

**AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE EXPERIENCES OF YOUNG WOMEN AND
MEN AS MEMBERS OF *PAKATAN RAKYAT*: A CASE STUDY IN PENANG,
KUALA LUMPUR AND SELANGOR, MALAYSIA**

By

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	ii
Table of Contents.....	iii
List of Tables	iv
List of Figures	v
List of Abbreviations	vi
<i>Abstrak</i>	vii
Abstract	viii

CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Young People in Politics: A Brief Scenario.....	1
1.3 Women and Young Women in Politics	3
1.4 Problem Statement.....	7
1.5 Research Questions	8
1.6 Research Objectives	8
1.7 Significance of the Study	9
1.8 Organisation of Chapters	9
1.9 Conclusion	11

CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1	Introduction	12
2.2	Experience of Women and Men in Politics	13
2.3	Young People in Politics.....	19
2.4	The Establishment of Women’s Wings and the Roles and Responsibilities of Women Members in Malaysia’s Political Parties	23
2.5	The Importance of Party’s Structure to Women’s Political Participation in Political Party.....	29
2.6	Women in Politics: Strategies and Reforms from Global Platforms	31
2.7	Political Socialisation and the Experiences of Young People in Politics	34
	2.7.1 Life Cycle	36
	2.7.2 Family Factor	37
	2.7.3 Peer Influence.....	38
	2.7.4 Political Influences.....	39
2.8	Young Malaysians’ Political Involvement.....	40
2.9	Young People and Political Parties in Malaysia	43
	2.9.1 Youth Wings and Young Women’s Wings: The Roles and Responsibilities of Young Women and Men as Members in Malaysia’s Political Parties	45
	2.9.2 Motivating Factors for and Hindrances for Young Women’s Involvement in Political Parties in Malaysia.....	48
2.10	Conclusion.....	55

CHAPTER 3 – METHODOLOGY

3.1	Introduction.....	56
3.2	Qualitative Research Method.....	56
3.3	Study Sites.....	57
3.4	Operational Definitions	58
3.5	Selection of Respondents	60
3.6	Research Instruments	63
3.6.1	In – depth Interviews.....	63
3.6.2	Guideline Questions.....	64
3.7	Data Collection.....	65
3.8	Data Analysis.....	66
3.9	Framework for the Role of Gender as Social Determinant of Health.....	66
3.9.1	Structural Causes: Gendered Structural Determinant.....	67
3.9.1 (a)	Literacy and Education.....	68
3.9.1 (b)	Demographic Transition.....	68
3.9.1 (c)	Globalisation.....	69
3.9.1 (d)	‘Rights’ Discourse.....	69
3.9.2	Intermediary Factors.....	69
3.9.2 (a)	Norms, Values, Practices and Behaviours.....	70
3.9.2 (b)	Differences in Exposure and Vulnerability.....	70
3.9.2 (c)	Biases in Health System.....	70
3.9.2 (d)	Biases in Health Research.....	71
3.9.3	The Consequences.....	71

3.10	The Conceptual Framework for the Factors Affecting the Experiences of the Young Women and Men in the Political Parties.....	72
3.10.1	Structural Causes: Gendered Structural Determinant.....	73
3.10.1 (a)	Literacy and Education.....	74
3.10.1 (b)	Globalisation and Human Rights Discourse.....	74
3.10.1 (c)	The Political System with its Culture and Institutions.....	75
3.10.2	The Intermediary Factors.....	76
3.10.2 (a)	Discriminatory Values, Norms, Practices and Behaviours.....	76
3.10.2 (b)	Differential Backgrounds and Exposures to Politics and Party.....	77
3.10.2 (c)	Biases in Political Parties.....	77
3.10.2 (d)	Motivating Factors and Barriers.....	78
3.10.3	Consequences	78
3.11	Ethical Issues.....	80
3.12	Limitations of the Study.....	81
3.13	Conclusion.....	82

CHAPTER 4 – FINDINGS, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1	Introduction.....	84
4.2	Background of Political Parties to which Respondents are Members.....	84
4.2.1	Democratic Action Party (DAP).....	85
4.2.2	<i>Parti Keadilan Rakyat</i> (PKR).....	89
4.2.3	<i>Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party</i> (PAS)	94
4.3	Socio–demographic Profiles of Respondents.....	99
4.4	Experiences Prior to Joining the Party: Exposure to Politics.....	103
4.5	Experiences as Political Party Members.....	109

4.5.1	Roles and Responsibilities	110
4.5.2	Perceptions of Roles and Responsibilities:	
	Shaped by their Experiences.....	111
4.5.2 (a)	Political Activism as a Duty: Fighting for a Cause	112
4.5.2 (b)	Men lead, Women Follow; Women as an Appendage?.....	113
4.5.2 (c)	Mobilisers; “Ice-breakers;” Recruiters	117
4.5.2 (d)	Making Choices: Reproductive Role/ Political Role / Political Career.....	120
4.5.2 (e)	As the ‘Young Ones’ in the Party.....	123
4.5.2 (f)	Being ‘Young’ and Being a ‘Woman’	124
4.6	Balancing Personal Issues, Professions and Politics: The Juggler	128
4.6.1	Constraints on Professional Growth	128
4.6.2	Constraints in Political Involvements in the Party	130
4.7	Personal Sacrifices.....	131
4.8	Reformed Structure of the Parties.....	134
4.9	Consequences.....	137
4.9.1	Political Outcomes: the Individuals’ Political Experiences.....	138
4.9.2	Social and Political Consequences	138
4.10	Discussions.....	139
4.10.1	Social, Religion and Cultural Factors	142
4.11	Conclusion.....	143

