

Lecture Note

Gender Economics (EE364)

Chapter 2: The role of Thai women in the current economic system



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Chapter 2

The role of Thai women in the current economic system

2.1 Women in the labor market

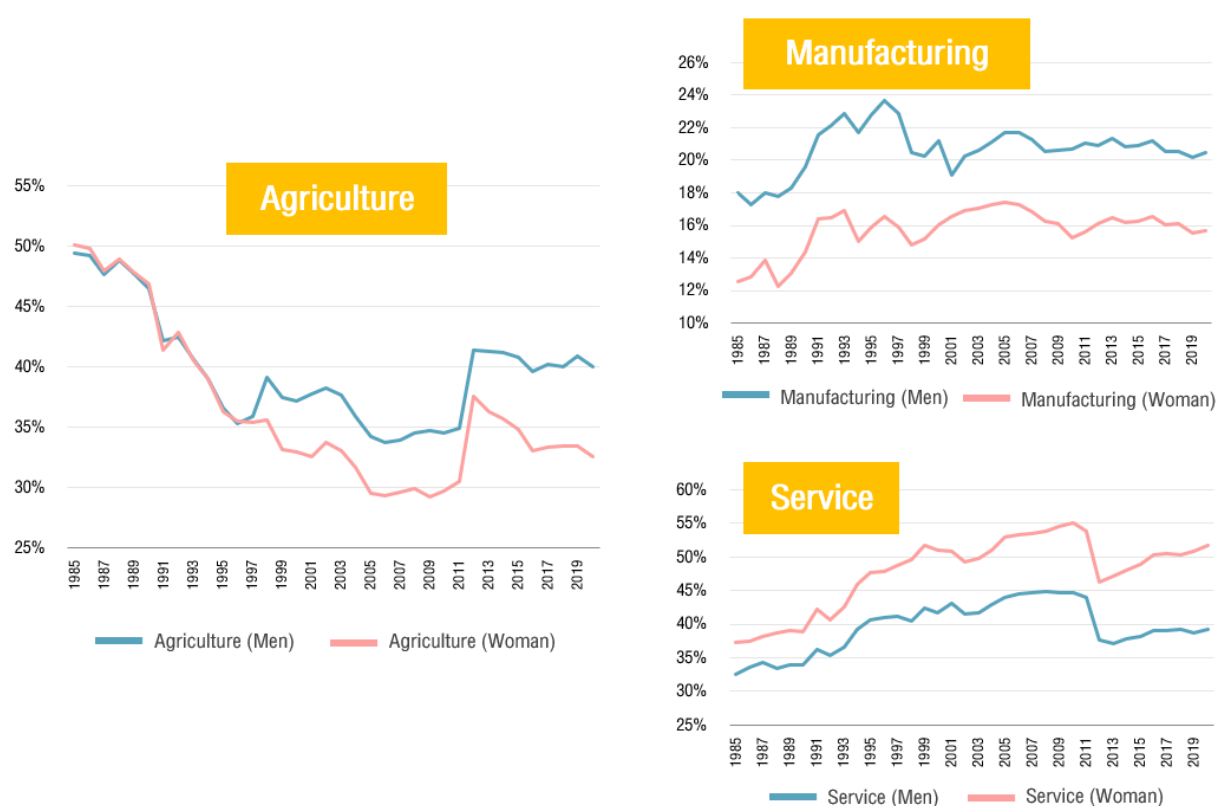
This chapter will focus on four main aspects including: (1) Women in the labor market - Role of women in participating in the labor market in Thailand; (2) Women at Work - Gender diversity and the glass ceiling in the workplace in Thailand; (3) Limitations of women in the labor market - Factors that determine the limitations of women in the labor market; (4) Policy to encourage women to participate in the labor market - Policy implementation in Thailand.

Women's participation in the labor market in Thailand - Thailand has a consistently high female workforce participation rate, averaging 65% from 1990 to 2017. The rate in other countries in Southeast Asia is: Malaysia (46%) and the Philippines (48%). Thai women continue to work after marriage and raise children at the same time. The female participation rate of married women is 80%. The development of women's roles parallels economic changes. In the past, taking care of children/unpaid family workers have become the main workers in the labor market. Education is an important factor driving Thai women in the labor market. Currently, there are more advances in education for women than for men. Women's income tends to increase in the same way as men's income. Women's income increased from 1985–1996, and then decreased during the Asian financial crisis (1997), but later recovered after the crisis. Therefore, the gender wage gap has continued to decrease dramatically.

Women's participation in the labor market and economy - Thailand has evolved from an economy based on agriculture to one based on the manufacturing and service sectors over the past few decades. The Thai workforce has transitioned from a low-income agricultural sector to the high-income manufacturing and service sectors. The proportion of employment in the agricultural sector continues to decline. However, the proportion of employment in the manufacturing and service sector continues to increase. The demand for Thai workers in the manufacturing sector is high. Women have become the source of labor supply expansion in the Thai labor market. Government has implemented education policies to support the country's development. Women are highly educated, have started working in manufacturing/service sectors, and receive higher wages. Income inequality has decreased over time.

Women's Participation in the labor market and industry (Figure 2.1) - The average share of the agricultural workforce has dropped sharply from 50% in 1985 to 33% in 2020. The proportion of workers in the manufacturing sector has increased since 1985 and remained stable after 1995. The proportion of workers in the service sector has increased since 1985 and remained stable after 2000. The number of women working in the service sector is higher than men. The proportion of labor in this sector has continued to increase dramatically.

