



**REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN THE MALAYSIAN
PARLIAMENT, 1999-2007**

BY

UMMU ATIYAH AHMAD ZAKUAN

**A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science**

**Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and
Human Sciences
International Islamic University Malaysia**

JANUARY 2014

ABSTRACT

This study analyses the descriptive and substantive representation of women in the Malaysian parliament. However its focus is on the substantive representation of women in the 10th and 11th *Dewan Rakyat*, the lower house of the Malaysian Parliament. It aims, in particular, to see whether or not the women MPs act for women by proposing women related issues in the *Dewan Rakyat*. What issues they proposed and who among them are at the forefront in representing the women? These women MPs are called the critical actors. Content analysis of the parliamentary debates was conducted to identify what women issues the women MPs had proposed and to identify who among them were at the forefront of doing it. Series of face to face interviews were conducted with critical actors to examine what made them the critical actors. Factors contributing them to represent the women and the problems they faced were examined. All of these are important insights to explore and understand the substantive representation of women in the Malaysian parliament. The study found that the women MPs represented the women in the 10th and 11th *Dewan Rakyat* and proposed various issues relating to education, children, health and welfare and the feminist concerns. These issues directly impacted the women. The study also found that not all the women MPs were critical in representing the women. Thirteen out of twenty-nine women MPs were found to represent women but seven were more active in doing so. Experience, gender awareness and roles as a woman were factors that contributed to their representing women in the parliament. Information and networking appeared to be crucial in facilitating them to represent the women.

خلاصة البحث

تقوم هذه الدراسة بتحليل عينة من النساء في البرلمان الماليزي بشكل وصفي وموضوعي . وتتركز على عينة موضوعية من النساء في المجلس الشعبي العاشر والحادي عشر، ومجلس النواب في البرلمان الماليزي . وتهدف الدراسة بشكل خاص إلى التحقق فيما إذا كانت عضوات البرلمان يناقشن القضايا المتعلقة بالمرأة أم لا في المجلس الشعبي؟ وماهي القضايا التي تتم طرحها؟ ومن هي المرأة التي تمثل جبهة النساء في البرلمان . وتسمى الدراسة أولئك النسوة بالمثلثات الناقدات . وقامت الدراسة بتحليل محتوى المناظرات البرلمانية للتعرف على القضايا التي تطرح بشأن المرأة والدور الذي تقوم به عضوات البرلمان، وذلك لمعرفة من هي المرأة التي تمثل جبهة النساء في البرلمان . وأجرت الدراسة لقاءات شخصية مع الممثلات الناقدات للتحقق في فعاليتهن وحسمهن للقضايا . كما تم التحقق من العناصر المساهمة في تمثيل المرأة والمشاكل التي تواجهها . وجميع تلك العوامل ضرورية لكشف ومعرفة العينة الموضوعية من النساء في البرلمان الماليزي . وكشفت هذه الدراسة عن مختلف القضايا التي تناقشها المرأة الماليزية في المجلس الشعبي العاشر والحادي عشر فيما يخص التربية، والطفل، والصحة، والرفاهية، واهتمامات المرأة، وذلك لأن جميع هذه القضايا تؤثر على المرأة . كما كشفت الدراسة بأن هناك عدد من عضوات البرلمان يقمن بانتقادات من خلال تمثيلهن للمرأة، حيث توصلت إلى أن حوالي ثلاثة عشرة من مجمل اثنان وتسعون عضوة في البرلمان يمثلن المرأة، لكن سبعة منهن يعتبرن أكثر فاعلية . واستخدم في تقييم تمثيل المرأة في البرلمان عناصر مساهمة وهي الخبرات، وإدراك نوعية الجنس، والأدوار . ويظهر من خلال النتائج أن عنصري المعلومات والتواصل الاجتماعي يلعبان دورا حاسما في تمثيل المرأة الماليزية في البرلمان.

APPROVAL PAGE

The dissertation of Ummu Atiyah Ahmad Zakuan has been approved by the following:

Abdul Rashid Moten
Supervisor

Muhamad Fuzi Omar
Internal Examiner

K.S. Nathan
External Examiner

Amir Akramin Shafie
Chairman

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigation, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

Ummu Atiyah Ahmad Zakuan

Signature.....

Date.....

INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA

**DECLARATION OF COPYRIGHT AND AFFIRMATION OF
FAIR USE OF UNPUBLISHED RESEARCH**

Copyright © 2014 by International Islamic University Malaysia. All rights reserved.

**REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN THE MALAYSIAN
PARLIAMENT ; 1999-2007**

I hereby affirm that The International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) holds all rights in the copyrights of this Work and henceforth any reproduction or use in any form or by means whatsoever is prohibited without the written consent of IIUM. No part of this unpublished research may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by means, electronics, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without prior written permission of the copyright holder.

