



EXPLORING THE INFLUENCE OF DOMINANT MASCULINITY ON WOMEN POLITICAL LEADERSHIP IN POLITICAL PARTIES

Rabi'ah Aminudin

Department of Political Science,

AHAS KIRKHS, IIUM

Social Issues and Development International Conference 2023

Towards Advancing Sustainable Society

9-10th May 2023



Introduction

- The UN-led Sustainable Development Goal 5- Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
- Women are still under parity, especially in terms of economic empowerment and political participation
- Globally, women only occupy 26.2% of national parliaments
- According to CEDAW Report 2022, women's political leadership is still below the global average.
- 19 % federal ministers, 19 % senators, 16 % local councilors, and 13.5 % Members of Parliament.



Introduction

- Underrepresentation of women in political decision-making positions is glaring despite Malaysia's economic achievements over the years
- However, this is not reflected in the level of women's political participation
- There is a need to understand the gap, especially considering women's education level has surpassed men's.
- Female enrolment into higher education institutions has surpassed men enrolment since 2012.
- In 2012, women made up 59% of university enrolment. In 2020, women made up 60.5% of tertiary education institutions.
- Studies have shown a positive correlation between political engagement and education level.
- However, the case is not observed in the case of Malaysia.



Focus of the study

- This study explores political parties as the main gatekeepers to women's political engagement to understand the low level of Malaysian women's political leadership at the party level.
- Previous studies have focused on women's political participation by looking at the challenges and obstacles experienced by female politicians such as gendered institutional structures, biased allocation of resources, and lack of political networks.
- This study examines how masculinity's dominance influences women's attempts to occupy political leadership positions.



Research Objectives

- To identify how masculinity perpetuates its dominance through formal structures of political parties
- To examine the dominance of masculinity in informal structures of political parties



Methodology

- Document analysis (political parties' constitutions)
- Interviews (30 politicians)
- 4 main political parties: UMNO, PAS, PKR, DAP

Dominant masculinity

- Dominant masculinity- “dominant” forms of masculinity—such as those that are the most common, powerful, and/or most widespread in particular settings—may actually do little to legitimate men’s power over women and, therefore, should not be labeled hegemonic masculinities (Flood, 2002, Beasley, 2008 as cited in Messerschmidt, 2018)
- However, enables political actors to gain masculinity capital that is celebrated in their political career
- Masculinity capital enables political actors to thread policy areas that are traditionally considered male-domain easily such as foreign policy, trade, military, and national security.





Analysis

FORMAL

- Membership in political parties
- Establishment of a specific platform for women
- Appointment of women in party's leadership position

INFORMAL

- Cadre system
- Mentorship



FORMAL

ELEMENTS	UMNO	PKR	PAS	DAP
Women membership in the political parties	/	/	/	/
Women wings in the political parties	/	/	/	/
Appointment of women for party's committee members at national level	/	/	/	/



- Article 9.2.3 in UMNO's constitution, Article 21.3 (c) in PKR's constitution, Article 25 (3) in PAS's constitution, Article VIII (14) DAP constitution
- Political parties stated in their parties' constitutions that women must be included as part of the leadership committee members either through party elections or appointments.
- DAP- 30% quota for women in the Central Executive Council

FORMAL APPROACH



Equal access to political parties' membership regardless of gender

However, there is a segregation of gender through the formation of women's wings in the majority of political parties

Although women are included in the party's central leadership position (except for DAP which has a quota system), they go through different paths in the political journey.

This accentuates the dominance of masculine traits in the political parties as women are put in a different category.



INFORMAL APPROACH

- Women's groups are further divided into different subgroups targeting different demographics (UMNO, PAS) under the cadre system established by political parties
- DAP on the other hand filter the potential candidates to be groomed using selected traits (integrity and willingness to work)
- While men are able to utilize their masculinity capital (network, preferred characteristics such as confidence, financial resources) to climb in their political career, women had to unlock more doors before they are able to increase their visibility to the party's leadership
- Men are also more active in providing mentorship to their female peers. Interviews with female politicians from all parties cite that their male mentors have been supportive.
- However, this perpetuates that male perspectives being passed down to female politicians and continue the dominance of masculinity in political parties

CONCLUSION

- In order to have a more gender-friendly political culture, it has to start with political parties as the main gatekeeper.
- Female political leadership could be improved by reforming political parties' culture and structures to be more friendly and inclusive towards women.
- This can be achieved if feminine values are given the same appreciation and celebrated by political parties.

