

THE ROLE OF GENDER ON WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE LABOUR FORCE IN CHINA: A COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN PATRIARCHAL CULTURE AND MODERNIZATION



Tasya Widya Krisnadi
Universitas Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia
tasyawkui@gmail.com

Abstract

This study aims to explore the influence of gender roles influenced by patriarchal culture and modernization on women's participation in the workforce in China. Using the literature review method, this study critically examines relevant previous studies to identify key factors affecting women's participation in the labor force and their implications for economic and social development in China. The results show that China's deep-rooted patriarchal culture has shaped gender stereotypes and social norms that limit women's role in the public sphere, including in the labor market. However, China's modernization process has driven social and economic transformations that have opened up opportunities for women to participate in the workforce. This research also reveals the disparities between urban and rural areas, as well as differences in education levels that affect women's access to and participation in the labor force. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of the dynamics of gender roles and their influence on women's labor force participation in China. The findings of this study can provide more effective policy recommendations to improve gender equality and empower women in economic and social development in China.

Keywords: Gender Roles, Patriarchal Culture, Modernization, Women's Participation

INTRODUCTION

Women's participation in the labor force is one of the important indicators in achieving gender equality and the economic development of a country (Kristina Kis-Katos et al., 2018). However, in many countries, including China, social, cultural, and economic factors still act as barriers for women to optimally participate in the labour market (World Bank, 2019). A strong patriarchal culture and traditional gender stereotypes have limited women's role in the public sphere, while the process of economic and social modernization has opened up new opportunities for women to engage in the world of work (Xian Huang & Yu Guo, 2021).

According to Naila Kabeer (2016), women's participation in the workforce is not only important from an economic perspective but also about women's empowerment and gender equality. Access to employment and economic resources can give women autonomy and the ability to make decisions in their lives. However, patriarchal structural and cultural barriers often prevent women from accessing the same opportunities as men (Kabeer, 2016).

In the Chinese context, several previous studies have explored the influence of patriarchal culture on women's participation in the labour force. Research by Mingwei Liu (2020) revealed that social norms that favor women's traditional role as homemakers are still quite strong, especially in rural China. Meanwhile, a study by Xian Huang and Yu Guo (2021) shows that the process of economic modernization and urbanization has provided new opportunities for women to work in the formal sector, although there is still a gap between urban and rural areas.

This study covers several regions in China, both urban and rural, to explore the differences in women's participation in the labor force between the two regions. Details of the research locations are suggested below:

Urban Areas: a) Beijing (capital city and major economic center); b) Shanghai (financial and industrial center); c) Guangzhou (industrial and trade center); d) Shenzhen (technology and innovation center); e) Chengdu (economic center in the western region).

Rural Region: a) Shandong Province (agriculture and rural industry); b) Henan Province (agriculture and rural industry); c) Anhui Province (agriculture and

rural industry); d) Jiangxi Province (agriculture and rural industry); e) Guizhou Province (agriculture and rural industry in mountainous areas)

The research sites were purposively selected to represent the diversity of urban and rural areas in China and to cover different economic sectors and levels of development. Thus, this study can provide a more comprehensive picture of the influence of gender roles, patriarchal culture, and modernization on women's participation in the workforce in different regions of China.

In addition, this study can also explore the differences in social, cultural, and economic conditions between urban and rural areas that may affect women's participation in the labour force. For example, in rural areas, the influence of patriarchal culture and gender stereotypes may be stronger compared to urban areas that are more exposed to modernization processes.

This research can also analyze the impact of government policies and development programs on women's participation in the workforce in different regions, as well as identify best practices and challenges faced in efforts to improve gender equality and women's empowerment in China.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Gender Roles and Patriarchal Culture

In a social and cultural context, gender roles refer to a set of expectations, norms, and behaviours associated with men and women in society (Eagly & Wood, 2012). One important aspect of gender roles is a patriarchal culture, which refers to a social system that is dominated by men and prioritizes masculine authority and power (Sultana, 2012). In patriarchal cultures, women often face barriers and discrimination in accessing opportunities in the public sphere, including participation in the labour market (Seguino, 2000).

Research by Inglehart and Norris (2003) shows that a strongly patriarchal culture can limit women's participation in the labour force through unequal gender roles and gender stereotypes that deter women from working outside the household. Another study by Duflo (2012) revealed that social norms that favour women's traditional role as homemakers can limit their career aspirations and choices.

Modernization and Socioeconomic Transformation

On the other hand, the process of modernization and socioeconomic transformation has opened up new opportunities for women to participate in the workforce (Goldin, 2006). Economic growth, urbanization, and increased access to education have driven shifts in social norms and opened up opportunities for women to enter new sectors of the labour market (Mammen & Paxson, 2000).

