

Gender Equality in Vietnam, Achievements, Challenges and the Factors Affecting

Hien Vu Thi

University of Transport and Communications, No.3 CauGiay Street, Lang Thuong Ward, Dong Da District, Hanoi, Vietnam

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ABSTRACT: Over the past 30 years, socio-economic development and dramatic changes in the family and society have brought about many qualitative changes in gender and women's issues. Women's contributions not only create a progressive and civilized society but also develop the woman herself. However, at present, there is still quite a large disparity between women's roles and social status. Therefore, to create a balance between the position and role of women, it is

necessary to synchronously implement many solutions to raise awareness of the whole society on gender and gender equality to gradually erase the gender gap in Vietnam is necessary. This study focuses on analyzing the current situation of gender equality in Vietnam, the factors affecting gender equality, and then recommending solutions to further strengthen gender equality in Vietnam.

KEYWORDS: Gender equality, the factors affecting, Vietnam, value of women

has university degrees or higher, the difference is 19.7%.

I. INTRODUCTION

Decision No. 622 / QĐ-TTg dated 10/10/2017, the Prime Minister promulgates the National Action Plan to implement the 2030 Agenda for a clearly defined sustainable development, empowerment of women is a condition for sustainable development to change the course of the twenty-first century and address key challenges such as poverty, inequality, and violence against women [1]. However, in reality, the issue of salary, bonus, welfare, and promotion opportunities for women is still much lower than for men. Despite equal qualifications, women still earn less than men. There are more women in informal jobs and more vulnerable than men; at the same time, they also have little access to social protection services. In particular, women only make up the minority at all levels of policy-making in political, economic, and communal life

From the practice of implementing the law on gender equality, legal experts say that our country's gender policies have been issued but have not yet met the actual requirements. Currently, there is still a stigma in assessing the ability, training and promoting women in many agencies and organizations. The promulgated policies are not really suitable for the gender difference between men and women. Therefore, in many cases, it does not bring real justice to women. In fact, women play a great role, contributing positively and effectively to socio-economic development, but society does not really pay attention to women, their social status. There are also many aspects that are not commensurate with their great role.

According to Report of the Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs [2], the proportion of women participating in the labor force is 71.2%. However, the working status of women is still low, of which 52.1% are in simple labor and 66.6% are in family labor. Therefore, the average income of women is 5.22 million VND / month, equal to 81.1% of the average income of men (5.92 million VND / month). Not only that, this gap is widening in the group of qualified workers, most obviously at the untrained level, female workers' income is lower than that of male workers at the same level of 8.1%, but if the group

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Vietnam is one of the early countries that give gender equality certain priorities. Specifically, in the first Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, the 1946 Constitution, Article 9 directly mentions the equal rights of men and women: "Women are equal to men in all aspects" [3]. President Ho Chi Minh in his will, he also worried about the role and position of the woman: "The Party and the Government need to have a practical plan to foster, raise and help to get more and more. Many women are in charge of all jobs including leadership. Women themselves must try to rise up. It is a revolution that brings about real

equal rights for women” [4]. And this issue has been institutionalized into legal documents such as the 2006 Law on Gender Equality [5], the Law on Domestic Violence Prevention and Control 2007, or promulgating action programs such as the National Program of Action. on gender equality in the 2016-2020 period, the National Action Program on Domestic Violence Prevention and Control to 2020, etc. to ensure women's rights in the fields of politics, economics, and labor education, health care, and righteousness in their families.

During development, the Government of Vietnam has strived to bring real gender equality to the people of Vietnam, so that the people of Vietnam can truly live in a civilized society, sustainable development, and humanity. Although there are still some limitations in the implementation of the Party's policies, the State laws and policies on gender equality such as gender inequality also appear in some important fields of social, women still bear many burdens of work, income, and discrimination. Women's participation in organizational structure and social management is limited, especially at the grassroots level. In some places, the income gap between men and women remains the same in the same job position, the opportunity for women to access high-income jobs is still lower than that for men and women workers [7]. Female workers are not appreciated as male workers, which is more vulnerable when the enterprise needs to reduce manpower. Violence against women still occurs in some places, especially in rural and remote mountainous areas. However, it can be said that Vietnam is one of the countries with many achievements in the implementation of gender equality, making an important contribution to the country's development in the integration period.

In fact, Vietnamese women, who make up more than 50% of the population and nearly 50% of the social workforce, are increasingly participating in all activities in the community. The proportion of women participating in the 14th National Assembly of Vietnam (term 2016-2021) reached 26.8%, making Vietnam among the group of countries with a high proportion of women in the National Assembly in the region and the world. Women currently hold many key leadership positions of the country such as member of the Politburo, Chairman of the National Assembly, Vice Chairman of the National Assembly, Vice President, and Minister; Deputy. In localities, many women play a key role at all levels and sectors, contributing to solving important problems. Female entrepreneurs who are ethnic minorities increase, especially in the fields of education, healthcare, and

people's health care. The role of ethnic minority women has been increasingly promoted.