Figure 2.1 - Proportion of workers by industry and gender (1985-2020)

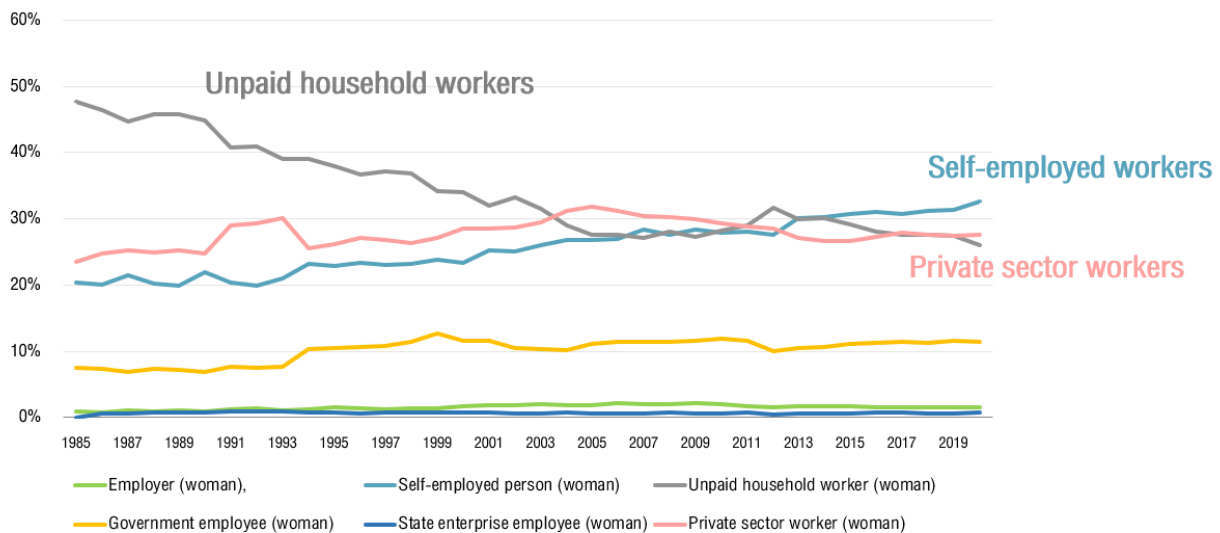


Source: Author's calculation from LFS (1985-2020).

Working status of women in Thailand (Figure 2.2/2.3) – There are three main types including: (1) Employee (Government; Government enterprises; Private sectors); (2) Employer/Own account workers (operated enterprise with/without employee); (3) Unpaid family (works without pay on a farm or in a business enterprise owned or operated by the head/other members of family). A number of women work as unpaid family workers more than men in Thailand. However, trend has declined over time and the gap between men and women has

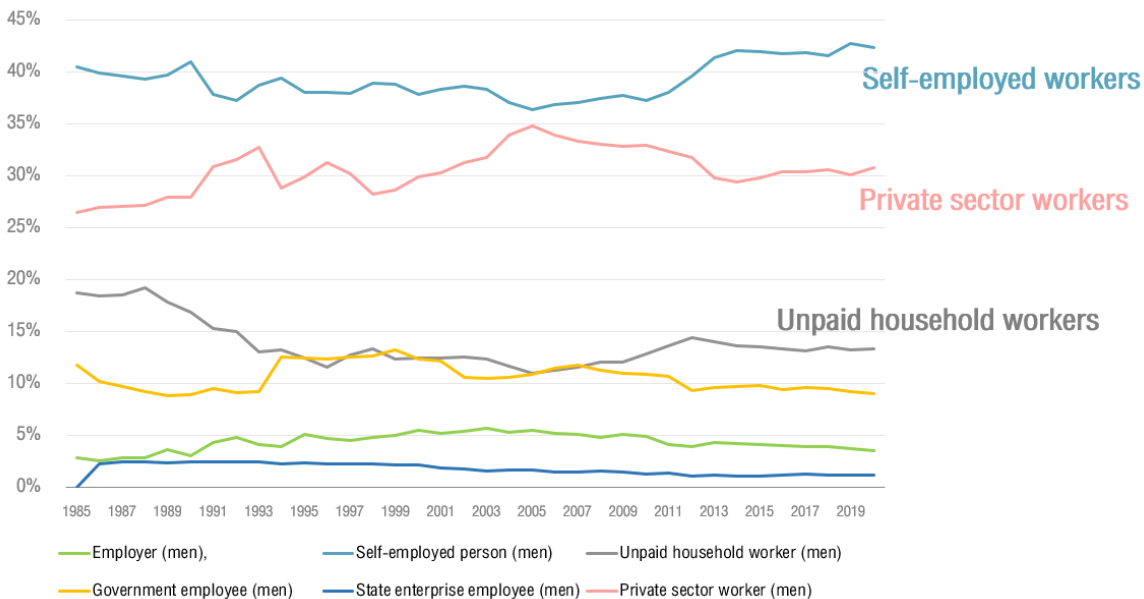
decreased steadily. However, men join to work more than women in other sectors, especially in own account worker (men have higher proportion than women)

Figure 2.2 - Gender proportion of workers by working status (1985-2020) - Women



Source: Author's calculation from LFS (1985-2020).

