

Women's Political Participation in the Province of Batangas

MA. ROSARIO B. TAMAYO

chery_tamayo@yahoo.com.ph

Lyceum of the Philippines University
Capitol Site, Batangas City

Date Submitted: July 16, 2011

Final Revision Accepted: July 18, 2011

Abstract - The study focused on women's participation in electoral politics in the province of Batangas, their priority programs, the factors that impede their participation and the platform for action that Lyceum of the Philippines University-Batangas can propose to help increase women's political participation in the province. Descriptive-correlational method was employed utilizing convenient sampling. Survey questionnaire and interview was utilized in data gathering. Respondents of the study are women politicians who won in the 2007 local election. Findings revealed that majority of women politician's priority is health. They were recruited by political parties and their political experience is by being councilors in their respective areas. They believe that support of the community, family and personality are the factors for winning. Lack of financial resources and the type of electoral system as well as the lack of quota reservations are the socio-economic factors that impede women's participation. On the other hand, the cultural and institutional factors include lack of party support including money and other resources and the lack of coordination and support from women's organization

and other NGO's, how women are portrayed in media is believe to be the ideological and psychological factors that impede women's participation in politics.

Keywords - feminism, politics, election

INTRODUCTION

Women constitute more than half of the world population. Yet, their participation in formal political structures and processes, where decisions regarding the use of societal resources generated by both men and women are made, remains insignificant (BBC News through Online Women in Politics). Statistics show that the percentage of women in local government seats range from a high of 33% to a low of 2%. (Drage 2001).

Political participation according to Igwe (2002) is the degree and form of involvement of the people in governance and related institutions of society. In its active sense, it involves participation in political campaigns and debates, attending causes or strategy meetings of political parties, voting during elections, standing as candidate for elections and holding of government and party posts. Okolie's (2004) definition includes freedom of expression, association, right to free flow of communication, influence decision process, and right to demand for better social and health services, better working conditions and increase in wages, among others.

Women's political participation encompasses a wide range of actions and strategies. It includes voting and voter education, candidacy in national and local elections, joining political parties, lending support to candidates who carry gender-sensitive agenda, campaigning against those who are have policies that are 'anti-women's rights', and advocating for the integration of a women's rights agenda in the platforms of candidates and parties. It could also mean acting as intermediaries in both the selection process and grassroots voter mobilization (Chung-Li Wu, 2003). Political participation strategies include mechanisms that enhance women's political participation. (Bello 2003).

In this study, however, the researcher has restricted political participation to mean involvement in electoral politics only, that is, standing as candidates for elections. Election is a decision making process where people choose a candidate for office in government. It is integral to democratic governance. Ideally, elections serve as a major source of political recruitment, a means of making government, and of transferring government power, a guarantee of representation, and a major determinant of government policy (Heywood 2000). Electoral politics refers to public elections either for executive and legislative office holders or for initiative and referenda activities.

Women's participation in politics is very important. Women defend their own interests better than anyone else (Diakité 2007). According to Karl (1995), there can be no true democracy, no true people's participation in governance and development without the equal participation of men and women in all spheres of life and at all levels of decision making. Future society will not progress without making the best use of its women (Jung Sook 2006). Women's active political participation will improve dramatically the current politics.

The participation of Filipino women cannot be gauged merely by their role as candidate or political officials. It is done through a broader context in the policy process. For instance, women dominate the Philippine bureaucracy, reaching 36% and achieving even higher proportion in some offices. In civil society organizations, women are active both as leaders and members. The work of women NGO and political leaders has led to gains for women through successful advocacy for the passage of more gender oriented policies and services. However, despite these broader involvements, the number of women running for political positions has not increased dramatically (Tapaes 2005).

Several theoretical approaches – legal/institutional, sociological, psychological, rational choice, a political process – seek to explain patterns of participation in various types of political activities (Conway 2002). One aspect of sociological theory emphasizes cultural explanations for the low proportion of public offices held by women. The patriarchal culture that has dominated societies with its social norms, has assigned women to domestic life or narrowly prescribe work roles, such as clerk, secretary, nurse, or teacher. Social norms

combined with limited educational and occupational opportunities prevented most women from obtaining skills and resources necessary to compete successfully for public office.

Lyceum of the Philippines University in Batangas aims to provide quality education to its students both in the graduate and undergraduate level. Through its multi-disciplinary programs, it hopes to train future leaders committed to serve God and country. From the result of the study, a proposed intervention can be committed by Lyceum of the Philippines University which can serve as a model for other tertiary learning institutions to help increase women's political participation not just in the province of Batangas but in the whole country.

