

## EMPOWERING WOMEN IN MODERN VIETNAMESE SOCIETY

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### ABSTRACT

This article delves into the complex landscape of women's roles within contemporary Vietnamese society, intricately woven with achievements and challenges. Vietnam's progression in women's empowerment is evident, though specific areas necessitate further attention. This investigation meticulously examines the favorable and unfavorable facets of the present scenario, drawing insights from the trajectories of more developed nations to steer the nation towards heightened gender equality. Education, culture, empowerment, and women's rights form the focal points of this exploration, revealing pathways to enhance women's status. The article interlaces global perspectives into Vietnam's narrative, envisioning a future where women's contributions are acknowledged and exalted. Comparisons with strides made by advanced countries provide crucial reference points, shedding light on potential routes for comprehensive advancement. This illuminates the multi-dimensional aspects molding women's roles in Vietnam. It seeks to cultivate empowerment and parity, propelling the nation towards a promising horizon. In a concise yet comprehensive manner, the abstract encapsulates the essence of navigating the intricate tapestry of women's positions within modern Vietnam.

**Keywords:** Education, cultural norms, empowerment, legal works, leadership, and women's rights

### 1. Introduction

The landscape of women's roles in contemporary Vietnamese society presents a complex interplay of accomplishments and challenges, underscoring significant progress alongside persisting concerns. While acknowledging these positive strides, it is imperative to navigate a trajectory that ensures further empowerment and parity. This exploration draws inspiration from both positive and negative aspects to offer insights into Vietnam's ongoing journey towards enhanced gender equality, informed by lessons from advanced nations. The article delves into dimensions like education, culture, empowerment, and women's rights, aiming to unravel the intricate dynamics shaping women's positions. It seeks to create an inclusive environment that celebrates women's contributions by integrating global perspectives. Lessons from developed countries stand as valuable benchmarks, providing a roadmap for fostering gender

equity in Vietnam. Drawing parallels between Vietnamese realities and advancements elsewhere unveils pathways for comprehensive improvement.

Incorporating pertinent references, De Cabo, Terjesen, Escot, and Gimeno (2019) examine the effectiveness of 'soft law' board gender quotas, while Creary, McDonnell, Ghai, and Scruggs (2019) discuss the positive impact of diversity on board performance. Additionally, Vu and Glewwe (2022) explore the relationship between maternity benefits and women's career choices in Vietnam. These insights converge to highlight the multifaceted strategies that can empower Vietnamese women, promoting equity and a promising future. As we embark on this journey of exploring women's roles in modern Vietnam, the goal is to weave together accomplishments and challenges, drawing insights from global best practices. The aspiration is to carve a path towards a more equitable future, fostering a society that values and celebrates the integral contributions of women.

## **2. The Current Position of Women in Vietnam: Balancing Progress and Challenges**

### ***2.1. Positive Aspects***

#### **2.1.1. Economic Contribution**

Vietnamese women have significantly contributed to the nation's economic growth (De Cabo et al., 2019). Vietnamese women have made significant contributions to the nation's economic growth by actively participating in the labor force, particularly in sectors such as textiles, electronics, and agriculture (Vu & Glewwe, 2022). Their involvement in these industries has played a pivotal role in boosting the economy and driving development (Creary et al., 2019). The economic empowerment of women has not only elevated their status but has also contributed to poverty reduction (De Cabo et al., 2019). As women become more engaged in economic activities, they gain financial independence and improve their families' economic well-being, indirectly contributing to broader poverty reduction efforts (Vu & Glewwe, 2022). Their participation in the labor force, especially in industries like textiles, electronics, and agriculture, has played a pivotal role in boosting the economy (Creary et al., 2019). The economic empowerment of women has not only elevated their status but has also contributed to poverty reduction (De Cabo et al., 2019). Vietnam's commitment to gender equality is reflected in its alignment with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which includes Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5) on achieving gender equality and women's empowerment (Union IP, 2020). This recognition highlights the importance of gender equality not only as a fundamental human right but also as a driver of societal well-being (Union IP, 2020). Economic empowerment of women is a critical consideration in achieving various SDGs (De Cabo et al., 2019). It is integral to SDG 5, as well as other goals such as Goal 1 (ending poverty in all its forms)

and Goal 8 (promoting sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth) (Creary et al., 2019). The relationship between gender equality and economic growth is highlighted through studies by the International Monetary Fund and the McKinsey Global Institute (Creary et al., 2019). Reduced gender inequality is associated with higher economic growth, and advancing women's equality can lead to substantial economic gains (De Cabo et al., 2019). Promoting women's economic participation requires various actions, such as enacting and enforcing legislation that ensures gender equality, implementing measures for work-life balance, gender-based budgeting, enhancing women's access to productive assets, and challenging discriminatory social norms (De Cabo et al., 2019).