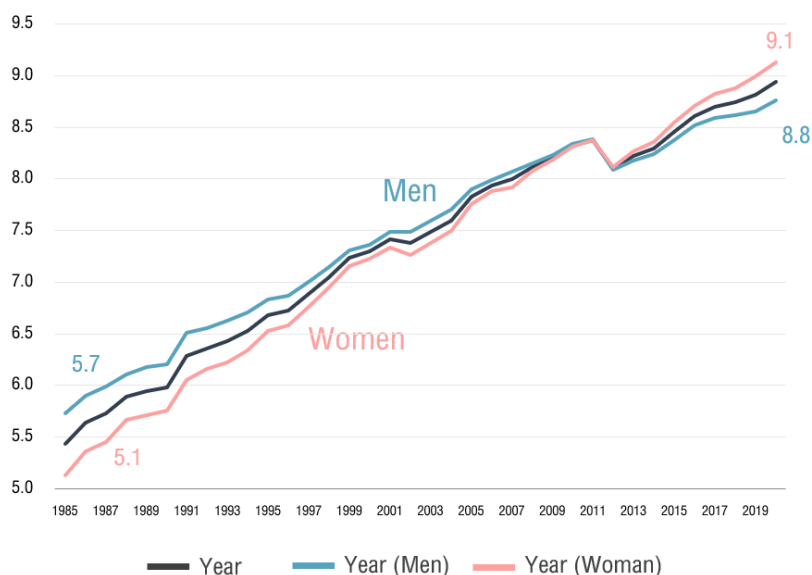
Figure 2.3 - Gender proportion of workers by working status (1985-2020) - Men



Source: Author's calculation from LFS (1985-2020).

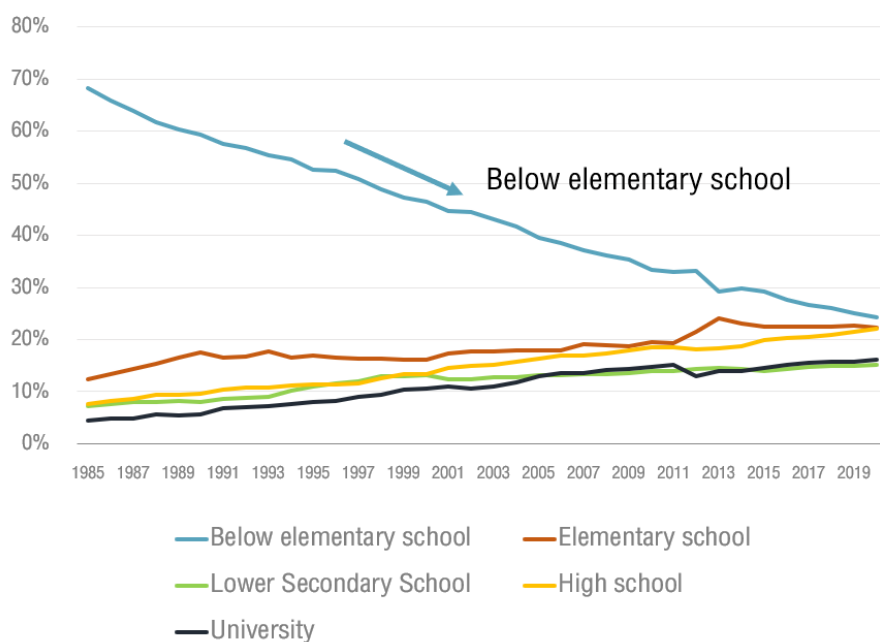
Women's participation in the labor market and education - Education is the main factor driving Thai women into the labor market. Compared to other Asian countries such as Korea, Indonesia, Thailand, there is a strong correlation between education & participation in the female labor market (Dowling and Worswick, 2001). Regarding Thailand's education system, in the Past, the boy learned from the monks in the temple, while the girls are studying to do housework in the house. The First School in Thailand has been invented by the King Rama V (1871), which is the school for boys and girls. The development of Compulsory Year of Education Policy starting from 4 years (1936), 7 years (1951), 6 years (1977), 9 years (1999), and 12 years (2002). Therefore, the average year of education of Thai workers has continued to increase (Ministry of Education, 2018) (Figure 2.4).

Figure 2.4 - Average year of education for Thai workers (1985-2020)

