixed-member electoral system and gender quota legislation in South Korea, followed by an analysis of the institutional effects on parties' incentives to fulfil gender quotas. The article then examines the impact of gender quota legislation on women's descriptive representation in four national elections. The final section analyses the unintended and prolonged impacts of gender quota practices on women's representation by demonstrating a spillover effect.

Institutional landscape: Mixed electoral system and electoral gender quotas

Mixed electoral system

South Korea is a relatively new democracy. After the country returned to a constitutional democracy in 1987, it established a presidential system with a single house of parliament. The electoral system was reformed several times until the current two-vote mixed electoral system was adopted in 2004. Several institutional features define the South Korean variant of a mixed electoral system. It shares an essential feature of a broader family of mixed electoral systems, that is, the employment of multiple formulas for seat allocation in a single legislature (Ferrara et al., 2005; Shugart and Wattenberg, 2001).

The South Korean mixed electoral system combines two formulas for seat allocation: proportional and majoritarian (first-past-the-post). Voters cast two separate ballots, one for an individual candidate nominally in single-member constituency districts and the other for a political party list, where the entire country serves as one constituency. The proportion allocated to SMD seats compared with PR seats is very high: SMD representatives constitute 246 of 300 seats and only 54 are elected on party proportional list ballots. Dual candidacy for two parts of the election is not allowed. Finally, the SMD and PR parts of the election are completely unlinked, whereby there is no compensation between the two systems (mixed-member majoritarian).³

Gender quota legislation

Gender quotas were instituted in parallel with the electoral reform to the mixed electoral system. Quotas were first introduced in the Law on Political Parties in 2000 as part of a larger programme of political reform shortly before the 2000 national election. However, the 2000 law was only to encourage 30% voluntary candidate quotas for women on party PR lists, without sanctions for non-compliance or mandatory enforcement measures. As expected, political parties did not comply with the new gender quota recommendation in the immediate 2000 parliamentary election. It was not until the 2002 and 2004 electoral system reforms that stronger enforcement measures were institutionalised to make gender quotas more effective.⁴ In this round of reforms, quotas were introduced in both the PR and SMD tiers of elections, and they were significantly strengthened, to various degrees, for different levels and portions of elections.

Quotas in the PR tiers increased from 30% to 50% for all levels of election and they were made legally mandatory in regional and municipal contests.⁵ Most importantly, a placement mandate was specified imposing an alternating 'zipper' list, whereby women and men must alternate on party PR lists. A 30% gender quota was newly stipulated for SMD candidacies; however, the SMD quotas were worded in a much weaker style compared with those applying for PR and stopped short of any enforcement measures, stating that political parties should 'make an effort' to nominate women

Table 1. Institutional landscape of candidate gender quotas: Legislation and party compliance.

Level of legislation		Target of the legislation		
Election-related laws	Law on Political Parties (2000, 2002)	Electoral candidate quotas for women	50% PR (54 seats)	Placement mandate applying to all elections ('zipper' list alternating women and men) No sanctions for non-compliance in national elections
	Law on the Election of Public Officials (2002, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2009, 2010)		30% SMDs (246 seats)	
Party statutes and regulations	Law on Political Funds (2002, 2004, 2005, 2006)			
	Saenuri Party	Quota compliance	50% of PR lists	High compliance
	Democratic United Party United Progressive Party		30% of SMDs	Low compliance

Note: Table constructed by the author with reference to Korean Ministry of Government Legislation. Available at: <http://www.law.go.kr> (accessed 31 May 2013).

to 30% of SMD candidacies. Consequently, the implementation of SMD quotas was largely left to the discretion of parties. Table 1 summarises the institutional landscape of gender quota legislation in South Korea as of September 2013.

According to comparative research on gender quotas, the South Korean quota legislation should qualify as strong and effective. While on reserved seat systems guarantee the election of target group members, legislative quotas are expected to exert greater mandatory pressure than party quotas. This is particularly so when the legislation is backed up by good enforcement measures (Schwindt-Bayer, 2009). Yet, institutional design does not explain everything. Among 40 countries that held elections in 2012, nine out of the 19 with a higher proportion of women legislators than South Korea had no gender quotas or employed non-legislative party quotas (IPU, 2013: 2), while some political regimes in new democracies often misuse legislative quotas to consolidate political leaders' power base (Hassim, 2009). These cases attest to the fact that the effectiveness of gender quotas depends on political parties' willingness to comply with quota legislation; otherwise, they may still easily find ways to nullify the purpose of quota legislation (Dahlerup and Freidenvall, 2011; Hoodfar and Tajali, 2011; Krook, 2009).