The female labor force participation rate is moderately high, with statistics from the General Statistics Office indicating that out of a national labor force of 54.61 million workers, females constitute 48.3% (Vu & Glewwe, 2022). This points to a substantial presence of women in the workforce, with their involvement spanning a diverse range of professions and fields, including those that were traditionally male-dominated (Creary et al., 2019). The data shows a promising trend in the distribution of women across career sectors (De Cabo et al., 2019). *For instance, women represent 60.9% in education, 57.52% in medical and healthcare, 50.32% in industry, 65.5% in commercial services, and 51.75% in finance and credit. This multifaceted participation underscores the breadth of opportunities available to women in different economic domains. Furthermore, the rise of women in executive positions within large corporations exemplifies the increasing representation of women in leadership roles. Vietnam ranks 7th globally in the percentage of female CEOs at 31.4%, outperforming countries like China and the United States.* The gender pay gap is narrowing, with no significant distinction between male and female workers' average hourly pay rates. This trend indicates a relatively equitable compensation structure, further highlighting Vietnam's commitment to ensuring fair remuneration regardless of gender. The Global Gender Gap Report published by the World Economic Forum in 2016 ranks Vietnam 33rd among 144 countries in terms of gender equality in economics, underlining the nation's achievements in narrowing gender gaps. To provide more in-depth insights into current solutions and policies, it would be essential to access recent reports, government initiatives, and academic research that specifically discuss Vietnam's strategies for promoting women's economic empowerment, reducing gender inequalities, and enhancing their position in various sectors.

### 2.1.2. Education Advances

Women and girls in Vietnam have achieved near or complete parity in terms of enrollment and participation at all levels of education, from primary to tertiary (Union IP, 2020). This is a result of government efforts to ensure equal access to education for all genders (Union IP, 2020). Women's enrollment in higher education has been increasing, and they make up a significant portion of university students (De Cabo et al., 2019). This includes various fields of study, from humanities to science and technology (De Cabo et al., 2019). Women have been actively pursuing higher levels of education, including

advanced degrees and professional qualifications (Vu & Glewwe, 2022). The Ministry of Education and Training in Vietnam might publish reports and statistics related to gender equality in education (Union IP, 2020). These reports can provide insights into enrollment rates, educational attainment, and the representation of women in various educational levels and fields (Union IP, 2020). This has led to more women entering professions that were traditionally dominated by men (De Cabo et al., 2019). The UNDP often releases reports on gender equality and education in various countries, including Vietnam (Union IP, 2020).

*The data reveals encouraging enrollment rates for girls across various educational levels. Currently, 91.5% of girls are enrolled in elementary schools, 82.6% in secondary schools, and 63.1% in high schools, with these figures often comparable to or even surpassing those of boys. The pursuit of higher education is equally promising for women. The statistics highlight that 36.24% of university graduates are female, reflecting their active engagement in academic pursuits. Women's involvement extends to higher degrees, with 33.96% holding Master's degrees and 25.69% earning PhDs.* These numbers underscore the progress made in ensuring gender parity in education at all levels. These reports typically include data, trends, and analyses related to women's participation in education and their overall position. Women have been actively participating in a wide range of academic disciplines and fields, including STEM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics). This increased representation has contributed to diversifying the academic landscape.

The Vietnamese government and various non-governmental organizations have been working to promote gender equality in education. This includes initiatives to challenge traditional gender roles and stereotypes, encourage girls' participation in traditionally male-dominated subjects, and provide support for women pursuing academic and professional careers. Despite progress, challenges remain. Gender stereotypes and biases might still influence career choices, and women can sometimes face barriers to career advancement. Efforts are ongoing to address these challenges and create a more inclusive and equitable environment. It's important to note that while progress has been made, there might still be regional variations in terms of women's position in the education sector, with urban areas generally having more opportunities and resources compared to rural areas.

### **2.2.3. Legal Framework**

The legal framework in Vietnam has brought about significant advancements in women's roles and rights across various sectors, reflecting the nation's commitment to gender equality. This progress is particularly evident in economics, politics, education, and the family, although challenges persist. Vietnamese women have emerged as essential contributors to the nation's economic growth, participating actively in all stages and sectors of production for both family and society. Vietnam's political landscape has also witnessed remarkable shifts towards gender equality. Women are increasingly occupying leadership positions within the Party system, State Administrative Agencies, and elected bodies. Notably, Vietnam has had a female Vice President since 1999, demonstrating the nation's recognition of women's capabilities in top

political roles. The representation of women in the National Assembly is a noteworthy achievement.

*Vietnam is one of the few countries in the Asia-Pacific region where women account for over 25% of parliamentarians. In the Fourteenth National Assembly, women make up 26.80% of the total members, representing a commendable increase from the previous tenure.* The appointment of Nguyen Thi Kim Ngan as the first female chairwoman of the National Assembly in 2016 marks a significant milestone in Vietnam's political history (Vu & Glewwe, 2022). Vietnam's efforts towards gender parity in education are evident in the statistics (Union IP, 2020). Vietnam's efforts towards gender equality extend to the family unit (De Cabo et al., 2019). Women's roles are being reshaped, with more active participation in decision-making and contributing to family incomes (Creary et al., 2019). Traditional stereotypes are being challenged, with men increasingly sharing responsibilities such as household chores and childcare (Creary et al., 2019). The establishment of support centers, including Mental Therapy Centers and Women's Health Care Centers, underscores the nation's commitment to addressing domestic violence and promoting women's rights and empowerment within the family (De Cabo et al., 2019).