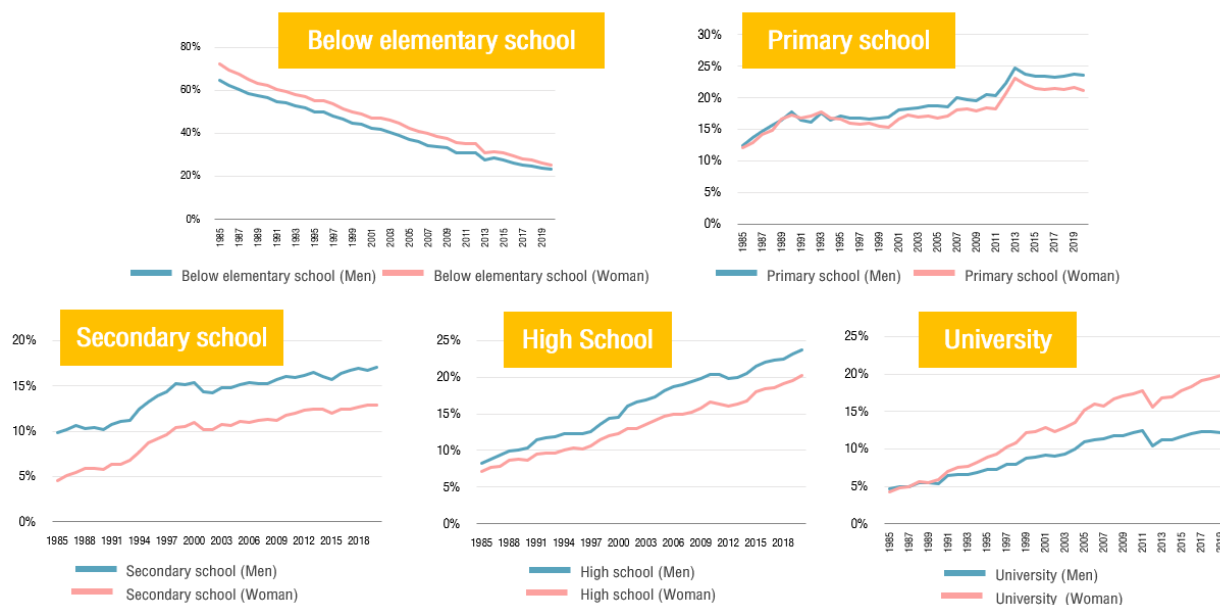


Source: Author's calculation from LFS from LFS (1985-2020).

The implementation of Thailand's education policy, especially the number of compulsory years of education, has improved the education level of Thai workers (Figure 2.5). The proportion of people with less education has decreased, and the proportion of the workforce graduating from higher education has increased. The proportion of less-educated people decreased 35%, and there was a 10% increase in the proportion of the workforce graduating from higher education (male and female). However, women's education is lower than that of men at all levels, except at the tertiary level (Figure 2.6).

Figure 2.5 - Proportion of workers classified by level of education (1985-2020)

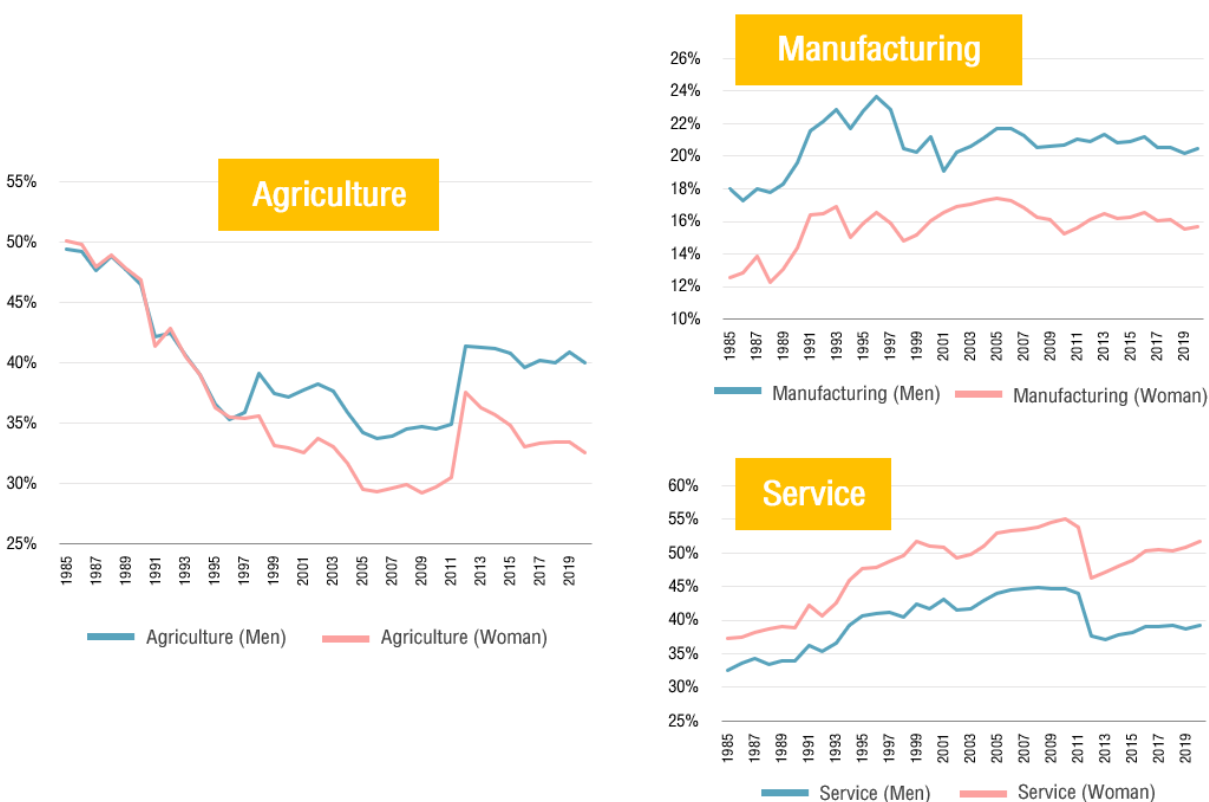
Source: Author's calculation from LFS from LFS (1985-2020).

Figure 2.6 - Proportion of workers Classified by educational level and gender (1985-2020)

Source: Author's calculation from LFS (1985-2020).

Participation of women in the labor market and industry - The average share of the agricultural workforce has dropped sharply from 50% in 1985 to 33% in 2016. The average share of the manufacturing workforce has been substantial since 1985 and stable in 1995. The average share of service workers increased from 1985 and remained stable in 2000. More women work in the service sector than men. The proportion of workers in this sector has continued to increase dramatically (Figure 2.7).