Institutional effect on political parties

Since the new mixed-member electoral system and gender quotas were legislated, political parties have behaved strategically. The positive part of the story is that almost all major parties have complied with a 50% PR gender quota.⁶ This practice contributed to the dramatic increase in women's descriptive representation throughout the 2000s. However, the same political parties have been far more passive in implementing the 30% quota for SMD candidates. All three major parties in the 2012 parliamentary election performed very poorly in nominating women for SMD candidacies; the Saenuri Party nominated only 7% women among all party district candidates; the Democratic United Party (DUP) nominated 10%; and the United Progressive Party nominated 15%.

These discrepancies between quota practices in the PR and SMD tiers of the election system echo earlier studies finding that PR systems are more favourable to women's representation (Matland, 2005; Matland and Studlar, 1996; Norris, 2004). However, it is noteworthy that the ways in which the institutional features of the South Korean variant of a mixed-member majoritarian system are implemented shape parties' strategic incentives regarding gender quota practices.

A notable aspect of this is the weighted ratio of seats allocated by the two parts of the electoral system. The share of seats elected to the National Assembly through PR is very small, barely 18%, whereby a 50% gender quota translates into only 27 out of a total of 300 seats. In contrast, SMD representatives comprise the remaining seats, such that a full 30% gender quota, if translated equally into seats, would amount to 82 out of 246 SMD seats. This weighted ratio of PR and SMD seats (54:246) prompts the parties to see the SMD portion as central to their election strategies, thus rendering them more resistant to employing gender quotas in this part. Even if parties do nominate women for SMD candidacies, a 30% quota does not ensure that women win that portion of seats unless parties place their 30% quota of women into winnable districts. When political parties reluctantly succumbed to women's groups' pressure to adopt legislative quotas, their attempts to minimise the effect of gender quotas on candidate selection resulted in a compromise, with strong gender quotas for PR and much weaker quotas for SMD seats. This solution enables parties to demonstrate their commitment to gender equality through the proportional lists, while retaining control over the strategic candidate selection for single-member districts.

Another institutional factor, the unlinked two-vote system, discourages parties from nominating more women to SMD candidacies, while encouraging their willingness to implement quotas in PR lists. In mixed electoral systems, parties seek to appeal to a larger electorate by adopting different strategies for the PR and SMD parts of the election. Parties utilise the list ballot to attract the attention of the electorate beyond their traditional bases of support. Since voters cast two ballots – one for a preferred political party and one for a constituency candidate – many voters end up casting votes for two different parties. Parties compete for the ballots of the PR tier regardless of the expected result of SMD contests. Gender quotas in the PR tier benefit parties by presenting a better list than those of other parties, while safe districts are reserved for party leaders and senior male incumbents. Parties perceive that violating quotas is more costly in terms of incurring a negative image than nominating more women on PR lists.

Third, there is virtually no pressure for parties to depose sitting PR legislators in South Korea due to a 'no re-election' norm in the PR system. Parties are relieved from the pressures to renominate incumbents to PR lists and are expected to replace PR incumbents with new candidates at each election.⁷ In contrast, it would be much harder to remove constituency-based incumbents in the face of intra-party factional politics and resistance from incumbents. These dynamics in nomination rules make the candidate selection strategies quite unique.

The 'no re-election' norm was developed as part of the electoral reforms in the 2000s. A PR system before democratisation in 1987 served as a convenient tool for authoritarian leaders or a dominant party to increase their influence in the national legislature (Park, 2000). PR seats were reserved for party leaders or patrons of the party. Voters had little influence on the ordering of party lists. Even when a new PR system was introduced in the 1996 election through strong pressure from civil society, voters were given only one ballot to cast for a candidate in their district. The PR seats were distributed among parties in proportion to the ballots each party won in the SMDs (Hwang, 2006).⁸ After this practice was declared 'partially unconstitutional' by the Constitutional Court in 2001, the current two-vote mixed electoral system was instituted in 2004, by which the PR system came to reflect the corresponding proportion of direct votes by the electorate. Gender quotas were also adopted in a similar spirit of better representation in the legislature.