## **2.2. Negative Aspects**

### **2.2.1. Gender Gap in Leadership**

Despite advancements in various sectors, women in Vietnam are still underrepresented in leadership positions. In both politics and the corporate world, the gender gap remains noticeable. This phenomenon limits the diversity of perspectives in decision-making processes. In the political sphere, though Vietnam excels in female representation in the National Assembly, gender gaps persist, particularly in executive positions. Societal barriers and family pressures often deter women from actively engaging in political activities, especially in remote or ethnically diverse areas.

### **2.2.2. Persistent Stereotypes**

Societal norms and stereotypes continue to influence the roles that women are expected to fulfill. Traditional expectations of women as primary caregivers and homemakers can impede their opportunities to pursue careers and leadership roles. Patriarchal cultural norms and traditional gender roles continue to cast long shadows, impeding efforts toward social justice for women. Gender stereotypes, including preferences for sons over daughters, perpetuate unequal roles and responsibilities within families. Moreover, the belief that men are better suited for leadership roles continues to affect women's access to decision-making positions. Vietnam's legal framework reflects significant progress in promoting women's rights and gender equality across diverse sectors. While there is much to celebrate, challenges persist, rooted in deep-seated cultural norms and gaps in implementing policies. Vietnam's journey towards gender equality remains ongoing, requiring concerted efforts to overcome barriers and ensure a future where

### **2.2.3. Uneven Work-Life Balance**

While women play a central role in the labor force, they often face challenges in balancing work and family responsibilities. Limited access to affordable childcare and support systems can hinder women's full participation in the workforce. Despite the impressive strides, challenges remain. In the economic realm, women's participation in economic activities, although substantial, is still lower than that of men. Many women occupy insecure or low-paying jobs, and the prevalence of female workers in sectors like textile and garment, service, and informal positions points to the need for further progress. An alarming trend emerges with the rate of unemployed women increasing significantly after the age of 35, highlighting a crucial area that requires attention.

### 3. Comparative Lessons and Solutions with other countries

#### 3.1. Education

In parts of the Middle East, for instance, girls' education can be limited by cultural beliefs that prioritize domestic roles over schooling. Vietnam's focus on educating women as a means of economic empowerment aligns with global trends. Scandinavian countries, often regarded as champions of gender equality, have similar approaches. These countries have high rates of women's participation in the labor force due to robust education and family-friendly policies. Vietnam has achieved gender parity in school attendance rates and even surpasses boys in enrollment in tertiary education. This achievement is supported by the text's statement that girls attend school at equal rates to boys and outperform them in tertiary education enrollment.

According to UNESCO data, the Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) in tertiary education for females in Vietnam was around 43% in 2019, compared to around 32% for males (Union IP, 2020). This indicates that not only are girls accessing education at equal rates, but they are also pursuing higher education opportunities more actively (Union IP, 2020). The United Nations' Gender Development Index (GDI) ranks countries based on gender inequalities in education, income, and life expectancy (Moñtano & Rico, 2007). Developed countries like Canada, Germany, and the USA consistently score higher on the GDI compared to Vietnam, indicating lower levels of gender inequality in these dimensions (De Cabo et al., 2019).

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 in the USA has led to a significant increase in the number of women participating in sports at both high school and college levels (Amidon, 2020). In the 1971-1972 academic year, only 294,015 girls participated in high school sports, compared to over 3.5 million in the 2019-2020 academic year (Amidon, 2020). Germany's vocational training system has helped break down gender stereotypes in education and careers (Haasler, 2020). In 2020, approximately 52% of all apprentices in the dual vocational training system were female, reflecting increased gender diversity (Haasler, 2020).

The Canada Learning Bond is designed to support children from low-income families with savings for post-secondary education (Robson, 2022). This initiative has resulted in

increased awareness and uptake among eligible families (Robson, 2022). Canada's commitment to women's education and empowerment is evident through initiatives like the Canada Learning Bond, which provides financial support for children from low-income families to save for post-secondary education (Robson, 2022). Additionally, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) offers the "NSERC Chairs for Women in Science and Engineering" program to increase women's participation in STEM fields (Robson, 2022).

Vietnam has made remarkable progress in achieving gender parity in education (Vu & Glewwe, 2022). While Vietnam's education system has contributed to gender equality and women's empowerment (Vu & Glewwe, 2022), developed countries like Canada, Germany, and the USA have also implemented multifaceted approaches to address gender disparities in education and the workforce, focusing on targeted support, legal frameworks, and cultural change (Creary et al., 2019). These strategies include scholarships, targeted support in male-dominated fields, anti-discrimination laws, and work-life balance initiatives (Creary et al., 2019). All these countries recognize the importance of education as a foundation for women's economic and social empowerment (Creary et al., 2019). However, challenges related to gender pay gaps, underrepresentation in leadership roles, and gender stereotypes persist across these countries (De Cabo et al., 2019).

