Gender Affairs Committee (SA6)

The Question of Gender Polarization in Southeast Asia

İPEK AYHAN

Forum: Gender Affairs Committee (SA6)

Issue: The Question of Gender Polarization in Southeast Asia

Student Officer: İpek Ayhan - Deputy Chair

Introduction

The subregion of Asia, known as Southeast Asia, consists of the geographical areas that are the south part of China, east part of the Indian subcontinent and north-west of Australia. Throughout the history, the notions human body, sexuality, gender and sex have always been misunderstood by those in the society, which created great polarization in the vicinities of Southeast Asia. The way how people shape their identities, bodies and sexuality have always been an arguable topic for them being solely determined by societal norms and rules. Therefore, understanding the reasoning behind the profound polarization occurring in that specific territory concerns defining and practising that are witnessed in accordance with the stigmatized gender roles, expectations and numerous political, cultural, ethic, political and religious backgrounds. The falsified perceptions of those conceptions have pervaded in the Asian societies which address the urgency of the situation that the definitions of gender and sex have to be reconstructed through synchronous events of all-round education. Due to those misinterpretations, women and men have been treated differently in different environments such as but not limited to business life, politics, media etc. where their socio-economic adnd socio-politic status is dependant solely on their sex. Therefore, tackling social, religious, cultural and economic problems require eliminating diverse social norms that doubtlessly propose dire challenges to the effort in increasing women's participation in life through preserving their rights.

South East Asia

Definition of Key Terms

Gender polarization: A conception which suggests that the definition of femininity and masculinity are two far and opposite terms that have certain distinctions, causing them to be completely opposite.

Discrimination: Alienating, casting out and undermining people based on their socail status, sex, race, age or disability.

Socio-economic status: A reflection of the individual's education, income and occupation to his/her social standing.

General Overview

There are various reasons why gender polarization is occuring in the eastern part of the world and its influence on each individual varies depending on the severity of discrimination and alienation. Women and men's access to religious and political authority, healthcare and sanitation, hierarchical rules within the families are never the same and the unbalanced opportunities given to different sexes, continue to further tear apart the society. Recognition and social equality for women and men lies at the core of the issue of gender polarization in Southeast Asia in this volume. The equal distribution of recognition can be considered as a subject of self-realization; however, when an individual is deprived of acknowledgement and acceptance, the society automatically denies the prerequisite for prosperity. In other words, recognizing someone means valuing their thoughts and considering their respect substantial. A democtratic environment can only be achieved if and only if the recognition is mutual; whereas, if a mutually beneficial acknowledgment is not accomplished or fails to fulfill its requirements, a certain political plane and legislation ought to interfere in order to satisfy the both side's needs and demands. In order to live up to the desires and concerns raised predominantly by women living in Southeast Asia, they should be given opportunities to speak up for themselves and live in an environment where mutually advantageous relationships construct the foundation of the society and establish work patterns in combination of both women and men.The dominant elements which are aroused due to gender-related bigotry are health and quality work environments where the majority of the men possess dominance and women are left with no other choice than being suppressed and silenced; thereby, gender-related offences elevate the tension between the two poles drastically. Throughout the history, the extensive observational data have shown that the major roadblock in the issue of gender-diversity is the gap in the distribution of the participation rate of women and men. While the current pattern of women's political inclusion in East Asia constitutes 16%, the average gets slightly better in Southeast Asia with a rate of 18%. Nonetheless, looking at the data, it is possible to point out the obstacles women face in equal attendance in formal politics and the process of contributing to determining legislations. Women in Southasia have been repeatedly reporting that in a male-dominant society, they struggle to express themselves and overcome the enormity of any kind of inequality they encounter on a daily basis. Although Southeast Asia accomplishes to navigate an ample array of societal and cultural distinction, when it comes to politics and business, the benefits of having a vast cultural variety is overpassed and overridden. The ineffectiveness of this diversity is provoked due to the fact that men are perceived as the decision making organ of the society where women are significantly overshadowed, resulting with the vain attempts of the leaders to govern properly and eliminate ongoing issues. A high portion of women have stated that when it comes

to the alignment of men and women in business, women are treated as second class and are denied by companies who state that women are not cut out for particular jobs such as engineering, computer science and politicians. Although two citizens, one male and another female, having the same graduate degree and experience in a certain field, the companies in Southeast Asia tend to overlook concrete facts and recruit males unjustifiably without solid and valid grounds. Therefore, women in the Southasian region have been addressing their lack of self-esteem due to not being equally evaluated. The lack of career advancement drags the society in a vicious cycle where leadership roles are distributed unfairly and female retention rates rise up meaninglessly. According to Zoe Morris, the wrecked foundation in gender polarization is reinforced through the inadequacy of the accessibility to find a way to balance business and home life and when these merge with the lack of tenacity in professional aspiration, it is inevitable to observe derangements in the society.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

Thailand

The studies done in Thailand reveal that male values appear as the norm, which eventually leads women to gain misconceptions of uncertainty and loss of power and end up with responses of apprehension and illness problems. On the other hand, a study examining the psychological aspects of gender discrimination have uncovered that women in Thialand are confronting with enormous social, health and economic challanges involving large-scale violence and political insecurities and fluctuations which is associated with the population not being proportional to the net income of families. Moreover, traditional gender roles preserve their role in the region as well. The appointed roles for women and men differentiate with strict concepts: women are held accountable for household, whereas men are the breadwinners. These assigned roles for men and women aggravate the problem since these ideas provoke discriminative behaviors in the society which makes it even harder to break taboos and societal norms.