The study by Gaddis and Klasen (2014) shows that economic development, especially in the manufacturing and services sectors, has increased the demand for women's labour and encouraged their participation in the labour force. However, research by Klasen and Pieters (2015) also reveals that gender gaps in education and access to employment opportunities are still challenging in achieving equal participation of women in the labour market.

Chinese Context

In the Chinese context, previous research has explored the dynamics between patriarchal culture and modernization and their influence on women's participation in the workforce. The study by Zhang et al. (2008) revealed that although China has undergone a rapid economic transformation, traditional norms, and patriarchal culture still influence gender roles and limit women's participation in the labour force, especially in rural areas.

Meanwhile, research by Qian (2008) shows that economic reform and industrialization in China have created new employment opportunities for women, especially in the manufacturing and service sectors. However, the study also revealed a gap between urban and rural areas in terms of women's participation in the labour force.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a literature review study design, referring to the method described by Creswell (2018). The research stages carried out are as follows:

Problem Identification

This research began by identifying issues related to gender roles, patriarchal culture, modernization, and its influence on women's participation in the workforce in China.

Literature Search

The literature search process was conducted systematically through various online databases such as Web of Science, Scopus, and Google Scholar. The keywords used in the search included 'gender roles', 'patriarchal culture', 'modernization', 'women's participation in the workforce', and 'China'. In addition, the literature search was also conducted through cross-referencing of relevant articles.

Screening and Selection of Literature

The literature found was then screened based on the established inclusion and exclusion criteria. Inclusion criteria included journal articles, books, and research reports that addressed related topics, were published within a certain time frame, and used valid research methodologies. Exclusion criteria included literature that was irrelevant, not fully accessible, or of poor quality.

Literature Analysis and Synthesis

The selected literature was then analyzed in depth using content analysis techniques. Key information from each piece of literature was identified, categorized, and synthesized to answer the research questions.

Interpretation and Reporting of Results

The results of the literature analysis and synthesis were interpreted and elaborated using relevant theoretical frameworks. The research findings were then presented in the form of a descriptive narrative and critically discussed.

Research Validation and Limitations

To ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, this study applied validation strategies such as triangulation of data sources, comparing the findings with supporting literature, and involving experts or experts competent in related fields to provide feedback and judgment. In addition, the limitations of the study were also recognized and discussed to provide context and recommendations for future research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the literature review conducted, several key factors affecting women's participation in China's labour force were found, as well as the implications for the country's economic and social development.

Patriarchal Culture and Gender Stereotypes

China's deep-rooted patriarchal culture has shaped gender stereotypes and social norms that limit women's roles in the public sphere, including in the labour market. Research by Liu (2020) revealed that social norms that prioritize women's traditional role as housewives are still quite strong, especially in rural China. This is in line with the findings of Bian et al. (2000) who stated that gender stereotypes and discrimination are still obstacles for women in accessing formal sector jobs and getting career promotions.

However, the process of modernization and socio-economic transformation taking place in China has provided opportunities for women to participate in the workforce. The study by Huang and Guo (2021) shows that industrialization and the growth of the service sector have created new employment opportunities for women, especially in urban areas. This finding is supported by Qian's (2008) research which reveals that economic reforms in China have encouraged increased female participation in the manufacturing and service sectors.

Table 1
Related to The Influence of Patriarchal Culture, Gender Stereotypes, and Socio-Economic Changes on Women's Labor Force Participation in China

Study	Key Findings
Liu (2020)	- Social norms prioritizing women's traditional role as housewives are still strong, especially in rural China.
Bian et al. (2000)	- Gender stereotypes and discrimination remain obstacles for women in accessing formal sector jobs and career promotions.
Huang and Guo (2021)	- Industrialization and growth of the service sector have created new employment opportunities for women, particularly in urban areas.
Qian (2008)	- Economic reforms in China have encouraged increased female participation in the manufacturing and service sectors.
Démurger et al. (2009)	- Women in rural China have lower labor force participation rates compared to urban women due to a lack of formal sector opportunities and the influence of patriarchal culture and gender stereotypes.
Zhang et al. (2008), Maurer-Fazio et al. (2011)	- Education level has a significant impact on women's labor force participation and the gender wage gap in China, with lower education levels associated with greater barriers and discrimination.

Meng (2004), Li and Song (2013)	- Higher education levels can increase women's labor force participation, access to formal sector jobs, and earning potential in China.
Fincher (2014)	- Women in rural China often have limited access to quality education, reinforcing barriers to their participation in the formal labor market and contributing to the gender economic gap.

Source: Researcher Processing

Although patriarchal culture and gender stereotypes are still a challenge, the process of modernization and economic transformation in China has opened up new opportunities for women to participate in the labour market. This suggests shifting gender roles and more flexible social norms, although disparities between urban and rural areas remain.

