

# Politics and Young Chinese-Indonesian Women: Socio-Psychological Determinants of Their Political Participation

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## ABSTRACT

Despite the fruitful of research have been undertaken on political participation and civil engagement among women, there is less understanding of how Chinese-Indonesian women participating in politics. This study therefore aimed at providing a causal explanation of their participation through the analysis of some socio-psychological variables as well as demographic characteristics of the respondents. The research design of the 'ex-post facto' type was adopted for the study. This study examined whether age, level of education, marital status, attitude toward patriarchy, perceived feminism and need of power influence the level of female political participation. Purposive sampling was adopted to select participants. Data were collected through a demographic data form and questionnaires. Research questions were answered with the aid of descriptive and inferential statistical analysis of the data including correlations test and regression model. The results indicate that socio-psychological factors and education influence the level of political participation. However, positive attitude toward patriarchy and low feminism can be regarded as causes of resistance for involving working women in the politics realm. These findings have a major implication for comprehension and practice of politics of gender in Indonesia particularly in the midst democratic transition and in the context of urban psychology. The limitations of this study will be discussed toward possibilities for further research.

**Keywords:** Political participation, Socio-psychological factors, Demographic characteristic, Chinese-Indonesian, Women

## 1. INTRODUCTION

It commonly regarded 21st century as an era of femininity and women. Women are well suited for in information-oriented era. Furthermore, national development will be a function of how effectively woman power is applied and utilized. In the political sphere where democratization process and women empowerment are being stressed, number of seats are prepared to be held by women in national legislative in the light of democracy and gender egalitarianism. Therefore, women's participation in business, and social activities, particularly in politics, are very important.

Political participation, which is *sine qua non* of democracy and allows for diversity of opinion and participation of both men and women cannot thrive by excluding the women folk that constitute half of the world's population. Compared to economic opportunities, education and legal

rights, political representation is the area in which the gap between men and women has narrowed the least between 1995 and 2000 [1]

The concept of political participation refers to normative and operational difficulties of conceptualizing political participation and it varies from the wide to the narrow sense of a notion of political participation [2]. Odetola and Ademola [3] said that political participation according to deals with the level, nature and extent to which each citizen takes part or becomes involved in politics-power to take decisions, allocate resources and distribute them. In this study, political participation refers to activities of citizens that attempt to influence the structure of government, the selection of government authorities, or the policies of government [4]

According to [5], political participation can take many forms of behaviors directed toward political realm i.e. voting, standing for office, joining local or specific action,

volunteering to support a political campaign, writing to a parliament and raising funds for a political campaign. In other words [6], stated that political participation comprises activities from vote to formal representation, including advocacy and community consultation, community leadership, and opinion making. Meanwhile, [3] suggest that the concept of women participation in politics would logically result from the synthesis of the essential political activities that women engage in such as: attaining political power in legislative bodies, holding public and party office, attending political meetings and election rallies and campaigns, voting in an election, fielding self as a candidate to be elected, and participation in political discussions and debates

Relative to their population share, women are underrepresented in political leadership positions throughout the world. Recognizing this fact, many governments are taking active steps to encourage the participation of women in policy making, notably by establishing quotas for women in parliaments or in local governments. Quotas for women in assemblies or on parties' candidate lists are in force in the legislation of over almost hundred countries, including Indonesia.

In Asia Pacific, there is approximately 11% women representation in the houses of parliament. This is a low figure compared to Nordic countries where the level of representation is 35-40%. Despite the fact that there has been a move to introduce a quota system as well as a move toward a critical mass representation in many countries, such moves have not led toward greater representation of women within the formal electoral system. Therefore, if election is viewed as a vehicle that would increase the representation of women, and subsequently addressing women's issues, then, it is necessary to examine the strategies as well as the challenges faced by women candidates in the various elections which took place in 1999-2004 in Asia-Pacific.[7]

How is about women political participation in Indonesia? Indonesia has 237,641,326 citizens comprised of 119,630,913 male and 118,010,413 females according to National Census 2010 of BPS (<http://www.bps.go.id>). Parts of women population are working women which are playing a significant role as voters, activists, legislature, and politician, beside target of political socialization. Women are expected to take active role in politics in the term of political participation due to many benefits not only for individual learning, but also for community and society benefit [5]

Some scholars and authoritative literatures uncover some factors or variables linked to low participation in politics among women including Indonesia, that the political structure is highly masculine in nature, the electoral system has not favourable to women candidate, there are lacking of financial supports for women candidates, women face the absence of well-developed education and training system for women's leadership, education, poverty and

unemployment, multiple burdens of women within the house and between the house and in the public sector, lack of confidence (self-efficacy), gendered traditional believes and ideology, the believes about politics being 'dirty', the negative pictures of women by media, women hesitance toward corruption & money politics, lack of party supports, and masculine standards in politics [8] [9] [10] [11]

However, as it has been often noted, unlike for men, participating in politics is not a simple matter for women because activities and institutions designed and populated by men, and women's expected subservience as essential marker of patriarchal controls which socialization processes have been operative and entrenched in all contemporary societies [12]. Patriarchy is regarded the main obstacle that women face in entering and participating in politics.