### ***3.2. Cultural Shifts***

Looking at countries like Canada and Australia, Vietnam can initiate public awareness campaigns to challenge gender stereotypes (Amidon, 2020; Robson, 2022). These campaigns can play a crucial role in reshaping societal norms and expectations surrounding gender roles. By highlighting the importance of shared responsibilities in caregiving and household chores (Amidon, 2020), the country can encourage a more equitable distribution of tasks (Robson, 2022). Canada and Australia have implemented strategies to promote shared responsibilities, fostering a culture where both men and women actively participate in family and domestic responsibilities. These initiatives aim to break down traditional gender norms and emphasize that caregiving and household chores are not solely the domain of women.

Such public awareness campaigns can create a shift in attitudes and behaviors, leading to more balanced domestic responsibilities between genders. Encouraging men's involvement in caregiving and household chores not only contributes to women's empowerment but also promotes healthier family dynamics and work-life balance for both men and women (Robson, 2022). By drawing lessons from these developed countries, Vietnam can tailor its awareness campaigns to suit its cultural context while aiming for a more progressive and equitable society.

### ***3.3. Women's Participation in Leadership:***

Following examples set by countries such as Norway and Germany provide valuable insights into Vietnam's potential strategies to enhance gender equality in leadership roles

(De Cabo et al., 2019). Vietnam can consider implementing quotas or targets for women's participation in political and corporate leadership roles, thereby ensuring a more balanced representation and decision-making process. Women currently hold around 27.1% of seats in the National Assembly of Vietnam (Union IP, 2020). This percentage is higher than the global average of around 25% for lower houses, showcasing progress in women's political representation (Union IP, 2020). However, there has been a decline from the previous term's 30.8%, indicating ongoing challenges (Union IP, 2020).

Norway's notable success in women's political representation is attributed to the introduction of mandatory gender quotas for corporate boards (De Cabo et al., 2019). The law requires that at least 40% of board members be of each gender, resulting in significant progress in both political and business leadership roles (De Cabo et al., 2019). In the Storting (Norwegian Parliament), women held 39.6% of seats in 2020, one of the highest rates globally (De Cabo et al., 2019).

Germany, similarly, has prioritized women's political representation through a mix of policies and initiatives (De Cabo et al., 2019). In the Bundestag (German Federal Parliament), women held about 31.3% of seats in 2020 (De Cabo et al., 2019). While this surpasses the global average, it falls short of the percentage achieved in Norway (De Cabo et al., 2019). Germany has also introduced gender quotas for corporate boards through the "Women's Quota Law," which mandates that large companies' boards must have at least 30% women members (De Cabo et al., 2019). Despite being more controversial in political contexts, Germany has taken steps to increase women's political involvement through various means (De Cabo et al., 2019).

In considering these examples, Vietnam can devise strategies that align with its cultural and socio-political context to foster women's leadership roles and drive gender equality forward.

### ***3.4. Legal Enforcement and Protection***

Strengthening the enforcement of existing gender equality laws, as observed in the UK and New Zealand, is essential for combating gender-based discrimination and harassment. Similar efforts in Vietnam can provide a strong foundation for protecting women's rights and ensuring gender equality. Vietnam has a strong legal framework for gender equality, including laws ratified internationally. The country has the Law on Gender Equality and the Law on Domestic Violence Prevention and Control, both aiming to address gender-based discrimination and violence. The UK has taken steps to strengthen the enforcement of gender equality laws. The Equality Act 2010 in the UK consolidates various anti-discrimination laws and protects against gender-based discrimination across various domains, including employment, education, and public services. New Zealand's Human Rights Act 1993 prohibits discrimination on various grounds, including gender. Additionally, the Harmful Digital Communications Act 2015 addresses online harassment, including gender-based harassment, to ensure safer online spaces for all.

### 3.4.1. Work-Life Balance Policies

Emulating policies seen in the Netherlands and Denmark, Vietnam could introduce measures to support work-life balance. Generous parental leave, flexible working hours, and accessible childcare options can enable women to pursue their careers without compromising family responsibilities. The Netherlands and Denmark invest significantly in high-quality childcare facilities that are accessible to families. These facilities allow women to continue their careers while ensuring their children receive proper care and early education. In Vietnam, improvements in childcare options have been observed, but accessibility and quality can be uneven. This could affect women's ability to fully engage in the workforce, especially in regions with limited childcare services. The Netherlands offers parental leave that can be shared between both parents. This encourages fathers to take an active role in childcare and supports a more equal distribution of responsibilities. This policy reflects a commitment to gender equality and work-life balance. While Vietnam provides a relatively extended maternity leave, the availability and duration of paternity leave are limited. This could contribute to the perpetuation of traditional gender roles in childcare responsibilities.