Figure 2.7 - Proportion of workers by industry and gender (1985-2020)



Source: Author's calculation from LFS (1985-2020).

2.2 Women at work

2.2.1 Gender diversity in the workplace in Thailand

Only one-fifth of company's worldwide include women with senior management positions. Companies where women held senior management positions in small, medium, and large companies in 2016 (% of companies). Women-led companies. There is a tendency for the number of female employees to increase.

According to the Corporate Women Directors International Report (CWDI) Report (2020) on Female Directors in Asia Pacific, the number of women on board is very small in the Asia-Pacific region, accounting for 15.1% of all directors in 1,573 leading companies. At the regional level, Asia-Pacific still has fewer women on board than other regions. The percentage of women on board in Asia Pacific is 15.1%, behind Northern Europe (37.6%), USA/Canada (28.6%), Western Europe (26.5%), Central and Eastern Europe (19.3%), and Southern Africa of Sahara (19.1%). Only Latin America (8.3%) and the Middle East North Africa (MENA) region (3.7%) have a lower percentage of women on board than the Asia-Pacific region.

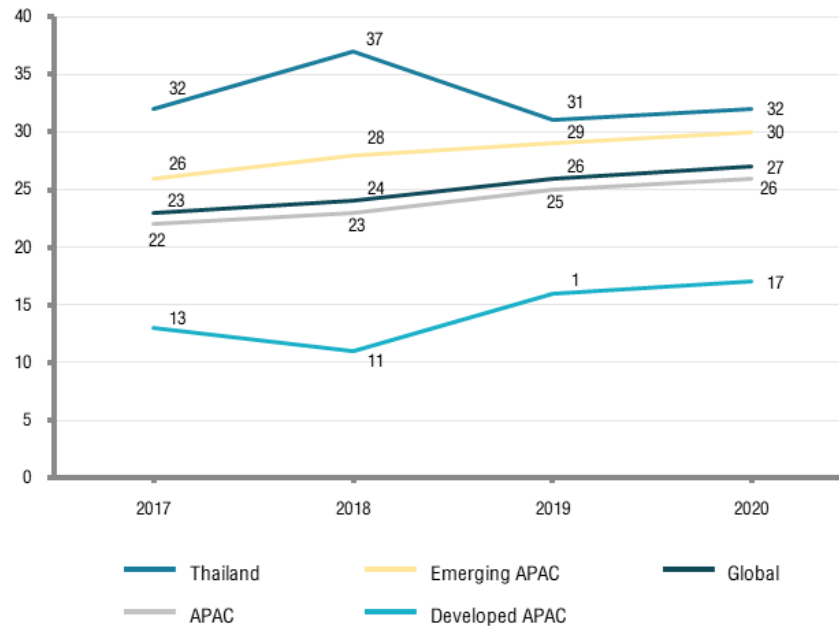
The main reason is that social and cultural contexts in Asian countries (a society in which men dominate as leaders) contributed to the fact that women remained underrepresented. There are fewer men on the board of directors (BOD) in Asia. Although women have higher education levels and a more active role in the labor market, they still have a disadvantage in making decisions and are considered “under-represented in decision making.” Gender discrimination (in which women are considered inferior leaders to men) results in a small number of women serving on the BOD in this region. The issue of the percentage of women on the board is highly controversial, leading to some countries setting a gender quota for boards.

In private sector, the number of Thai women in senior management positions is 32%, higher than the global average of 27% and the Asia-Pacific average of 26% (Figure 2.8). However, only 20.4% of Thai women are on Board of Directors in listed companies. There is a very high percentage of men in the Board of Directors in Thailand. However, when compared to the percentage of women in business leadership positions across ASEAN¹, on average Thailand is around 20.4%, which is higher than that of Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, ASEAN average (The International Finance Corporation (IFC), 2019) (Figure 2.9). In

¹ Board Members, Role of the Board of Directors, Chairman of the Board, Executive Director, Non-Executive Director, Independent Director, Audit Committee, Other Leadership Roles, Senior Executives.

public sector, on average Only 25.1% of Thai women hold executive positions and 17.8% in senior positions. Based on the information from the Office of the civil service commission (OCSC), 2012-2019, the percentage of Thai women in the public sector (2012-2019) (classified by position level), especially those in management level, high level position is still low.

Figure 2.8 - Proportion of workers by industry and gender (1985-2020)



Source - The Grant Thornton (2020).

Figure 2.9 - Proportion of women on board

	Indonesia	Malaysia	Philippines	Singapore	Thailand	ASEAN average
Board Members	14.9	13.5	13.2	11.9	20.4	14.9
Role of the Board of Directors						
Chairman of the Board	11.7	6.1	3.9	5.2	7.6	7.1
Executive Director	-	14	12.4	11.8	19.7	13.8
Non-Executive Director	-	10.4	14.7	11.1	19.7	14.3
Independent Director	14.6	13.9	8.9	11.3	18.1	13.4
Audit Committee	19.0	11.2	13.1	9.9	19.8	14.6
Other Leadership Roles						
Senior Executives	18.4	26.2	32.8	27.2	29.7	25.2

Source - The International Finance Corporation (IFC), 2019

Figure 2.10 - Percentage of Thai women in the public sector (2012-2019) (classified by position level)



Source: Office of the civil service commission (OCSC), 2012-2019.