Affirmed by Ummu Atiyah Ahmad Zakuan

.....
Signature

.....
Date

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to Allah (SWT) for enabling me to finish this study. I must also thank those people who contributed at different stages in this study. First, I would like to express my deep and sincere thanks and gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Dr. Abdul Rashid Moten, who believes in me, and patiently guided me throughout the period of this study. His supervision was indispensable. Associate Professor Ishtiaq Hossain and Professor Dr. El-Fatih Abdullahi A. Salam gave constant encouragement which helped me to survive the journey. I am also grateful to Dr. Wahabuddin Ra'ees, and Dr. Tunku Mohar for all the cooperation in dealing with the administrative matters and the encouragement to complete this dissertation.

I would like to express my special gratitude to all female MPs: Tan Sri Napsiah Omar, Datin Paduka Seripah Noli, Datin Paduka Chew Mei Fun, Datin Paduka P. Komala Devi, Dato' Tan Lian Hoe, YB Teresa Kok, Datin Paduka Tan Yee Kew, Datin Paduka Zaleha Ismail, YB Chong Eng, Dr Rozaidah Talib, Dato' Mastika Junaidah and Mrs Sukinam Domo. Without the assistance from these individuals, this study would not come into completion. Also appreciations to those people who had helped to furnish me with information including the helpful officers at the Malaysian Parliament, Welfare Department (Federal and State), Kedah Women Development Department, the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development, Kedah Education Department, Mr Muhammad Nasaruddin Ahmad, Ms Ivy Josiah, IIUM, UUM, UKM, UM and USM libraries as well as the Malaysia National Archive.

Last, but not the least, I must express my deepest gratitude and appreciation to my beloved husband, Mohammad Raffizal Mohamed Yusof, who never fails to support and believes in me, who has to endure many difficulties during my study, and my children, Darwish, Iskandar, Hannah and Adham, who in their own ways support their mother too, without actually knowing it. My beloved father, Ahmad Zakuan Hj Ahmad, and my late mother, Che Rokiah Hj Zakaria, who could not see the final product, your support provided me strength to face the test. To all my siblings and friends, who are equally important in encouraging and supporting me during hard times, I remain grateful.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	ii
Abstract in Arabic.....	iii
Approval Page.....	iv
Declaration.....	v
Copyright Page.....	vi
Acknowledgments.....	vii
List of Tables.....	xi
List of Abbreviation.....	xii

CHAPTER ONE: REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN THE PARLIAMENT.....	1
1.0. Introduction.....	1
1.1. Statement of the Problem.....	3
1.2. Justification of the Study.....	4
1.3. Significance of the Study.....	5
1.4. Literature Review.....	5
1.4.1. Women Representation in General.....	6
1.4.2. Women in Politics in Malaysia.....	12
1.5. Theoretical Framework.....	19
1.6. Methods of Data Collection.....	25
1.7. Chapter Outline.....	30

CHAPTER TWO: WOMEN IN POLITICS IN MALAYSIA: A BRIEF HISTORY.....	31
2.0. Introduction.....	31
2.1. Women in the Pre-Colonial Phase.....	32
2.1.1. Culture and ethnicity.....	32
2.1.2. Religion.....	36
2.2. Women in the Colonial Era.....	39
2.2.1. Non-political organizations.....	40
2.2.2. Political arena.....	46
2.3. Women in the Post-Independence Era.....	62
2.3.1. The Early Phase.....	62
2.3.2. The Modern Phase.....	64
2.4. Conclusion.....	69

CHAPTER THREE: DESCRIPTIVE REPRESENTATION: WOMEN IN THE DEWAN RAKYAT.....	71
3.0. Introduction.....	71
3.1. Historical Development of the Malaysian Parliament.....	71
3.1.1. State form.....	71
3.1.2. Federated form.....	72
3.1.3. Centralized form.....	74
3.1.4. One Chamber.....	74

3.1.5. Two Chambers.....	76
3.2. The Malaysian Parliament	78
3.3. Descriptive Representation of Women in Parliament	84
3.4. Women in the 10 th and 11 th <i>Dewan Rakyat</i>	89
3.5. Conclusion	92

CHAPTER FOUR: SUBSTANTIVE REPRESENTATION: EDUCATION AND CHILDREN..... 94

4.0. Introduction.....	94
4.1. Education	95
4.1.1. Education system.....	95
4.1.2. Educational Facilities and Infrastructure	100
4.1.3. Examination.....	104
4.1.4. Students	105
4.1.5. Schools	106
4.1.6. Teachers	108
4.1.7. Technical and Vocational Institutions	111
4.1.8. University	112
4.2. Children	114
4.2.1. Sex-Related Crimes Involving Children.....	114
4.2.2. Childcare	118
4.2.3. Disabled and Disadvantaged Children.....	120
4.3. Proposals.....	121
4.4. Policy Outcomes.....	126

