

Perceptions of Mon People on Mon Women's Leadership in Politics after the 2021 Myanmar Military Coup

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Abstract

After 2021, women leadership like Daw Zin Mar Aung and Ei Thinzar Maung became prominents at the state level of pro-democratic movement. At the local based armed resistance, young women serve as platoon commanders, snipers and drone female soldiers taking the leading roles to fight back the military junta that challenge traditional gender norms of being a dependent.

On the other hand, the perception of politics as an inherently rough or masculine domain serves as a discursive barrier that pathologizes women participation. The interplay between traditional patriarchal norms and the junta's gendered strategies of repression creates a high-risk environment that discourages formal leadership.

This paper explores how the coup has changed society's perception of the role of women leadership in pro-democratic movements, examining the challenges women have faced and the opportunities for increasing gender equity in political leadership positions.

Qualitative research methods were used and ten in-depth individual interviews were conducted. Participants were purposely selected to capture diverse perspectives across community leaders, civilians, gender specialists, and youth leaders in Mon community.

The results were analyzed using in vivo coding to discuss participants' experiences and views about women's leadership roles in the post-coup context. Thematic analysis was used to identify patterns of perceived barriers and enablers.

Results show that women cannot break down men 's power domination in decision and policy making roles, although the involvement of women in leadership has been increasing due to the 30 percent policy in Mon Communities. This research shows that authoritarian conflict can both create opportunities and challenges for women, increasing their role in resistance movements while still limiting their access to long-term political leadership. This study contributes to discussions on gender equality by emphasizing the need for safer and more inclusive political spaces that support women's equal participation and leadership in decision-making processes.