2.2.2 Glass Ceiling

The glass ceiling is an invisible barrier or limitation that prevents working women from rising to the position of senior executives/company directors or from progressing in their duties and work. The concept of the glass ceiling in Asia is different from that in developed countries. Numerous studies indicate a shortage of women in management positions in general, not just in senior management positions, which can be used as an indicator of the glass ceiling. The main reason for the existence of glass ceilings in Asia is tradition (both culture and religion). For example, in Bangladesh - Only 5.1% of women are in administrative and management positions and only 6% of women work in government agencies (Zafarullah, 2000). In South Korea - 94% of women believe they have more difficulty finding full-time jobs than men (Kang and Rowley, 2005). Furthermore, only 7% of managers in South Korea are women, compared to 21% in Hong Kong and 19% in China.

Finally, regarding the glass ceiling in Thailand - The proportion of men in administrative and management jobs is over 70%, while women are only 20%. The proportion of women in management has increased by approximately 8% over 30 years. Women working as farmers.

There is still a large proportion in Thailand (Figure 2.10). Furthermore, currently, there are no female students admitted to the Police Cadet Academy. The Police Cadet Academy is accepting applications for female police cadets from 2009 until 2018.

Figure 2.10 - Glass ceiling in Thailand

Year	Men	Women	Difference
Managerial jobs and related			
1985	79.72%	20.28%	59.44%
1995	78.73%	21.27%	57.46%
2005	72.17%	27.83%	44.34%
2015	71.19%	28.81%	42.37%
Agricultural jobs and related			
1985	53.96%	46.04%	7.92%
1995	54.48%	45.52%	8.96%
2005	56.45%	43.55%	12.89%
2015	57.74%	42.26%	15.49%

Source: Author's calculation from LFS (1985-2020).

2.2.3 Effects of Gender Diversity on Company Performance

The presence of women as directors (Women on Board) or the increase in the proportion of women as directors affects the company's operations (Terjesen et al. (2009)). For example, it affects the company's performance or good governance. Adams and Ferreira (2009) provides empirical evidence in the United States. The proportion of women on the Board of Directors (BOD) and their impact on corporate governance and efficiency. They applied the information of 1939 companies (1996-2003) regarding Board meeting information Director's Remuneration and financial information. Their main finding shows the gender diversity in directors has a significant effect on company outcomes (firm's input).

For example, women behave differently than men in meeting attendance. Women tend to have less attendance problems than men. Furthermore, when there is an equal gender proportion on BOD, the behavior of the male judges was even better. More diversified boards tend to hold CEOs accountable for falling share prices. GBT committees are paid more equal. Boards with more gender diversity have more rigorous scrutiny.

Paweenawat (2019) - Women on Boards and Corporate Governance: Evidence from Listed Companies in Thailand. The status of Thai women has improved greatly with a high education level and high labor market participation. Therefore, Paweenawat (2019) studied on the effects of gender diversity on the Board of Directors and its impact on corporate governance in Thailand. Improving the level of governance (from good to excellent) was related to the ratio of women appointed as a member of board of director. Furthermore, the presence of women as a chairwoman in two subcommittees - Chairman of Executive Committee and Chairman of Audit Committee will increase level of governance. This evidence is consistent with the study on gender diversity contributing to better corporate governance in Germany, Japan, the UK (Al-Rahahleh and Ayat, 2017). Therefore, gender diversity is a tool and policy to improve corporate governance of companies.

In addition to study of Paweenawat (2019), few studies examine the women on boards in Thailand and the impact of gender diversity on company performance in Thailand. There are three related studies including: (1) Singhathep and Polpirul (2015) found the negative impact of female CEOs (CEOs) on short-term and long-term corporate performance; (2) Sae-ngow (2015) found that there is no link between the proportion of female executives on the board and the return on equity; (3) Chotiyaputta and Yoon (2018) found that women's ratio contributing to stable performance as measured by Tobin Q and return on assets (ROA).

2.2.4 Gender quotas for the Board of Director (BOD)

Comparing the number of women as directors of a company and the number of men, on average worldwide, the number of women on the BOD is a small. In some countries, laws have been introduced to provide gender quotas for the BOD. Smith (2014) summarizes several controversies regarding gender diversity and the creation of a more balanced composition of the BOD and governance committees.

Supportive views: (1) Improving the quality of the decision-making process compared to one-sex committees; (2) Adding new perspectives to the meeting of the Board of Directors; (3) Improving the image/legitimacy of the company, contributing to stable performance and shareholder value; (4) Women in senior management positions serve as role models for women's career development at lower levels; (5) A balanced gender composition creates more

independence than **one-sex board/committees;** (6) Increasing controversy among high productivity talents.

Opposing views: (1) More gender diversity committees create more conflict; (2) Protracted and unconcluded debates can be a serious problem if companies need to respond quickly; (3) Communication problems in cases where company executives are unwilling to share important information with directors with different characteristics (demographics) negatively affect the efficiency of committees.

Theoretical arguments about the costs and benefits when quotas are applied. If a company already has a decent percentage of the board, enforcing the quota by increasing the proportion of women will negatively change the board's balancing act. The proportion of women in senior management positions is low in many countries. This is due to the limited number of qualified women.

Smith (2014) studied the effects of gender quota 40% in Norway. As of 2002, the proportion of women as directors was less than 10% of members in Norway's largest publicly traded company. The proposed regulations give companies five years to increase the proportion of women on the BOD to 40%. In January 2008, more than 40% of the BOD comprised women. In terms of numbers, this is considered quite successful. In addition to the gender quota, family friendly employment rules often help women to advance in their careers. However, the law has not increased the number of women in senior management positions.