CHAPTER FIVE: SUBSTANTIVE REPRESENTATION: HEALTH AND WELFARE..... 131

5.0. Introduction.....	131
5.1. Health.....	131
5.1.1 Medical treatment and insurance	132
5.1.2. Medical Tribunal	134
5.1.3. Virus, Illness and Medicine.....	135
5.1.4. Doctors and Nurses	136
5.2. Welfare.....	137
5.2.1. Inadequate Compensation to the Victims	137
5.2.2. Victims of Abandoned Projects.....	139
5.2.3. Victims of Lost Farms.....	139
5.2.4. Poor people.....	140
5.2.5. Disabled People	141
5.3. Proposals.....	142
5.4. Policy Outcomes.....	145

CHAPTER SIX: SUBSTANTIVE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN: FEMINIST ISSUES..... 146

6.0. Introduction.....	146
6.1. Single Mothers	147
6.2. Violence	151
6.3. Women’s Rights – Discrimination and Protection.....	156
6.4. Gender Mainstreaming	159

6.5. Representation.....	161
6.6. Proposals.....	164
6.7. Policy Outcomes.....	166
CHAPTER SEVEN: CRITICAL ACTORS	169
7.0. Introduction.....	169
7.1. Critical Actors	169
7.2. General Background of the Critical Actors	170
7.3. Factors Contributing to Becoming Critical Actors.....	173
7.3.1. Experience	173
7.3.2. Gender Awareness	178
7.4. Obligation to Represent Women and Mechanism to Gather Information	184
7.4.1 The Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs).....	187
7.4.2. Critical Actors own efforts.....	188
7.4.3. Inputs from Constituencies.....	189
7.4.4. Inputs from the Media.....	190
7.4.5. Networking.....	191
7.5. Challenges Faced by the Critical Actors	195
7.5.1. Political parties	195
7.5.2. The Public.....	198
7.5.3. The Committee System in the Parliament.....	200
7.6. Conclusion	202
CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION	204
8.1 Discriptive Representaton.....	205
8.2 Substantive Representation.....	206
8.3 Proposals and Policies	209
8.4 Critical Actors	209
8.5 Limitations of the Study	214
8.6 Recommendations	215
REFERENCES	217
APPENDIX I: THE NUMBER OF WOMEN IN THE DEWAN NEGARA	239
APPENDIX II: LIST OF THE FEMALE MPS INTERVIEWED IN THIS STUDY	241
APPENDIX III: QUESTIONNAIRES	242

LIST OF TABLES

<u>Table No.</u>		<u>Page No.</u>
1.1	Sittings that are selected in this study	26
3.1	Women in the Malaysian Parliament, <i>Dewan Rakyat</i> from 1955-2008	86
3.2	Women Representatives in the 10 th <i>Dewan Rakyat</i>	90
3.3	Women Representatives in the 11 th <i>Dewan Rakyat</i>	91
4.1	Summary of Proposals Made by Women MPs Relating to Education	124
4.2	Summary of Proposals Made by Women MPs Relating to Children	126
5.1	Summary of Proposals Made by Women MPs Relating to Health	143
5.2	Summary of Proposals Made by Women MPs Relating to Welfare	144
6.1	Summary of Proposals Made by Women MPs Relating to Feminist Issues	166
7.1	List of the Women MPs Proposing Women Issues in the 10 th and 11 th <i>Dewan Rakyat</i>	170

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIDs	Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome
API	<i>Angkatan Pemuda Insaf</i> (Awakened Youth Organization)
AWAM	All Women's Action Society
AWAS	<i>Angkatan Wanita Sedar</i> (The Progressive Malay Women's Corps)
B.C	Before Christ
BN	<i>Barisan Nasional</i> (National Front)
CCTV	Closed-Circuit TV
D.Y.M.M	<i>Duli Yang Maha Mulia</i> (His Royal Highness)
DAP	Democratic Action Party
DM	<i>Dewan Muslimat</i> (PAS's Women Wing)
DPP	Deputy Public Prosecutor
EPU	Economic Planning Unit
EPU	Economic Planning Unit
FELDA	Federal Land Development Authority
GERAKAN	<i>Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia</i> (Malaysian People's Movement)
HAWA	Department of Women Affairs
I-Kit	Keusahawanan Ibu Tunggal (Single Mother Entrepreneurship)
ILL	Indian Independence League
INA	Indian Nationalist Army
IPO	Interim Protection Order
IPU	Inter Parliamentary Union
JAG	Joint Action Group for Gender Equality
JE	Japanese Encephalitis
JKR	Jabatan Kerja Raya (Department of Public Works)
JKSM	Jabatan Kehakiman Syariah Malaysia (Department of Syariah Judiciary Malaysia)
KEMAS	<i>Jabatan Kemajuan Masyarakat</i> (Welfare department)
KI	<i>Kaum Ibu</i> (Women's Association (of UMNO))
KMT	Koumintang
KPDM	Kursus Diploma Perguruan Malaysia (Malaysia Diploma Teaching Course)
KPLI	<i>Kursus Lepas Ijazah</i> (Post Undergraduate Degree)
KWSP	<i>Kumpulan Wang Simpanan Pekerja</i> (Employees Provident Fund)
LPBS	<i>Latihan Perguruan Berasaskan Sekolah</i> (School's Based Teacher Training)
MADA	Muda Agricultural Development Authority (<i>Lembaga Kemajuan Pertanian Muda</i>)
MBMMBI	<i>Memartabatkan Bahasa Malaysia & Memperkukuhkan Bahasa Inggeris</i> (Upholding Bahasa Malaysia and Strengthening English)
MCA	Malayan/Malaysian Chinese Association
MCP	Malayan Communist Party
MIC	Malayan Indian Congress
MIC	Malayan/Malaysian Indian Congress
MMC	Malaysia Medical Council