CHAPTER 5 – CONCLUSION

5.1	Introduction.....	145
5.2	Summary and Conclusion.....	145
5.3	Recommendations.....	149
5.4	Conclusion.....	150

REFERENCES

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

APPENDIX 2

LIST OF TABLES

		Page
Table 3.1	Initial targeted respondents from each party	62
Table 4.1	Number of respondents involved in the study from each party of the PR alliance based on sex	100
Table 4.2	A brief socio-demographic profiles of the respondents	102
Table 4.3	Prior experiences before becoming party members	106

LIST OF FIGURES

		Page
Figure 3.1	The WHO Framework for the Role of Gender as Social Determinant of Health	67
Figure 3.2	The Conceptual Framework for the Factors Affecting the Experiences of the Young Women and Men in the Political Parties	73
Figure 4.1	The Political Structure of the Democratic Action Party (DAP), 2005	88
Figure 4.2	The Political Structure of the <i>Parti Keadilan Rakyat</i> (PKR), 2010	93
Figure 4.3	The Political Structure of the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS) (2007 – 2009)	98

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AMCJA	All-Malaya Council of Joint Action
API	<i>Angkatan Pemuda Insaf</i>
AWAS	<i>Angkatan Wanita Sedar</i>
BATAS	<i>Barisan Tani Sa-Malaya</i>
BN	<i>Barisan Nasional</i>
CLP	Certificate in Legal Practice
DAP	Democratic Action Party
MCA	Malaysian Chinese Association
MIC	Malaysian Indian Congress
MNP	Malay Nationalist Party
MP	Member of Parliament
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
PAS	<i>Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party</i>
PBT	<i>Persatuan Bahasa TiongHwa</i>
PKI	<i>Persatuan Kaum Ibu</i>
PKR	<i>Parti Keadilan Rakyat</i>
PR	<i>Pakatan Rakyat</i>
PRM	<i>Parti Rakyat Malaysia</i>
SUHAKAM	<i>Suruhanjaya Hak Asasi Manusia Malaysia</i>
UMNO	United Malays National Organisation
UUCA	University & University College Act 1971
UN	United Nations

**SATU KAJIAN PENEROKAAN TENTANG PENGALAMAN PEMUDA DAN
PEMUDI SEBAGAI AHLI DALAM PAKATAN RAKYAT: SATU KAJIAN KES DI
PULAU PINANG, KUALA LUMPUR DAN SELANGOR, MALAYSIA**

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini meneroka dan menganalisis pengalaman yang berbeza antara pemuda dan pemudi sebagai ahli parti politik Pakatan Rakyat di Pulau Pinang, Kuala Lumpur dan Selangor. Kajian terhadap ahli-ahli parti-parti ini dibuat kerana PKR dan DAP memperkenalkan struktur baru, iaitu menggabungkan pemuda-pemudi di bawah sayap yang sama, sementara PAS mengekalkan struktur asal partinya, iaitu memisahkan pemuda dan pemudi PAS kepada dua sayap yang berasingan. Pengekalan struktur baru dan pengekalan struktur lama ini memberikan peluang untuk mengkaji dan mendokumentasikan pengalaman ahli-ahli muda di dalam parti berkenaan. Kajian ini juga ingin mengenalpasti faktor penggalak dan faktor penghalang yang mempengaruhi penglibatan ahli-ahli muda di dalam parti tersebut. Kajian ini menggunakan kaedah kualitatif dengan menggunakan teknik temubual secara mendalam dengan dua puluh tujuh orang responden yang dikenalpasti melalui teknik 'snowballing'. Analisis pengalaman responden dalam kajian ini dibuat berdasarkan kerangka kajian oleh WHO *Gender as a Social Determinant of Health*. Kerangka kajian ini merangkumi hubungan antara struktur penyebab, faktor – faktor pertengahan, motivasi dan halangan kepada penglibatan pemuda dan pemudi sebagai ahli dalam parti politik. Analisis menunjukkan bahawa pengalaman responden terbentuk daripada nilai patriarki dalam sistem sosial yang mempengaruhi persepsi mereka sebagai wanita dan lelaki sebagai ahli dalam parti politik dan juga persepsi parti terhadap mereka. Walaupun faktor motivasi yang mempengaruhi responden menjadi ahli parti politik adalah lebih kurang sama, tanpa mengira gender, namun halangan yang dialami oleh pemudi adalah lebih serius jika dibandingkan dengan pemuda. Apa yang menarik sekali adalah halangan yang dialami oleh pemudi bukan hanya disebabkan oleh struktur parti ataupun dominasi lelaki dalam politik sahaja, tetapi para pemudi juga percaya dan menerima hakikat bahawa tanggungjawab tradisi mereka sebagai wanita harus diutamakan, sebelum menceburi bidang politik secara aktif. Hal ini membawa kepada kesimpulan bahawa reformasi struktur parti sahaja tidak mencukupi untuk mempromosikan kesaksamaan gender dalam penglibatan politik. Faktor-faktor lain seperti persekitaran sosial orang muda, sosialisasi dan penghayatan norma-norma dan amalan budaya seseorang, adalah juga penting dan perlu diberi perhatian.

