



The Feminist movement in Thailand: A case study of empowering women in politics

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ABSTRACT

Thailand's history revealed that women have small space within the political sphere or as decision-making accomplices within the political parties, before and after the democratic bureaucracy since 1932. This paper focuses on the knowledge extracted from the secondary research documents along with focus group discussion to signifying the women's role in participating directly in politics, to figure out the obstacles and what would be the government's political initiatives under the constitution towards the empowerment of women in legislative issues, augmented with the proposition to enhance the women's political enthusiasm and involvement. The results showed that for many reasons, Thai women have a little level of interest in politics and a low participation level in parliament. Finally, this paper proposes some recommendations to the government for future development and strategies to inspire more women's participation in politics.

Keywords: Democratic bureaucracy, Government's political initiatives, Women's political enthusiasm, Women's participation in politics

1. Introduction

Feminism is a woman center approach to think about human nature through investigation of femininity and masculinity ranging from political movement philosophy and community movement that share overall objectives which are to define progressive political, financial, individual, and social right for women includes pursuing to provide equal choice for women in literacy and occupation. (GWANET Central Asia (n.d.))

The history of women's revolution

The first wave, 1848 to 1920; (Vox.com, 2018) focus on legislative equality for women, alongside other legal rights. Mostly active in UK Canada and United States. The Seneca Falls Convention of 1848 which was the women's rights convention for the first time in history (Tara Anand, 2018). Highlight the progression of uniformity and propriety rights for women and the confinement to the marriage in which the husband owned his wife, and any children of their union in a legal relationship similar to that of slavery. This chattel marriage was the same as in Thailand. In 1865, King Rama IV had announced the royal decree to change the law and recognized women's rights in choosing their own husbands and destinies (Pear Maneechote, 2020). In 1893, New Zealand was the first country to allow women to demonstrate their political rights. Surprisingly, Thailand was the second country because



Thailand provided women legislative right to vote for their local domestic leaders in 1897 (Cambridge University Press, 2010). Mary Clement Leavitt a missionary who came to Thailand in 1897 was one of the foreign women who support voting rights in Thailand (Katherine A. Bowie, 2013). Then it followed by Australia in 1902 and Finland in 1906. After this extraordinary triumph, UK also permitted this right to women age over 30 in 1918. Last but not least, in 1920, American ladies could vote for their politicians (GWANET Central Asia (n.d.)). As of now, more than 190 nations around the world entitled this right to ladies (IPU data, 2021).

The second wave started at the beginning of the 1960s and ending through the late 1980s which fighting for legitimate rights and fairness for women with remaining social difficulties. Ladies took part within the military in World War II or found the job that exclusive only for men within the same work environment, with the same wage. However, the Equal Pay Act of 1963 was under fighting and still struggling with many related problems. The Equal Rights Amendment, which benefits parity for women was passed by Congress in 1972 (GWANET Central Asia (n.d.)). In 1973, the Constitution of the United States provides pregnant women the freedom to choose abortion without any restrictions. Whereas in Thailand, the teachings of Buddhism, abortion is a sin, the unborn fetus is valued as a human being, abortion without any restriction make a deviation from Thai culture, values, and custom (Legal Advisor, 2013). However, until after 7 February 2021, Thai abortion law still has the condition that abortion has been legal up to 12 weeks of pregnancy and up to 20 weeks with the Obstetrician's recommendation (Samveda Hatwalkar, 2020). On top of the abortion right, the second-wave feminists achieved many other outcomes. Education and employment were opened up for women. But, female literacy in Thailand is very marginal. It was not until the 19th century, that girls were granted to obtain literacy (Borgenmagazine, 2014). In 1924, one of King Rama V's queens founded "Nipakarn School" the first school for girls in Suan-Sunandha area (Sunandha Park Story, 2018) allowed only for girls from noblemen, government officials, and a royal emissary's families.

The third wave, 1991 to 2007 (Vox.com, 2018) started at the very beginning of the 1990s, women's activists centered on "micro-politics" of what was, or was not, great for females. Battles in the third-wave were as more personal. Both younger women and men realized that this wave was either extremely idealistic or obstructed by traps. (GWANET Central Asia (n.d.)).