MMC	Malaysian Medical Council
MPAJA	Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army
MPAJU	Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Union
MPs	Members of parliament
MU	Malayan Union
MWTC	Malay Women's Training College
NACIWID	National Advisory Council on the Integration of Women in Development
NDPs	National Development Plan
NGOs	Non-governmental Organization
NPE	New Pantai Highway
OTI	Order To Investigate
PAS	<i>Partai Islam Se-Malaysia</i> (Islamic Party of Malaysia, formerly Pan Malayan Islamic Party)
PBB	<i>Parti Pusaka Bumiputera Bersatu</i> (United Traditional Bumiputera Party)
PDK	<i>Pusat Pemilihan Dalam Komuniti</i> (Selection Community Center)
PER	<i>PERIKATAN</i> (Alliance).
PGPJ	<i>Persekutuan Guru-Guru Perempuan Johor</i> (Women's Teacher Union)
PKMM	<i>Parti Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya</i> (Malaysian National Party)
PKR	<i>Parti Keadilan Rakyat</i> (People's Justice Party)
PMR	<i>Penilaian Menengah Rendah</i> (Lower Secondary Assessment)
PPD	<i>Pejabat Pendidikan Daerah</i> (District Education Office)
PR	Proportional representation
PSRM	<i>Parti Sosialis Rakyat Malaya</i> (Malaysian People's Socialist Party)
RIMUP	<i>Rancangan Integrasi Murid Untuk Perpaduan</i> (Integration Plan for Students)
S46	Semangat 46 (Spirit of 46 Malay Party)
SCA	Sabah Chinese Association (<i>Persatuan Cina Sabah</i>)
SF	Socialist Front (<i>Parti Rakyat Malaysia</i>)
SLSM	Skim Latihan Siswazah Menganggur (Unemployed Graduates Training Scheme)
SPM	<i>Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia</i> (Higher Secondary Assessment)
SRJKC	<i>Sekolah Rendah Jenis Kebangsaan Cina</i> (Chinese National Primary School)
SRJKT	<i>Sekolah Rendah Jenis Kebangsaan Tamil</i> (Tamil National Primary School)
SUPP	Sarawak United People's Party (Parti Rakyat Bersatu Sarawak)
UiTM	<i>Universiti Teknologi Mara</i>
UMNO	United Malays National Organization (Pertubuhan Kebangsaan Melayu Bersatu)
UPSR	<i>Ujian Pencapaian Sekolah Rendah</i> (Primary School Assessment)
USNO	United Sabah National Organisation (<i>Pertubuhan Kebangsaan Sabah Bersatu</i>)
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association (<i>Persatuan Wanita Muda Kristian</i>)

CHAPTER ONE

REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN THE PARLIAMENT

1.0. INTRODUCTION

“Women in parliament” has received increased international attention in the 1990s.¹ It was one of the twelve priority issues for the 1995 Beijing “Platform for Action” which was adopted by 189 countries at the 4th United Nations World Conference on Women.² Although women make up at least half of the electorate in almost all countries and have attained the right to vote and hold office in almost all Members of the United Nations, women continue to be seriously under-represented as candidates for public office. There are only 8,928 women MPs as compared to 36,803 male MPs in both houses in the parliament worldwide.³ Malaysia is ranked 102nd in the world in terms of the composition of women in the parliament.⁴

¹ Marian Sawer, Manon Tremblay and Linda Trimble, “Introduction. Patterns and practice in parliamentary representation of women”, in *Representing Women in Parliament. A Comparative Study*, edited by Marian Sawer, Manon Tremblay and Linda Trimble (London: Routledge, 2006), 1.

² The Critical Areas of Concern that have been identified are: i) the persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women, ii) inequalities and inadequacies in and unequal access to education and training, iii) inequalities and inadequacies in and unequal access to health care and related services, iv) violence against women, v) the effects of armed or other kinds of conflict on women, including those living under foreign occupation, vi) inequality in economic structures and policies, in all forms of productive activities and in access to resources, vii) inequality between men and women in sharing of power and decision-making at all levels, viii) insufficient mechanisms at all levels to promote the advancement of women, 9) lack of respect for and inadequate promotion and protection of human rights of women, 10) stereotyping of women and inequality in women’s access to and participation in all communication systems, especially in the media, 11) gender inequalities in the management of natural resources and in the safeguarding of the environment 12) persistent discrimination against and violation of the rights of the girl-child. See UN Women. “The United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action),” <www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/decision.htm> (accessed 26 March, 2012).

