

## Gender Equality in Leadership and Management in Vietnam Today: Some Theoretical and Practical Issues

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### Abstract:

During the development process of society, gender equality is considered a measure of the progress and fairness of society. Therefore, promoting gender equality in all fields, especially gender equality in politics, is crucial to eliminating gender stereotypes and prejudices against women, aiming to achieve substantial gender equality in order to create opportunities for equal development and enjoyment of the achievements of social development for both men and women. Recognizing the important position and role of gender equality in politics, particularly the participation of women in leadership and management in Vietnam, this article will focus on clarifying the following basic contents: Concept of gender equality in leadership and management; Current state of gender equality in leadership and management in Vietnam; and some solutions to promote gender equality in leadership and management in Vietnam today.

**Keywords:** Gender equality, Politics, Leadership and management, Political participation

### 1. Preamble:

In recent years, our Party and State have issued numerous resolutions, directives, laws, and policies on gender equality and personnel work, such as: Resolution No. 11-NQ/TW dated April 27, 2007, of the Politburo on women's work in the period of accelerating industrialization and modernization of the country; Decree No. 56/2012/NĐ-CP dated July 16, 2012, of the Government stipulating the responsibilities of ministries, sectors, and people's committees at all levels in ensuring the participation of the Vietnam Women's Union in state management; Directive No. 21-CT/TW dated January 20, 2018, of the Secretariat on continuing to promote women's

work in the new situation; Resolution No. 28/NQ-CP dated March 3, 2021, of the Government issuing the National Strategy on Gender Equality for the period 2021-2030...

Through significant efforts and commitments in both legislation and policy, Vietnam has made remarkable progress in promoting gender equality: "Women have upheld their traditions of unity and creativity in study, labor, and work, achieving outstanding achievements in various fields of politics, economy, culture, society, security, and national defense, contributing significantly to building a prosperous, equal, progressive, and happy family, maintaining political security and social

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order and safety in the country. Social awareness of gender equality has been raised. Women are more respected and equal, and the status of women in society and family is increasingly improving. Vietnam's gender equality has been recognized by the United Nations as a bright spot in achieving the Millennium Development Goals" [1]. Despite the progress made in promoting gender equality, gender inequality still persists in Vietnamese society today, in terms of politics, economics, education, training, family life, and other areas. The implementation of gender equality also poses many difficulties and challenges. In particular, the issue of gender equality in leadership and management needs to be given more attention to remove barriers and create conditions and opportunities for women to actively participate in leadership and management roles within the political system, contributing to the realization of the national goals and strategies on gender equality in politics set out by the Party and the State of Vietnam.

## 2. Research Methodology:

To clarify the research problem, the authors use research methods from specific disciplines such as philosophy, political science, law, and sociology, in combination with interdisciplinary research methods from social sciences. The authors also collect and process secondary information on gender equality in politics from reports, statistics, and surveys of research centers and institutes, and the General Statistics Office. At the same time, specific methods such as logic-historical combination method, analysis, synthesis, statistics, comparison, and other methods are used to clarify the research problem.

## 3. Research Results:

### 3.1. Gender Equality in Leadership and Management

Gender equality means that men and women have equal positions, roles, and opportunities to develop their capacities for the development of the community and family, and to enjoy equally the results of that development

[15]. The goal of gender equality is to eliminate gender discrimination, create equal opportunities for men and women in socio-economic development and human resource development, leading to real gender equality between men and women and establishing and strengthening cooperation and support relationships between men and women in all spheres of social life. Along with the implementation of gender equality in general, the implementation of gender equality in leadership and management has a strong impact on the process of gender equality. Because Vietnamese women account for more than 50% of the country's population, the implementation of gender equality in leadership and management is not only to create conditions for the development of both women but also for men. Because when we give women the same opportunities as men, they will be able to develop their potential and strengths while also sharing and supporting men in all activities of social life.

Gender equality in politics is the equal position and role of men and women in terms of capacity development and opportunities to participate in socio-political organizations in the political system. Within the scope of the article, the authors focus on only one of the basic contents of the implementation of gender equality in politics, which is gender equality in leadership and management. From this approach, the article will focus on analyzing the current participation of men and women in leadership and management roles in the political system in Vietnam today.

Gender equality in leadership and management means that "men and women have equal positions and roles in leadership and management, and are given equal opportunities to develop their capacities at all stages of the cadre work process and are entitled to the results of appointment to official leadership and management positions in a fair manner" [14]. Implementation of gender equality in leadership and management will be an important lever in ensuring gender equality in general and enhancing the position of women in

formulating policies and laws for socio-economic development in general and promoting the implementation of gender equality in particular. In reality, men and women often have different experiences or approaches to solving work and life problems, so it is difficult to look from the perspective of one gender to formulate policies for the other gender without the participation of the other gender. Therefore, enhancing the position of women in leadership and management will address the core issues in the implementation of gender equality to achieve real gender equality.

Recognizing the importance and role of gender equality in leadership and management, in recent years, Vietnam has issued many legal documents and policies to promote gender equality in personnel work. The provisions on gender equality in the political field were first stipulated in the Law on Gender Equality (2006) [15], including the recognition of gender equality in the political field at all administrative levels and to ensure "an appropriate proportion... in accordance with the national gender equality goals" (Article 11). The Law also clearly defines the responsibility of the Vietnam Women's Union in introducing eligible women to participate in the management and leadership of agencies in the political system to contribute to the implementation of the gender equality goal (Articles 30 & 31), and stipulates measures to handle violations of the law on gender equality in the political field, including acts of obstructing women from running for leadership positions (Articles 40 & 42).