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ABSTRACT

This study explores and analyzes the differences in the experiences of young male and female members of *Pakatan Rakyat* component parties in Penang, Kuala Lumpur and Selangor. Members of these parties within the coalition of PR were chosen as respondents because of the recent introduction of a new party structure that consolidates young women and men in the same youth wing which has given rise to an opportunity to document and study their experiences. This study attempts to identify facilitating factors and constraints influencing their experiences in the parties. The study uses a qualitative method; in-depth one-to-one interviews are conducted with 27 identified respondents through the snowballing technique. The study analyses the experiences of these young respondents by adopting the framework of WHO Social Determinants of Health. As applied to this study, the framework establishes the relationship between structural causes, intermediary factors and the motivation or hindering factors to the participation of young women and men in political parties. The analysis showed that the experiences of these young women and men in the political parties are embedded in the patriarchal values which shaped their gendered perceptions and that of the political parties. Though the motivation for them to join the party cuts across gender, the hindrances encountered by the young women respondents are more pervasive if compared to the situation of the young men. It is interesting to note that hindrances preventing young women's political participations are not only attributed to a party's structures or the dominant behaviour of male party members. Women themselves contribute to this through their beliefs and acceptance of women's traditional roles, which are seen as priorities over active political participation. This leads to the conclusion that structural reform alone may not be an adequate measure to promote gender equality in political participation. Other factors may be more socially inherent and deep-seated and include a young person's social environment, socialisation and internalisation of cultural norms and practices.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter begins with a brief introduction of the background of young people's situation in the political arena, especially in Malaysia, followed by a special section focusing on the situation of young women and men specifically in the political scenario. This chapter also focuses on the lack of Malaysian young women's involvement in politics and it sets the stage by briefly looking at women's low participation. It then extends this argument to the situation of young women in politics and also presents some of the arguments made about the need for women's political participation.

This chapter also describes the study in the context of the *Pakatan Rakyat* (PR) which is an alliance of three opposition parties in Malaysia. The chapter covers the research problem that was studied, the research questions to be answered and the research objectives to be achieved. It also introduces briefly the theoretical framework that was used in this study but a more detailed discussion on this framework is presented in the methodology chapter. This chapter also include the discussion on the potential contribution of this study to the existing dearth of literature on young women's and men's experiences in politics in Malaysia which could contribute to the understanding on how to increase the number of women in positions of power and decision-making. The chapter ends with the organisation of chapters for the whole thesis.

1.2 Young People and Politics: A Brief Scenario

Many contemporary studies conducted on young people in politics can be categorized into two traditions (Quéniart, 2008). The first tradition examines young people's attitude

towards the states, their political participation as members of political parties and in voting. This group of studies often finds that there is lack of interest amongst youths in politics and that there is a high disaffection amongst them towards the political scenarios in their own countries (Quéniart, 2008). This strand of studies tends to conclude that young people are apathetic towards political issues.

This tradition, however, did not take into account the political socialization and ‘the patterns and processes by which individuals engage in political development and learning, constructing their particular relationships to the political contexts in which they live’ (Sapiro, 2004)¹. There is a second tradition of research that investigates young people’s political involvement in politics and often finds that young people are political, but in different ways. The second tradition of the study of young people’s political involvements looked empirically at different modes of participations, such as volunteering in the party, writing to the media, signing petitions and being part of demonstrations and boycotting movements on ethical issues. It seems that the findings of the studies leaning toward the second tradition often show that young people are indeed actively involved in politics, but in alternative ways.

The history of youth movement has proven that different modes of political involvement of young people can be powerful forces in political development. In the United States (US), a very influential youth movement was the Student for a Democratic Society during the 1960s. This movement caused uproars by organizing series of demonstrations and protests around Washington D.C during the Vietnam War (Haenfler, 2004). It became the leading group against war in many of the US campuses during the Vietnam War.

¹ As cited in Haenfler, 2004

Youths' political expression can also be seen through the emergence of pop culture². One of the historical pop cultures is the punk. Punk politics include among others, anarchism, socialism, anti-authoritarianism, anti-militarism and anti-capitalism (Bennett, 2006). These punks also took part in many protests and demonstrations (Bennett, 2006; Cohen, 1997). Another major highlight of the youth movement history was the hippie subculture. Initiated in the United States, the hippie subcultures have spread rapidly around the world. Hippies opposed political and social orthodoxy, choosing a gentle and non-doctrinaire ideology that favoured peace, love and personal freedom (Haenfler, 2004).

From the previous research, many were aimed at looking at the political participation of young people. These researches have not only reflected the importance of young people's political participation in politics but at the same time also reflected the political power that the young people have in the political realm. It is interesting to note, however, despite the many research trying to analyse young people's political participations, but not many give emphasis to the differences of political participations between young women and men.

1.3 Women and Young Women in Politics

Globally, it is a fact that the political realm is still dominated by men. There is a need for the emphasis on research about young women's political participations as it is still a fighting cause for women to reach gender equity in the political realm which is dominated by men. From the historical context, the experiences of women globally in the struggle to achieve "full citizenship" through voting rights and political participation have been fraught with serious challenges. Women's political participation has been low and uneven in many countries and that is why for so many years the numbers of women in the parliaments and at the local governance levels remain low. Until 2008, there were only 20 countries around the

² Results of the expression of young people resistance to the mainstreams and hegemonic society (Haenfler, 2004).

world with governments having 30 per cent or more women in the Parliaments, while less than 5 per cent of the women were heads of State and Government (Inter - Parliamentary Union, 2008).

Malaysia is one of the countries which has only 10 per cent women in the parliament (2008). The same low level of women in politics in Malaysia has also been a matter of concerns. The Human Development Report 2009 shows Malaysia's Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) to be 0.542, ranked 68th out of 109 countries (UNDP, 2009). The GEM reveals the inequality in opportunity of different genders in selected areas. It tracks the numbers of seats held by women in parliament, and women as legislators, managers or any professionals, as well as gender disparity in income earned and economic independence (2009).

An argument supporting women's participation in politics is the question of citizenship. A mark of citizenship is the ability of the citizens to exercise their rights to vote and to be actively involved in the political processes. It is the ability to use the democratic space that is available. Salem, Ibrahim and Brady (2003) opined that "political participation is a manifestation of citizenship, a reflection of how people "become" citizens (Salem, Ibrahim, & Brady, 2003). Unfortunately women's participation, particularly young women's involvement in political parties has been a matter of concerns at both the global and national levels. Such low numbers of women, particularly low numbers of young women in political parties and in the parliaments, signals marginalization. In addition it is also a sign of gender-biased cultural norms and values and gendered socialization patterns. These concerns were also raised as one of the areas of concerns in the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing 1995; that issues of women in power and decision-making must be addressed by governments.

