



Women, Society and Change: Modern Trends & Patterns

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PARTRIDGE

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Introduction

The ever-changing world today has inevitably caused people to alter or modify their way of life, making necessary adaptations to suit contemporary social, cultural, economic and political changes. With the change of time, people can be seen taking up different and sometimes unexpected course of actions or roles, very often naturally or voluntarily. Yet, there are cases or times when changes, conditioned by global trends, elicit negative or unwanted effects much to the dismay of traditional beliefs, norms as well ideals held by individuals or groups.

In the world of today, positive changes involving women can be noted in various fields. Women empowerment in decision-making process, active participation in public domains and not to mention their significant contributions in preserving traditional culture and heritage are all indications of positive changes. That said, negative effects resulting from the changes are not difficult to discern and this happened due to various factors, some of which are beyond the control of the women themselves or the society at large. Social influence, economic reasons and global trends, are among those factors which, to do away with them completely is not easy, especially in the present times.

This work attempts to highlight various societal issues particularly in relation to women of today, looking at how they

cope with the changes that are taking place and how others view their roles and position in the fast changing world. It contains five chapters each focusing on a specific issue related to either women at work, women and cultural institutions such as museums, LGBT issue or women representation in the media.

The first chapter by Rabi'ah Aminuddin touches on the issue of women not from cultural perspective, rather from administrative and institutional perspectives. In view of the increasing need for women empowerment in today's society, her study analyses Women Policy's Agency (WPA) in Malaysia, focusing on the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development and its institutional capacity to implement gender empowerment initiatives. The author demonstrates the variance of network and actors involved in relation to the WPA and the extent of their influence on the agency.

Moving away from administrative viewpoint, the second chapter which is a descriptive study by Haram Awan et al., highlights the significant role of women in preserving cultural heritage of society. Taking two museums namely, LokVirsa Museum in Pakistan and National Textile Museum in Malaysia as case studies, the authors emphasize not only on the role of museums as cultural institutions to preserve and highlight national history and culture, but also the role and contributions of women in promoting folk culture. In conducting this study, observational checklist is used to identify several prominent features related to women's role and their work displayed in both museums.

Another contemporary issue facing the modern society of today is the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) issue as discussed by Mohd Firdaus Ahmad and Adibah Abdul Rahim in Chapter 3. Diverting from the normal discussion

of the issue from psychological, social and cultural viewpoints, the authors offer a new perspective by looking at or based on religious principles and worldviews. To provide a more engaging discussion and better understanding from the said approach, two religions are chosen, namely Islam and Buddhism where the principles and worldviews of both religions on LGBT are comparatively assessed and examined.

In Chapter 4, Norhaslinda Jamaudin explores issues surrounding the implementation of performance management framework, specifically Performance Management System (PMS) in Malaysian public sectors from organizational justice perspective. As emphasized by the author, while there is a need to assess work performance in view of the continuous change and development in work industry, the system is hampered with poor execution and flaws. This in turn call for a thorough assessment and further improvement in order to ensure fair appraisal and work integrity among those involved in the industry.

Nik Supiah Fajariah et al. in Chapter 5 choose to study the ideals of beauty, an issue that is very much related to women of modern times. Taking Malaysian beauty and fashion women magazines as samples of study, the authors demonstrate that the notion of beauty held by Malaysian women today due to the great influence of the media has changed, that it is very much based on the Western standard, preferring models of fair complexion and those having certain physical features. This despite the long established traditional idea of beauty that characterised the people and culture of the country. The over-emphasis on the Western idea of beauty indicates how changing trends via global media could mould people's mindset

and perceptions, sometimes at the expense of traditional ideals and lead to some extent to health issues.

Finally, a more directly-related health issue involving women is discussed by Suhaiza Samsudin et al. who select a group of reproductive-age women in one district in the state of Pahang, Malaysia as a target group for study. The work attempts to assess the level of knowledge and understanding of preconception care among reproductive-age women since it determines the health status of mother and unborn foetus, and reduces maternal and perinatal morbidity and mortality. In conducting the study, the authors examine the subjects' socio-demographic background such as their level of education, income and employment status in association with their knowledge of preconception care.

About the Authors

Adeela Rehman has been working as a lecturer at the Department of Gender Studies, Fatima Jinnah Women University, Pakistan since 2009. She obtained her PhD in sociology and anthropology from the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) in 2017. Her area of doctoral dissertation is medical sociology in which she conducted her research on medicalization of motherhood in public hospitals in Pakistan. Her affection for culture enables her to write a number of papers on different aspects of culture in general and folk culture of Pakistan in particular. She has also presented on various topics of culture and health in many national and international conferences and seminars as a presenter as well as guest speaker. She has also received a number of awards in her academic and professional career. In recognition of her teaching excellence she is awarded with "Rosina C. Chia Teaching of Excellence Award 2015" presented by Global Partners in Education USA on 12th of May 2015 at Global Partner's Education Conference held in China.

