

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

A. Background

As a matter of fact, women exceed that of men in terms of population; it said that two third of the world's population are women. However, women are the most affected ones regarding to the equal rights with their male counterparts. The inequality has put women as the inferiors which allows them to do almost nothing but to accept the situation as it is. Also, it has been worsened by the art of patriarchy, women subordinates, the rooted perception that public domains are for those (men) as the ones who are granted to it. Moreover, the reciprocal relation of men to government instead of the people to government is socially constructed. (Ginwala, 2002)

In politics, male has been dominating the arena in which feminists believe that it should not be accepted any longer. Male counterparts who are contributing very much as the decision makers have lost their credibility when it comes to certain policies that might affect women such as social prejudice and treatment towards women, office hours for women, birth-leaving days off, and women-friendly public facilities. Furthermore, they often fail to see that women should be the ones to take care of these policies. Women who are the most affected by the “system” should be the ones to take a chance for change.

The male counterparts kept doing what they have been doing because there is an absence of women in politics, particularly in the decision-making

process. In fact, it is quite impossible that lots of men do not realize how such ignorance towards the issue encountered by women could bear a very serious impact for the entire nations in the world. Such circumstance has women gathered around to bring the notion to the surface to help them sorting out solutions for themselves. Through the women movements, NGOs, also other legal bodies and institutions from local, national and international, women are chasing after their goals to achieve an equality. By embarking the notion of gender and its entitlement to equality, women have departed to bring the awareness and to shape public's opinion towards women. The issue of inequality has women identified who they really are; women are subject as similar as men who are able to have powers and controls over themselves. Women have been very much aware that they could also pursue their dreams and to achieve more for their future just like their male counterparts could.

Regarding to the issue encountered by Emirati women, this undergraduate thesis lifts up an issue on how the advocacy process of the advocacy actors to increase women's participation in politics, to encourage more Emirati women to represent themselves in the parliament, also to increase their awareness of their own role and contribution to the society. In this thesis, there are three main actors in advocacy that represent three levels; the international level, state level, as well as civil society level.

The international level represent the international organization, in which UN Women. UN Women is one best representative of the international organization

as it has a huge influence to women in more than 150 countries in the world. UN Women's agendas have been life-changing for women and save the life of women and girls all around the universe. Meanwhile, in the state level, the United Arab Emirates' Government is the key actor of the advocacy process in this issue. Should the government be the most prominent actor that enable women to preserve their rights, because government is the most powerful actor in any nations. UAE government is the key actor in this issue and the only actor who holds the power. UAE government has the capacity as well as legitimacy to a policy-making and to implement the policies altogether with the citizens and other state's instruments, such as women's organizations or women's movement in which in this undergraduate thesis, is represented by the UAE's General Women's Union (GWU), the first women's movement inside the United Arab Emirates.

United Arab Emirates is rather unique than the other liberal and democratic countries. Surely, most of the Arab states have never been growing up and familiar with liberalism. This does apply too in the United Arab Emirates, in which the idealism could not always meet the realism. UAE's General Women's Union is the prominent example for this situation. In democratic countries, movement or organization is commonly recognized as and independent entity. Their establishment mostly do not have the responsibility to the government, thus, they are commonly known as Non-Governmental Organization (NGO).

Such case did not apply in the GWU's case, as this women's organization is still somewhat controlled by the government. In one of the international

meetings held by the United Nations, GWU involves the Minister of Foreign affairs who is also a part of the government's entity of the United Arab Emirates. Such phenomena is rather unique compared to another non-governmental organizations. The position of NGOs in the United Arab Emirates is very unlikely the organizations in the democratic country. To put simply, the United Arab Emirates is not familiar with independent organizations, as it is perceived by the system as an act that might lead to political instability. Moreover, the UAE's General Women's Union was established by the wife of the first president as well as the founder of the federation state. The women's organization is engaged closely to the government.

The history of UN Women was started in a form of a commission namely Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). It has been seven decades since the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) held its first consolidation in the New York, not long after the founding of the United Nation. The Commission was then recognised by the UN, which was later on involved in one of the UN Departments which is the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) in the UN Secretariat¹. The first achievement of the Commission was the contribution in the United Declaration for Human Rights (UDHR) 1947 by successfully argued that the Commission was against the word 'men' as a synonym for humanity, yet women should entitled one, too.