In that context, the PR system came to represent democratic values and citizens' achievements. Candidate lists for the PR seats are taken to be a litmus test for the electorate to adjudicate how much each political party is committed to democratic values. Parties are pressured to demonstrate their continued dedication to political reform and the wider constituency through the 'quality' of candidate lists. To this end, PR seats came to be seen as an institutional channel for the recruitment of candidates whose profession related to specific areas of legislation that would benefit all citizens. PR seats are also employed to represent various marginalised groups, such as women, labour, the disabled and so on. Professional politicians are pressured to give way for new candidates who would otherwise have little chance of entering the legislature. These dynamics have generated a norm that no one should unfairly benefit by repeatedly running for PR seats. This symbolic role of PR has led parties to seek fresh faces at each election in order to appeal to the larger electorate.

The 'no re-election' norm associated with the PR portion in South Korea promotes a far higher turnover rate than any other PR system.⁹ In the 2012 parliamentary elections, for instance, all PR representatives of the two major parties, except for two party leaders, were newly elected members. Yet, even the two party leaders will be replaced by new members at the next elections. Almost the only way to run again at the next election is to contest a party nomination in SMD seats. This practice makes parties view a PR legislator as serving only one term, making it less burdensome to nominate women in these positions. All of these institutional features play a key role in shaping women's political representation in the two electoral systems.

Women's descriptive representation in the legislature

From the first parliamentary election through the year 2000, when gender quotas were introduced, women were virtually absent in the national legislature. Despite frequent changes in the size of the legislature, women's representation remained extremely low, at about 2%. There were fewer than five women legislators at each election from 1948 through to 1967. Slightly more women began to enter the legislature during the next 25 years from 1971 to 1996,¹⁰ but no significant enhancement occurred.

Gender quotas brought about a dramatic change in this persistent trend, as illustrated by two upward spikes in 2000 and 2004 (see Table 2). In 2000, 16 women legislators were elected to the National Assembly, the first time that their numbers reached double digits. Women comprised only 5.9% of the legislature, but this was a record-high proportion of seats achieved after only four parliamentary elections since democratisation. Women's ratio increased again to 13% in the subsequent election in 2004. These increases in the number of women legislators can be attributed mainly to the introduction of gender quotas and the strengthening of the PR system.

The 2000 election outcome reflects the immediate impact of the introduction of 30% gender quotas for PR candidates. Although few political parties complied with this new no-penalty quota regulation, women's groups' strong demands for compliance with the new law and public interest put a good deal of pressure on parties, leading to the nomination of more women on their PR lists.¹¹ However, due to the lack of a placement mandate, many female candidates were listed in less winnable positions (*Seoul Daily*, 2000). As a result, women's success rate was low (11 won out of 36 candidates).

Women's presence became more conspicuous in the 2004 election, which was a significant moment in the electoral history of South Korea. The new electoral reforms in 2002 and 2004 introduced a two-vote mixed electoral system with an increase in PR seats from 46 to 56.¹² Gender quotas were considerably expanded and strengthened with a strong placement mandate. These reforms had an immediate and direct impact on women's legislative representation, with 39 women being elected in 2004. This constituted 13% of the legislature, a dramatic jump from 5.9% in 2000.

Table 2. Number of legislators by gender and year (1948–2012).

Election	Year	Seats (all)	Male	Female (%)
1	1948	200	199	1 (0.5)
2	1950	210	208	2 (1.0)
3	1954	203	202	1 (0.5)
4	1958	233	230	3 (1.3)
5	1960	291	290	1 (0.3)
6	1963	175	173	2 (1.1)
7	1967	175	172	3 (1.7)
8	1971	204	199	5 (2.5)
9	1973	292	275	17 (5.8)
10	1978	231	223	8 (3.5)
11	1981	276	267	9 (3.3)
12	1985	276	268	8 (2.9)
13	1988	299	293	6 (2.0)
14	1992	299	291	8 (2.9)
15	1996	299	290	9 (3.0)
16	2000	273	257	16 (5.9)
17	2004	299	260	39 (13.0)
18	2008	299	258	41 (13.7)
19	2012	300	253	47 (15.7)

Source: Kim (2012).

As demonstrated in Figure 1, the increase in women elected through PR (11 to 29) was a major contributor to this sharp rise. Major parties complied with the 50% gender quota in PR seats.

Parties, however, were far more passive in nominating women as SMD candidates. Regardless of their place on the ideological spectrum, parties have failed to fulfil the 30% gender quota recommendation for SMD candidates. Women's groups and women's caucuses strongly criticised political parties' lack of commitment to women's political representation. While calling for compliance with the 30% quota in constituency seats, women's groups from various points on the ideological spectrum collaborated to put forward 101 prospective female candidates for party nominations (Kim, 2010). Those multiple efforts paid off: 39 candidates on the women's list made it on to the candidate lists of major parties. The final result was that 10 women were elected in SMDs in 2004, the highest number up to that point.