Feminism in the Cyberworld or Fourth wave feminism or Cyberworld feminism, beginnings when there are online social media like "Facebook", "Twitter", and "YouTube" provided. In 2013, the thought that we had entered the fourth wave was satisfactory across the board. Right now, the fourth-wavers are propulsive to the evolution behind cyberspace media such as "The Guardian" "#MeToo" and "Time's Up". Similar to all the women's liberation, the fourth wave has begun to handle the perception of the men effectively mindful of their behavior.

From of many waves of feminism' objectives focused on the social rights for women, equal opportunity in education, economic and political. As of now, in most of every nation in the world women won voting right however on women's role in participating directly in politics, still in question. From the IPU 2021 data, globally, regionally even Asia, and especially Thailand still has a few of women's roles in participating directly in politics.



The issue of women and her political roles was interested in the global debate since the United Nations had declared the first International Women's Year in 1975 and drawn it out to the “Decade of women in Development” (1976-1985) that was the international discussions and agreement preparations to promote the participation of women in political and social decision- making.

History of Thai political arena

As the same as the political history of every country in the world. Thailand was ruled and governed by the King since it was founded. Until the absolute government transformed without a violent revolution in 1932, ending up by having the government under the constitution. It was challenged that Thailand had not enough time to teach most of the Thai people about the constitutional foundation. King Rama VI had initiated a plan to gradually educate Thai people about the democracy of the “Muang Dusit Thani Plan” (oknation.nationtv.tv, (n.d.)), but the 1932- revolution happened before his plan was accomplished. It was one of the causes that the democracy in Thailand has swayed between total tyranny and a total vote-based majority government. As people can see that most of the time, Thailand has been ruled by military governments. The armed force got to be a component of constitutional perseverance. Thailand has exposed to 18 overthrows in 86 years (12 victorious and 6 endeavors), (Nick Robins- Early, 2017). Thailand was spotted as the highest military coup’s country in the world, the most recent one just turned up in 2014 (Max Fisher, 2013). This was one of the reasons why Thai women have a low interest in political participation. They had a perception of a very vulnerable to spend their time in playing any roles in politics which the government status may change every 4 or 5 years. In any case, it was anticipated that Thailand would witness a decline in armed force topple for some years. The study on the feminist movement in Thailand and a women’s role in participating directly in politics will explore the women's revolution in Thailand and understand Thai women’s roles in politics since the ancient time on the success and obstacle and provide recommendation for future development or future study advancement.

2. Objectives of the study

1. To understand Thai women’s roles in participating directly in politics.
2. To propose strategies to inspire women in political participation and policies recommendation.

3. Materials and methods

This study is a qualitative research study. Sources of data of women’s revolution in Thailand and women’s roles in politics and active women’s political participation are from secondary research documents and using focus group research study method to understand the rationale, the limitation, the success, and the obstacle of women’s direct participation in politics. Focus group is similar in characteristics to get a breadth of understanding of the thoughts and experiences of the people who are in the political arena by using open-ended questions, and discussion to figure out the government commitments under the constitution and another status towards the



empowerment of women in legislative issues, examine the activity that should be embraced by the government, a few proposals for both short and long term for upgrading the women's political interest.

The profiles of a total of 6 focus group audiences. All are from the political field. Two audiences are female congresspersons, another four audiences are from the House of Representatives with balance by gender, two male representatives, and two female representatives. To get the ideas from both younger generation politicians and the experienced ones, the age range of the focus group audiences are from 40 to 75 years old and political experiences are ranging from 2 to 15 years (See Table 1). To secure the identity of all participants, and to preserve their rights, all participants' names will not be disclosed. The objectives and the benefits of this study had been thoroughly elaborated to all participants to get their consent. Organize an open atmosphere with ice breaking before the discussion had been introduced to allow all participants to openly speak out their thoughts, with preparedness in avoiding any domination during the discussion. For some questions, researchers may need to stimulate the participants to give their opinions. However, all participants have the privilege not to provide any oppressive or awkward opinions during the discussion if they feel uncomfortable. After the research has been concluded, all the records during the exchange session will be destroyed.