2.3 Limitation on women's participation in the labor market

The main barriers to participation in the labor market of Thai women are household responsibilities. Thai women are expected to be the primary caregivers in Thai households. Compared to male family members, women tend to carry more household responsibilities. Based on the reasons for not participating in the labor market (%) (2018-2019), housework was the main reason for not participating in labor market (Figure 2.11).

Figure 2.11 - Reasons for not participating in the labor market (%) (2018-2019)

	Men	Women	Total
Housework	16.39	87.33	73.11
Studying	1.13	0.27	0.44
Waiting for the season	2.56	0.31	0.76
Sick, Disabled, etc. until unable to work	53.82	7.77	17
Rest	21.55	2.58	6.39
Etc.	4.54	1.74	2.3

Source: Author of the calculation from LFS (2018-2019)

Furthermore, Paweenawat and Liao (2022) found the motherhood wage penalty in Thailand. The country has limited support for women with children, they faced many obstacles in the labor market (Waldfogel, 1998). For example, in Thailand, the number of paid maternity leave is small compared to other developed countries. The Women, Business, and the Law (WBL) index (2020) studied the legal measures that affect women's work during and after pregnancy. Thailand scored only 20 (out of 100) compared to the Philippines and Vietnam (80) (in the parental indicators). Therefore, female workers with children in Thailand have little work-life balance. This is because the country lacks appropriate childcare facilities. In addition, Thailand does not have a flexible working hours policy for workers with children, causing some people to leave the labor market or reduce their working hours, which negatively affects wages and career advancement.

In the light of female entrepreneur, restrictions on access to women's loans are major problems. Many microfinance projects focus on poverty reduction in Thailand, such as the Village Fund Project and People's Banking Program by the Government Savings Bank. However, only the Women Empowerment Fund (WEF) focuses on improving employment and women's access to economic opportunities. Thai women in SMEs face barriers to accessing funding because of high collateral conditions and a low rate of acceptance.

2.4 Policy to encourage women to participate in the labor market

According to the Women, Business, and the Law 2021 (World Bank, 2021), the legal environment does not support women's decision-making in the workplace. If we started from job search, employment, resignation for marriage/children, asset management, starting business, and retirement. The 190 economic gender discrimination measure over 10 years focuses on how women apply discriminatory laws and regulations across all phases of work, the main finding show limiting equality of opportunity.

However, results improved across all indices measured in WBL, with the developmental gender gap greatly reduced. The increasing number of women in the labor force and employment volatility is lower. The proportion of women represented in parliament is greater. Since 2019, 27 economies have enacted legislative reforms to promote gender equality. Most of them were reforms regarding wages and parental status. Finally, economies with a score of 100 in the WBL Index: Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Latvia, Luxembourg and Sweden, Portugal.

Thailand scored 78.1 out of 100, scoring well for freedom to travel, laws affecting women's work decisions, and gender differences in property and inheritance. However, Thailand still has restrictions on marriage, laws affecting the work of women after having children, restrictions on starting and running a women's business, and laws affecting women's pensions. Thailand should improve legal equality for women. One of the lowest scores was an indicator of laws affecting how women work after having children. The indicators of parental status need improvement. There is a need to consider paid maternity leave of at least 14 weeks for mothers, benefits, paternity leave, and paid parental leave.

Thai government policy - The government promotes gender equality and the role of Thai women. Women will play a greater and an important role in the development of the country. The country aims to achieve the targeted “Sustainable Development Goals” (SDG)

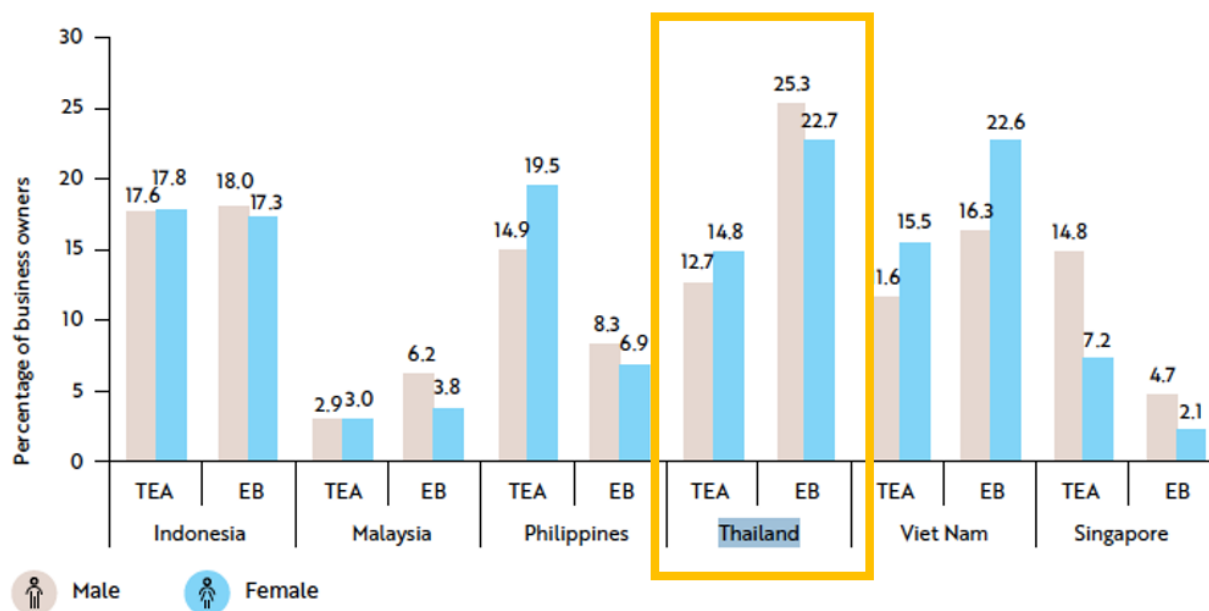
- No. 5 – “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”
- No. 4 – “Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning.”