FRAMEWORK

Historically, the native women of the Philippines enjoyed high socio-economic status. They could own property, contribute to the economy, serve as priestesses or even ascend to the tribal throne (Salazar 2000). Spanish colonization which began in 1521 and ended in 1898 relegated the Filipino women to home and church. Americal colonization on the other hand (1898-1946) which opened the public schools to women as well as the professions, did not raise the consciousness of the Filipinos which trapped the women in the double standard of morality. It took many years of efforts from the gender conscious women and gender sensitive men who were in decision making positions or in influential organizations to gradually remove the barriers to women's emancipation. The suffragettes during the americal regime succeeded after a long battle, to get the vote for the women in the Philippines in 1937 (Aquino, 1994).

But while women got the vote and more registered women than men actually voted, there have not been a women's vote, in the sense that they had not really gotten certain candidates elected nor did the women run for office (Tapales 2003).

Women in electoral politics

Facts and Figures

In 2002, women still accounted for only about 14 percent of

members of parliament worldwide. (BBC News through Online Women in Politics). Out of over 180 countries, 14 are headed by women, six women are vice presidents. (Women's Learning Partnerships, 2002). In May 2003, Qatar appointed Sheikha bint Ahmed Al-Mahmud as the state's first woman cabinet minister. The appointment followed an April 29 referendum in which Qataris overwhelmingly approved a written constitution recognising a woman's right to vote and run for office. (DAWN Internet newspaper, May 2003) .

In 1893, New Zealand became the first nation to grant women full voting rights. Among the countries in the developing world that were the earliest to grant women the right to vote were: Albania (1920), Mongolia (1924), Ecuador (1929), Turkey (1930) and Sri Lanka (1931). Some of the latest countries to grant women suffrage are: Switzerland (1971), Iraq (1980), Namibia (1989), South Africa - black population (1994). Some countries still do not have universal suffrage. Among them are Brunei Darussalam, Kuwait, Sultanate of Oman, Saudi Arabia, and United Arab Emirates. Among the developing nations which have not ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) are: Bahrain, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sultanate of Oman, Syrian Arab Republic, United Arab Emirates. The United States is the only industrialized nation that has not ratified CEDAW. (Online Women: Statistics, Online Women in Politics <http://www.onlinewomeninpolitics.org/statistics.htm>)

Women in South Asia and the East Asia and Pacific sub-regions have had more electoral success overall than those in South-East Asia. In South Asia this success is directly related to a quota of reserved seats being allocated for women, a measure that, when introduced, instantly changed the level of women's involvement. In East Asia and the Pacific, the numbers reflect the length of time women have been able to vote and stand for election; the overall level of development in most of these countries and the social and economic circumstances within which women live, and the long campaigns for changes to increase the numbers. (Women in Local Government in Asia and the Pacific: A comparative analysis of thirteen countries, 2001).

Voter-turn out in the Philippines has generally been higher among women than in men (Tapales, 2005). In 1995 national and local elections, the turn out of women was 71.0% and 70.3% for men, although there

were more registered male (18.3 million) than female voters (18.1 million). There have been no significant increase in the number of women running for elective positions, much less those who actually win. In 1995, there were 6 female candidates out of the 28 candidates for senatorial posts (21.4%). There were 56 female candidates out of the 611 candidates for congressional posts (9/2%) Women won 2 of the 12 senate posts (16.67%) and 25 of 207 congressional seats (12.08%) in the 1998 national and local elections. If party list representative would be included, we would have 27 women out of 220 seats.

At the local level, as of 1998, women covered 21.31% of the total gubernatorial posts (233 of 1544), and 13.64% (or 94 out of 672) of the total posts. Almost 18% of the total mayoralty posts were women, 12,785 were women vice-mayors. There were 2,102 women councilors out of the 12,680 contested seats. Tapales recommended that providing awards & incentives can help inspire other women to follow suit.

Another study conducted by Tapales in 2005 looked at the profiles of Filipino women provincial governors plus city and municipal mayors who were elected into office in 1992, 1995, 1998, and 2001. It presents their socio-economic profiles, their entry into politics, and the major projects they pursued as they got into office. Some issues emerge from the study. For one, the increasing proportion of women local chief executives relative to the males may be encouraging, but there can be problems when the women candidates merely serve as “breakers,” to keep the mayoral seats warm for the return of their husbands to office after they have served their mandatory “resting time” at the end of their maximum terms. This is corroborated by the findings of Santos et al (2007) where women politicians interviewed stated that the reason they enter politics is to serve as “breakers” or stand-in for their husband or other siblings.