Table 1: Profile of focus group' participants

| Participants | Age | Sex | Political Experience | Positions |
|--------------|-----|-----|----------------------|---------------------------------|
| #1 | 75 | F | 15 | Senator |
| #2 | 73 | F | 3 | Senator |
| #3 | 71 | M | 15 | House of Representatives member |
| #4 | 55 | M | 6 | House of Representatives member |
| #5 | 46 | F | 2 | House of Representatives member |
| #6 | 40 | F | 2 | House of Representative member |

4. Results

Thai women have low interest and low involvement in politics

A consecutive understanding of the history of the Thai women's revolution at the very beginning until the present day was needed as a background of a thorough understanding of Thai women's role in participating directly in politics. Before entering into women's role in politics, the understanding of the Thai women's revolution was important. The information about the women's revolution in Thailand was from the secondary research documents. Many pieces of evidence showed that in developing countries most of every development was slower than the developed countries. This is also the same for the Thai women's revolution. Woman's rights in Thailand depended on various factors such as culture, religion, legislative issues, finances, and education. Numerous advancement



results were comparable to the results of the developed countries, but they have happened much afterward than the developed countries. Due to Thai women's low interest and low involvement in legislative issues induced by the strong patriarchy in Thai culture. Before 1865, Thai women were respected and treated exceptionally inferior to men. Thai women had no veritable rights over their personal lives. They were not permitted to investigate their own proficiency even to write or read. Amdaeng Muean, one of the Thai women's heroes, was a young rustic female who refused these existing conditions, held up for her rights, and reversed it all which is now the legacy of Thai females. On the 10 December 1865, King Rama IV, after considering her case that she was sold by her father by forcing her to marry a man she did not love, King Rama IV issued a regal declare requested her parents to pay back a bride cost and let her married a man she loved. Because of her case, the King changed the law and recognize women's rights in choosing their own husbands and destinies. It moreover got to be illicit in Thailand to sell a daughter or a spouse (Pear Maneechote, 2020). This part of women's history demonstrated the hidden potential of Thai women in politics, even they have no opportunity to express themselves. Amdaeng Muean was one of the very few women in history who had that kind of courage. By that time, it was in the first-wave feminism period which women in developed countries earned their voting right such as in the UK, Europe, Canada, and the USA, Thai women just overcame one part of the patriarchal culture. Sixty-seven years later, the first Thai Constitution provided equal rights for women in voting and nominating after the abolition of the absolute monarchy in 1932. Thai women had to wait for 67 years later to obtain the same rights. This may be because at that time, Thai women were disconnected from the outside world. They did not know about global feminism or women's suffrage. And the nature of Thai women is tolerant, tends to accept the cultural norm, and no interest in politics. However, there was a piece of evidence that Thailand was entitled women voting right for the local domestic leaders only, not for higher-level leaders in 1897 (Cambridge University Press, 2010). In the period of 1943-1945, the first female soldier group was graduated and on the position. However, these female soldiers have vanished because the new government after Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram, disapproved of the female soldiers (Chanan Yodhong, 2018). This is one out of many indicators that illustrated the instability of Thai government policies which caused vulnerability and not attract women of being involved in politics. In Thailand, Cadet school allowed only for men. Now female soldiers are serviced in the military but are not related to warfare, they work in administration, education, or medical service (Pornsak Piyanantisak, 2019). Female soldiers can be promoted to a high level as general.

The political role opportunity for Thai women

In 1949, Ms. Orapin Chaikarn was the first woman elected as a member of Parliament, however, it was behind other countries in ASEAN because the appointment of the first female parliament member in Myanmar was in 1932, followed by Indonesia in 1935, the Philippines in 1941, and Vietnam in 1946. In 1953, after the Convention on the Political Rights of Women was approved. There were some women elected or appointed to be in high-rank positions for example Thanpuying La-ia-d Pibulsongkram was the President of the World Federation of the United Nations Association in Geneva in 1956. Ms. Chalorjit Jittarutta being a female judge in 1965. Ms.



Jintana Nopakul, as a municipal councilor in 1969. A new constitution in 1974, delivered an innovation for women's rightful position. Article 28 of this constitution declared the right of women with equal opportunity to men. Any constraints on equality in law or independence that disrupted the morale as well as the character of this article were not permitted. The government had a biennial period to improve or modify the unfair laws and codification against women as stated in Article 23. It is a pity that this Article was eliminated from the constitution when a conservative armed force government took control in 1976. This is another example that demonstrated the instability of Thai government policy which made women feel insecure to involve in politics. In this year, there were two women who were not parliament members, Khunying Lersak Sombatsiri, was appointed as a Ministry of Transportation, and Ms.Wimonsiri Chamnarnwej was appointed as a Ministry of University Affairs. The Council of Ministers declared a verdict of women appointment that women were not entitled to be district officer which is the entrance to be a governor, which was effective since 1978 was withdrawn. In 1982, Ms.Somsong Surapan was elected as sub-district head and Ms.Malichian Pengwong was selected as village head. They were both the first female in that position (National Statistical Office, (n.d.)).