The Department of Women's Affairs and Family Development (DWF) is the main authority for the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women in Thailand.

Women Empowerment Fund (WEF) - Founded in 2012 with the aim to empower women through financial strategies. The fund aims to promote the role of women. It helps women by supporting the nation in protecting women's rights. The fund is a funding source for women who need better access to education, employment, and health services. Three main objectives of WEF including: (1) To provide funds with low interest or zero interest for women's investment; (2) To provide funds for women's development & help develop women's networks; (3) To provide funds for supporting activities & projects that help with women's problems and empowerment

Women Entrepreneurs in Thailand – In Thailand, the proportion of male and female entrepreneurs is similar. Many businesses are run by women, and the entrepreneurial rate of women is higher than that of men (21% vs 17%) (GEM 2012). Thai women dare to invest more and become more entrepreneurial (The Grant Thornton International Business Report 2014) (Figure 2.12-2.13).

Figure 2.12 - Total early-stage Entrepreneurial Activity (TEA) rates versus Established Business (EB) rates (2015)



Source: ES CAP based on Xavier, S.R. et al. (2016). ASEAN Regional Entrepreneurship Report 2015/2016.

Figure 2.13 - TEA rates by activities, men and women entrepreneurs (2013–2014)

	INDONESIA		MALAYSIA		PHILIPPINES		SINGAPORE		THAILAND		VIET NAM	
												
1 Agriculture, forestry, fishing	4.8	2.0	14.5	0.9	6.9	2.6	0.8	0.7	11.0	7.2	3.9	0.7
2 Mining, construction	2.6	2.8	6.1	0.9	1.3	0.6	4.0	0.7	2.6	0.0	3.6	0.7
3 Manufacturing	9.4	10.4	4.6	11.2	4.9	3.8	3.2	4.3	5.5	7.5	3.6	3.4
4 Utilization, transport, storage	3.5	1.3	2.3	0.0	2.3	1.0	4.5	1.4	2.4	1.9	1.6	1.7
5 Wholesale trade	8.1	2.3	13.7	2.8	5.9	2.2	8.5	7.9	11.0	2.4	7.8	3.1
6 Retail trade, hotels & restaurants	60.2	71.3	51.1	67.3	72.4	85.1	36.8	55.4	50.4	68.5	62.5	78.4
7 Information and communication	1.4	0.4	1.5	1.9	1.0	0.8	9.3	2.9	4.6	1.2	2.3	1.0
8 Financial intermediation, real estate activities	2.3	1.0	3.1	2.8	1.6	1.6	7.7	5.8	2.9	1.7	3.9	1.4
9 Professional services	1.7	2.2	1.5	6.5	0.7	1.0	9.7	5.0	1.3	0.5	2.0	0.3
10 Administrative services	3.0	1.4	1.5	1.9	1.0	1.2	2.4	0.7	0.9	0.2	0.7	0.7
11 Government, health, education, social services	2.7	4.9	0.0	3.7	2.0	0.2	8.9	13.7	6.6	8.2	6.2	6.9
12 Personal/consumer service activities	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.0	1.4	0.9	0.7	2.0	1.7

Source: ES CAP based on Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (2015). GEM Adult Population Survey 2013–2014.

The latest development of Thai women supporting policy - A Cabinet resolution on January 11, 2022 approved the “Principles for drafting measures to support women as an important economic force” proposed by the MDC. These measures are to support and facilitate women’s participation in the economy. This support is to reduce working women’s burden of raising children and increase men’s participation in raising children.

Exercises

- 1) Provide examples of the development of women's roles in a country anywhere in the world and explain the main reasons for the development of these roles. What are the barriers to the development of women's roles? Include a discussion on age, race, religion, and beliefs in that country.
- 2) Provide a definition of the glass ceiling and a real-life example. What factors cause the glass ceiling in Thailand and other countries worldwide? Compare the situation of Thai women to that for women in the rest of the world. Please give examples of research studies on this issue and provide a discussion on this issue.
- 3) What is the reason for the increasing number of women in the board of directors (BOD)? On average, women comprise a smaller proportion than men in most countries. Give an example of a country that has a policy to encourage a high number of women on the BOD and provide examples of the policies used. Were these policies successful? If not, why not?
- 4) Discuss the limitations on women's participation in the labor market in Thailand compared to other countries with less or more restrictions. What policies would you suggest the policy maker to get rid of limitation of women's participation in labor market? Do you agree that "Female workers with children in Thailand have little work-life balance."? Why? Or, why not? Please provide a discussion on this issue.
- 5) The government promotes gender equality and the role of Thai women. Women will play a greater and an important role in the country's development through policies and measures. Please provide examples of measures that governments should improve to support the role of women even more.

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