# FACTORS AFFECTING THAI FEMALE POLITICIANS ENTERING POLITICAL ARENA

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**Abstract -** The purposes of this research were to study the model of level of involvement in political activities of female politicians and the antecedent, to study success factors for entering political arena, and to create new body of knowledge to comprehend the political activities of Thai female politicians. The researcher had designed the qualitative research by utilizing context analysis and descriptive analysis by accumulating secondary data from government document, rules, regulations, executive orders, research findings, dissertations, and vast information from internet together with the primary data from the interviewing with key informants. The findings revealed that there were two types of female politicians' involvement which was a formal involvement and informal involvement and factors affecting Thai female politicians entering political arena which comprised of supporting factors and detrimental factors. On one hand, the supporting factors included related rules and regulations, family supporting, personal interests, individual talents, knowledge capacity, family income, past achievement, funding, budget from political party, and social capital. On the other hand, the detrimental factors included social norms, gender discrimination, lacking of purposes, family burden, and level maturity of each female politician.

**Index Terms -** Thai Female Politician, Factors of Entering Political Arena, Political involvement.

## I. INTRODUCTION

In 2017 the United Nations determined the target of women developing as "Women will the agent of change of working in this world 50-50 within 2030". This is because the world will be changed with the force of women. First, the world will be more open to all kinds of human beings and the equality of work will be expanded. Women will be more accepted in many filed of works than before.

Nowadays the proportion of female politician in each nation is significantly small when compared with the male politicians. In fact, there is 22.7 percent of females in the parliament while there is 77.3 males in the parliament. Also, there is 17.7 percent females in the government administration while there is 82.3 percent of male in the government administration. There is only 6.6 percent of females as the head of the government while there is up to 93.4 percent of males as the head of the government (UNWOMEN, 2017).

In Thailand, women play a significant role in terms of economics. There is a constant promotion of female opportunities in the workplace which is a good thing. However, from the survey of the Institute of Graduate Schools, it reported that there are only a few female representatives while the majority of Thai representatives are males, whereas in terms of population, the majority is actually females. From the survey, it found that the attitude of the population plays a major role in choosing the representatives. For instance, male candidates are often preferred than female candidates since it is a tough job and high responsibility. Moreover, it found that the majority of Thai population both male and female often significantly prefer to choose male candidates to female candidates. It is also obviously that female voters also often vote for male candidates rather than female candidates. However, nowadays there is force of changes from the globalization and international news and medias, role of women is now more acceptable and become part of the change. Therefore, the researcher is interested in studying the success factors for female candidates entering the Thai political arena as well as to create the new body of knowledge regarding the roles female politicians to participate in Thai politics in an effective and sustainability way in order to increase the stability of the nation

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

From the study of Pew Research Center (2017), it found interesting information about the issues of honesty and corruption in politics that in comparison, female politicians have a tendency to be more honest and less corruption than male politicians and more importantly, female politicians also tend to have high ability in leadership than that of male politicians. SuJit Taipitak (2010) stated that there were two ways to initiate the female involvement in political arena which was direct way and indirect way. The direct way means the use of political campaign to promote the high level of female voters and more female candidates. On the other hand, the indirect way means to make sure that the voter understand the benefits as well as the positive impacts of having more female candidate and female politicians in the mix of Thai politics. Mary Robinson (2017) the prime minister of Iceland stated that female politicians have many outstanding quality such as the enthusiasm to walk

and lead the world in a more advancement and willing to negotiate and be more flexible in many conflicts and many strong issues. Whereas the male politicians tends to be rigid and often inflexible in many modern important issues. From the study of OSCE (2014), it stated many strong points of having female politicians in the public arena. First, it will stimuli the high level of participation and high level of involvement of female in many issues and in many countries. Second, it will change the vision and direction of the world regarding women ability and capacity in the near future. Third, it will allow women solidarity and the strength will determine proper voices for women both in local level, national level, and international level. The new dimension of promote the female involvement in the political arena can be successful under this new concept. First, there must be a real campaign to promote the difference in having female involvement in politics and the real benefits of having high female involvement in politics to local, national, and international level. Second, there must be a way to provide real support to a good and strong female politician candidate to represent the will of the people. Third, there must be a way to enhance the female knowledge, skills, and experiences to be able to a successful female politicians in the world dominated by male. Finally, there must be a way to increase the network of female by using public relation, and strategic marketing campaign. (Assavasirisilp & Koolrojanapat, 2018)

## III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to find the answer what are the factors affecting the role of women to enter Thai political arena, there are three important purposes of this research study. The purposes of this research were to study and examine the model of level of involvement in political activities of female politicians and the important antecedents, to investigate vital success factors for entering political arena, and to create and promote new body of knowledge to comprehend the political activities of Thai female politicians. In order to collect the important data, the researcher had designed the qualitative research by utilizing context analysis and descriptive analysis by accumulating secondary data from a vast government document, rules, regulations, executive orders, research findings, dissertations, and vast information from internet together with the primary data from the interviewing with key informants. A total of 15 key informants was selected from high government officials, policy makers, well-known politicians both national and local level, academicians, and committee working for political party. An in-depth was performed to elicit data, information, comments, and opinions from these 15 key informants by using one to one interaction and structured formal interview. In addition, the confidentiality of the information from these important informants was conducted properly and without any bias.