Adibah Abdul Rahim obtained her PhD in Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Heritage from the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). She is currently working as an Associate Professor in Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, IIUM. In 2008, she was appointed as a Visiting Academic at Monash University, Victoria, Australia during her sabbatical leave. Dr. Adibah was also appointed as a

Project Leader for building taxonomy on *usul al-din*, philosophy and comparative religion for IIUM library. Her academic area of interest is contemporary Islamic thought, Islam and modern ideologies, religious studies, modern Muslim thinkers and others.

Fauziah Fathil is currently a lecturer at the Department of History and Civilization, International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), Malaysia. She obtained her BA degree (Human Sciences) from IIUM and later MA (History) and PhD (History) degrees from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, United Kingdom. She has been teaching for more than 10 years in both undergraduate and postgraduate courses related to East Asian history, Malaysian history and Islamic history.

Haram Awan completed her Master in Gender Studies at Fatima Jinnah Women University Rawalpindi, Pakistan. Her current knowledge and research experience in the field of women and gender studies enables her to broaden her horizon in the field. Beside her academic achievements, she volunteers to participate in both curricular and co-curricular activities at the university.

Mohd Aznan Md Aris is currently an Associate Professor and a Family Medicine Specialist /Lecturer at the Department of Family Medicine, Kulliyyah of Medicine of International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). He obtained his MD-Bachelor Degree (Medicine) and later Master Degree in Family Medicine from University Science of Malaysia (USM). He has been teaching for more than 10 years in undergraduate courses related to family medicine and more than 5 years in postgraduate courses of family medicine. He has produced

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Mohd Firdaus Abmad is a PhD candidate at the National University Malaysia (UKM). He graduated from the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) with specialization in comparative religion. He was a former lecturer at the Centre of Fundamental Studies, International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). Currently, he is working as Head of Shariah Department in Brainy Bunch International Montessori. He is actively involved in presenting papers on religious studies in both local and international seminars.

Nerawi Sedu is a lecturer at the Department of Communication, Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences (KIRKHS), International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). He obtained his Doctor of Philosophy from the School of Journalism, University of Queensland Australia. He has been with the Department of Communication for more than eleven years. He teaches courses on media system, contemporary issues in communication, media ethics and intercultural communication in both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. His research interests are media studies and journalism. He has presented research-based papers at a number of international conferences in Malaysia as well as abroad.

Nik Supiah Fajariah Nik Iskandar completed her BA and MA in Sociology and Anthropology from the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). Her research interest has always related to the topic on women, beauty and body image. During her study, she has presented a paper in an international conference and published an article in a local journal. Her research entitled "*Maintaining Social Order via Cosmetic Usage*:"

The Voices of Working Women” was presented in the 1st Melaka International Conference on Social Sciences 2017. Currently, she is working in Cyberjaya, Malaysia.

Norhaslinda Jamaudin is a lecturer at the Department of Political Science at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). She earned her BA and MA in political science from the IIUM and PhD in public administration from the Malaysian University of Science (USM). Her specialization and areas of interest include public policy, public sector management and public personnel administration in the Malaysian Civil Service.

Nurazzura Mohamad Diah works at the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). She obtained her PhD from the University of Western Australia in Anthropology. Her research interests include womens’ health and well-being, health education among youth and the aborigines. Her teaching experience cover areas of introduction to anthropology, medical sociology and anthropology, social anthropology, group dynamics, population and society. Her postgraduate supervision has included projects on maternal healthcare, minority students’ participation in sports, occupational preference among rural youth in Maldives, PWDs in entrepreneurship, essential oil usage in spas, beauty and cosmetics preferences.

Rabi’ah Aminudin is an Assistant Professor in political science at the International Islamic University Malaysia, where she teaches research methodology, public policy analysis and public administration. She recently completed her PhD at the University of Manchester in 2015 with her thesis titled *“Explaining the Institutional Capacity of State Feminism in a Non-Western Setting: A Case Study of the Malaysian Women’s Policy*

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Subaiza Samsudin is currently a Family Medicine Specialist/ Lecturer at the Department of Family Medicine, Kulliyyah of Medicine of International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). She obtained her MBBS (Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery) from IIUM and later completed her Master in Medicine (Family Medicine) from National University Malaysia (UKM) in the year of 2016.

Book Summary

Changes in human society are inevitable particularly in the modern era of globalization. Members of the society are consequently affected in one way or another having to cope with different or new ideas, perceptions, expectations and worldviews. Authored by different scholars and writers, the book is a compilation of six chapters each dealing with a specific issue in modern or present society. While some chapters discuss issues related to women and change such as women at work, women empowerment, women representation in the media, women health issues, etc, a few dwell on other contemporary issues such as the issue of LGBT from religious perspectives, and work performance in modern public sector from organizational viewpoint.

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