Caul argued that women's experience of being marginalized, especially young women, is a function both of supply and demand (Caul, 1995a). For Caul, the under representation of women in politics is not only due to the barriers to women's participation, but the pool of eligible women candidates is also limited. To Caul this is a serious matter because of the issue of representation which is an important feature in a democratic system. "...the severe underrepresentation of women not only limited to the diversity of parliament, but also contradicts with one of the central tenets of representation democracy" (Caul, 1995b).

Caul's argument raises another issue about the "pool of eligible women". Logically, the pool ought to have younger women to be involved in politics given the fact that the older generation of women will eventually have to make way for the younger women to replace them. But the fact is the number of young women in the "pool" is insufficient. There have been several arguments to explain this situation but these will be explored further in the review of literature.

The experiences of young people as members of political parties need to be understood because this is fundamental to operationalize the concept of citizenship. If young people are considered to be citizens then they should have their substantive rights which include civil and political rights as well as social and economic rights. They should have the right to vote and to stand for election. They all have to experience the process of political participation and this study can help to contribute to this understanding by tapping into the experiences of young women and men in political parties.

Members of political parties have different experiences within the party and outside the party; all depending on their identities, their genders, their positions of power and the roles that they play as party members. In addition the political cultures of parties are not gender-neutral. Political party is "a body of men united, for promoting by their joint endeavours the national interest, upon some particular principle in which they are all agreed" (Smith, 2007).

In the literature, women who wanted to join politics had to face several challenges which can be summed up into five major factors: (1) society's perceptions; (2) time; (3) religion; (4) structure; and (5) limited resources. (Rashila Ramli, 1998; 155) These challenges identified by Rashila form part of women's experiences in the political environment.

Many scholars also pointed out that the structure of a political party plays a major role in either constraining or facilitating women's political participation and have great impact on the women's experiences in politics. Sacchet pointed out that the structural and culture of political parties, serve as further constraints on women's political participation and influence. The activities of political parties are usually organized with little regard for women's specific needs (Sacchet, 2005). "The political behaviour and skills that tend to be valued within these organizations are those commonly displayed by men, such as forceful assertiveness and verbal eloquence" (Sacchet, 2005). Hence, women would have to give more effort to prove them politically capable and reliable.

Many scholars have raised the issue that women do experience playing passive roles such as being treated as supporters of the political parties which are usually led and chaired by men. "Women's interests are usually over-shadowed by broader allegiances to class or political movements" (Papanek, 1977).

Taking into consideration the need to understand the realities experienced by young women and men and the dearth of literature on the issue, this research focused on exploring the experiences of the young women and men in political parties but limiting it only to *Pakatan Rakyat* (PR), which consists of an alliance of three opposition parties namely the Democratic Action Party (DAP), *Parti Keadilan Rakyat* (PKR) and the Pan – Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS). Out of these three, the DAP and PKR initiated a change in their parties' structure by establishing their youth wings opened to both young women and men.

PAS maintains its original structure of a sex-based differentiated youth wings. DAP and PKR argued that this more “egalitarian” structure would give equal opportunities to both young men and women members to gain access to the decision-making level in the parties (News Straits Times, 2003). This differs from the existing government political parties, namely the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) and the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC) which have separate youth wings for young women and men.

1.4 Problem Statement

The experiences of young women and men as members of political parties are influenced and shaped by various factors; one of which is the party’s organizational structure. In Malaysia, the *Pakatan Rakyat*, namely the DAP and the PKR established their new youth wings on the assumption that this structure which is open to both sexes is more egalitarian, offering a more equal pathway for young members to move up the parties’ ranks. The development of this new structure has given more limelight to women’s political participation especially during the 12th general election. It is felt that the time is right to explore the experiences of these young members of the three parties in the PR; two of which have given a new structure to their youth wings (DAP and PKR) while one maintains its conventional, sex based youth wings (PAS), in order to understand both their positive and negative experiences in the political process. Would there be differences in the experiences given the different political structure? Taking the gendered framework the study questions whether there are differences in the experiences between young women and young men as members in those parties. The findings from this study will contribute to a better understanding as to what other actions need to be taken, if any, in order to facilitate young women’s participation in politics based on the lived realities of these young men and women in the political parties.

1.5 Research Questions

This study is set out to answer the following questions:

1. What is the nature of experiences of young women and men as members of political party?
2. What are the differences in the experiences of young women and men as members of political party?
3. What are the factors which influence the experiences of young women and men as members of political party?
4. What are the constraints experienced by young women and men as members of political party?

1.6 Research Objectives

The main aim of this research is to compare the experiences of being members of a political party among young men and women. In order to achieve this aim, the following objectives of the study have been identified.

1. To explore the nature of experiences of young women and men as members of political party.
2. To analyze the differences in the experiences of young women and men as members of political party using the gendered framework.
3. To identify factors, which influenced the experiences of young women and men as members of political party?
4. To identify the constraints faced by young women and men as political party members

1.7 Significance of the Study

This research initiates inquiries into current lived realities of young people, especially women, in their engagement with politics. It is also a novel study in that it engages in the investigation of a new political context in Malaysia, represented by what is claimed to be a different structural approach of the *Pakatan Rakyat*. The establishment of the *Pakatan Rakyat* itself is, as a political development in Malaysia, a new subject of study. Studying the internal dynamics of its members will moreover provide unique understanding into such new subject. In addition, the study of the gender dynamics between youth members of the parties offers significant perspectives as compared to conventional understanding about political party membership. This study finds out the effectiveness of the new strategy to merge the young women and men in the same political wing. In addition, this study would contribute to the corpus of knowledge of similar and different experiences of young members especially that of the young women, in the opposition parties which could provide new information compared to the established mainstream governing political parties. It is important that the experiences of these young politicians, particularly the young women's experiences, are contextualised in the broader literature of political leadership,.