Pakistan

In accordance with Thialand, the perception of men in Pakistan adds up to the subservient role of women, as men most of the time go unpenalized for physical and sexual assault. Moreover, due to the stagnant economic conditions in the region, the majority of women and young girls are subjected to human trafficking and forced into prostitution, unwilling marriages and bonded labor. All these factors add up to a single view that as long as women are underestimated and devalued, their chances of immersing themselves in the society to contribute to the economy and business is brutally taken away from them. Unsurprisingly, in the country more than 87% of employees and employers are men. Women living in Pakistan come across with an array of economic and social controversies when it comes to obtaining access to the labour market, involving chances to migrate to get employed in safe and fair conditions. With an estimate of 22%, Pakistan has one of the lowest female labour force participation rates in South Asia. Moreover, 75% of women in the labor force haven't received formal nor quality education and solely about 25% of them have some type of a university degree.Cultural opposition to working women in Pakistan leads to the blockage of economic productivity of women both within and outside Pakistan.

Religion plays a great role in the lives of Indian people which automatically creates an imbalance in how women and men are treated since a concept men are entitled superior whereas women are labelled as "bad luck". If a woman gives birth to a son, it is a momentous event worthy of celebration; whereas, giving birth to a daughter is considered as a disgrace and is derogated. Additionally, in some cases, a common practise forces women to abort their fetus if the gender of it is a female. As a Muslim girl gets older, burdens continue to increase incrementally. More than half of the girl population in India are exposed to honor killings, unwanted marriages and compulsory female circumcision. Thus, expectedly, women in India are most likely to have intense inclination to demonstrate psychological issues than men. The data collected in India points out that twice as many women endured mental disorders, and three times as many women committed suicide. Moreover, Pakistani women suffering from depressive disorders stressed the points that the psychological symptoms were triggered by marital conflict, conflict with in-laws, economic dependence, lack of plum job, burden of parental responsibilities and work obligations.

Treaties and Events

38th Human Rights Council Session: A panel discussion about increasing women's rights in the economic field through providing them with the access they need to partake in both communication and knowledge technologies. The panel primarily focused on the issue of falsely promotion the capabilities of men and women in business while underlying the fact that to eliminate violence against women, initiatives regarding the encouragement of women in political decision-making process must be advanced, reinforced and safeguarded by well-negotiated treaties.

UN Decade for Women (975–985): UN Women's Conference aimed at driving attention to the direness of the gender polarization crisis in the world while suggesting feasible solution alternatives to diminish the discriminstion observed in the eastern countries. The conference assessed the huge numbers of socio-political and socio-economic issues regarding justice and acknowledgement of women in societies. They came to the conclusion that providing avenues in the quest of settling disputes to achieve a peaceful environment as the world becomes more polarized, is the ideal solution.

Taking place in Beijing, *The Fourth World Conference for Women* was a significant step taken in order to initiate significant changes in the gender polarization issue. This gathering took place in 1995, which led to the establishment of another joint commision called the *49th session of the UN's Commission on Status of Women* that appoints to confirm the imperative requirements that stress the need for effective implementations regarding subsidizing the damaging effects of gender inequality.

United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW): Focusing on advocating for the development of the conditions of women around the world and mutual accomplishment of women's equality with men, *United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women* is an entity devoted to raise awareness on the argument that gender wage gap drastically increases with women lacking opportunity to have a plum job. The organization's chief aim is to demonstrate gender inequality as pervasive and express that women from all around the world are refused from taking part in business and healthcare

sectors. Likewise, the organization emphasizes the point that women are overlooked in political decision-making organs and that they endure discrimination, alienation and assault. Following the path to ensure equal participation of women and men in any field, DAW argues that in order to develop sustainably and preserve peace and security, women should be promoted as equal beneficiaries as men. While the organization works as a sub organ of UN Women to revive the mainstreaming of a gender viewpoint outside and within the UN orders, it simultaneously endeavours to construct a platform specifically pointing out for women to meet their needs.

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

According to the Resolution 997 of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, publicizing a gender perspective is the process of analyzing the influence of any proposed action, including legislation, policies or services, on women and men in all fields and at all levels. Since the ultimate goal of legislations regarding resolving gender polarization in Southeast Asia, a strategy that involves making men's and women's concerns equally important and to achieve this, an integral aspect of the exercise, monitoring and assessing of coherent policies within the spheres of economic, social and political fields must be evaluated to ensure that inequality is not perpetuated.