³ The Inter-Parliamentary Union, “Women in National Parliament: Situation as of 31st December 2011,” <<http://www.ipu.org>> (accessed 26 March, 2012).

⁴ Utusan Malaysia, “Ruangan Sekilas,” 6 April, 2011,2

Hence, the “Platform for Action” called for women's equal participation in decision-making because it is a requirement for simple justice or democracy but also as a necessary condition for women's interests to be taken into account. Without the active participation of women and the incorporation of women's perspective at all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved.

Women representatives are expected to “stand for” or “act for” women. Available studies show that women legislators are more responsive to women’s interest than male legislators; develop their own distinctive set of concerns and priorities; and take leading parts in formulating policies with women’s perspective in mind.¹ There are also studies that show women representatives are less willing to be associated with women’s issues or interest and that the primary impact of women is symbolic. It is argued that difficulties such as male dominated environment and strong party discipline had limited them to “stand for” or “act for” women.²

Most studies relating to women representation are concerned with the impacts the women legislators made in the legislatures but they concentrated on the Western countries, and very few in non-western countries such as in Taiwan and India. Thus, this study examines both the descriptive and the substantive representation of women in the Malaysian lower house, the *Dewan Rakyat*.

¹ Leslie A Schwindt-Bayer, “Legislative Representation in Latin America: A Comparative Study of Descriptive, Substantive, and Symbolic Representation of Women,” (Ph.D dissertation, The University of Arizona, 2003); Wan-Ying Yang, “Politics of gender difference in Taiwan’s legislative Yuan: Descriptive, symbolic or substantive representation,” (Ph.D dissertation, Michigan State University, 1999); Manon Tremblay, “Do Female MPs Substantively Represent Women? A Study of Legislative Behaviour in Canada’s 35th Parliament,” *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 31, no.3 (1998): 435-465; Linda Trimble and Jane Arscott, *Still Counting: Women in Politics Across Canada* (Ontario: Broadview Press Ltd, 2003), 139; Michelle A. Saint-Germain, “Does Their Difference Make a Difference? The Impact of Women on Public Policy in the Arizona Legislature,” *Social Science Quarterly*, vol. 70, no.4 (1989): 956-968.

²Trimble and Arscott, 131.

²Tremblay, 436.

1.1. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

It has been argued by several scholars that, women, by virtue of their representation in the parliament, have brought different and wider issues into legislatures and influenced the policy output to be much more women-friendly, changed the atmosphere in the parliament and encouraged other women to be actively involved in or at least interested in politics.³ It is argued that women's representation in legislation is very important because the gender of the legislator does matter. This is due to fact that women and men have different life experiences, roles and socialization that shaped their interest, preferences or perceptions. Because of this, women need separate representation to cater to their needs and concerns.⁴

In particular, this study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What is the nature of the representation of women in parliament in Malaysia?
2. What women related issues were proposed by the women MPs in the *Dewan Rakyat* and with what consequences?

³ On issues see Birgit Meyer, "Much Ado About Nothing? Political Representation Policies and the Influence of Women Politicians in Germany", *Review of Policy Research*, vol.20, no.3 (2003): 401-422; Joni Lovenduski and Pippa Norris, "Westminster Women: the Politics of Presence," *Political Studies*, vol. 51 (2003):84-102; Sarah Childs and Julie Withey, "Women Representative Acting for Women: Sex and the Signing of Early Day Motions in the 1997 British Parliament", *Political Studies*, vol.52, no.3 (2004): 552-564;

On policy outputs see Marion Sawer, "When women support women...EMILY's List and the substantive representation of women in Australia," in *Representing Women in Parliament. A Comparative Study*, edited by Marian Sawer, Manon Tremblay and Linda Trimble (London: Routledge, 2006), 111-113 ; Linda Trimble, "When do women count? Substantive representation of women in Canadian Legislatures", in *Representing Women in Parliament. A Comparative Study*, edited by Marian Sawer, Manon Tremblay and Linda Trimble (London: Routledge, 2006), 124;

On role model see Stephanie Anne-Marie Mullen, "The Substantive Representational Effects of Women Legislators in Presence, Legislative Outputs & Extra-Parliamentary Activity: A Qualitative Analysis of the Canadian Senate," (Ph.D. dissertation, Carleton University, Ottawa, 2006), 16 ; Christina Wolbrecht and David E.Campbell, "Leading by Example: Female Members of Parliament as Political Role Model", *American Journal Political Science*, vol.51, no.4 (2007): 931-952; Childs & Withey, 87.