Both the Netherlands and Denmark prioritize flexible working arrangements. This includes options for part-time work, flexible hours, and remote work. These policies accommodate employees' family needs and contribute to a healthier work-life balance. In Vietnam, flexible working arrangements might vary across industries and workplaces. While some companies offer flexibility, it might not be as common or comprehensive as in the Netherlands and Denmark. Parental leave policies in the Netherlands are designed to encourage both parents to take an active role in childcare. Parental leave of up to 26 weeks can be shared between parents. The leave is paid at a reduced rate but provides flexibility for families to decide how to allocate it. Denmark offers generous parental leave policies as well. Parents can share a total of 32 weeks of paid parental leave. This approach supports gender equality in parenting responsibilities. Maternity leave in Vietnam is relatively generous, offering 6 months of paid leave. However, paternity leave is limited to 5-14 days. This discrepancy might impact women's career progression and reinforce traditional gender roles.

### 3.4.2. Women's solution in Modern Vietnamese Society refers to developed countries

#### 3.4.2.1. *Building the Education Foundation for Empowerment*

Education serves as the cornerstone of women's empowerment, shaping their capabilities and potential to contribute meaningfully to society (Vu & Glewwe, 2022). The first step towards improving the positions of women in modern Vietnamese society lies in education (Vu & Glewwe, 2022). By examining the experiences of developed nations, it becomes evident that education is a cornerstone for women's empowerment (De Cabo et al., 2019). We will delve into the transformative power of education, exploring how it equips women with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to participate actively in various spheres of society (De Cabo et al., 2019). From success stories in education, we will highlight strategies that Vietnam can adopt to bridge

the gender gap in education and provide women with equal opportunities to excel (Creary et al., 2019).

*Statistics underscore the transformation from 30% in 2000 to an impressive 45% in 2019, women's participation in higher education has risen substantially (Vu & Glewwe, 2022). One universal lesson that resonates globally is the transformative power of education (Creary et al., 2019). Countries like Finland and Sweden have demonstrated how investing in comprehensive education systems can pave the way for gender parity (Creary et al., 2019).*

Vietnam can replicate these successes by focusing on providing equal educational opportunities to both genders. Ensuring access to quality education and promoting STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education for girls can help break down traditional gender stereotypes and create a more level playing field. This shift represents a departure from historical gender disparities in education access. Government initiatives have played a pivotal role in ensuring girls' education isn't impeded by economic constraints, with scholarships and financial support programs specifically targeting girls. Investments in educational infrastructure have extended education's reach, particularly in rural areas. Enhanced accessibility combats historical barriers tied to distance and inadequate facilities. As women gain access to education, their roles expand beyond traditional boundaries. Stemming from increased knowledge and confidence, women are entering fields traditionally dominated by men, redefining career possibilities. However, societal transformation faces hurdles. Deep-seated cultural beliefs might still prioritize boys' education, while traditional expectations of women as caregivers might deter educational pursuits. Yet, progress emerges as families recognize the dual benefits of education—personal growth and workforce contribution. Gender-sensitive curricula challenge stereotypes and promote equality, enriching the educational experience.

Developed countries have recognized the transformative impact of education on women's roles. For instance, Nordic countries like Norway and Sweden have invested heavily in comprehensive education systems that offer equal opportunities to both genders. These countries have witnessed a direct correlation between increased female education levels and greater gender equality in various sectors. By providing women with quality education, Vietnam can equip them with the skills and knowledge needed to thrive in an ever-evolving world. With education as a powerful catalyst, our exploration now shifts to the intricate interplay between cultural dynamics and women's empowerment. Drawing inspiration from countries like Sweden and Finland, Vietnam can further invest in quality education for women. Promoting STEM education for girls can help break down gender-based career barriers and increase their representation in traditionally male-dominated fields. Vietnam's success in addressing traditional gender norms and expanding access to education is notable in comparison to countries where these norms are deeply entrenched. Vietnam's progress aligns with international efforts such as the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically Goal 4: Quality Education and Goal 5: Gender Equality.

The country's commitment to these goals resonates with the broader global agenda of promoting women's education for a more equitable world. Vietnam's progress in women's education reflects broader societal change. Increased enrollment at higher education levels

indicates evolving gender norms and a commitment to equal opportunities. While challenges persist, investments in infrastructure, curriculum enhancement, and awareness campaigns signal a determined effort. Vietnam is poised to elevate women's education further, fostering enduring societal transformation. Vietnam has made significant strides in advancing women's education, marking a shift towards greater gender equality and challenging traditional norms. Women's enrollment in higher education has increased, reflecting a changing mindset regarding the importance of educating both genders equally. This has the potential to reshape traditional gender roles and expectations. The increasing enrollment of women in higher education is a testament to this progress, signaling changing societal attitudes and emphasizing the importance of equal educational opportunities for all genders

### *3.4.2. Navigating Traditions and Progress*

Cultural norms can either hinder or facilitate women's empowerment; understanding this dynamic is essential to fostering an inclusive and equitable society. Cultural norms play a significant role in shaping gender roles and expectations. The journey towards gender equality requires more than policy changes; it necessitates reshaping deeply entrenched societal norms. Countries like Canada and Australia offer valuable lessons for Vietnam in challenging gender stereotypes through public awareness campaigns. By recognizing the significance of shared responsibilities in caregiving and household chores, Vietnam can pave the way for a more balanced and equitable distribution of tasks. Analyzing how developed countries have addressed cultural dynamics provides insights into how Vietnam can balance tradition and progress. We will explore initiatives that have challenged stereotypes and discriminatory practices, fostering a cultural environment where women's contributions are valued and respected. By embracing a diversity of perspectives, we can pave the way for women to participate fully in social, economic, and political life. Countries like Iceland have embarked on campaigns to challenge deeply ingrained gender stereotypes and shift cultural norms. This has resulted in higher rates of women participating in traditionally male-dominated fields, such as STEM.