Despite the effect of institutional reforms, however, the overall impact of the new gender quotas on women's representation did not live up to initial expectations. After a big rise to 13% in 2004, the general trend of growth has become conspicuously sluggish (13.7% in 2008; 15.7% in 2012). Since the number of PR seats is fixed and parties have complied with the PR gender quotas, further enhancing women's representation depends upon improving how women fare in the SMD seats, which is the focus of the following section.

'Spillover' effect from PR to SMD seats

Studies have found that one potential unexpected and negative effect of gender quotas, particularly in the form of reserved seats, is a *glass ceiling* effect on women's representation. This perspective argues that, contrary to the policy objective of gender quotas setting a minimum level of women's

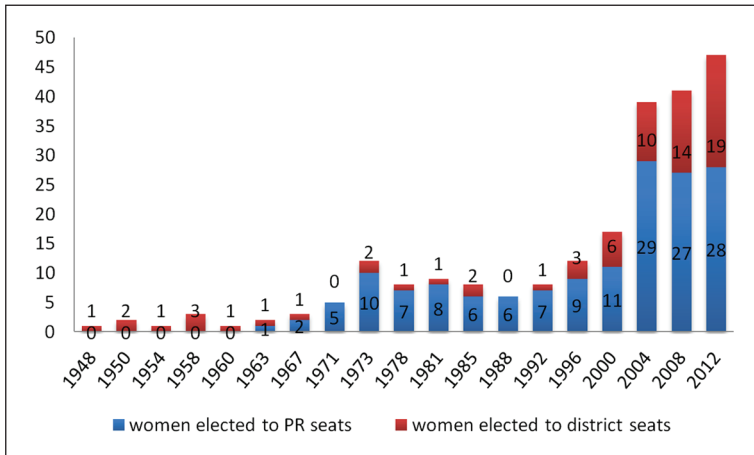


Figure 1. Women elected in parliamentary elections (1948–2012).

Source: Graph constructed based on the data of the National Election Commission. Available at: <http://info.nec.go.kr> (accessed 3 March 2013).

Table 3. Breakdown of women elected in four parliamentary elections.

Year	Total seats	Women elected (%)	Women elected in PR	Women elected in SMDs	From PR to SMDs (%)
2000 (16th)	273	16 (5.9)	11	5 0 (0)	0 (0)
2004 (17th)	299	39 (13)	29	10	4 (40)
2008 (18th)	299	41 (13.7)	27	14	7 (50)
2012 (19th)	300	47 (15.7)	28	19	8 (42)

Note: Table constructed by the author with reference to the election data of the National Election Commission. Available at: <http://info.nec.go.kr> (accessed 3 March 2013).

representation, with the expectation that women’s numbers will increase beyond that level, political parties often regard gender quotas as the maximum number of women needed to represent them. Upon complying with quota requirements, parties no longer feel obliged to nominate women beyond the required minimum (Dahlerup and Freidenvall, 2010).

At first sight, this perspective seems to fit with the current South Korean quota practices, whereby women legislators elected through PR quotas are seen as one-term servers, while the nomination of women to SMD candidacies confronts fierce resistance from male incumbents (Kim, 2012). Yet, a close comparison of women’s elections in PR and SMD systems over time raises questions concerning such an expectation.

Data collected on the women elected in PR and SMD seats in Table 3 show that while women’s election has stabilised in the PR tier, there has been a continuous increase in the number of women elected in the SMD tier over the four parliamentary elections (5→10→14→19). Unlike PR legislators, women elected in district constituencies are not required to quit their careers unless they lose the election or fail to obtain a party nomination. By winning ahead of male candidates, women in these seats could have a longer and sustainable impact on women’s electoral representation.

Table 3 indicates that the rise in the total number of women representatives in the past three elections is due to the steady increase in the number of women elected in SMD seats. More

significantly, the data in the rightmost column illustrate that about half the women elected in SMDs had been elected previously to PR seats. In the case of male legislators, for a simple comparison, out of 227 elected in SMDs in the 2012 election, only eight (i.e. 3.5%) are former PR representatives.