Achievements and Challenges Posed

In the field of politics: Vietnam is one of the nation's remove gender gap the fastest in the past 20 years [7], already ahead of schedule for the goal of equality between men and women and improving status for women (this is one of the Millennium Development Goals we strive to achieve) [8]. Vietnam is considered by the United Nations to be a bright spot in achieving the millennium goals, one of the countries with high gender equality achievements. According to the ranking of the United Nations (2012) in the index of gender inequality, Vietnam ranked 47/187 countries, compared to ranked 58/136 countries in 2010 (the closer the 0 is, shows the more the equality high). The percentage of female delegates accounted for over 25% (from IXth term to XIIth term of Party) and the results of the XIV (2016 - 2021) National Assembly deputies term with the percentage of female deputies in the XIV National Assembly was 26.72%, increasing 2.62% compared to the previous term, making Vietnam one of the countries with the highest proportion of female National Assembly deputies in the region and the world (ranked 43/143 countries in the world and 2nd in Asia in terms of The percentage of women in the National Assembly (higher than China, South Korea, and Japan, etc.) and also the first time Vietnam has a female National Assembly Chairman. Although it has not met the requirements of reality, the percentage of women is large. Provincial People's Council term of 2016-2021 reached 26.54% (up 1.37%); district-level reached 27.85% (up 3.23%) and commune level reached 26.59% (increased 4.88%). “As of June 2017, in Vietnam, the male has 12/30 Ministries, Ministerial-level agencies, and government-attached agencies with women in charge of leading positions, reaching 40%, including 10/22 Ministries, Ministerial-level agencies and 02 / 08 Government agencies”[8].

In the field of economics and labor: In 2016 alone, Government was created for about 1,641 million workers, of which female workers accounted for 48%. This indicator exceeded 8% compared to the target set in the National Strategy on gender equality for the period 2011-2020. “According to the General Statistics Office, as of July 1, 2017, the labor force aged 15 and over was estimated at 54.5 million, of which male workers 28.3 million accounted for 52%, female workers 26.2 million, accounting for 48%” (The Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

2017). “In 2016, 10 localities reached the percentage of women owning a business from 30% or more. Particularly for Binh Duong, the percentage of women participating in the leadership of state enterprises reaches 50%” (The Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. 2017). In the period 2010-2015, the number of female workers moving out of the agricultural sector was higher than that of male workers. “If in 2010, the proportion of women and men employed in agriculture was 51.2% and 46.4% respectively; by 2015, these rates have decreased to 45.5% and 42.7%, respectively” [7] Vocational training and job creation for female workers, especially in rural areas, were focused, with an estimated 46% of female workers receiving vocational training under the policies of the Project on vocational training for workers in the countryside; over 40% of female workers will get jobs. In addition, women’s economic rights have been enhanced through the provision of women in the name of men in their certificates of ownership of land, houses, and properties. Improved access to women’s credit [8].

In the field of health, culture - education and science and technology: Vietnam is also a leading country in the Asia-Pacific region in terms of gender equality indicators through the provision of health services, education for girls, boys, and women. The illiteracy rate of women compared to men is decreasing (Ministry of Education and Training. 2017). These are very significant numbers because the implementation of gender equality will help bring great resources for the sustainable development of each country.

Prevention of mother-to-child transmission is now being implemented nationwide with new directions for mother-to-child transmission interventions. The achieved results are as follows: “The percentage of pregnant women receiving preventive treatment that helps reduce mother-to-child HIV transmission is 55.7%, the percentage of children born to HIV-infected mothers being tested for HIV within 02 months after birth reached 48.4%, the estimated percentage of HIV-infected children born to HIV-infected mothers in the past 12 months was 12.4%”[8]. The above results show that Vietnam’s health sector has continuously made efforts to effectively implement the goal of stopping and repelling the spread of the HIV/AIDS epidemic (one of the 4 MDGs on health).

Culture is the foundation for people to participate and exercise their civil rights. From the first Constitution (1946) to the Constitution of the State of Vietnam (2013), all affirmed that Study is a right and a duty of citizens. With the motto,

education is a top national policy, the national education system has been built relatively complete and unified; expand the scale and initially diversify training types and modes, creating many opportunities for people including women to study. More and more collectives and individuals of female scientists who have researched works have received VIFOTEC awards from the Vietnam Union of Science and Technology Associations, the Creative Labor Certificate of the Vietnam General Confederation of Labor, Vietnam Women’s Union, Vietnam Women’s Award, Kosovo-Kai-A, etc. Many female scientists have established career associations, clubs and research centers to continue promoting the intelligence and talents to contribute to the development of the country.