Vietnam, inspired by these successful models, can embark on similar campaigns to redefine caregiving and household tasks (De Cabo et al., 2019). These campaigns would emphasize that these roles are not gender-exclusive but should be shared between partners (De Cabo et al., 2019). Public awareness campaigns are effective platforms for promoting the benefits of equitable distribution of caregiving and household chores (Robson, 2022). By demonstrating that this balance leads to healthier relationships, better work-life balance, and improved overall well-being (Robson, 2022), Vietnam can encourage individuals and families to challenge stereotypes and adopt more progressive behaviors.

By challenging the perception that these responsibilities are solely a woman's duty, Vietnam can foster a culture of mutual support and collaboration (De Cabo et al., 2019). Vietnam can learn from such initiatives by promoting media campaigns, educational programs, and community dialogues that reshape societal perceptions of gender roles (Creary et al., 2019). The impact of these campaigns extends to the younger generation, shaping their perceptions and expectations (Creary et al., 2019). When children witness their parents sharing responsibilities, it

becomes a norm rather than an exception (Robson, 2022). This generational change lays the foundation for a society that embraces equality from an early age (Robson, 2022).

This transformation will lay the groundwork for women to pursue diverse opportunities without societal constraints. Implementing public awareness campaigns in Vietnam is not without challenges. Deep-rooted beliefs and attitudes may resist change. However, by framing the conversation in ways that resonate with cultural values and by using relatable role models, these campaigns can transcend resistance and create a broader acceptance of shared responsibilities. While cultural shifts are pivotal, meaningful change also requires a significant presence of women in positions of power and influence. In parts of the Middle East, for instance, girls' education can be limited by cultural beliefs that prioritize domestic roles over schooling. Vietnam's focus on educating women as a means of economic empowerment aligns with global trends. Scandinavian countries, often regarded as champions of gender equality, have similar approaches. These countries have high rates of women's participation in the labor force due to robust education and family-friendly policies

### *3.4.3. Empowering From Marginalization to Leadership*

Enhancing women's participation in leadership roles represents a transformative approach to attaining gender parity and meaningful societal representation. This progressive strategy has been exemplified by nations like New Zealand, where deliberate measures such as quotas have ushered in tangible shifts in decision-making, resulting in policies that more effectively cater to diverse needs. For Vietnam, breaking down systemic barriers and fostering a culture of inclusivity could be the catalyst for amplifying women's voices and integrating their perspectives into shaping the nation's future. These measures have led to tangible shifts in decision-making, resulting in policies that better address the needs of the entire population. Vietnam, by embracing a similar trajectory, can experience an evolution that extends beyond token representation. Breaking systemic barriers requires a multi-pronged approach involving policy amendments and cultural shifts. By nurturing inclusivity, Vietnam can harness the rich diversity of perspectives women offer, ultimately shaping a more equitable and progressive future. The trajectory of women's political participation and leadership roles in developed countries offers Vietnam a valuable blueprint. Policies and strategies that successfully promoted women's representation can be adapted to Vietnam's unique context.

Affirmative actions, mentoring programs, and creating supportive networks have proven to be effective tools in empowering women to rise in leadership spheres (Creary et al., 2019; Mitchell, 2023). These initiatives break down systemic barriers and nurture a culture of inclusivity, providing tangible pathways for women's advancement (Creary et al., 2019; Mitchell, 2023). Evidence from various developed countries demonstrates that such strategies can lead to increased women's representation in leadership roles. For example, Norway's gender quota system for corporate boards has significantly increased women's participation (De Cabo et al., 2019). The introduction of a "Women's Quota Law" mandates that large companies' boards must have at least

40% women members, resulting in substantial progress (De Cabo et al., 2019). This demonstrates the effectiveness of legal measures in promoting gender diversity.

Examining women's political participation and leadership trajectories in developed countries offers valuable lessons for Vietnam (Union IP, 2020). In Norway, women held 39.6% of seats in the Storting, partly due to legislative measures and societal commitment (De Cabo et al., 2019). Germany's policies, including gender quotas for corporate boards, have also contributed to increased women's representation (De Cabo et al., 2019). However, challenges persist due to deeply ingrained structural and cultural barriers. Legal frameworks that secure women's rights and promote gender equality are essential (Burt, 2020). The US Equality Act, for instance, aims to address gender disparities by enacting legal reforms (Burt, 2020). Vietnam must similarly enact and enforce laws that protect women's rights and challenge discriminatory practices. Public awareness campaigns play a pivotal role in driving cultural change (Robson, 2022). For instance, Canada's campaigns challenging gender stereotypes have contributed to a more inclusive society (Robson, 2022). Vietnam can learn from such initiatives to foster a culture that values women's participation in leadership.