The theorists of patriarchy laid emphasis on male dominant of the female folks. Males are seen as controlling access to institutional power and it is argued that they mould ideology, philosophy, art and religion to suit their needs. Patriarchy as an ideology is deeply embedded in several societies, cultures, and institutions as well as in the minds of men and women. From experience and a variety of studies we are able to conclude that women over whom such power and authority is exercised are socialized suitably to 'fit in'. Prejudices coloured by patriarchy are inherent in many traditions. Where tradition rules, institutions, cultures, social mechanisms, norms, and practices tend to become resistant to change and hinder women's development.

The social relations of gender as well as class relations are part of a historical inheritance. Among the ideologies underlying our inheritance is that of patriarchy. Almost all the societies of the world are patriarchal in nature [13]. Patriarchy is a political-social system that insists that males are inherently dominating, superior to everything and everyone deemed weak, especially females, and endowed with the right to dominate and rule over the weak and to maintain that dominance through various forms of psychological terrorism and violence. [14] defined patriarchy as a system of social structures and practices, in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women and composed of six structures: the patriarchal mode of production, patriarchal relations in paid work, patriarchal relation in the state, male violence, patriarchal relations in sexuality, patriarchal relations in cultural institutions. Feminists began to use the word "patriarchy" to replace the more commonly used "male chauvinism" and "sexism" Patriarchy is defined as a hierarchy of authority that is controlled and dominated by the males [15]. In this case, the more positive attitude of women toward patriarchal culture, the lower their participation in politics.

According to some feminists, women movement activists and women politician such as Katlyn Robinson, Julia Suryakusuma, Titi Sumbung, Kofifah Indar Parawansa, and Nursjahbani Katjasungkana, in New Order era of former Suharto as President, Indonesian "womanhood"

were under “housewifization” and “domestication”. Women were apolitical and didn’t have enough interest in politics. But, today Indonesia in the current setting as the world’s fourth-largest country and third-largest democracy, many have worked very hard to promote and improve women political participation, Indonesia had held first female president, a quota 30% for women representation has been introduced. Unfortunately, women have still been under represented in the Indonesia’s parliament, and the 30% quota has not met. What are the obstacles or barriers? Is there still any political, socio-economic or cultural restrictions? [16] [17] [18] [19]

[20] said that women in emerging democracies may face two distinct barriers to participating in politics: too high cost in the term of traditions or cultural stereotypes discourage the exercise of own preferences; and may have fewer or poorer sources of information about the significance of political participation that further disengage women from public life. In my opinion, unlike the first, the latter is no longer can be approved because of the opportunity women have as worker to access the amount of information about politics.

Other factor allegedly impact political participation among women is perception of feminism. Despite the difficulty to define because of many different views within it, feminism can be defined as a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation and oppression. Feminism is the idea that women have political, social, sexual, intellectual and economic rights equal to those of men. It involves a various movements, theories and philosophies, all concern with issue of gender difference, which advocates equality for women and campaign for women’s rights and interests. In this case, the more positive perception women have on feminism, the higher of level of participation they do in the public and political sphere.

But, how is about political participation of working women in urban living? What do explain the political activities and sensibilities of young Indonesian women who do not join politics in practical manner, instead of (professional) worker? They are regarded as understudied population. Relatively little is known about the politics of these citizens. Almost all the societies of the world are patriarchal in nature; patriarchal attitudes in a society are linked with how women respond to many issues. Despite increasing trends of egalitarian attitudes towards gender equality, the prevalence of women participation in the politics arena remains low. Need of power is a motivational factor affecting interest to politics. Perception on feminism should be accounted for political activism.

Although working women seem don’t far away from public sphere, this is not to say that political activism is very common for them. As such, women’s entry into active political participation is likely to call for a reconfiguration of the women perception on feminism and patriarchal culture and at the same time also maintenance their need for striving power.

[21] defined the need for Power as a “concern ‘with the control of the means of influencing a person’”. Lussier and Achua [22] defined the need for Power as “the unconscious concern for influencing others and seeking positions of authority”. Similarly, Daft defined the need for Power as the desire to influence or control others, be responsible for others, and have authority over others. Individuals who exhibit the need for Power have a desire to be influential and want to make an impact [22]. In this case, the stronger the need for power they possess, the higher the level of participation they have including striving for power.