1.8 Organisation of the Chapters

This thesis is presented in five chapters. Chapter One provides the background for the study undertaken for this thesis. It does so by setting out initial discourse on the subject matter, presenting the problem statement leading to the study, enumerating its research questions and objectives, and presenting the significance of the study as well as the potential contribution of this research.

Chapter Two consists of the review of past and current literature on the topic of this thesis. It does this by discussing the historical contexts of political participation of men and women globally and locally and the assessment of materials on the common and distinct

experiences of young people involved in politics. This chapter also reviews the materials to establish links between the general issue of women's and men's political participation and their specific experiences pursuing political aspirations in political parties.

Chapter Three presents the methodology used in this study. It briefly describes the qualitative approach to research that is chosen for this study. The chapter also briefly compares this approach to the quantitative approach to justify its choice for this particular study. Chapter Three further discusses the selected qualitative method of in-depth interviews that is being used for the study and explains the steps that are taken to administer the interviews such as selection of respondents, development of domains of enquiry, and the techniques used to obtain the respondents. The chapter further presents the operational definitions of certain important concepts in this study which are important because it helps to bring more focus to the study. This chapter also discusses relevant ethical issues including the issue of confidentiality and how the researcher obtained the consent from the interviewees, how the conversation was audio recorded and how the recordings and transcripts were stored. The chapter ends with the discussion about a few limitations of this research and the constraints during the research process.

Chapter Three also presents an important section of this study and that is the conceptual framework used to analyse the data obtained. This chapter elaborates further the initial framework drawn by the WHO Commission to look at the Social Determinants of Health, specifically on the role of Gender. A brief background of the WHO Social Determinants of Health is presented followed by a detailed discussion on the framework. This is followed by a discussion on the rationale for adopting the framework for this study as well as the adaptation made and the details of the modified framework. Each tier of the framework is also discussed in this chapter. This adaptation is important because the framework was developed for the health field and is being used in this study which is in the political

discipline. The success of using a framework cross-discipline in itself is a significant contribution of this study.

The findings, analysis and the discussions of the research are presented in Chapter Four. As a background to understanding the findings, a brief description of the political parties from which the respondents were selected is presented first. This contextual background includes information on the ideology and values of the relevant parties and a discussion of the new organisational structure implemented. This is followed by the section on the socio demographic background of the respondents. The presentations of the substantive parts of the findings are made by using categories that are developed from the analyses of the data gathered. These categories include the nature of the respondents' political experiences prior to and during being members of the political parties and the balancing lives and personal issues, career and politics. The conceptual framework is used to assist in the analyses of the findings. This chapter discusses the new and existing approaches to membership and party division as well as the importance of young people's views about inclusiveness and how they can shape contemporary party politics. Last but not least, the chapter also discusses the possibilities of change in the gendered dimensions in politics, especially to the young generations.

In the last chapter which is Chapter Five, conclusions to the study are made. The chapter also makes recommendations based on the findings and suggests areas for future research.

1.9 Conclusion

This chapter has provided the introduction and background to the study undertaken for this thesis. It clarifies the aims, objectives and the significance of the research. In the next chapter, past and current literature is reviewed to provide more in-depth background to the study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter begins by presenting the previous research on the experiences of women and men in politics, in general. It then looks at the establishment of women's wings and the roles and responsibilities of women as members in the political parties. This chapter also discusses the strategies and reforms on the global platform to have more women in the political arena.

Then the focus is narrowed down to look into the previous literature about the political participation of young people. In Chapter One, two general traditions have been briefly identified as the defining trends in studying young people in politics. This chapter aims to discuss these two traditions further by reviewing available materials on women, men and politics. Then it discusses important literature on political participations of the young women and men. The discussion leads to the arguments from two different traditions of research done on youth in politics. The discussions then proceed to the political socialisation and the experiences of young people in politics.

The chapter also looks at the political participation of young people in the context of Malaysia. It further presents the roles and responsibilities of young women and men members in the political parties and the motivating factors and hindrances to the involvements of young women as members of the political parties.

2.2 Experience of Women and Men in Politics

The argument that young people are involved in politics in alternative forms than the conventional ones does not address the issue of whether the experiences of being involved are similar for both young men and women. Literature has shown that historically women's participation in what can be seen as the conventional form of political activism (activities directly related to electoral processes) is very low. However, taking into account new forms of political participation as proposed by the second tradition of literature begs the question, does the nature of their political participation change? According to Quéniart (2001)³ gender differences among young adults, despite their educational levels, can also lead to different political experiences between them. Quéniart's more recent study continues to show that young women are still marginalized in politics (Quéniart, 2008).

Women and politics have been widely studied from various perspectives and invited different stances from many scholars. A comparison of these perspectives can be made between what can be termed as the conventional social scientists view and the feminists view on politics. Conventional political scientists tend to argue that there were more similarities than differences between women and men in terms of their degree of political participations and their political activities (S. Verba, L.Schlozman, & Brady, 1995). As argued, women have equal opportunities in politics just like men. Hence it is up to the women to be politically active or otherwise. In focusing on the similarities, the conventional view fails to look deeper into the lived realities of women and men in the context of their public and private lives. At the very least, women and men are different biologically and psychologically. Such differences have been shown to bring about assigned gendered roles to women and men, which, in turn, brought about differential treatment to women in their access to socio-political opportunities. Beckwith (1980)⁴

³ As quoted in Brechon (2001)

⁴ As quoted in Manderson (1980)

stressed that the differences in biological sex is merely the starting and a reference point of these researches done by those conventional political scientists. Manderson (1980) stressed that the research must also take into consideration the gender relations between women and men, and the social and cultural settings of which women and men are attached to.