¹ UN Women. (2017). *A Brief History of the CSW*. Retrieved from UN WOMEN: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/brief-history>

UN Women was coined in 2011 by the United Nations as it is probably one of the divisions with the very dedication towards equality. The four systems in the United Nations that are *Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW)*, *International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW)*, *UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)* and *Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI)* had merged into UN Women². Under the supervision of the United Nations, UN Women spreads its wings and broadens its dedication for the world's gender subject.

UN Women has done numerous works for empowering women in many countries. If the flight goes to India, UN WOMEN takes a huge role in empowering the Indian women. Departed from various issues encountered by Indian women such as domestic violence, adolescence, education, also the other public access for women, UN Women has underpinned to resolve the issue by empowering the Indian women. There are more schools attended by girls and also communities run by women in India. Sushma Swaraj would probably be the best example of the women's representation in Indian's politics. Served as a member of parliament for the sixth term and was the leader of opposition in the 15th *Lok Sabha*³. She recently takeholds as the leader of Union Minister Of External Affairs of India. Sushma is the second person to handle this position after Indira

² Ibid.

³ Lok Sabha is a Lower House for People's Representative in the Indian Parliament. The leader of Lok Sabha is directly elected by the Indian's citizens.

Gandhi⁴. Women's achievement in India has been developed once because of the advocacy from the external party such as UN Women which empowers the goals of every country for their women including the United Arab Emirates.

The traditional belief in Arab countries had somehow constructed a consensus that women had never been better to express themselves anywhere except inside their houses. The condition had somehow degraded the rights of women to pursue their own dreams. Women's role that is limited, especially in vital sectors in their home countries such as economics, labor force and political participation in most of Arab states, somehow unveils the Arab gender issues, particularly in the level of supporting women empowerment that is low. As women's roles were limited, the situation showed almost no significant appearance of women's performances under the circumstances.

Being under the patriarchal rules, women in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) seems to encounter their own anxiety. Although the respective state's government has worked to elevate the quality of its economy, politics, social and security, Emirati women are still undergoing a transition. Their society is exposed to foreign influence and adapts to changing identities while protecting cultural and religious tradition⁵. Their rights to equality which remains degraded has had the

⁴ India Today. (2015, September 4). *10 Most Powerful Female Politicians in India*. Retrieved from INDIA TODAY: <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/education/story/women-politicians/1/465444.html>

⁵ Kirdar, S. (2010). *Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa: Progress Amid Resistance*. New York: Freedom House.

situation forced several prominent international institutions and organizations which concern towards women to then initiate the women empowerment promotion in the Arab countries.

In 1975, UAE Women's Federation was successfully established under the initiation of Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak⁶, the first lady of the respective state's first leader. The establishment which best marked the intention of the United Arab Emirates to promote gender equality in the country brought Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak to the most influential women for political participation of women in the respective state, United Arab Emirates. At that time, women in the United Arab Emirates were not very familiar with how gender equality works. Gender mainstreaming was not resonated as much as the modern UAE. The situation had put Emirati women in a not very strategic position. They had no real power and they were not even thinking of speaking up their minds, especially knowing that women are not much engaged with their society, moreover with their male counterparts.

However, by 2004, since the UAE's former president had passed away and his leadership was handed to his son, the UAE's government performance in elevating other sectors for women's opportunity to pursue their dream was marked by many Emirati women who were offered a high-profile position in the government and business world. Unsurprisingly, restrictions are still applied to

⁶ MiddleEast Arab. (2010, April 26). *The UAE Women's Federation*. Retrieved from MiddleEast Arab: middleeastarab.com/ae/uae-womens-federation.html

some professions, and the support for advancements in women's rights varies among the emirates. Moreover, societal and familial perceptions of a woman's proper role continue to perform a significant barrier to advancement⁷. In the same year, United Arab Emirates was reported to ratify several articles in the Convention on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) as an action for women empowerment.

In contrast, the women's rights abuse in United Arab Emirates was reported in 2010. The Committee of International Federations for Human Rights (FIDH) highlighted numbers of principal concern⁸ which refers to women's discrimination before the law of UAE. Some of the issues started from the absence of the UAE's law about legal prohibition towards gender-based discriminations such as the discrimination in marriage and family relations, violence against women (lack of protection against domestic violence, rape, female circumcision, particular vulnerability of women migrant domestic workers), discrimination in other vital aspects such as politics, access to education, freedom to establish associations as well as violation of freedom of movement.