We can argue that the more favourable a woman’s attitude toward patriarchal culture, weaker the power motive a woman possesses, negative perception on feminism, the lower the level of her participant in politics. The purpose and significance of this research were: to assess the working women’s participation in politics, to examine socio-psychological factors (N-Power, perceived feminism, and attitude toward patriarchal culture) that influence women’s political participation. We expect this paper contributes to the theoretical or statistical foundations in the political behavior.

Moreover, we also add some personal characteristic regarded influence women political participation such as age, level of education, marital status as well as parental education, interest, communication, and influences as [23] suggested. The international literature demonstrates abundantly that education, class, gender and age strongly correlate with political participation [24]. The differential effects of the parental education, interest, and communication variables certainly raises a wide array of questions about parent-child socialization, especially questions about the potential gendered nature of that socialization. In particular, Dalton [25] [23] argued that age plays important role in differentiate girls who are more likely to engage in social movement activities or not.

The differential effects of the demographic variables certainly raise a wide array of questions about the potential of the propensity to be engaged in community and non-profit activities as well as electoral activities. More broadly, the results presented here raise the possibility that indeed to understand political and civic engagement of working women requires modelling the process separately for other type of women.

## 2. METHOD

We undertook quantitative, correlation, explanatory research design [26] for 210 participants were drawn by using purposive and convenience sampling as respondents from universities and also from internet social network, Facebook, e-mail, beside students from 3 private universities in Jakarta. The aged below of 60 years or not late adulthood, having at least graduate from senior high school.

All measure are constructed by author: 1) The measurement of political participation in the questionnaires used in this research corresponds to questions used in classical studies of political participation scale based on [27], political participation is measured by questions on conventional modes of political participation such as signing petitions boycotting certain products, taking part in demonstrations, attending political meetings, contacting politicians, donating money or raise funds for political causes, contacting the media, and joining an internet political forum; 2) Attitude toward Feminism based on [28] [29]; 3) Power Motive Scale based on social motives by [21]; 4) Perception on Patriarchal Culture by [13]; and 5) The demographic part questions about age, marital status, birth order, and level of education. Each of attitudinal items was accompanied by a five-point scale from 'strongly disagree', 'agree', 'undecided', 'agree' and 'strongly agree.'

We tested the initial item pool to examine empirical relationships between items and to validate the item I constructed. The respondents were also asked to critique the scale or questionnaires and mark any item they had difficulty understanding. Analysis of the items indicated that 1) item-subscale correlations were 0.3-0.84 for all measures and were in the expected directions; 2) Cronbach Alpha as reliability test internal consistency index for Attitude toward Feminism Scale, Perceived Patriarchal Culture Scale, Need for Power Scale and Political Participation Scale are 0.98, 0.91, 0.89 and 0.95 respectively

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result shows that political participation, need for power and attitude toward patriarchal ideology or culture are not as high as perceived feminism they possess. As table 1 show, there is a wide range of score of socio-psychological factors among working women who participated in this study.

**Table 1** Descriptive statistics of variables (N=210)

Variables	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation	Range
Need for power	2.08	5.00	3.47	.56	1-5
Political participation	1.14	4.71	3.04	.90	1-5
Perceived feminism	2.82	4.78	4.01	.32	1-5
Attitude toward patriarchy	1.60	4.74	3.34	.81	1-5

Result shows that unlike their counterpart, there was no statistically significant correlation between power motives with political participation among working women from religious-related group. There was statistically significant correlation between attitudes toward feminism with

political participation among two samples. There was statistically negative significant correlation between perceptions on patriarchal culture with political participation in both samples. All independent variables predict 46.3% for political participation variance.

**Table 2** Regression analysis (N=210)

Variable as predictors	B	SE B	$\beta$	R <sup>2</sup>	$\Delta R^2$
Constant	3.89	.84		.476**	.463**
Need of power	.09	.10	.06		
Attitude toward patriarchy	-.66	.17	-3.88**		
Perceived feminism	.44	.07	.40**		

To examine the role of personal characteristics, we regressed age, marital status, birth order, and level of education on political participation. The result also reveals that, among other demographic characteristics, only age has significantly correlation with level of participation. We also found that women's level of education does not explain their level of their participation. One possible reason from this finding is that education is the function age. Levels of education have risen over time; older women have lower level of education than younger women. Therefore, age influences their political outlook.

Using Multivariate of variance, it was found that women from universities have higher level of political participation, more favour/positive and high-level attitude toward feminism, moderate perception on patriarchal culture and low motive of power. Meanwhile, women from non-higher education group have lower level of political participation, positive but moderate attitude toward feminism, negative perception on patriarchal culture and higher motive of power.