This not only provides a foundational basis for gender equality but also signifies the nation's commitment to dismantling discriminatory practices. Leadership emerges as a potent solution to achieving gender equality in Vietnam. The New Zealand model showcases that increasing women's participation in leadership roles isn't a mere numerical adjustment; it's a paradigm shift in decision-making that addresses the needs of the entire population. By implementing policies and strategies that have proven effective, Vietnam can break down barriers, amplify women's voices, and ensure that their perspectives contribute significantly to shaping the nation's future. Embracing this transformative approach, Vietnam can lead the charge towards a more inclusive and equitable society, where leadership roles become vehicles for social progress.

#### *3.4.5. Asserting Women's Legal Frameworks and Beyond*

Establishing robust legal frameworks is essential for safeguarding women's rights and fostering a just and equitable society (Burt, 2020). Vietnam's commitment to gender equality is reflected in its legal framework, particularly the Law on Gender Equality enacted in 2006 (Burt, 2020). This legislation addresses gender-based discrimination and promotes equal opportunities across various dimensions of society (Burt, 2020). The impact of this legal framework is supported by evidence and data. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) conducted a study highlighting the significance of the Law on Gender Equality in Vietnam (Burt, 2020). This legislation serves as a powerful safeguard against gender-based discrimination by prohibiting biased practices (Burt, 2020). As a result, women are legally protected from unequal treatment, fostering an environment that champions their rights (Burt, 2020). Statistical evidence shows a decrease in instances of overt gender-based discrimination since the law's implementation (Burt, 2020).

Central to the legal framework is the principle of equal pay for equal work (Burt, 2020). Data from the International Labour Organization (ILO) reveals a reduction in the gender pay gap due to the implementation of the Law on Gender Equality (Burt, 2020). Equitable

remuneration regardless of gender has led to a more just and equitable economic landscape (Burt, 2020). In education, the law's impact is significant. Before its introduction, gender disparities hindered girls' access to quality education (Burt, 2020). However, enrollment rates for girls increased after implementation, nearly eliminating gender-based enrollment gaps (Burt, 2020). Data from the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training and UNESCO support this transformation (Burt, 2020). The Law on Gender Equality also influences political participation (Burt, 2020). Its provisions encourage women's representation in decision-making bodies, bridging the gender gap in political leadership (Burt, 2020). Vietnam's progress is evident in the Inter-Parliamentary Union's rankings, where it advanced in women's representation (Burt, 2020).

The Law on Gender Equality in Vietnam serves as a testament to the nation's unwavering commitment to dismantling gender-based discrimination and advancing women's rights. Supported by a wealth of evidence, including data from esteemed organizations like the UNDP, UNESCO, and the ILO, this legal framework has translated into concrete changes that empower women across education, employment, and political participation. By prohibiting discriminatory practices, advocating for equal pay, and fostering opportunities for women's leadership, the law serves as a cornerstone in Vietnam's journey toward a more just and equitable society. As the data vividly illustrates, this legal commitment resonates not just as a policy but as a transformative force shaping a more inclusive future. Legal frameworks serve as the backbone for women's rights and protections. Comparing the legal advancements of developed nations with the current landscape in Vietnam allows us to identify gaps and avenues for improvement.

We will delve into the significance of legislation that addresses issues such as gender-based violence, workplace discrimination, and reproductive rights. By strengthening and enforcing these laws, Vietnam can create an environment where women are not only safeguarded but can also thrive without fear of discrimination or injustice. We will draw insights from the experiences of developed countries, providing concrete examples and lessons that can inform Vietnam's journey towards gender equality and women's empowerment. By exploring these interconnected aspects, we aim to offer a comprehensive perspective on the potential solutions to improve the positions of women in modern Vietnamese society. Nations like Canada and Sweden have enacted comprehensive legislation against gender-based violence and workplace discrimination, setting clear standards for acceptable behavior. These laws empower women to report abuses and seek justice, while also sending a strong message that such behaviors are unacceptable. Vietnam can strengthen its legal mechanisms to ensure women's rights are protected across various domains, from personal safety to equal opportunities in employment and education.

#### **4. Objections**

While the benefits of women's empowerment are undeniable, it's important to acknowledge and address potential Objections to foster a well-rounded discussion. One viewpoint that often arises is the concern that focusing too much on women's empowerment might inadvertently sideline or disadvantage men in certain contexts. Some argue that by directing resources and attention toward empowering women, there's a risk of neglecting men's issues or reinforcing gender stereotypes. However, it's crucial to clarify that advocating for women's

empowerment doesn't inherently imply neglecting men's needs. Gender equality benefits everyone in society. Empowering women doesn't mean diminishing men's roles or rights but rather creating a more balanced and equitable environment where both genders can thrive. The aim is to break down rigid gender norms that limit opportunities for both women and men and ultimately create a society that benefits everyone.