Therefore, the importance of abolishing the gender inequality in Arab peninsula, particularly in the United Arab Emirates, in order to survive the international existence, also to be the leader of global commerce, education and

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Admin. (2010). *Women's Rights in the UAE*. Rabat: FIDH (International Federation for Human Rights).

culture has come to urgent. Women's rights abuse is expected to be a wake-up call for United Arab Emirates to then step out of the door to make a change. As the United Arab Emirates (UAE)'s government has strived to build a breakthrough by allowing gender equality promotion to live side-by-side with other prominent priorities of the state, UAE has elevated its level of gender equality promotion as one of the very pioneer in Arab countries whose prominent support towards the change, proven by the achievement in ranked itself as a leader in gender equality in the Arab region⁹, according to the World's Economic Forum's 2014 Global Gender Gap report. By examining the great achievement of the respective state in encouraging its women to take role in public sectors, UAE is furthermore working better to be the significant promotor of gender equality promotion, particularly in empowering women within the Arab region.

B. Research Question

By examining the background, a question arose and it motivates the author to strive formulating a research question. The research question of this undergraduate thesis is:

“How does the advocacy process of the International, state, and civil society actors to increase the women participation in the UAE parliament?”

⁹ Embassy of The United Arab Emirates. (2016). *Women in the UAE*. Retrieved on November 17, 2016, from Embassy of The United Arab Emirates, Washington DC: www.uae-embassy.org/about-uae/women-uae

C. Theoretical Framework

To answer the research question above, the author would like to use the advocacy structure by Dr. Nur Azizah, as the first step to distinguish the advocacy actors in international, national and civil society level¹⁰.

Table 1. 1 The Advocacy Structure shows three stages of advocacy actors

<p style="text-align: center;">International organization and transnational civil society</p> <p>(International organizations, regional associations, transnational NGOs, and transnational networks among scholars, activists, and politicians)</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">State</p> <p>(National leaders, governing coalitions, parliamentary factions and judges at the national and local levels)</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Civil society</p> <p>(Women’s movement organizations, cross-party alliances among women, and women’s sections inside political parties)</p>

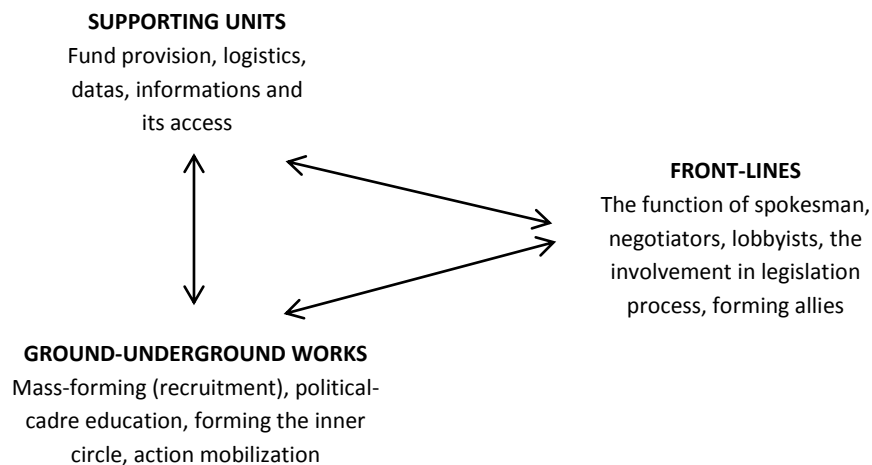
Second, the author adds the model of advocacy by Roem Tomatimasang in Dr. Nur Azizah’s book, *Advokasi Kuota Perempuan di Indonesia*¹¹. According to Azizah, there are three substances of advocacy, in which involve the Front-lines,

¹⁰ Azizah, N. (2013). *Advokasi Kuota Perempuan di Indonesia*. Yogyakarta: LP3M UMY.

¹¹ Ibid.

Supporting Units and Ground-Underground Works. This model is suitable to assist the author to find the answer for the research question. The model is illustrated in the figure below.