Despite many achievements, the implementation of gender equality in Vietnam is still facing shortcomings and challenges due to the impact of the global economy, the strong development of the 4.0 Technology Revolution natural disasters, climate change, and changes in population size and structure. This poses new challenges that will require Viet Nam to develop concrete policies and actions to sustain its existing achievements while addressing existing gender issues, as well as gender issues arose in the next period [9]. Therefore, Vietnam's functional sectors are developing and submitting to the Prime Minister for promulgation the National Strategy on Gender Equality for the period 2021 - 2030 on the basis of ensuring compliance with the law on gender equality and effectively implementing the United Nations and Viet Nam's sustainable development goals, the CEDAW Convention and other relevant international commitments.

Vietnam also integrates gender equality and women's empowerment, one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals into all its socio-economic development target programs, as the necessary foundation for a Vietnam of peace, prosperity, comprehensive and sustainable development. Most notably, in 2019, Vietnam passed a Labor Code with 11 legal privileges for female employees. This has supplemented the policy mechanism to promote gender equality in Vietnam to suit the new situation, changing the approach of “protecting female workers” in existing regulations to a “promoting gender equality”, helping Vietnam become a leading country in the region in respecting basic rights among female workers, in accordance with international conventions and generation free trade agreements new that Vietnam joined [9, 10].

The Factors Affecting Gender Equality

Gender discrimination:

Gender: The biological difference between men and women. Gender is the identity that we are born with and cannot change. Sexism or sexism, a term that emerged in the mid-20th century, is a form of belief or attitude that one gender is inferior, incompetent, and less valuable than the other. This term is almost always used to refer to the dominance of men over women. The fight against sexism, centered on the feminist movement, takes place in various forms and not exclusively for women.

Many critics have criticized the notion that different gender characteristics between men and women lead to a division of different social, family, business or political roles. Historically, there have been many ideas that men and women have a special role in society, in which men often undertake works of art, industry and the military while women undertake housework family and child care. This specialization in the role has led to the development of the notion that women are incapable of performing intellectual jobs.

Women now earn less than men in almost every country in the world despite some legal efforts to close the income gap. According to the results of recent studies, the income difference still exists, women with lower income than men exist in all professions. Results of the 2002 Living Standards Survey showed that: the average monthly income of women accounts for 85% of the income of men (this rate is only 66% in the agricultural sector and 78% in the industrial sector) [7]. Whereas income inequality among workers may reflect a combination of factors including differences in educational attainment, expertise, work experience and other causes along with the discrimination. Female employees receive only 86% of the basic salary of men. The basic salary of female workers in total income is (71%) lower than that of men (73%) [7]. According to feminists, the current gender discrimination is reflected in the following areas: rights to vote for women, political equality, the elimination of gender-based languages, domestic violence against female subjects, criticism of sexist advertisements, criticism about the role of women in science, etc.

Gender stereotypes:

Gender stereotype is negative and biased perception, attitude and assessment of the characteristics, position, role and capacity of a man or woman (Clause 4 Article 5, Law on gender equality). In other words, this is a set of characteristics widely attributed to being male or female, and these notions are sometimes false and

limit what an individual can do. The above prejudices not only exist many times since feudal society but in today's society, such concepts still exist. Gender stereotypes reflect gender inequalities and reinforce gender inequality in society. The most obvious manifestation of gender stereotypes must include the longstanding thought that "respect for men despises women". Although, in recent years, the view of "girl" in society has been more open. The role and position of women has been enhanced and more confirmed. But the idea of preferring a boy, so many women are willing to have an abortion if they know the fetus is a girl, regardless of how harmful it is to their health. In rural areas that do not have the ability to access early fetal sex diagnosis services, there are many families who continue to give birth to the 4th and 5th children until the birth of a new boy.

It is these ideas that have led to the gender imbalance in Vietnam. According to the latest survey on hot issues of the population of Vietnam by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), in 2007 [1], for every 112 boys born, 100 girls were born, higher than five. 2006 and above normal level (rate 107/103). Notably, in 2007 there were 35 provinces with a sex ratio at birth of 110 boys/100 girls or more, while in 2006 there were 19 provinces.

In the perception of Vietnamese people, society sets its own standards for girls such as hard work, graceful cooking, good cooking, sewing, embroidery, etc. Women are also not encouraged to participate in the political field or to become a leader, because according to the concept of many societies, it is still the role of men. When women enter these fields, they lose their "feminine" look. These standards have led girls to focus on developing skills so that they can be a better housewife in the future, rather than skills in order to find good jobs or contribute to the development of the commune festival. Therefore, when graduating from school and participating in the labor market, women are generally inferior to men of the same age.