Possible Solutions

In order to diminish the gender inequality crisis in Southeast Asia, concrete plans such as decisions on top management levels have to be subjected to demographic changes. While up- dating gender perspectives and educating the society on gender taboos present a long-term solution alternative, in order to solve this issue from its root, radical solutions have to be taken effectively immediately. Treaties focusing on augmenting women's suffrage have to be ratified not only by a couple of Southeast countries, but the treated must pass anonymously. Since ensuring the Member State's participation in these elections can never be guaranteed, achievement-oriented goals should be employed to increase the number of women and female decision- makers in political fields in order to prove a better understanding of gender problems involved. Additionally, the articles in the treaties have to be considered meticulously, regarding their appropriateness to the dominant religion in the country since indigenous people are deeply connected with their religion bigotedly. Another point of view is that on a global scale, more women living in Southeast Asia are belittled and abused than any other region; thus, in order to resolve the particular harm involving sexual assault and domestic violence women are exposed to, simple education programs and redistributing social and material commodities would not be efficient in overcoming the seriousness of this issue. Women's exclusion from public exemption and refusal of full human rights can only be rectified if and only if treaties regarding the reconstruction of the recognition of both males and females are finalised equally under the same circumstances. In order to tackle gender equality, the member states should focus on three different aspects to diminish restrictive gender norms and elevate the prosperity and health of communities: massive-scale legislations, laws and policies, governance-related behaviour and gender transformative programming for wellness.

Bibliography

Trueman, Charlotte. "The State of Gender Diversity in Southeast Asia." *CIO*, CIO, 21 Sept. 2018, www.cio.com/article/3307122/the-state-of-gender-diversity-in-southeast-asia.html.

"The Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties at Fifty: An Anniversary Celebration - General Assembly of the United Nations." *United Nations*, United Nations, www.un.org/pga/73/2019/05/23/the-vienna-convention-on-the-law-of-treaties-at-fifty-an-anniversary-celebration/.

"How Gender Stereotyping Affects the Enjoyment of Human Rights." *OHCHR*, www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/WRGS/Pages/WrongfulGenderStereotyping.aspx.

"Gender Discrimination in Southeast Asia." *BORGEN*, 8 July 2014, www.borgenmagazine.com/gender-discrimination-southeast-asia/.

Ditkowsky, Alexis. "5 Tips for Preventing and Reducing Gender Bias." *Making Caring Common*, Making Caring Common, 11 Oct. 2018, mcc.gse.harvard.edu/resources-for-families/5-tips-for-preventing-and-reducing-gender-bias.

Trueman, Charlotte. "The State of Gender Diversity in Southeast Asia." *CIO*, CIO, 21 Sept. 2018, www.cio.com/article/3307122/the-state-of-gender-diversity-in-southeast-asia.html.

Ditkowsky, Alexis. "5 Tips for Preventing and Reducing Gender Bias." *Making Caring Common*, Making Caring Common, 11 Oct. 2018, mcc.gse.harvard.edu/resources-for-families/5-tips-for-preventing-and-reducing-gender-bias.

"Gender Discrimination in Southeast Asia." *BORGEN*, 8 July 2014, www.borgenmagazine.com/gender-discrimination-southeast-asia/.

. Written by Neil Schoenherr, Senior News Director. "Policies That Target Gender Inequality Boost Family Health." *World Economic Forum*, www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/07/policies-that-target-gender-inequality-boost-family-health.

Hegewisch, Ariane, and Valerie Lacarte. "Gender Inequality, Work Hours, and the Future of Work." *IWPR 2020*, 26 Aug. 2020, iwpr.org/iwpr-issues/employment-and-earnings/gender-inequality-work-hours-and-the-future-of-work/.

Hegewisch, Ariane, and Valerie Lacarte. "Gender Inequality, Work Hours, and the Future of Work." *IWPR 2020*, 26 Aug. 2020, iwpr.org/iwpr-issues/employment-and-earnings/gender-inequality-work-hours-and-the-future-of-work/.

"The Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties at Fifty: An Anniversary Celebration - General Assembly of the United Nations." *United Nations*, United Nations, www.un.org/pga/73/2019/05/23/the-vienna-convention-on-the-law-of-treaties-at-fifty-an-anniversary-celebration/.

"How Gender Stereotyping Affects the Enjoyment of Human Rights." *OHCHR*, www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/WRGS/Pages/WrongfulGenderStereotyping.aspx.

Chronology of the International Events and Treaties Promoting Gender Equality, www.gender.cawater-info.net/what_is/chronology_e.htm.

"United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women." *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 11 Dec. 2020, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations_International_Research_and_Training_Institute_for_the_Advancement_of_Women.

"UN Women: The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women - Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth." *United Nations*, United Nations, www.un.org/youthenvoy/2013/07/un-women-the-united-nations-entity-for-gender-equality-and-the-empowerment-of-women/.

"OSAGI - Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issies and Advancement of Women." *United Nations*, United Nations, www.un.org/womenwatch/osaginew/index.html.

"China's Influence in Southeast Asia Looks Set to Rise." *Geopolitical Intelligence Services*, www.gisreportsonline.com/southeast-asias-future-tied-to-great-power-competition,politics,3054.html.