Feminists argued that in doing social research, it is important to take into consideration the constructive elements of social relations between men and women on the basis of differences between sexes, such as through the representation of cultural symbols and their interpretations in the kinship system, polity and economy (Waylen, 1996). The differences in the gender identities cast by the social and cultural factors surrounding them may determine the degree of political participations of both women and men.

The dichotomy of gender roles between women and men can already be traced in the classic literatures. Aristotle, in his *'The Politics'*, for example, upheld the importance of men assuming leadership roles in the household, village and the country: 'men is a political animal'. Women, on the other hand, are seen as followers who will facilitate and implement men's decisions about the way a society must be governed. For Aristotle, a household will only be formed when the men have women and slaves. He even quoted from the poet, Hesiod, 'Get first a house and a wife and an ox to draw a plough.' (The ox refers to a slave.) The household is important, according to Aristotle, to satisfy men's daily needs (Aristotle, 1962).

As highlighted by Okin (1992), Plato, in *The Republic* perceived women as 'bickering, uncooperative, self-abandonment, blasphemy and frailties of sickness, love and labour'. Similar opinions can be seen amongst the very early political theorists such as Hegel and Rousseau, as well as liberal theorists such as John Locke and Stuart Mill (Crick, 1992; Okin, 1992; Philip, 1994). Such views about women have received critiques from many feminist scholars especially with regard to their effect on society's decisions to give access and

opportunity to women to participate in the public life. The pervasiveness of such views means that women are consistently seen as more suitable to operate within what is seen as the private sphere. Stivens (1991) points out that the invisibility of the 'private sphere' is acute within the political science.

Such dichotomy of gender roles within the private and public spheres has formulated the relationship between the superior and the inferior and hence the valued and the disvalued. Acknowledging the effect of gender dichotomy on the power relations between both women and men, Frazer (1998) reconstructs feminist political theory to encompass a range of social phenomena, which include the 'ways of life' and 'traditions' (Frazer, 1998). 'Traditions', as explained by Frazer, takes into account roles of women in the domestic sphere, which include as child bearers and domestic labour. As for the 'ways of life', Frazer clarified that feminist political theory involves modelling and empirically scrutinizing the changes of the state and the government, as well as the social relations of institutions, which include the households, and locations such as on the roads and homes. To sum up, Frazer stressed the importance of women's role which cut across public and private spheres.

In order to acknowledge the importance of gender relations in the political sphere, feminist political theorists such as Randall (1995), has also redefined politics as an "articulation, or working out of relationships (between men and women) within an already given power structure" (Andermahr, Lovell, & Wolkowitz, 2000). Thus, while conventional political theorists define politics as a practice of governing without violence and through public institutions with the consent of the governed (Crick, 1992; Philip, 1994), feminist political theorists define it as an activity, a conscious, deliberate participation in the process to allocate resources among citizens (Stivens, 1991; Waylen, 1996). Politics as defined by the feminist scholars stressed on equity in gender relations in the basis of daily lives. Such equity is not only defined in the context of public sphere but also in the domain of personal lives of the individual.

The concept of politics has often been associated with the concept of power. Feminists point out that the idea of power is not only gendered, but also that power and the use of power are defined differently between women and men. Frederick Frey⁵ stressed that power will not be given up voluntarily; rather it is taken: “If men have more structural power and the resources that translate into power than do women, and if men benefit from the power superiority, we should not expect them to cede power to women” (Whitaker, 1993). Frey remained sceptical of the possibility of feminists transforming political ‘power over’ with ‘power to’. He believes that women who attempt to enter the political elite continue to experience considerable difficulty, when the men continue to hold the political power (Whitaker, 1993)

Women’s rights to vote is an example where women’s ability to exercise political power in one area is limited by men’s power control over other areas. Shvedova (2005) pointed out that women’s rights to vote were not sufficient to ensure their positions to be well represented in the political system.

In theory, the right to stand for elections, to become a candidate and to get elected, is based on the right to vote. The reality is, however, that women’s right to vote remains restricted: principally because the only candidates to vote for are mostly male.

(Shvedova, 2005)

Shvedova’s point highlighted an interesting perspective on the reality of gender inequality in politics, which has often been overlooked by political players.

Political scientists disagree on reasons why women are not able to fulfil political positions. A few of the scholars conclude that women’s under-representation in politics were mainly due to their nature, personalities and characteristics. Women were perceived to be unable to run for elections because they are seen as less politically knowledgeable

⁵ As quoted by Whitaker (1993)

compared to men (Mondak & Anderson, 2004; Waylen, 1996). They are also said to be less internally efficacious and less likely to join in the political decision making processes (Atkeson, 2003; Wolbrecht & Campbell, 2005). Others claim that they are less interested in campaigns during elections (S. Verba et al., 1995) and are less likely to attempt to influence other persons' vote choices (Waylen, 1996), as a result, there are less women joining the election as candidates if compared with the men.

Women are also said to be less likely to have an opinion on political issues (Waylen, 1996). They tend not to comment about presidential candidates and party issues (Atkeson, 2003; Jenkins, 2005). Women also prefer not to make contact with government officials to express their dissatisfaction with or views about governance issues (Mondak & Anderson, 2004). They are also found to be less likely to discuss politics with family and friends (Waylen, 1996). Many of these differences are consistent over the decades of survey research (Atkeson, 2003; Waylen, 1996).

The focus on blaming women for their lack of interests, motivations and initiatives in dealing with political issues may hide certain deficiencies in conventional research on women's participation. The studies that are carried out to come to the conclusions may be informed by patriarchal thinking or lack of consideration about underlying structural and cultural factors determining women's assigned location into the public and the private spheres. Stivens (1991) noted those researchers have resulted in women becoming 'the gendered victims'. "The results of various past and present state policies worldwide for women to be gendered 'victims' are not difficult to document" (Stivens, 1991).

