

ABSTRACT

This research attempts to study political participation of rural women in Yaxi, located in southeast of China through the lens of gender theory, and aims to explore ways to increase their participation in politics. This study also analyses cultural and social challenges in influencing Chinese rural women's lack of political participation, and assesses policies and regulations in relation to rural women's low political participation. Gender in this research is studied within the framework of the socialist feminism approach to examine the culture, values and social forms that lead to low political participation of rural women and to explore ways to increase their involvement in rural China. Based on the critical paradigm, a qualitative approach is used to explore in depth the participants' feelings, interpretations and understandings. Empirical findings from Yaxi Town largely confirm that the exclusion of women from political structures and decision-making processes is the result of cultural, social and policy challenges in the context of modern society. Thousands of years of traditional culture and social norms influence the political engagement of rural women in China. Being a country where only one party dominates, the understanding and implementation of policies affects rural women in their participation in politics, and policies with gender inequality violate rural women's political rights and their participation in politics. The insights gained from the interviews suggest that solutions should be sought to change the cultural and social barriers and change policies to promote women's participation in politics, especially in their decision-making processes.

Keywords: Political participation, rural women, gender theory, Yaxi, China, Culture