The fact that former PR legislators comprise between 40% and 50% of the total number of women elected to SMD seats in each election indicates a strong relation between women's representation in the two parts of the electoral system, that is, a 'spillover' of women incumbents from PR to SMD tiers. It also implies that spillover provides a relatively robust informal channel for women to be elected to SMD seats, contributing to the steady increase in the number of women elected to those seats.¹³ Consequently, the impact of gender quotas in the PR portion is not limited to the realm of PR, where the pool of women is fixed. The quotas appear to exert a lasting influence on the overall candidate selection process for women, with some time lag. This finding suggests that gender quotas in South Korea may contribute to the *sustainable political representation* of women in the long run (Dahour and Dahlerup, 2013).¹⁴

Bhavnani's (2009) study on the impact of gender quotas in the Indian municipal elections finds similar lasting effects, though in a different institutional context. His data demonstrates that women are more likely to win in the districts where quotas were previously implemented even after quotas are withdrawn. He argues that quotas give women incumbency advantages, such that women realise that they can win elections and are more willing to run. At the same time, parties also realise that women can be competitive; thus, they start nominating more women to represent them.

Gender quotas in the South Korean electoral system give quota women similar incumbency advantages. More women in PR seats are willing to challenge for a party nomination for SMD seats, and their success rate is high.¹⁵ These women gain confidence from four years of legislative experience and feel more confident to run for the next election.¹⁶ In the case of the opposition DUP, five of the party's nine PR quota women in the 2008–2012 parliament contested party nominations for SMD candidacies in the 2012 election. The total number of women applicants for nomination for SMD candidacy contests has also increased considerably. For instance, women applicants for the ruling Saenuri Party increased from 18 in 2008 to 76 in 2012, and for the DUP, the increase was from 23 to 49. It is possible that seeing successful women in previous elections encouraged other women new to politics to contest a party candidacy.

Second, parties give priority to experienced women who have 'proved' their political calibre. This is particularly the case when parties are hard-pressed to fulfil a 30% gender quota for SMD candidacies. For the 2012 election, all major parties purported to administer some favourable guidelines for female candidates.¹⁷ The ruling Saenuri Party announced that an extra 10% of points would be given to provincial and PR women legislators if they were to contest party nominations for SMD seats (Yoo, 2012). This rule was proposed to demonstrate the party's commitment to the fulfilment of a 30% gender quota in SMD candidacies, which indeed benefited PR quota women in enabling them to obtain a party nomination.

The opposition DUP also put forward favourable rules for women contenders for party candidacies, and expressed its commitment to nominating women in at least 15% of SMD candidacies. The party even revised the party regulations whereby an extra 15% of points would be added to the final score of women contenders at the primaries. Unfortunately, however, neither party had achieved their own goals of nominating women. The only positive aspect of these performances was that parties set much clearer regulations and goals concerning women's nomination for SMD seats in the 2012 election. During the nomination process, parties were pressured to recruit competitive women who would win in SMD seats, and the women previously elected through their own PR lists were the most plausible and reasonable options for that purpose.

Third, PR women incumbents are advantaged by public exposure during their PR terms. Since women legislators are still a minority, they tend to draw media attention and get appointed to positions with high public exposure, such as a spokesperson.¹⁸ Voters become familiar with women legislators through such media exposure. In addition, voters are reported to be less biased against women than the political parties themselves. To take a recent example, despite the fact that women had more difficulties in winning the primaries and getting a party nomination in the DUP, women candidates who ran for SMD seats finished with higher numbers of votes than their parties won for the PR tier in the 2008 and 2012 parliamentary elections (Kim, 2012; Yoo, 2012).¹⁹

Conclusions

The findings of this article suggest that institutionalising gender quotas is in effect fast-tracking women's electoral representation. However, in South Korea, it has a different impact on women contesting PR and SMD candidacies because of the different target percentages and enforcement mechanisms in the two parts of the electoral system. Parties comply with PR quotas from a strategic perspective, but less so with the SMD quotas. It is the main reason why gender quota legislation in South Korea has had only limited positive outcomes in the increase of women's descriptive representation.

However, a closer look at the women legislators in PR and SMD seats suggests that there is an indirect and enduring impact of gender quotas on women's representation over time, which has been largely overlooked in previous literature. Nearly half the women elected to SMD seats are former PR legislators who entered the legislature through PR quotas. This means that gender quotas for PR lists, however few seats it applies to, contribute to opening up a significant first chance for women candidates to start their political careers as legislators. Legislative experiences in the previous electoral term provide them with incumbency advantages for both the candidate selection process and electoral competition in district constituencies. Quota women gain more confidence and resources to run for election again, while parties and voters revise their perceptions regarding women's capabilities as legislators.