Factors Affecting Women's Participation

Differing explanations have been offered by political scientists as to why women have lower rate of participation as public officials than men. These include physiological constraints where women are perceived to lack the psychosocial characteristics associated with political leadership cultural constraints (the perception that politics

is a man's world, role constraint where women have been socialized into the lifetime role of mother and wife and lastly male conspiracy. Men seek to preserve their positions by imposing restraints barring women from access to position of influence (Medoff 1986).

These explanations were corroborated by the findings of a recent study conducted by Santos et al in 2007. The study zeroed in on the barriers to women's participation in politics. The researchers cited various cultural, political and economic factors both personal and structural continue to impede Filipino women's full and meaningful participation in politics. Among these factors are the persistence of sexist beliefs and practices in domestic and public spheres, a male centered (macho) political culture, women's lack of skills and motivation to assume leadership roles and inadequate support to enable them to enter politics and effectively perform their work.

The factors that limit women's political participation include cultural and institutional factors (Jung Sook, 2006). Cultural factors are more fundamental, while institutional factors tend to be derived or constructed. Therefore, a more effective short-term method of reducing barriers involves focusing on the institutional component rather than attacking cultural factors.

Political scientists have demonstrated that the public looks at women and men in politics in predictably stereo type ways (Dolan, 2006). The stereotyped assessment of political leaders & candidates focused on three major areas: Ideology, personality characteristics, and issue of specialization. One of the more stereotypes of women is that they are more liberal than men. (Dodson, 2002). Another way in which voter's stereotype women candidates is by ascribing to them certain character traits. The public sees women candidates as warm, compassionate, kind & passive, while men are perceived as strong, knowledgeable, tough, direct, and assertive. The final major stereotype that voters about women candidates is a set of beliefs about their policy interest and expertise.

Lawless & Fox (2005) has three major findings. Women are less likely than men to consider running for office. Lawless and Fox point to the obvious burdens of family role socialization on women. They further concluded that increasing the number of women candidates will require significant social and systemic changes.

Another approach taken to the study of women candidate's emergence is that of Burrell & Frederick (2006). They focused on the "recruitment pool" which they define as "consisting of positions likely to be considered to be viable candidates or named as potential candidates when election opportunities arise. While it was a different process of candidates', emergence that was examined by Lawless and Fox, it does provide support for the option that there is relatively little bias against women who entered politics. Lawless & Fox (2005) suggests that party organizations are less supportive of women candidates. They find that potential women candidates being less likely to have been encouraged to run for office by party leaders that did similarly situate men. The constraints include the under-representation of women in the leadership of political parties, the lack of internal guidelines or gender equality policies within parties, discrimination in candidate selection, and unfavorable placement of women candidates on parties' candidate lists. Financing for women's campaigns was also raised by participants as a major challenge.

Strategies to Increase Women's Political Participation

The following strategies are proposed by Idea (2002) to increase the representation of women. Support and strengthen links between women's networks and organizations. Increase the representation of women in political parties. Conduct advocacy with the leaders of political parties. Developing access to the media Increase the understanding and awareness of women through education and training. Improving the capabilities and political experiences of women and Introduce a quota to increase women members of parliament.

To enhance women's participation in the political sphere, Matland (2004) proposed that Women should organize themselves inside and outside political parties. Women should urge parties to set down clear rules for candidate selection. PR systems are better than majoritarian systems for increasing women's representation. Women should keep in mind all variables and alternatives with regard to electoral system design. Existing research suggests that the more seats in the national legislatures the better it is for women, because this will increase party magnitude.

The study entitled “Women in Local Government in Asia and the Pacific: A comparative analysis of thirteen countries” suggests strategies to increase the number of women in local government. Strategies need to be adopted to change policies and structures that perpetuate women’s subordinate status. Policies on economic and social empowerment are needed to enable women to participate on an equal footing with men. Local government needs to work closely with NGOs, civil societies and women’s groups to develop communities and services that take account of the needs of women. Women in local government need financial support, childcare, support systems and training opportunities. Women’s associations to be established for women councilors and managers in local government to provide a voice for women’s views and a base for networking. Women in local government need to encourage more women to participate. Funds should be established to assist women to run for election. Gender-disaggregated statistics need to be collected to increase the visibility of women.

The study is anchored on the liberal feminist theory. The theory advocates that the female gender like their male counterparts, should be entitled to full human rights, and therefore, should be free to choose their role in life and explore their full potential in equal competition with men. In other words, there should not be any man-made obstacle or barrier preventing women from engaging in any legitimate enterprise they deemed necessary. The theory goes further to postulate that there should not be any undue favoritism for any sex on the basis of gender. Men and women should enjoy the same rights and have equal opportunities (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2007).