The patriarchal political culture and priorities established by men have instilled prejudices and reinforced traditions that exclude women in the political landscape (Romão, 2003). As a result, women were constantly being ignored in the constructions and analysis of nationalism and political science. Stivens (1991) and other researchers argued that it is

women's citizenship rights to take part in politics and decision making positions. Women's roles are important to redefine political and economic priorities, placing on the political agenda items that help to address women's gender-specific concerns, values and experiences (Stivens, 1991). Politics and political culture should not be defined only by men but also by women. The power relations between men and women can help to integrate meaningful gender dimensions in government's policy (Romão, 2003). Hence, given "the experiences they are likely to have shared as women and the sensibilities they are likely to have developed" (Romão, 2003), they can be effective leaders not in spite of but because of being women.

There are local studies which have also shown that women in Malaysia have started to take different route in political participation.

Experiences both locally and abroad show that women have been involved in politics in various ways, and that they have not been confined to practising it at the formal level. In fact many have made a conscious decision not to partake in this recognized route towards representation but instead try to see what can be gained by operating outside this framework (pg. 110)

(tan & Ng., 2003)

Therefore, it is important to note that women are indeed actively involved in politics but not through the formal channel, such as joining the political parties or holding decision making positions in the formal political party organisations. As stressed by tan and Ng (2003), "It is even more important to distinguish between the level of women's political representation and the level of their political activities", as they do not equate to each other, which has often been the assumption of the conventional political scientists. It is due to this assumption that the conventional political scientists conveniently conclude that women are not interested in politics (tan & Ng., 2003).

Tan and Ng (2003) continue to highlight the importance of the representation of women in the political arena, especially in the case of Malaysia.

Participation in the formal sphere cannot be ignored simply because this is where many national decisions and policies which impact on women's lives are determined. Challenges in the informal sphere are useful in effecting change at the local and immediate levels, but in the long run, women will still need to enter the formal realm to evoke more widespread change (pg. 111).

While the debates of the importance of women in politics continue, these arguments are built on the basis of the agreement that women are indeed, under represented in the political arena. Having to work in such marginalised situation, young women, who have entered the field, would often be 'politicized' in such an environment and as such the chances would be high for these young women to face the same patterns of discriminations as those women who have been in politics. Therefore, it is important to understand from the previous research on the strong influences of political socialization among the young people and how such socialization can shape their experiences in politics.

2.3 Young People in Politics

As mentioned briefly in the previous chapter, there are two different traditions of political research about young people. The first tradition of research on youth in politics generally claimed that young people are disinterested in politics. The disinterest is judged by the specific references to their actual exercise of their voting power, their displayed knowledge about politics and their abilities or willingness to articulate issues of politics. The literatures argued that although the youth consists of the largest bloc of voting power, the political scientists often concluded that they are less likely to vote and join political parties (O' Toole, 2003; Quintelier, 2007). At the same time, young people are being seen to be less politically knowledgeable and apathetic about political issues (O' Toole, 2003;

Quintelier, 2007). By measuring their political activism based on the conventional voting activities and their interests in joining political parties, the young people were labelled as “‘ignorant’, ‘apathetic’, ‘selfish’, ‘indifferent’, ‘alienated’, ‘disaffected’ and ‘disinterested’ when it comes to politics” (Eden & Roker, 2002). Such worrying situations of the young people are further reinforced by the media which portray continuously that this group is not participating in polling, especially during the general elections (Quéniart, 2008).

The second tradition in the literature contends that the conventional measurements of political activism are not suitable to measure the political participation of the younger generation. In fact, there are an increasing number of studies that show how young people have evolved from the traditional political participation. The result of the research seminar held by the European Youth Centre in Strasbourg (2003) presented that there is a reduction in traditional political participation. This, however is by no means indicative that young people were less interested in politics (Hoskins, 2003).

As highlighted in several previous researches, scholars have started to realize the new forms of political participation among the young people (Hoskins, 2003; O’Toole, 2003; Quéniart, 2008; Quintelier, 2007). According to Hoskin (2003) the conventional indicators, such as voting and participations in politics are no longer adequate to explain the political participation of the young people (Hoskins, 2003). Quéniart concluded that the forms of political involvement among the young people are ‘mutated’ and transformed into wider sense of the political participations. Their scopes of political and social participation are widening to encompass signing petitions, donating money, forming campaign groups and demonstrating. Quéniart (2008) even found out from the literatures that youth councils and parliaments, youth hearings, local community actions and campaigns, political consumerism, new social movements, single issue politics, protest politics and peer support groups are becoming a trend among the young people (Quéniart, 2008).

Hence, the conventional definition of political participation would have to be relooked at, to encapsulate more new ways of political participation (Quintelier, 2007). Hoskin (2003) explained further:

The personal and private sphere of people's everyday lives are where political interest is high and when young people discuss 'politics' in their own terms... When young people are participating politically it can relate to what clothes they wear or what food they purchase. Young people often like to have fun and there is an element of irony and play in songs, posters and in their protests (pg.3).

With the current era of information technology, young people can even try out more new ways and be more creative in participating in politics (Hoskins, 2003). Therefore, the second tradition of research on young people in politics has looked at the basic dimensions of their political involvements empirically. Besides the conventional indicators for political participation, such as voting and joining the political party, the scholars begin to widen the scope to include voting – emphasizing on the interval period of two elections, where the participations happen outside the electoral arena; party campaigning - the fund-raising, canvassing, clerical work and attending a rally; collective action - Working through an organised or informal group to raise issues, signing and circulating petition as well as attending a protest meeting; contacting - whether by letter, by telephone or face-to-face, by which the citizen may choose to try to raise matters directly with those authorities whom they see as being in the position to respond; direct action - formation of the scale protesting, such as blocking traffic and protest marches, followed by joining political strikes and engaging in a boycott; and political violence - the use of physical force (Parry, Moyser, & Day, 1992).