To strengthen women's participation in the labour market, efforts are needed to address gender stereotypes and discrimination through policies and programs that support gender equality, as well as campaigns to change people's perceptions of women's roles in the public sphere. In addition, improving access to education and training for women is also important to enhance their capacity and opportunities in the evolving labour market.

Regional Disparities and Education Level

Despite the overall increase in women's participation in the workforce, the study also revealed disparities between urban and rural areas, as well as differences in education levels that affect women's access to and participation in the workforce in China.

The study by Démurger et al. (2009) shows that women in rural China have lower participation rates in the labour market compared to women in urban areas. This is due to the lack of employment opportunities in the formal sector, as well as the strong influence of patriarchal culture and gender stereotypes in rural areas.

Table 2
Related to The Disparities in Women's Labor Force Participation in China

Study	Key Findings
Démurger et al. (2009)	- Women in rural China have lower participation rates in the labor market compared to urban women. - Lack of formal sector job opportunities and the strong influence of patriarchal culture and gender stereotypes in rural areas contribute to this disparity.

Zhang et al. (2008)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Education level has a significant impact on women's labor force participation in China. - Women with higher education levels tend to have better opportunities to work in the formal sector and obtain higher-paying jobs.
Maurer-Fazio et al. (2011)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A Significant gender wage gap exists in China, especially for those with lower education levels. - Indicates discrimination and barriers to access to equal employment opportunities for women with lower educational backgrounds.
Meng (2004)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Higher education levels can increase women's labor force participation in China.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Women with lower education tend to have limited access to formal sector jobs and face discrimination in recruitment and promotion processes.
Li and Song (2013)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Women with higher education in China have better chances of working in the formal sector and earning higher wages compared to those with lower education levels.
Fincher (2014)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Women in rural China often have more limited access to quality education compared to their urban counterparts. - This can reinforce barriers to rural women's participation in the formal labor market and contribute to the gender economic gap.

Source: Researcher Processing

Another study by Zhang et al. (2008) also revealed that education level has a significant influence on women's participation in the labour market in China. Women with higher levels of education tend to have greater opportunities to work in the formal sector and obtain better-paid jobs.

This finding is in line with the study conducted by Maurer-Fazio et al. (2011), which shows a significant wage gap between women and men in China, especially for those with lower levels of education. This indicates discrimination and barriers to accessing equal employment opportunities for women with lower educational backgrounds.

Therefore, efforts to improve access to education for women, especially in rural areas, are crucial to strengthen their participation in the labour market and reduce the gender gap in the economy. In addition, policies and programs that support equal employment opportunities for women across China also need to be enhanced to overcome remaining cultural and structural barriers.

In addition, research by Meng (2004) revealed that higher education levels can increase women's participation in the labour force in China. Women with lower education

levels tend to have limited access to formal sector jobs and face discrimination in the hiring and promotion process.

This finding is in line with another study conducted by Li and Song (2013) which shows that women with higher education in China have greater opportunities to work in the formal sector and earn higher wages compared to women with lower education levels.

This difference in education levels also correlates with the wage gap between women and men in the Chinese labour market. Research by Zhang et al. (2008) revealed that a large part of the gender wage gap in China can be explained by differences in education levels and work experience between women and men.

In addition, a study by Fincher (2014) shows that women in rural China often have more limited access to quality education compared to women in urban areas. This may reinforce barriers to rural women's participation in the formal labour market and contribute to the economic gender gap.

Therefore, efforts to improve access to education for women, particularly in rural areas, are critical to strengthening their participation in the labour market and reducing China's economic gender gap. Policies and programs that support equal education and training opportunities for women in all regions of China need to be enhanced to overcome the remaining cultural and structural barriers.

CONCLUSION

This research has explored the influence of gender roles influenced by patriarchal culture and modernization on women's participation in the workforce in China. Based on the literature review conducted, it can be concluded that: a) China's deep-rooted patriarchal culture has shaped gender stereotypes and social norms that limit women's roles in the public sphere, including in the labour market. However, China's modernization process and socio-economic transformation have opened up new opportunities for women to participate in the workforce, especially in the manufacturing and service sectors; b) There is a gap in women's labour force participation between urban and rural areas in China. Women in rural areas tend to have lower participation rates due to the lack of employment opportunities in the formal sector and the strong influence of patriarchal culture; c) Education level also affects women's

labour force participation in China. Women with higher levels of education have greater access to formal sector jobs and face less discrimination in the hiring and promotion process.

The findings of this study contribute to a deeper understanding of the dynamics of gender roles and their influence on women's participation in the labour force in China. This can provide more effective policy recommendations to improve gender equality and empower women in the country's economic and social development.

For future research, it is recommended to conduct empirical studies using both quantitative and qualitative data to obtain a more comprehensive picture of women's participation in the labour force in China, as well as explore other possible influential factors, such as government policies, local cultural values, and diverse regional economic conditions.

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