In 1985, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was established in Thailand. In 1988, Khunying Supatra Masdit was elected as a member of the house of Representatives. She was the first one who is a lady that got elected and she was appointed as the minister in the cabinet work in the office of the Prime Minister. In 1989, the National Commission on Women's Affairs was founded as the long-lasting national institute for the development of women. In 1990, two conditions relating to avocation rights and liberties with regard to restriction on lawful capability were edited as agreed to CEDAW on Article 10 and on Article 15 (Vox.com, 2018). Just recently, since February 2021 abortion in Thailand has legal for up to 12 weeks of pregnancy while in the USA women get the abortion right in second-wave feminism.

More political opportunity is widely opened

In 1979, the Sub-Committee for the Development of Women's Role and Status of the National Economic and Social Development Board task force was drafted 20 years long-term plan from 1982 to 2001 for women's development. The first long-term plan had been passed but the current situation on women's status demonstrated that progression still needed. The latest one, 20 years long-term plan from 2017 to 2536 stated about 17 goals and 169 targets of UN Sustainable Development Goals of which goal #5 is gender equality, will be focused on as well (20-Year National Strategy, 2017); (Jinangkul Rojananan, 2017). In 1991, the Council of Ministers commanded all state institutions to survey their prejudice rules to permit female officials to handle any post excluding those relevant to national precaution. This eliminated all official hurdles to the development of women in government officials. The preclusion and elimination of the manipulation of prostitution, the abolition of child prostitution, and civil rights freedom were the major aims of Chuan Leekpai's government. In 1993, Khunying Supatra Masdit was honored to be the facilitator of the NGO Forum on Women, the first Asian woman to occupy this post. In 1994, the first female provincial governor, together with one woman councilor representative was entitled and ten female



local officials were assigned. In 1995, Thanpuying Sumalee Jatikawanij was honored to be the coordinator for the NGO Forum on Women preparedness coinciding with the Fourth World Conference on Women. In 1995, fifteen female detective inspectors were chosen to base in three police stations according to CEDAW 's statement that provided equal chances on politics, social life, and literacy for women. In 1996, the first female community leader was in the positions and ten female army commanders were nominated as Generals. The Board of Ministers certified the country policy and action plan for preclusion and elimination of the profit-making on children sexual violation.

No real role model that inspires women's motivation

Thai women nowadays appreciate higher education, financial, public, and legislative status compare to predecessors. Female institutions proceed with their developments and actions to make the progression of the women position and to eliminate existing civil and legislative disparities between males and females. Female institutions nowadays have extended and made arrangements to expand the umbrella over not only municipality areas and privileged class families who get proper literacy but also grassroots class and other bottom-line qualifications. These include the group of female peasants, the group of female laborers, the group of northern female leaders, the group of women and youth of Lamphoon, and the regional groups of housewives. They are interested in women's issues such as labor misconduct or discrimination, labor benefit, work environment surveillance, destitution, and infringement with appropriate supports. These female institutes have coordinated with other institutions in many conditions such as the opposition to social bad form, challenges counter to dam building, and requests for agrarian estate legislation, including many other arguments about female problems by the requests of the meeting of the underprivileged.