Figure 1. 1 Coordination Lines among Actors in Advocacy Process¹²



In the model of advocacy by Roem Tomatimasang, there are three main positions along with the tasks each position carries out. Front-liners would be very useful for the access to the executives of a state which is government. By sending delegation, the related actor exercises a vital role to organize a visit, discussion and to later on study about the situation of the respective state. The output of the front-line position is hoped to lead the advocacy process in understanding the root's of the issue deeply.

When the initiator of the advocacy process successfully cooperates with the potential partners, Supporting Units would have to generate the next step. This

¹² Ibid.

position is very much attached to the fund supply, the initiative of making some recommendations to the government, provision to the access to information related to women's rights, gender equality promotion, women and politics, as well as any other instruments needed.

Meanwhile, in the Ground-underground Works, the preparation is performed. This position has the legitimacy to seek for public affirmation. The Ground-underground Works may start a recruitment to find best agents of change, which would have to undergo certain mechanism that had been prepared by the initiator, including the obligation to educate the selected agents related to politics and social movement (for example) if necessary. A thorough preparation in the Ground-underground Works is expecting to shape the public opinion to be more aware towards certain issue and to exercise a practical advocacy.

Thus, the author of this undergraduate thesis believes that the model of advocacy by Roem Tomatimasang is best applied to the topic that is brought to the surface. Hopefully, this will lead to unfold a question to a proper answer.

D. Hypothesis

To increase women's participation in the United Arab Emirates' parliament into reality, the advocacy actors are expected to do a set of actions to advocate the gender equality promotion in the country. Based on the advocacy model which is used by the author, the three advocacy actors should be contributed in:

- 1) Raising the awareness and shaping public opinion broadly towards women empowerment in politics through general meetings such as conferences, conventions, annual sessions also the effort to make some recommendations to influence the perspective of the UAE towards women in politics.
- 2) Opening an access to the accurate data and information related to women's participation in the parliament of the United Arab Emirates.
- 3) Funding the needs of women empowerment agenda in the United Arab Emirates.

E. Purpose of Writing

This thesis is written by the author in order to inform the reader about the advocacy process by the international, state, and civil society actors to implement the gender equality promotion, particularly the women's participation in politics.

F. Research Methods

The research is conducted in both qualitative and quantitative methods. The author of this undergraduate thesis strives to collect the information and data through the journals, articles, reports, conference reports that were researched and written by the experts and professionals. All of the data collected and processed by the author are classified as secondary data.

G. Scope of Research

There are two main categories of study for women empowerment; women in politics and access for women. However, the author would specify the study into the women empowerment in politics. To give more specific time and causes behind the chosen time, the author would like to divide it into two sections:

a. *The range of research time*

This research will be limited to the last thirteen years, starting from 2004 to 2017. However, the needs of historical background as the roots of the rising movement of women in the United Arab Emirates becomes an exception, showing year 1975 was recalled as the very milestone for women in the respective state, United Arab Emirates.

b. *Phenomena from the chosen range of research time*

2004 was the very first time for the United Arab Emirates to become one of the signatories to ratify the *Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) 1979*. While in 2006, the United Arab Emirates held its first election for the Federal National Council (FNC) in which recognized the impressive involvement of Emirati women in political realm. In 2008, the United Arab Emirates' Embassy website launched a journal of the women progress in the respective state.

As in 2016, the UN Women's Liaison Office had been launched in the Emirates of Abu Dhabi.

H. Writing Methods

- I. Chapter I would be the introduction which comprises of:
 - a. Background
 - b. Research Question
 - c. Theoretical Framework
 - d. Hypothesis
 - e. The Purpose of Writing
 - f. Research Methods
 - g. Scope of Research
 - h. Writing Methods
- II. In Chapter II, the author would emphasize the history of United Arab Emirates, its political system and the organizations that are responsible in promoting gender equality in the UAE.
- III. In Chapter III, the author would emphasize the challenge encountered by Emirati women in political participation.
- IV. Chapter IV would focus on the analysis of the actors' contributions to influence the UAE's perspective, both in government and civil society levels. This chapter would elaborate the contributions of these actors to create recommendations in order to protect the UAE women's rights in politics. Also, their contributions in supporting elements such as fund supply and the provision of the operational

building proves the role of these actors in advocating women empowerment in the respective state that is United Arab Emirates.

- V. Chapter V would be the last to draw the entire undergraduate thesis study into a conclusion, followed by suggestions and solutions from the author related to the issue of women empowerment in the United Arab Emirates if necessary.