Once they have a job, Vietnamese society expects married women, and takes time to care for their families rather than spend time with society. The concept of "happiness" is also attached to this concept. This greatly affects the selection of a woman's career. For example, the profession of a teacher is considered appropriate for women in part because of the time spent caring for the family. Today, women are engaged in income generation in many areas such as men, but society still expects them to do well housework, take care of children, take care of relatives, when men only need to work

to earn income is enough. This, in turn, was not seen as overwhelming for women or as inequality while they were considered “the weaker sex”. Because women want to do both roles well, while the time is limited, women have to work hard to study, work and strive if they want to have equal positions with men; or this is the decision of most women to sacrifice their career development to take care of their family. In order to develop a good career, everyone needs to update their knowledge and improve skills regularly. Daily rest and entertainment time is also essential for mental and physical recovery to be able to continue working. Naturally this rest period should be suitable for men. But the social notion does not allow women to enjoy that right because they expect them to contribute to the housework. Clearly, society's conception of a good and happy woman deprives women of their right to professional, physical and intellectual development.

Domestic violence:

According to the United Nations CEDAW Convention, gender violence can be understood as “any action that leads to or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm, or suffering for women, including threats of such behavior, arbitrary coercion or deprivation of freedom, whether occurring in public or in private life “[7].

According to a survey in 8 provinces in 8 regions across the country conducted by the National Assembly's Committee on Social Affairs in the first 6 months of 2006: 2.3% of families experienced physical violence. Nationally, every 2-3 days, a person is killed in connection with domestic violence, according to a report by the Ministry of Public Security. The above situation shows that gender inequality is prevalent everywhere from urban to rural areas.

The problem that has recently been a pain in public opinion is sexual violence. The acknowledgment of whether it is an independent form of violence or not has many different opinions. However, due to the seriousness as well as the humanity, the breakthrough of the issue, the law still mentions this issue, considering it a form of violence. According to Point dd, Clause 1, Article 3 of the Law on Domestic Violence Prevention and Control, [6] “forced sexual relations” is one of the acts of domestic violence. Sexual violence often manifests itself in the form of: forced sexual intercourse, rape, rape, sexual harassment, forced use of depraved culture to

satisfy sexual needs. And reality shows that this situation is not too new. According to the report of the Committee of Social Affairs of the National Assembly on the Law on Domestic Violence Prevention and Control [6], up to 30% of couples have the phenomenon of forced sex.

In addition to physical and sexual violence, acts of emotional violence (the wife is cursed at, abused by the husband, banned from participating in social work, banned from having relationships with others) and economic violence (husband controls his wife on income, refuses to contribute to the family economy). It is also happening more and more commonly, causing bad consequences for the family and the whole society.

Some Solutions

Firstly, it is necessary to improve the system of policies of the State in a strong, synchronous, and uniform manner in all fields of social life in order to shorten and gradually eliminate the gender gap. In which, special attention is paid to policies: education policy, training, labor policy, social policy, and staff policy (mainly a contingent of staff propagating about gender equality).

Secondly, to perfect a comprehensive and unified legal system, ensuring the similarity between the provisions of the Law on Gender Equality and those of other law branches. Especially the Criminal Law, Labor Law, and Social Insurance Law.

Third, the basic principles of the Law on Gender Equality must be institutionalized in documents of other law disciplines. Especially the principle of ensuring the integration of gender equality issues in law development and enforcement. At the same time, it is necessary to have specific regulations on sanctions against violations of the law on gender equality. To promulgate a Decree on handling administrative violations in the field of gender equality in order to enforce the provisions of Articles 40, 41, and 42 of the Law. The Decree should provide specific administrative penalties for violations of the law on gender equality in the fields of politics, economics, labor, education and training, science and technology, culture, information, fitness, sports, health, and family.

III. CONCLUSION

Along with the improvement of legal policies, Vietnam also promotes educational activities to raise awareness of leaders, society, families, and women about women's rights, and strengthen international cooperation, taking all

resources to ensure gender equality and women's empowerment. The 21st century has promoted the role of women, which requires women to constantly study and train to improve the role and appreciation of society. Currently, women participate in almost all areas of social life but women are not allowed to forget the responsibility to fulfill the role of the mother and wife in the family. Every woman must always have a sense of cultivating the four virtues of Cong (skillful of work) - Dung (a pretty face) - Ngon (soft speech) – Hanh (gentle temperament). Must fulfill the role of motherhood, have the responsibility to nurture and educate children to grow up. Women are also the first teachers of children, treating them fairly and equally.

Comprehensive liberation and development for women are one of the goals of the Vietnamese Revolution. Vietnam has had many undertakings, policies, and achievements of the realization of women's emancipation, creating conditions for women's development, and has been recognized and appreciated by the international community for many years. This achievement will continue to be maintained and strive to achieve a higher level in the coming time.

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