⁴ See Zaireeni Azmi. (2001, July). Ekspektasi Masyarakat Melayu Mengenai Peranan Gender dan Hubungannya dengan Politik: Satu Perbandingan antara UMNO dan PAS. Paper presented at Simposium Kebangsaan Masyarakat Malaysia: Isu dan Cabaran Abad ke-21 organized by Fakulti Sastera dan Sains Social, Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur. Also see Anne Philips, *The Politics of Presence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press Scholarship Online, 1998), 45. <http://www.oxfordscholarship.com>

3. Did women MPs in the *Dewan Rakyat* represent the women?.
4. Who were in the forefront in representing the women in the *Dewan Rakyat*, what motivated them to do so, and what challenges they faced?

1.2. JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

It has been confirmed in many studies that women legislators continue to be significantly concerned with representing women. Women representation in the parliament will ensure women's interest to be presented and subsequently turn into women-friendly policies which otherwise would be less likely in existence. It is in the parliament that interest are discovered through debates.⁵ It is in the parliament, the agenda is set. Agenda setting is a crucial point in any policy making endeavor and it can affect policy preferences and outcomes by redefining set of alternatives.⁶ Hence, it is important to have women representation in the parliament or legislatures as to ensure women related concerns or interests becoming an agenda in the parliament.

Most importantly, no study has yet been conducted to explore the substantive representation of women in the Malaysian parliament or in the lower house, the *Dewan Rakyat*. There are some studies dealing with women in politics in general. There are also some reports in the newspapers, referring to political leaders, lamenting the marginalized role of women in politics. They do hint at the institutional constraints, party discipline and overall male dominated environment as limiting the role of women in politics.⁷ Yet, no empirical study has been conducted analyzing the role women play in the parliament. This study hopes to fill in the gap in the literature.

⁵ Pitkin, 187.

⁶ Peter Bachrach and Morton S. Baratz, "Decisions and Nondecisions: An Analytical Framework", *American Political Science Review*, vol.57, no.3 (1963): 632-642.

⁷ Vasanthi Ramachandran, "Women have the numbers but not the Power," *New Straits Times*, 14 November, 2007, 23; *New Straits Times*, 17 May, 2007,4.

It is equally crucial to examine the descriptive and the substantive representation of women representatives in the *Dewan Rakyat* basing on the expectation on them to act for women.

1.3. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Even though this study confines to the 10th and 11th *Dewan Rakyat*, from 1999-2007, it is expected to contribute to the understanding of women in politics, in particular, in the area of women political representation in the Malaysian parliament. It provides a closer investigation about women representatives in relation to their roles in representing the women in the parliament. Among inputs that could be gathered are their demographic background and factors that induce them to represent the women. At the same time, problems that hindered them to represent the women more effectively in the parliament are also discussed. The results of this investigation led to policy proposals which would help improve the position of women in the *Dewan Rakyat*. These findings would contribute not only to improve the situation and position of women in the Malaysian politics, but to produce more women who are critical in representing the women in Malaysian politics. Lastly, the study will benefit the population as a whole and women in particular, in giving awareness about the roles and the importance of MPs particularly the women MPs in the parliament.

1.4. LITERATURE REVIEW

Representation of women in the legislature and the impact they make therein have been studied extensively by scholars. There have also been studies conducted on the political behaviour of women in Malaysia. These studies have been reviewed under two headings: Women representation in general and Women in politics in Malaysia

1.4.1. Women representation in general

Women's representation by elected women is a major research arena for scholars of women and politics.⁸ Political representation of women consists of descriptive and substantive representation. While the former refers to “who” as well as the “numbers” of the representatives as to reflect the composition of female population in a country, the latter is concerned with the impacts the representatives have made in the parliaments or legislatures or to put simply, “do they act for women?”⁹

Empirical studies focusing on descriptive representation discuss the numerical representation of women in the parliaments or legislatures. Scholars like Drude Dahlerup, Elizabeth Powley, and Elisa Maia Carrio emphasized quota as the most efficient measure to increase the numerical representation of women in parliaments. Studies on the Rwandan lower house, Argentina's legislature and Bundestag in Germany, have shown that quotas greatly contributed to the increased number of women representation in the respective houses.¹⁰ Manon Tremblay and others looked at such factors as constitutional guarantee, electoral system and public opinion as enhancing the number of women in the parliaments.¹¹ Women activism and movement also constitute as the possible explanation of increased representation of women. Women activism addressed the existing barriers to women in politics and it was

⁸ Special Issues on Critical Perspectives on Gender and Politics. “Do Women Represent Women: Rethinking The Critical Mass Debate”, *Politics & Gender*, vol. 2, no.4 (2006): 491.

⁹ See Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, *Theory of Representation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967).

¹⁰ Elizabeth Powley, “Rwanda: Women Hold Up Half of the Parliament” in *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers*, edited by Ballington, J & Azza Karam (Stockholm: IDEA, 2005), 154-163; Elisa Maia Carrio, “Argentina: A New Look at the Challenges of Women's Participation in the Legislature” in *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers*, edited by Ballington, J & Azza Karam (Stockholm: IDEA, 2005), 164-177; Birgit Meyer, 2003.