Women can participate directly in politics such as the House of Representatives members or Senators, lawmakers, members of the Constitutional drafting assembly, and the Council of Ministers. For the time being, many Thai women are in political positions. There are women who are appointed to government positions, such as Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education. Mrs. Tarisa Wattanakes was the first and only female top executive of the Bank of Thailand. These proven records showed a very good sign of a prosperous future of feminism in Thailand. Yingluck Shinawatra (Pheu Thai party leader) a 44-year-old political apprentice. The younger sister of previous prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra a huge accomplishment on the political campaign, especially within the conventional pro-red shirt political fortifications in the north and north-east of Thailand (Roy Cavanagh, 2019). She was the first female Prime Minister by winning 296 of 299 votes in Parliament, there were 197 lower house members abstentions (Legacy Phuket Gazette, 2011). Her position as the first female Prime minister is not able to be a role model for Thai women because she has no political experience. Her success in the position was coming from her brother's assistance. So, cannot motivate Thai women to enroll in politics

Thai legal restrictions illustrate non-fair play for women



Expanding of men's and women's equality in Thailand was accomplished in the 2017 Constitution. Subsequently, numerous official regulations and controls were substituted, to conform to the notion of women's suffrage. Including the restriction of female military officers to the rank of lieutenant-colonel (Ministry of Defense). The exception of married female authorities from the open lawyer position (Ministry of Interior) disallowing married female authorities from applying for travel permits without the consent of their life partners, and excluding female authorities from getting to be ambassadors (Ministry of Foreign Affair). Numerous women's organizations put pressure to drive the revision and the rejecting of unjustifiable and biased laws, along with the requirement of laws that ensure women's authority, such as the denial of the regulation that permitted a man to have many wives. There was a lawful requirement that a man should have only one wife since 1935. Now the family regulation has been transformed. The divorce rationale is the same for both women and men. In the past women can justify entering a claim for divorce only when they can verify that their husband pays for another woman's sustenance and recognizes her as his wife. Women are also playing a major role in birth control and contraception. Most males pay lower interest in using male contraception methods which is more convenient and safer. Resulting in a high rate of hazardous abortion.

From global feminism outcomes that are the right to vote, restriction to chattel marriage, financial rights, the right to choose abortion without restriction, discrimination against women, sexual assault, and the micro-politics race-related. For Thailand's feminism, even some outcomes are accomplished later than other countries but smoother even some of the achievements are not fulfilled yet.

Lack of knowledge on the benefit of equal rights in political participation

Many pieces of research about women's role in politics in many countries across the world showed related outcomes of a very low number of women participated in politics. From the 2021 IPU data, the percentage of women's role participating directly in politics in Thailand is smaller than the global, the regions, and many other Asian nations. This evidence that Thai women need more inspiration and strong lawful support to express their roles and be more involved in politics.

More than 25 years after many countries had agreed to remove all patterns of inequality in opposition to women, Thai women's liberation on women's equality rights country's record was verified by the CEDAW Committee in 1995. As of today, women's rights were changed or it is still very much the same, and additional suggestions for women's rights, in general, should be called human's rights. Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) is intensely devoted to the fundamental of dividing liability and authority between men and women as well as urging transformation in senates and communities around the globe. The results are clearly visible. As of March 2021, women MPs in all chambers, globally average is only 25.4%. The lower chamber and unicameral is 25.5%, upper chamber equal to 24.8% where the target is to achieve parity (IPU data 2021). In developing countries like Thailand, women get a narrow sphere of operation and visibility in participating in politics due to Thai cultural and hierarchical problems. Lack of knowledge on the benefit of equal rights in political participation is also an issue.



That is why Thai women MP's seats' share is lower than the global average, of which there are 15.8% in the lower chamber and 10.4% in the upper chamber. Whereas, in developed countries such as the USA even there is a higher percentage of participation but still not reach 50% due to glass ceiling problems due to a long male-dominated political sphere (Pamela O'Leary, Shauna Shames, 2014).

Thai people considered that politics is not for women

Both Eastern and Western social orders had started from early Roman back to 509 BC, the man had supreme authority over his children and his spouse. Married women belonged to their husbands, could be confined, deserted, torture, or sold at their husband's will (Wikipedia.org, (n.d.)). Even though the ancient Chinese adage said that women hold up half the sky (Wikipedia.org, (n.d.)), however, Chinese family still prefers to have boys rather than girls. They accepted that girls were financially dependent and would, at last, ended up belonging to the husband's family. They lived in their husband's home and did not carry any obligation of caring for their own guardians (D li, 1997). Similar to China, married Indian women are going to be men's family members, must work and assist all the men's family households that made them inferior like second-class people. This strong culture from India and China has a solid impact on the principle of culture and the mindset of Indochinese peninsula countries. Within the old Thai society, men were anticipated and acknowledged as the family leaders, whereas women had roles in taking care of all household issues. Up until now, this perception shapes the attitude and the character of Thai women. Even though, King Rama IV had declared that women can choose their own destiny. Nevertheless, a tremendous number of convictions in Thai culture have established and fortified different sets of attitudes and desires between men and ladies, which has brought about communal distortions between the sexes. Roles in politics are basically restricted to men. Family responsibility and all reproductive works are for women that take off women little room for energy for political interest and social concepts. It demonstrates that the things outside the family were for men. Political interest is also important for women. Because men and women have different needs and different points of view. It is essential that women should take part in authoritative issues to secure their needs and rights.