## IV. FINDINGS

### A. The form of political involvement in political activities

One of the most important factors that allow the increasing of female political involvement in political activities is the force of change in female liberalism. Dominelli (1986) had coined the definition the heart of female liberalism as the nondiscrimination of class and gender of the world population. All human beings should be treated fairly and equally. Male and female should be treated the same in the political arena. Male and female should have the same opportunity to advance in political arena based upon their ability, character, and morality, not based on their gender. It is obvious that in modern globalization, roles of male and female have been changed and interchangeable. There are more opportunities for female in many areas including political arena. Many times female politicians also show their strengths such as careful in the deliberation of many national issues, detail meticulously, and risk prudently. There are two distinctions of female involvement in the political arena: formal involvement and informal involvement. From these two distinctions, there are at least three sub categories. First is the independent female involvement in political arena. This is often a small group or individuals that are interested in local or national politics and aims to serve that in specific issues and focus on the benefits of the society as a goal. Second is the strong tie with political party. These are the group that have a clear connection and strong tie with formal political party and gain support from the party and often have a chance to be elected in both national and local election. Third is a nominee group. This female group often take turn as a nominee for their party, their spouse, and their local for a short time until the real candidate is ready to re-enter the political arena.

### B. Success factor for female politician to enter Thai political arena

In order for the female politicians or female candidates to be successful in the political arena, there are some important factors of success. The more factor of success, the female candidates have, the highly success they are more likely to possess. In fact, the more success of female candidate, the faster the change in the public mind about female politicians and female candidates. It certainly will lead to the strong connection and strong tie of female politicians with the party this would allow many different comments, and opinions of the female to be heard in the parliament system effectively, instead of the male

dominate voices and opinions. From the qualitative method, it can sum up the two groups of supporting factors and detrimental factors of female political potentially to be success in the Thai political arena.

On one hand, the supporting factors means the factors that would beneficial to the female politicians and female candidates to have high potential to be successful in the male dominated political arena both local and national level. These supporting factors are, in fact, important which included related rules and regulations, family supporting, personal interests, individual talents, knowledge capacity, family income, past achievement, funding, budget from political party, and social capital. On the other hand, the detrimental factors means some negative but important to evaluate in detail for its negative impacts on female politicians and female candidates to be successful in the male dominated political arena. These detriment factors included negative social norms, gender discrimination, lacking of definite purposes, family burden, and level of maturity of each female politician.

## DISCUSSION

From the findings the three important forms of female politicians and female candidates who actively involved in the political arenas are independent female whose involvement in political arena often free from pressure of politics and special interest group. They are often a representative of special issue and often originate from a small group or individuals that are actively participate in special issue and may be interested in both local or national politics and aims to show that their focus are actually on the greater benefits of society. Second is the group of female politicians and female candidate who have a strong tie or powerful connection with political party. These are the group that have a clear, strong, and power connection and often gain the majority support from the party as well as often have a fat chance to be elected in both national and local election. Third is a purely nominee person or a group to act as an interim. This kind of female politician or candidate who often act like an important substitution in special occasions and willingly to take turn as a nominee for their party, their spouse, and their local for a short time until the real candidate is ready to re-enter the political arena.

From these three group, the first group of female is independent from the political party and no strong connection or no important tie with significant political figures. If these group can enter to the Thai political arena, it shows the power of changing in the political of Thailand and the mindset of the voters of Thailand that can cast the vote to female politicians or female candidates freely and independently (Lewis, 2016). The phenomenal like this will increase more and more female politicians and candidates in the near future.

The second group of female politicians and female candidate who have a strong ties and powerful connection with the political party. The best example would be the research of Randolph (2013) who study the US female politician, Hillary Rodham Clinton: the most successful women in politics. She was the example of strong female politician and one of the formidable candidate for the United States presidential election. She is a powerful female politician in the world of male dominated political arena. However, the example like this happens in many countries nowadays but still a small proportion of the political mix.

The third group of female politicians and female candidates who act like the nominee of her spouse and her party. Most of the time, the real candidate cannot work in the political arena at that moment in time, the female nominee will act as the protection of the seat in the parliamentary or a short substitution. This idea concurred with Sardesai (20) which explains the power of politics can be temporary hold in the family and when time is ready, the real candidate or the real politician will come back to take their seats. The well-known case of Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatta who is the sister and the nominee of Prime Minister of Thanksin Shinawatta. This is the case that did not contribute very much to the political system since it is only temporary.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### A. Policy Recommendations

From the findings, it revealed the list of supporting factors such as rules and regulations, family supporting, personal interests, individual talents, knowledge capacity, family income, past achievement, funding, budget from political party, and social capital. Therefore, it is important for the policy makers to make certain that rules and regulations will promote the equality of male and female and promote the high level of participation of female politicians and female candidates. Also, the promotion of the gender equality and fairly should be a long term plan and started from primary school to the high level of government administration all over the nation.

### B. Academic Recommendations

Both large and small political party should have a strong support for female politicians and female candidates in both local and national level of political arena. Moreover, the academics and experts should promote the beneficial of more and more female representatives in a vast majority of national issues that should not be male dominated opinions and policy. It is also important to support independent

female politicians and female candidates who are freely from political party and aims to enhance the welfare of society at large.

### C. Future Study Recommendations

Since this research study aimed to study overall factors and the overall picture of the success factors that affecting female involvement in political arena and activities. Future study should focus on the in-sight of each important factor especially from supporting factors and detrimental factors to have the results that can be used to create policy recommendations to increase the high level of female involvement in political arena and political activities.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author would like to show a great appreciation and special thank the Research and Development Institute, and Saculty of Humanity and Social Science, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Bangkok, Thailand for financial support as well as staff supporting and vital document process. The author also would like to thank all key informants who kindly and positively provide valuable information, comments, and opinions. Also, the researcher would like to thank Asst. Prof. Dr. Kevin Wongleedee, Director of ILPC for proof reading this research paper.

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