Politics is complex and is undergoing changes due to globalization. There remain old and new outstanding issues to resolve but also new issues emerging and the formation of new opportunities for women. Women are making a mark in the formal institutions of government. Many more women are becoming a part of the state and local government institutions. This study advocates active women’s participation in electoral politics and the removal of all obstacles that stand on the way of women towards achieving parity with men in politics.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study aims to determine women's participation in electoral politics in the province of Batangas. Specifically, it sought to determine profile of Women politician in terms of individual characteristics and experience; women elected from 1998 to 2007, their priority projects, the factors that impede their participation, the relationship between the profile and the factors that impede their participation. and the platform for action that LPU can propose to help improve women's political participation in the province.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

The study employed the descriptive-correlational method to obtain information about the current status of women in electoral politics.

Participants of the Study

Respondents of the study are women politicians who won in the 2007 local election and are occupying elective positions in the province of Batangas from Governor to the Municipal Councilors. Thirty respondents were chosen from the present number of women occupying elective positions (38) utilizing convenience sampling.

Data Gathering Instrument

A researcher-made questionnaire patterned from the researches conducted by Tapales (2005), Matland (1998) and Medoff (1996) was utilized with modification to suit the present study.

Data Analysis

The following were utilized by the researcher: frequency distribution and percentage, weighted mean, eta-squared.

Data Gathering Procedure

Data were gathered with the use of survey questionnaire and interview. The collected data was tallied, analyzed and interpreted.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings are supported by the study conducted by Tapales (2005) where local chief executives consider family support, personality, name (i.e., family name), party support, and support of community organizations, in that order as factors crucial for winning elections.

The results are very far from the UN target of 30%. Ideally, if there is to be a proportionate number of women representatives in legislative bodies and executive positions in relation to the group it is supposed to represent (i.e., women) then the ratio of male to female legislators should be 1:1.

Table 2. Women in electoral politics in the province of Batangas 1998-2007

POSITION/DISTRICT	1998	2001	2004	2007
Governor				1
Vice-Governor				
First District				1
Board Member/SP				
Mayor	2		1	2
Vice-Mayor		1		
Councilors	9	13	8	7
Second District				
Board Member/SP				
Mayor				
Vice-Mayor	1			
Councilors	7	5	7	9

Third District				
Board Member/SP	1	3		1
Mayor		1	1	5
Vice-Mayor	2	1		
Councilors	8	9	12	10
Forth District				
Board Member/SP	1	2	2	2
Mayor	1	2	2	
Vice-Mayor				
Councilors	4	10	7	6
TOTAL	36	47	40	44

Source: Department of Interior & Local Government

Table 2. Factors that impede women's participation in electoral politics in terms of socio-economic factors

Items	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. Poverty and underemployment	3.20	Agree	2
2. Lack of adequate financial resources	3.47	Agree	1
3. Illiteracy and limited access to education and choice of professions	2.90	Agree	3
4. The dual burden of domestic tasks and professional obligations	2.87	Agree	4
Composite Mean	3.11	Agree	

The female politicians identified lack of financial support from political parties as the number one factor that hinders their participation. Personal resources is not enough to win in election. Political campaign is very necessary to get the voters' support. Voter's

support is influenced by political campaigns. Political campaigns can influence election results by conveying the candidate's issue positions and personal characteristics to a sufficient number of voters, thereby mobilizing voter support (Medoff, 1986).

Table 3. Factors that impede women's participation in electoral politics in terms of cultural and institutional factors

Items	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. Women is perceived to be the weaker sex.	2.13	Disagree	8.5
2. The strong macho culture of the Batanguenos	2.23	Disagree	7
3. The belief that the women's place is at home	2.10	Disagree	10
4. Women's weak access to and integration into political institutions	2.13	Disagree	8.5
5. The tailoring of many of these institutions according to male standards and political attitudes	2.33	Disagree	6
6. Lack of party support, including money and other resources to fund women's campaigns and boost their political, social and economic credibility	2.63	Agree	2
7. The lack of media attention on women's contributions and potential, which also results in the lack of a constituency for women	2.47	Disagree	4.5
8. The lack of coordination with and support from women's organizations and other NGO's	2.50	Agree	3

9. Women's low self-esteem and self-confidence, supported by certain cultural patterns which do not facilitate women's access to political careers	2.47	Disagree	4.5
10. The type of electoral system as well as the lack of quota reservations	2.70	Agree	1
Composite Mean	2.37	Disagree	

Table 3 illustrated the cultural and institutional factors that impede women's participation in electoral politics. Garnering the highest mean of 2.70 was item no. 10, the type of electoral system as well as the lack of quota system. According to Jung Sook (2006) adopting quota systems in politics related law or election law for assuring women's representation is a worldwide trend. The goal is to let more women advance into politics in the short term and to encourage many young women to take interest in politics and become prospective politicians over the longer term. In the Philippines, the enactment of the Gender Bill is expected to solve the problem. It is interesting to note in the findings of the study and from the interview conducted with women politicians, generally cultural & institutional factors does not actually impede women's political participation. Contrary to findings of the cited studies that machismo in politics continues to hinder women's effective and sustained participation in electoral politics.