The political sphere for women was emerging and spread out

In the year 1907, Finland was the first country that entitled direct political participation to women, followed by other leading countries such as Norway, Russia, and the USA, Denmark, UK, and Canada in the year 1911,1917,1918,1919 and 1921 respectively (IPU data 2021). Twenty-five years later, ASEAN countries started welcoming the first female parliament member in Myanmar in 1932, followed by Indonesia in 1935, the Philippines in 1941, Vietnam in 1946, Thailand in 1949, Singapore in 1951, Lao PDR and Cambodia in 1958, Malaysia in 1965, and lastly Brunei in 2021. As of March 2021, the number of female seats in the Thai parliament is only 14.06 percent, well below the average of Asian countries and below the global average. (Asian average = 20.4% and global average is 25.4%). The female seat in the lower chamber is 15.8% (78/498) and Senator's seat is only 10.4% (26/250). The number of Thai women participating directly in politics is quite low. Thailand ranked 139th out of



194 countries worldwide. Women's delegation in congress is a liability matter. The number of women delegations in politics or in the cabinet echoes the democratic power in that country. People can notice that in a country where women are poorly represented, tend to be in a narrow scope, less autonomous, and unfair (UN News, 2010).

Since 2007, the parliament members in Thailand comprised of 150 congresspersons but more than 50 percent of the members were not passed the election process of the Nomination Committee. In 2019, There are 250 senators of which 6 seats by position are nominated, Permanent Secretary of Ministry of Defense, Supreme Commander, RTA Commander-in-Chief, Commander in chief of the Naval Forces, Airforce Commander-In-Chief, and Commissioner - General, another 50 seats are from people self-elected from varieties of occupations across Thailand, and 194 seats appointed by the Senators Nomination Committee. And these 250 senators have the right to vote for prime minister. There was a debate that the congresspersons who passed the election process must be self-reliant and at least 5 years' time detached from any political parties, no any connection with other senators. However, most chosen congresspersons have been upheld or recommended by influential political organizations or related powerful political-linked institutes (Todayonline.com, 2014).

Focus group research results

In the current circumstance, the opportunity for Thai women to participate in politics is broadly opened. But the societal misconception, non-fair play rules, instability of government policies, and instability from military coups break off their motivations and interests. One of the foremost critical components that supported the rationale of a low number of women delegations in politics is related to the culture which passes by numerous generations in Thailand particularly the strong conviction of the control of men and the priority of patriarchal. From secondary research results on the issue of the cultural constraint is melodious with the focus group result. There is a belief that Thai women should not play any roles in politics. It is irrelevant for a woman to become a congressperson. The political sphere is for men. All six participants accepted that it is exceptionally problematic to enroll women with the political capacity to encounter men. And gave an opinion that married women regularly struggle with undoubtful hurdles, especially resistance from their husbands. Numerous men are aiming to deny women's additional actions that separated them from their families. Participating in politics customarily depends upon large investments of time and money. Participation # 3 said that "household responsibilities, low self-esteem, and lower expectations were the key reasons that stop women from participating in politics". Participant #1 said that "men always get priority in the political party's selection process because the awareness regarding gender equality is still low". "Women do not receive much support from political parties because of the domination of their structures are men". Participant # 4 also said that "the level of representation of women is affected, as each party expects to concur a limited number of seats in parliament". "There is a tendency to divide the limited number of seats among men, which has a direct effect on the level of representation of women". Participants #1 and #2 said that "the media has an important effect on developing a public opinion to support the representation of female politicians in parliament". Participant #3 said that "currently, there is no network of organizations, NGOs, or political parties to



fight for the representation of women”. Participant # 5 made a strong opinion that education is the most important factor that prevents women’s interests in politics. Last but not least, women have less interest in politics due to the low common understanding of the roles of women in the political delegation.