Almost all findings support the hypothesis in this study, except relation of power motive with political participation. Unlike predicted, as it was found from age factor, level of education has no significant correlation to political participation. Additional findings are working women from non-religion-based group tend to prefer donating money and joining internet political forum as their political participation. Meanwhile their counterpart prefers other forms of participation.

The need for Power was not as common in the realm of the students' life. [21] has suggested that in order for people to take power, they need to gain information about themselves and their environment and be willing to identify and work with others for change. The need for Power was less evident in non-student group. Students who expressed the need for Power included in their responses the desire to serve in leadership roles or positions, besides working women have great difficulty in balancing work outside with housework. Flexibility of time may be a significant factor contributes to their participation in politics, particularly for those who are in double role playing in everyday life, as a wife, a mother and at the same time also fulltime workers and college student. Hence, a woman who has more control over her time in terms of flexibility or availability may be encouraged to join political meetings. This may eventually get her committed to politics.

Other reason for insignificant role of power motive in influencing political participation is that feminism that have drawn on traditional feminine imagery face a double bind. One the one hand, women must not seek power because it corrupts. On the other hand, women need power to fight corruption. The possibility of women's large-scale induction into the hurly-burly of electoral politics throws this duality into sharp focus. Will electoral politics corrupt women, divide them in self and party interests? Or will women make power pure? Particularly in Indonesia, it is

now very common to acknowledge some women political figures allegedly suspected and sentenced to jail due to bribery and corruption cases.

Knowing that political participation likely has important effects, not only on policy choices and outcomes including those governing the redistribution of income (e.g., [30], 1981) and is likely to lead to superior social outcomes because of participation's role in aggregating information and preferences (e.g., [31]), but also providing an individual with direct utility and thereby increasing happiness and satisfaction with life (SWL) in general [32]; [33], fulfilment of basic psychological needs: autonomy [34] [35], relatedness [36], and competence ([37], personality [38], it is important to uncover many variables associated with women political participation including media and activist. Women's participation in politics would not have been possible without an active support of non-profit/non-governmental organizations and the media in Indonesia

#### 4. CONCLUSION

We have used quantitative survey in understanding working women in politics in order to tease out some of the important strands in understanding women's involvement in politics in Indonesia. While there are certain differences between the two groups in relation to the way women participate in politics, both have distinct patriarchal attitude, perceived feminism and power motive. We argue that women are bound to operate within the existing system to gain access to the public space of political participation. We have demonstrated that their attitude toward patriarchal ideology and gender culture and degree of their perceived feminism play significant role in determining their decision of form of participation in political sphere as legitimate political concerns. There is clear evidence that women who emerge into the political arena do not reject patriarchy but judge it fairly and also have a high degree in feminism as well.

Based on the study, we suggest that further research should account for differences in political knowledge, interest in politics, political efficacy, gender related personality including gender stereotype, and religious orientations in influencing participation. It is also suggested to apply rational choice model as framework analysis because it explains the participation of women in politics in terms of costs and benefits to individuals [39] [34]. Also suggest to test socio-economic model and civic voluntarism model which is proposed by [5] to explain political participation of women as a function of the socio economic characteristics of the individual like education, political efficacy, and income, and also including some other psychological and institutional factors like political efficacy, civil skill (e. g language skills), and resources available for political participation (e.g money & time). The psychological approach treats political participation of women as an outcome of social, experimental and personality processes which is based on personality dispositions, belief or attitude

[40]; [41]. It is also better to conduct further research by using mix-method (qualitative-quantitative)

We also hope that further research will consider some variables allegedly regarded have relation with women political participation; particularly variables found differentiate young men from young women and among women such as: intensity of religious beliefs [42], religious affiliations [43]; [44], social capital [45]; [27], past experience as student activist or student activism [46], social norms, politician, and the media [47], genetic variation [39], political efficacy [48], cultural, institutional and social barriers [49], and group consciousness (e.g.[50])

[23] found that there are no significant gender difference in political knowledge, reading a newspaper, using Facebook, and internal efficacy that have impact on interest in politics, but it is interesting to uncover the differential effects of these variables among women which, in turn, affect their engagement in politics sphere.

We also suggest that further research should consider employing qualitative and mix-method approach in studying political participation among women. The study of political behavior within the discipline of political science, including research in the discipline devoted more specifically to women's political behavior and to the relevance of gender for political behavior, has been dominated by research employing quantitative methods. More qualitative methods should be employed, to be relegated to a supportive role for informing more quantitative methods.

Women participation in Indonesian politics is an issue of great importance. A comprehensive analysis of conventional modes of political participation such as voting, contacting and involvement in electoral campaigns and of unconventional modes of political participation such as protesting is still underdeveloped in Indonesia. Despite the limitations it has, this study has a contribution to the growing understanding of women's political behavior in Indonesia in the midst of democratization.

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