Table 5. Factors that impede women's participation in electoral politics in terms of ideological and psychological factors

Items	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. Gender ideology and cultural patterns, as well as pre-determined social roles assigned to women and men	2.43	Disagree	3
2. Women's lack of confidence to run for elections	2.33	Disagree	4

3. Women’s perception of politics as a “dirty” game	2.47	Disagree	2
4. The way in which women are portrayed in the mass media	2.57	Agree	1
Composite Mean	2.45	Disagree	

Legend: 4 - 3.50 – 4.00 Strongly Agree 2 - 1.50 – 2.49 Disagree
 3 - 2.50 – 3.49 Agree 1 - 1.00 – 1.49 Strongly Disagree

The participants agree that socio-economic factors impede women’s political participation with item number 2, Lack of adequate financial resources obtaining the highest weighted mean of 3.47. The participants likewise agree that Factors that Impede Women’s Participation in Electoral Politics in terms of Cultural and Institutional Factors is the type of electoral system as well as the lack of quota reservations, ranked first and garnering the highest weighted mean of 2.70. With regards to Ideological and Psychological Factors, participants agreed that item number 4, the way in which women are portrayed in the mass media impede women’s political participation. It obtained the highest weighted mean of 2.57.

Table 5. Relationship between the profile variables and the factors that impede women’s participation in electoral politics

Factors Profile Variables	Socio- Economic	Cultural	Ideological and Psychological
Age	0.590	0.183	0.235
Educational Attainment	0.742	0.764	0.485
Civil Status	.0437	*0.021	0.206
Political Experience	0.524	0.876	0.459
Present Position	0.172	0.978	0.843
Political Recruitment	0.428	0.910	0.821
Project Priorities	0.982	0.185	*0.028

Legend: p-value < 0.05 = Significant *
 p-value > 0.05 = Not Significant

Based from the table, the computed p-value of civil status and project priorities were less than 0.05 level of significance, thus the null hypothesis of no significant relationship between the profile variables (civil status and project priorities) and the factors that impede women's participation in electoral politics in terms of cultural and ideological and psychological factors was affected by their profile. Other variables do not show significant relationship.

CONCLUSION

The women politicians belong to the 43-57 age bracket, college graduates and married. They started as councilors and were recruited by political parties. At present, majority are serving as councilors. The women politicians believe that support of community organizations, family support, party support and the personality of the women candidate are factors for winning in elections. Health is their priority project.

Women's participation in electoral politics in the province of Batangas is very minimal with 15.33%, very much lower than the UN target of 30%. Socio-economic factors impede women's political participation with lack of financial resources as number one factor.

The type of electoral system as well as the lack of quota reservations are the cultural and institutional factors that impede women's political participation. The way in which women are portrayed in media is believed to be the ideological & psychological factor that impede women's participation in politics in the province of Batangas.

There is a significant relationship between the profile variables (civil status and project priorities) and the factors that impede women's participation in electoral politics in terms of cultural and ideological and psychological factors.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Develop plans to address barriers identified. Develop advocacy plans that will push for the enactment of the Gender Bill for this will ensure 50-50 participation and equal funding of men and women in electoral process. Help ensure that women are represented in a

meaningful manner in party decision making and party leadership positions.

2. Develop training programs, including leadership skills training, to prepare women to fulfill their roles as government officials.

3. Develop cooperation in the areas of research, financing and publicity needed to reinforce female leadership.

4. Conduct a research on women's representation in the media, encouraging mass communication and public administration students to carry out more thorough studies and identify quantitative and qualitative indicators as a basis for in-depth analysis. Organize analytical workshops on female representation in the media with political parties and press associations on order to spur changes.

5. In Coordination with the Department Chair of Mass Communication & College of Computer Studies together with Mass Communication and Computer Science students, provide a diversified media training for politically active women.

6. Encourage women already in political posts to help persuade more women to join in politics & governance. Networking and setting up of organizations for the purpose would help.

7. Lobby for the LGU's compliance of Article 93 (b) (2) of the Local Government Code of 1991.

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