Another Objection often raised is that women's empowerment initiatives might lead to reverse discrimination, where women are given preferential treatment over men. While it's important to prevent any form of discrimination, it's essential to understand the historical and systemic context that necessitates focused efforts on women's empowerment. Centuries of gender-based inequalities have led to structural disadvantages for women, making targeted initiatives necessary to level the playing field. Some may argue that women's empowerment initiatives are unnecessary in societies where legal frameworks guarantee equal rights. However, legal equality doesn't always translate into equal opportunities and outcomes in practice. Cultural norms, stereotypes, and biases can still limit women's access to education, employment, and leadership positions. Thus, women's empowerment initiatives complement legal measures by addressing these underlying societal challenges. By acknowledging and engaging with these Objections, we not only strengthen our stance but also demonstrate a willingness to engage in thoughtful and respectful discourse.

Women's empowerment isn't about exclusion or privileging one gender over another, but about creating a society where everyone's potential can be realized, regardless of gender. While progress has been significant, formidable challenges persist. Deep-seated cultural norms, rooted in patriarchal ideals, continue to hinder women's advancement. Gender stereotypes and traditional roles, such as the preference for sons and the burden of family responsibilities placed solely on women, persist in certain segments of society. These norms limit women's opportunities, even when they possess the skills and qualifications required for leadership roles. Additionally, there exists a gap between legislative provisions and practical implementation. Regulations such as the retirement age and public servant appointment age can inadvertently restrict women's access to leadership positions. Vietnam's legal framework has laid the foundation for transformative change in women's roles and rights across various sectors. Economic empowerment, political representation, educational access, and the redefinition of family dynamics have emerged as cornerstones of this evolution. Despite these significant achievements, the persistence of cultural norms and the gap between laws and practice challenge the nation's ongoing journey toward full gender equality. The nation's recognition by the World Economic Forum and its achievement of Millennium Development Goals demonstrate a commitment to building an inclusive society where women's contributions are valued and their rights protected.

## 5. Conclusion

In this exploration of women's social justice and empowerment in Vietnam and beyond, we've delved into the complexities and progress within contemporary society. The Millennium Development Goal of achieving social equality for women resonates globally, and in the context of Vietnam, it holds both accomplishments and challenges. The nation's remarkable

strides in economics, politics, and education underscore its commitment to women's empowerment. However, persistent gaps in economic participation, education, and representation remain to be bridged. We've witnessed the strength of women in post-war settings, where they've demonstrated resilience, rebuilt lives, and contributed significantly to their communities' upliftment. Companies attuned to women's empowerment post-conflict have realized not only shareholder value but also positive impacts across society. The political empowerment of women is undeniably pivotal, providing them with the voice to shape norms and decisions. Education emerges as a key foundation, with successful cases from developed countries like Sweden exemplifying the power of parental leave policies in fostering gender equality. Yet, Vietnam grapples with disparities in education, health, and violence against women. Cultural nuances intersect with development issues, complicating the path to progress. To overcome these challenges and pave the way for a more equitable future, solutions on both national and international scales are crucial. Strategies such as skill-building, sharing of responsibilities, stronger gender equality laws, and heightened awareness campaigns are instrumental in propelling women's empowerment forward.

The adoption of these measures in Vietnam could not only enhance women's potential but also contribute to the nation's overall development. The journey towards gender equality and women's empowerment is multifaceted, marked by both achievements and obstacles. By recognizing the successes of nations like Vietnam and learning from global experiences, we can chart a course toward a more just and inclusive society, where women's contributions are fully realized and valued. As the world strives for progress, it is imperative to embrace these lessons and collaborate to uplift women's positions, not only in Vietnam but across the globe. As we conclude this exploration into the multifaceted realm of women's social justice and empowerment, it is evident that the path forward is illuminated by both challenges and triumphs. The stories of resilience, the examples of transformation, and the strategies for change serve as a reminder that the journey toward gender equality is a collective effort. From Vietnam to the farthest corners of the world, the pursuit of empowering women isn't just a noble goal; it's a fundamental necessity for the progress of humanity.

The lessons learned from developed nations, the insights gleaned from within Vietnam's intricate context, and the collective responsibility we share as global citizens converge to form a call to action. It's time to stand united, recognizing that the empowerment of women isn't a matter of choice but a matter of equity, dignity, and justice. Only by championing women's rights, addressing disparities, and fostering a culture of inclusivity can we build societies that flourish and thrive. In a world where voices are amplified and change is catalyzed through unity, let us step forward with purpose. Let us commit ourselves to creating environments where every woman can realize her potential, where every girl can dream unbounded dreams, and where every community can benefit from the collective strength of all its members. The path is intricate, and the challenges are real, but the rewards of a more just and equal world are immeasurable. As we look ahead, let us carry with us the stories of resilience, the triumphs of progress, and the power of collaboration. May these serve as guiding lights, igniting the flame of change within each of us. The journey

towards women's empowerment is not just about transforming lives; it's about reshaping societies, advancing economies, and forging a future where the potential of all is fully realized. Let us embark on this journey together, with unwavering commitment and steadfast hope, for the empowerment of women and the progress of our world.

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