The focus group participants suggest and recommend some strategies to inspire more women to successfully participate in politics.

All participants suggested that a high potential woman who is ready to become a candidate and interested in enrolling should be strongly convinced about her role as a House of Representative member that she can assist in raising women’s status, improving women’s well-being, promoting women’s rights, or promote awareness about the challenges facing women by focusing on women’s rights. If she can hold the position as Senator, her role will be more important by focusing on debating laws and regulations and votes for or against certain political measures, influent, certify and balance the propositions and amendments of law proposed by the lower chamber. All participants suggested that women who are interested in politics should familiarize themselves with political roles and situations. Women should aim to employ some strategic roles in the political parties. For example, head of the working group, moderator, or assistant because these roles determine many political policy problems. Participant #1,2,3,4 said that “government action in supporting and motivating female’s participation in politics should be done. By the incremental standard fraction of women in parliament using law and other legal instruments that will give explicitly to guarantee the level for women”. Whereas, participant # 6 did not agree with the quota system. By providing 2-3 opinions to support her argument. She is afraid that the argument from the male side that the quota system is somewhat against the democratic may be an issue. Thai people should have the right to choose either male or female candidates as their preferences. The government should seriously educate and implant the concept of gender equality to replace the old belief of patriarchy. So, at the end of the day, the Thai culture will be reshaped and the fraction of female politicians' seats in the Parliament will automatically increase. Participants # 1, 2, 3 said that “groups of women NGOs can communicate with the political party’s leaders to solve the problem of women’s political delegation. Political party’s leaders should start initiating female proportion policy within their own parties”.

The recommendation to women who are interested in being politicians was that they should explore the road to the success of their role models. Another option for women who are interested in politics can apply to work with political officers to illustrate their potential. All 4 females participants concurring on their thought recommending that in case that a woman needs to be successful in politics, before entering in the political parts she should work in a social charity organization to illustrate outstanding accomplishment, to get recognition by society to ensure support from men and women in the general election. For example, Ms. Prateep Ungsongtham Hata took on the position as one of the commanders of the 1992 defensive operation. In 2000, she was chosen to be one of the House of representatives. Previously, she was spending most of her time work for people living in slums in the “Khlong Toei” district in Bangkok, especially children. She got Magsaysay Award in 1978. She is a role model of a



person who emphasizes and demanding the rights that human beings should have. She also initiated and support children's education in the ghetto. One of The Duang Prateep Foundation's projects is to help young people who are experiencing problems find out their own problems. In particular, addicted youth will receive "natural therapy". It is possible to create a youth who has been wrongly lost to be able to return to his/her field of study or pursue careers effectively over 80% (Civil Society Empowerment Institute, (n.d.)).

And “women who came into politics had to adjust themselves to be themselves with confidence, act on their personality without playing a brutal role. It was not necessary to be successful with violence”.

5. Discussion

The world has always been designed by men, whether it is regulations or laws. Men emphasize the principle of reason. Most regulations and laws are logical and logical, neglecting the sensational dimension of a small issue. These small issues have been accumulated for a thousand years. This makes the world an unbalanced design. The improvement may happen if women come to shape up better new matches rules. To set the lives of people in society on a more reasonable and realistic basis. Some issues are related to the cultural dimension, coming from domestic violence. Solving these problems requires listening to the voices of women. Right now, we can see several laws on women in the new reformed constitution. Nevertheless, there still be the fight for another regulation on the proportion of seats between males and females in the parliament. In fact, it is possible that Thailand can have a female prime minister who is born as a good leader as same as other world female leaders such as Margaret Thatcher (UK), Indira Gandhi (India), and Angela Merkel (Germany).

Secondary research data showed both opportunities and obstacles to women's roles in participating directly in politics. The opportunity for women's roles in politics is now widely opened. The political sphere for women is emerging and expanding. However, there are many social misconceptions and obstacles in our society. Thai people considered that politics is not a women's sphere. We can see that men always get priority in the political parties. There are small numbers of female politicians elected. On top of that, the legal restrictions illustrated non-fair play for women's participation in politics. Besides, there a limited number of female Senators seats in parliament. The low number of women delegations in politics is related to Thai culture. Constraint within the women themselves is educational background, lack of knowledge on the benefit of equal rights in political participation, low common understanding of the roles of women in the political delegation, resistance from their husbands, large investments of time and money, no real role model to inspire their motivation. The instability from military coups pulls off their motivation and interests. Women who have the political capacity, if come to fight with men in the election, the result is still uncertain.