Patties (2003) and the colleagues have distinguished three dimensions of civic engagement, that are similar with Parry, which are individualistic activism, contact activism and collective activism. Individualistic activism indicates the activities such as “ethical consumption, donations, petition-signing, fund-raising, voting in local elections and wearing

a campaign badge” (Patties, Seyd, & Whiteley, 2003). The decisions to join in the activities are made through individuals. Often the person joins in the activities by focusing on what she/ he as a person can change in herself/ himself in order to fulfil the political principles. Contact activism is about contacting the authority, to voice out by writing to the media or by contacting the solicitors or an organisation, for instance, individual get involved by engaging with external elements that may help her/him brought about change, but she/he still act on an individual basis. Collective activism indicates a person’s decision to be part of a community fighting for the same cause, participating in a public demonstration, but is also strongly correlated with attending political meetings and participating in legal or illegal protests and to form a group of like-minded people.

Jenkins (2005) quoted what Keeter has established three similar distinctive areas of engagements as Patties, but the engagements encompasses more contemporary modes of participation. The three areas of engagements include electoral engagement, civic activism and ‘political voice’ activities. Electoral engagement refers to activism that is directly connected to electoral events: voting, donating money and displaying campaign buttons, signs, or stickers. Keeter also includes volunteering for the party, and trying to persuade others politically during an election as part of this first type of engagement. Civic activism includes working informally to solve a community problem, volunteering for a non-political group, engaging actively as a member of a group or organization, and charitable fund-raising, whether through participation in walk/ run/ bike/ event or another type of fundraising. Such activities often take place during the intervals of two elections, which usually not part of the electoral campaigning during elections. Finally, there is what the survey authors classify as ‘political voices’ activities – actions people takes to express themselves outside the formal channels of political participation. These include contacting elected officials, consumer activism, protesting, contacting the print or broadcast media, canvassing and singing petitions (both written and email) (Jenkins, 2005).

As the contemporary indicators for young people, political participations have become more diversified; young people tend to have more variety of political experiences. The different dimensions of political involvement amongst young people reflected the increase numbers of channels for the young to engage in politics.

2.4 The Establishment of Women's Wings and the Roles and Responsibilities of Women Members in Malaysia's Political Parties

According to Farish Noor (2004), it was upon the quest of obtaining independence from the British colonial power that political parties surfaced in the Malayan political arena. The early form of political grouping in Malaysia reflects the definition of a political party given by Edmund Burke⁶, which refers to a political party as “a body of men united, for promoting by their joint endeavours the national interest, upon some particular principle in which they are all agreed”. Crotty (1970)⁷ noted that the function of a political party is to educate the public, which includes to recruit and promote individuals to the public office and to serve as the comprehensive linkage between the public and the ruling government (as quoted in Sartori, 1976 and Smith, 2007). Crotty's definition was focusing on the positive obligations of political party to serve the public's welfare and play the role of bridging the public opinions with the government's policy decision-making.

Other scholars, however, define a political party by emphasising on the element of power. Schattschneider (1942) and Schumpeter (1975)⁸ define a political party as a group of people who proposes to compete to obtain political power to control the government. Smith (2007) noted that political parties developed simultaneously with electoral and parliamentary processes. Ladd and Hadley (1973) explain that a party is firstly formed by a group of

⁶ As quoted in Smith (2007)

⁷ As cited in Smith (2007)

⁸ As quoted in Smith (2007)

people sharing the same objectives for the purpose of election campaign. The people in the group, moreover, share the same desire to develop a parliamentary group within a legislative assembly. The collaboration among deputies at political summits naturally lead to attempts to form federations of their electoral committees, and hence, the first political parties are created (Ladd & Harley, 1973). To analyze a political party, it is important to take into account the ideologies, social foundations, structure, organization, participation and strategies of the political party (Duverger, 1972).

The Malay Nationalist Party (MNP)⁹ appeared to be the first political party in Malaysia's history to establish a women's wing, *namely Angkatan Wanita Sedar* (AWAS) in 1946 (Danz, 1987) for acknowledging the roles of women in the political arena. Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmi, the president of MNP, saw the need for the women's wing in the party. He argued that, "women also have a part to play in the struggle for independence and are needed by the party" (Danz, 1987; Ghani, 1992). The leaders of MNP saw the necessity of a women's wing as it could help to arouse the political consciousness of the Malay women about their equal rights with men: "...to free them from old bonds of tradition and to socialize them" (Danz, 1987). There were few prominent women political leaders who emerged from AWAS, such as Aishah Ghani and Sakinah Junid. When MNP was banned, Aishah Ghani took resort in the *Pergerakan Kaum Ibu* (PKI) while Sakinah Junid went to the Pan-Malayan Islamic Party (PMIP) which is currently known as PAS.

The trend of forming the women's wing in the party was followed closely by the (UMNO), the premier stakeholder in the negotiation for eventual self-rule of Malaya. Recognising the needs for the support of women in their folds, the party formed their women's wing in 1947. It was named the *Pergerakan Kaum Ibu* (PKI). Putih Mariah

⁹ MNP was a party formed in 1945 jointly with others closely related to the Malayan Communist Party (Soda 1998). The main aim of MNP was to push for the independence of colonial Malaya under the auspices of Indonesia. However, the idea did not appeal and raised concerns to the Malay conservative elites, the sultans, and the British. The MNP was therefore banned in 1953 but later emerged in Indonesia as the Independence of Malaya Movement (Liow 2005 cited in (Sakai, 2003)