Nonetheless, a majority of women involuntarily leave their political careers due to the failure to obtain a party nomination in the candidate selection process for the following elections. There is no doubt that a more women-friendly candidate selection process by political parties may be necessary to 'rescue' many women candidates who have already proved their competitiveness during PR terms. Parties' compliance with the existing quota laws would be a first step to accomplish this goal.

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Notes

1. Scholars vary as to the relevance of contamination theory in studying mixed electoral systems. Nonetheless, more scholars have become attentive to the relationship between mixed electoral systems and its gendered outcomes (Kittilson and Schwindt-Bayer, 2012; Moser and Scheiner, 2012).
2. The main research method of this research is an analysis of election data from the National Election Commission from 1948 to 2012, election-related laws from 2000 to 2012, parties' statutes and regulations, and public statements of parties, as well as personal interviews with PR legislators of the Democratic United Party (DUP) conducted in Seoul from May to June 2012.
3. For various types of mixed electoral systems, refer to Shugart and Wattenberg (2001), Ferrara et al. (2005) and Moser and Scheiner (2012).
4. Women's groups in South Korea had mobilised for the legislation of electoral gender quotas since the early 1990s. They also participated in a large-scale civil society mobilisation for political reforms, leading to the major electoral reforms in the early 2000s onwards (Shin, 2013).

5. However, the 50% PR gender quotas for parliamentary and local elections are not backed up by legislative sanctions. Only PR lists in regional elections are accompanied by strong sanctions for non-compliance, such as rejection of party lists by the National Election Commission.
6. Non-compliance with the quotas for parliamentary elections does not incur penalties for political parties. For this reason, small parties often do not comply with this legislation, thus inviting civil society's critiques and demands for stronger sanctions for non-compliance.
7. Since it is an informal rule, it does not apply strictly to all parties. Small parties do not employ this norm. However, major parties do not nominate incumbents apart from a very few exceptions.
8. Prior to 1996, PR seats were distributed in proportion to the number of seats each party won in SMDs. This was designed to favour the ruling and major opposition parties, but distorted proportionality among parties by ignoring the proportion of actual votes won by each party.
9. The spillover effect of gender quotas has also been supported by a high turnover rate in SMD seats. The average percentage of new members in each national legislature in Korea is 48.1 (see: www.chosun.com, accessed 13 April 2012). This number derives from the fact that many legislators have been involved in various scandalous and illegal practices during their tenures. Fearful of a decline in popularity, parties aggressively deposed such incumbents in SMD seats, replacing them with more qualified candidates.
10. In 1973, the authoritarian regime revised the Constitution so that one-third of the national legislators would be appointed by the President-engineered National Council for Unification. That law was applied to the 1973 and 1978 elections. In the 1973 election, the Council appointed eight women, which explains a sudden increase in the number of women legislators in that year.
11. Only the DUP met the recommended quota, nominating women to 32.6% of PR candidacies, while other conservative parties nominated around 20%.
12. The magnitude of PR was reduced again to 54 in 2008.
13. Taking the most recent 2012 election for example, nine women out of the 19 elected to SMDs are rookies with no PR experience. Also, five out of these nine were those whom parties 'strategically' nominated for candidacy in winnable districts (National Election Committee).
14. Dahour and Dahlerup (2013: 8–9) define the sustainable political representation of women as 'a durable, substantial political representation of women, freed of the risk of immediate major backlash'.
15. For instance, 75% of PR women in the 17th parliament obtained a party nomination for SMD seats in the 18th parliament.
16. Personal interview, former female PR legislator Kim Yoo Jung (May 2012, Seoul).
17. In the 19th parliamentary election in 2012, for instance, the majority Saenuri Party adopted a mandatory cut-off rate of 25% among the incumbents of SMDs for renomination. All incumbents elected in SMDs were subject to the qualification screening for renomination. This policy overall was put into effect and, as a result, the renomination rate for this party was as low as 61.5%.
18. Personal interview, former female PR legislator, Choe Young Hee (June 2012, Seoul).
19. One reason for this high success rate could be that parties nominated women for highly electable districts. This hypothesis is partially true, for most women are elected in the capital city of Seoul and the surrounding prefecture, where the electorate is more 'modern' in terms of gender norms. Yet, many more 'safe districts' were still reserved for men. Another plausible reason is that those women candidates were simply more competitive. This hypothesis is quite plausible precisely because it is extremely difficult for women to win the primaries in the constituencies. The simple fact that some of them were capable of winning primaries proves their high qualification (Yoo, 2012).

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