In focus group study also discussed that some countries have regulations forcing registered political parties to enroll a certain percentage of women members in the reservation of parliament seats for women as a fixed quota system. Almost all participants from the focus group study thought that it is one good strategy. The



participant who thought that the quota system was not a good strategy explained that the quota might go to their descendants. The ones we got may have no real ability and dedication to be a politician. The consensus from the group proposed that a group of women NGOs should stimulate or inspire the political party's leaders to solve the issue of the proportion of women's delegation in their organizations. NGOs and political parties should fight together for the representation of women in the parliament. The support from the media should be included because the media has an important effect in developing public opinion.

Women's recognition is one of the top arguing subjects in the present world, especially in the developing country which poverty is dominating, covering many restrictions like household, community, political, culture, education, and financial problems mostly in rural areas. The benefit of having women work in politics is the ability of women that can work beyond party policies. They are highly sensitive to constitutional and policy matters. Women can help guarded lasting friendship and neutrality. Most women consider health, education, and other key development indicators as a priority. Women can inspire and strengthen voters' assurance in representative government over their own attendance. There is no other effective mechanism for development than the empowerment of women. Female and male council members should put an effort together in solving the multiple problems in the country. For the objectives to construct a robust liberal government, women must be inspired, legitimized, and promoted in coming to be strong politicians and public leaders. Women are effective leaders, visionaries, and strategists. To address the societal problems should be done via female politicians. Increasing women's participation in Parliament, despite the progress, it was taken very slowly and considered delayed over the target of achieving the same number between men and women in Parliament within the year 2030 as a factor to promote equality between males and females in the background of economic and social development. The current non-general elected prime minister has contributed a few steadiness to Thailand. However, Thailand still proceeds to develop to become one of the great worldwide players. The majority-ruled government needs to return. Due to the reality that Thailand has ended up more complex and should be run under a democratic government. Thailand needs broad-minded talent to run the country. There are different reasons why the solidification of the vote-based system in Thailand has been troublesome to attain. Self-rule in Thailand is influenced by numerous issues counting those related to the proceeding significance of the military, shortcomings in political parties and representation frameworks, political dishonesty, and the increment of social disparities. Thailand has to move further to stabilize the political situation.

6. Conclusion



Thailand had been confronted with many domestic crises, experienced with 22 times military coups. However, today we have got female leaders in minister positions, local domestic leaders, and seats in parliament.

If women ask about gender equality, in reality, there is no equality between men and women. Women activists were not focused on physical strengths or equal potential. They go for the opportunity to get equal levels of decision-making at all levels of society. Women have some strength that men may not have. Women have the ability to manage societal problems, reducing violence, conflicts. If women get involved in politics, they can shape up a better society. The issue of women in political participation needs to be discussed more. It is not going to stop where it was. We still need more women to make decisions at all levels to shape up Thai society.

Way of moving forward

The percentage of women in national congress across the universe is growing, but Thailand is still belittled with only 15 percent, while many other countries have exceeded 50 percent. Learning and improving both quality and quantity must be made to lead the way for Thai female politicians in the future. Thailand struggle with a conservative official with a red-tape system. Thailand struggles with a conservative official with a red-tape system. The Law should not only be appealed when there is a specific damaged party but also cover unfairness. Adequate personal security beyond the scope of females and males needs regulation enforcement. Thus, the gender equality act in Thailand should be reviewed especially Section 17 needs to be modified. SDG # 8 focuses on equal treatment between men and women be the highest concern for each government. Gender equality should be fully implemented by the end of 2030.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my special gratitude to my research advisor, Asst. Prof. Witchayanee Ocha, Ph.D. As well as the committee members of the research who gave me valuable guidance and advice, aiding in completing this research in a limited time frame. Secondly, I would like to thank Assoc. Prof. Dr. Narong Petprasert Ph.D. (Political Economy), who broaden my knowledge of the international political economy. Thirdly, I would like to thank all honorable participants who shared their insights and provided recommendations for prospected female politicians.

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