¹¹ Drude Dahlerup, “Increasing Women's Political Participation: New Trends in Gender Quotas” in *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers*, edited by Ballington, J & Azza Karam (Stockholm: IDEA, 2005), 141-153; Manon Tremblay, “The Substantive Representation of Women and PR: Some Reflections on the Role of the Surrogate Representation and Critical Mass”, *Politics & Gender*, vol. 2, no.4 (2006): 502-511; Ian McAllister, “Women's Representation in Australia”, in *Representing Women in Parliament: A Comparative Study*, edited by Marion Sawer, Manon Tremblay & Linda Trimble (London: Routledge, 2006), 134-151.

actively participated by women of various backgrounds i.e. teachers, professionals, academicians, artists, social workers and human right activists. Women activism acted as a pressure demanding for more women representation in politics.¹²

Extensive attention has been given to the question of whether or not women's political presence in legislatures has impacted any changes in advancing policies favourable to women. Many studies have been conducted in countries such as the United States, Australia, Canada, Germany and New Zealand to see if any substantive representation of women occurred in the parliaments or legislatures, be it upper or lower houses. These studies have shown that, to a certain extent, women representatives have made impacts in the parliaments or legislatures.¹³ A study conducted in Germany has revealed that women representatives have contributed a great deal towards initiating and adapting laws that favour women. The country has witnessed several pieces of legislation being enacted and reformed favouring women, namely Equal Rights in the Basic Law, The Equal Rights Act, The Legal Status of Children of Single Mothers Act and reforms in Abortion Laws.¹⁴ Similarly, due to an effort by a female Senator in Canada's Upper House, the Divorce Act was amended to provide for the establishment of mandatory child support guidelines.¹⁵ Other studies have shown that women representatives are more likely to represent women's interests. Female legislators are far more supportive of women's rights and are more

¹² Elisa Maia Carrio, 164-177; Birgit Meyer, 410; Donley T. Studlar, "Women and Westminster. Descriptive Representation in the United Kingdom" in *Representing Women in Parliament. A Comparative Study*, edited by Marion Sawer, Manon Tremblay & Linda Trimble (London: Routledge, 2006), 83-99.

¹³ Debra L. Dodson & Susan J. Carroll, *Reshaping the Agenda: Women in State Legislatures* (New Brunswick, N.J: Centre for the American Women and Politics, 1991), 53; Lena Wanganerud, "Testing the Politics of Presence: Women's Representation in the Swedish Riskdag," *Scandinavian Political Studies*, vol. 23, no.1 (2001):70; See Manon Tremblay, 435-465; Michelle S. Saint-Germain, 956-968; Linda Trimble & Jane Arscott, *Still Counting: Women in politics across Canada* (Ontario: Broadview Press Ltd, 2003), 139.

¹⁴ Birgit Meyer, 410

¹⁵ Stephanie Anne-Marie Mullen, 183-184.

likely to sponsor bills that address matters of health and welfare, and women, children and family.¹⁶

In a study conducted in seven post socialist countries (Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia) the women representatives have raised issues such as protection of motherhood, the improvement of abortion and divorce law, social security, sexual discrimination and female wages, more frequently than the men in the parliament. They also discussed issues of the environment, consumer and human rights.¹⁷ Scandinavian research also discovered that women MPs were more likely to ask questions about family, health, housing, environmental and consumer policies, while men were more likely to ask questions about fiscal, labour market and energy policies. In addition, women were more likely to raise the profile of women's issues on the legislative agenda.¹⁸ Reingold's analysis of survey responses of state legislators in California and Arizona, found that female politicians were more likely to represent women's interest, to perceive themselves as receiving support from women constituents and to consider such support important than men. In addition they felt that they are more qualified to deal with concerns of their women constituents.¹⁹

There are also studies which link descriptive and substantive representations, using the "critical mass theory." These studies aimed at seeing "when" women make the difference. The "critical mass theory," purports that, when women reach a certain

¹⁶ Beth Reingold, "Concept of Representation Among Female and Male State Legislators", *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, vol.17, no.4 (1992): 509-537 ; Sue Thomas and Susan Welch, "The Impact of Gender on Activities and Priorities of State Legislators", *Western Political Science Quarterly*, vol.44, no.2 (1991):445-456.

¹⁷ Yvonne Galligan and Sara Clavero, "Prospects for Women's Legislative Representation in Postsocialist Europe: The Views Of Female Politicians," *Gender & Society*, vol. 22, no.2 (2008): 149-171.

¹⁸ Drude Dahlerup, "From a Small to a Large Minority," *Scandinavian Political Studies*, vol.11, no.2 (1988): 275-298.

¹⁹ Beth Reingold, 509-537.

number (titled group 15%-40% of representation), then it would affect the behavior of the women, in this case, affecting policies to be more women friendly.²⁰ However, the proportion of the total number of seats which constitutes a critical mass varies, from 15% to 30%.²¹ The “critical mass theory” prescription proved to be confirmed in several studies. Saint-Germain’s longitudinal study on Arizona state legislatures from 1969-1986 found that, women legislators were more likely to introduce feminist legislation seeking for greater equality and improvement of women status, as well as legislation dealing with women traditional interest such as children, education, and the family. In addition, as the number of women representatives increased, the degree of attention paid to women issues also increased.²²

Similarly Thomas and Welch in a survey on twelve-state legislators, found a correlation between the ratio of female delegates and the degree of support for legislation related to women. Although, Thomas and Welch did not find a systematic sex difference, they did find that women tended to introduce more bills relating to children, women and the family and they were more likely than men to cite such bills as accomplishments.²³

However, the direct causal relation between the number of women representative and pro-female policy outputs which is claimed by the “critical mass theory” has been questioned. When women constituted “critical mass” in the UK House of Commons, feminists predicted that the women representatives would bring with them a “new agenda” and also talked about “the difference those extra women will make.” However, when the Conservative government introduced a reduction in

²⁰ Rosebeth Moss Kanter, “Some Effects of Proportion on Group Life: Skewed Sex Ratio and Responses to Token Women”, *American Journal of Sociology*, vol.82, no. 5 (1977): 965-990.

²¹ See Dahlerup, 1988.

²² See Saint- Germain, 1989; Mi Yung Yoon, “More Women in the Tanzanian legislature: Do numbers matter?”, *Journal or Contemporary African Studies*, vol. 29, no. 1 (2011): 83-98.

²³ See Sue Thomas & Susan Welch, 1991.

lone benefit, as part of its pledge to the Social Security Bill, forty-seven Labour MPs voted against it, but only one of them was a female. Due to that incident, 101 Labour women MPs were criticized.

Childs undertook a study on the 101 female Labour MPs in the UK House of Commons to see the link between the number of the representatives and the output they produced. She revealed that, in spite of reaching “critical mass” threshold, there was no significant change or influence in the House of Commons.²⁴ In almost a similar study undertaken by Childs and Withey to test the critical mass theory in the British House of Commons using the Early Day Motions (EDMs), it was found that they were “less willing to rebel, and therefore unlikely to make a distinctive contribution to the public policy agenda.”²⁵ There were also studies demonstrating that, even though without critical mass, pro-female policy outputs occurred in the legislatures. One such example is by Trimble’s study of women in the Alberta legislatures in the 1990s, that even without the “critical mass,” women legislators were able to make modest changes to legislative style, discourse and policy outcomes.²⁶

The pre-determined or anticipated results from the application of “critical mass theory” has been questioned when even with the “critical mass” threshold, women representatives are less likely to produce women friendly policies. Many scholars have called to investigate other factors that could influence the pro-female policy outputs in the legislatures. Although they believe that there may be an effect when

²⁴ Sarah Childs, *New Labour’s Women MPs. Women Representing Women*. (London: Routledge, 2004), 136-137.

²⁵ See Sarah Childs and Julie Withey, 2004.

²⁶ See Linda Trimble, 2003.

larger numbers of women are present in the institution, but other variables need to be taken into consideration.

There are scholars who examined the actors or the representatives in order to study women substantive representation. Because of the inability of the critical mass theory to produce the result it propagated, the attention of the studies shifted to investigate what are the factors that influenced women to act for women. Many scholars have called to shift the attention to examine the “actors” who initiate policy or reforms to promote women’s cause.²⁷

Discussing about factors that contribute to the women substantive representation, Chaney argued that “personal characteristics” and “experiences” of individual women representatives are central in feminizing politics in the United Kingdom.²⁸ In a textual analysis of New Zealand parliamentary debates on three topics on child care, pay equity and parental leave since 1970, Grey discovered that women from left-leaning Labour Party and having close links with feminist organizations made more gendered claims than their conservative colleagues. They also develop a “team spirit” that eventually create a “safe space” for them to represent women’s interest.²⁹

“Party ideology” is recognized as an enabling environment for women to critically act for women in Bundestag Germany. Thus, political parties i.e the Christian Democrats (CD), promoted gender awareness which later shaped their

²⁷ See Sarah Childs and Karen Celis, “Introduction: The Descriptive and Substantive Representation of Women: New Direction,” *Parliamentary Affairs*, vol.61, no.3 (2008), 419-425; Susan Dovi, “Preferable Descriptive Representatives: Will Just Any Woman, Black, or Latino?” *American Political Science Review*, vol. 96, no. 4 (2002), 729-743; Sarah Childs and Mona Lena Krook, 2008; Fiona Mackay, “Thick” Conception of Substantive Representation: Women, Gender and Political Institutions,” *Representation*, vol. 44, no. 2 (2008), 125-139; Manon Tremblay, 2006.

²⁸ Paul Chaney, “Critical Mass, Deliberation and the Substantive Representation of Women: Evidence from the UK’s Devolution Programme,” *Political Studies*, vol. 54, no.4 (2006): 691-692.

²⁹ Sandra Grey, “Numbers and Beyond: The Relevance of Critical Mass in Gender Research,” *Politics & Gender*, vol.2, no.4 (2006):492-502.