The Constitution (2013) [16] reaffirms that male and female citizens have equal rights in all fields and the State has policies to ensure equal rights and opportunities (Article 26). The first National Strategy on Gender Equality for the period 2011-2020 set out targets for women's participation by 2020, specifically for Party committees (25% or more), the National Assembly and People's Councils (35% or more), and more than 95% of Ministries, ministerial-level agencies, agencies under the Government and People's Committees at all levels have "female key leaders", reaching 100% of Party, State, political and social

organizations have female key leaders if the agency or organization has a ratio of 30% or more female cadres, civil servants, officials and workers [18]. Finally, the Law on Elections of Deputies to the National Assembly and Deputies to People's Councils (2015) [17] set a target of ensuring that at least 35% of the total number of people on the official list of candidates for deputies to the National Assembly and People's Councils at all levels are women (Article 8 (3) and 9 (1) (2)). This target was adopted before the election of deputies to the National Assembly and People's Councils at all levels for the term 2016-2021 (14<sup>th</sup> session).

Men and women have equal rights to participate in, decide on, and benefit from political life. The Party and the State have established and gradually realized the goal of eliminating gender inequality and promoting the role of women in political participation. At present, it is necessary to continue to promote the role and responsibility of Party committees, Party organizations, state agencies and the Vietnam Women's Union in creating an environment and conditions for women to participate more effectively in political life. Promoting women's participation in political activities is necessary in today's society. Because the level of women's political participation is one of the best measures to assess their role and the status of gender equality in political life in particular and in society in general. Women's participation in leadership and management means participating in the decision-making process on major issues of society and the country, with their own capacity, in an equal relationship with men. This not only recognizes their role and voice but also affirms the respect, guarantee, and protection of the values and dignity of women, reflecting the fairness, civilization, and progress of society. When gender equality in leadership and management is ensured, human rights and the fundamental rights of citizens are fully realized. When human rights and fundamental rights of citizens are guaranteed and protected in practice, without discrimination on the basis of gender, age, class, or ethnicity, the legitimacy of the State is truly affirmed, and democracy is truly promoted [9]. Therefore, it can be said that women's participation in leadership and

management is a measure reflecting the level of democratic development in society. This is completely in line with the goals and aspirations of the Vietnamese working people, who consider democracy not only as a goal but also as a driving force of development.

### 3.2. Current Status of Gender Equality in Leadership and Management in Vietnam

Although Vietnamese women participate in most spheres of social life, their opportunities for employment, promotion, income, and participation in leadership and management are often limited due to their lower levels of education, expertise, and professions compared to men. As a result, in Vietnam today, "the proportion of women in leadership and management is low, not commensurate with the capacity and development of the female labor force, there is a shortage of female cadres, and in some fields, the proportion of female cadres is decreasing" [2]. Research to clarify some theoretical issues on gender equality in leadership and management, assess the current status, and analyze the issues raised by the Party and State's gender equality in leadership and management has theoretical and practical significance for continuing to promote gender equality in politics in Vietnam today.

In the political field, women are increasingly aware of their rights and responsibilities as citizens to participate in Party building and political system building... The number of women admitted to the Party, participating in Party committees and People's Councils at all levels has increased compared to the previous term, and they have an important voice in formulating and organizing the successful realization of the socio-economic development goals of the locality and the country [10]. The proportion of female Party members is currently over 33%, of which the number of newly recruited members is increasingly balanced with men (for example: during the 12<sup>th</sup> National Congress, as of September 30, 2020, the entire Party admitted 880,155 Party members, of which 43.72% were women [8, 188].

With the attention of the Party and State, the unity of action throughout the political system from the Central level to the grassroots levels, especially the active role of the Vietnam Women's Union at all levels and the National Committee for the Advancement of Vietnamese Women, the work of female cadres in general and the participation of women in Party committees, the National Assembly, and People's Councils at all levels in particular have achieved many important achievements in recent years. The number and quality of female cadres, civil servants, and officials in the political system at all levels have increased. The female cadres and civil servants have overcome many difficulties and challenges, constantly learning, training and striving to meet the requirements of the revolutionary tasks in the new period; many female cadres are assigned important responsibilities, holding high leadership positions in the Party, State, Viet Nam Fatherland Front and socio-political organizations, as well as leadership and management positions at all levels. Many female cadres are trained in the basics, have high professional qualifications and expertise; are sharp, dynamic and creative; have good moral qualities and lifestyle, strong political mettle, abide by the law, have a high sense of responsibility in their work and always complete the assigned tasks well, typically at the 12<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the Party, for the first time in the Party's history, there are 3 female members of the Politburo and all 3 are deputies to the National Assembly.

At the election of deputies to the 14<sup>th</sup> National Assembly, 131/483 female deputies were elected, bringing the proportion of female deputies to 27.12%, an increase of 2.3% compared to the previous term and with many young deputies... The arrangement of female leaders in the National Assembly accounts for nearly 40% (including the President of the National Assembly is female; heads of National Assembly agencies are female, accounting for 22.22%; vice heads of committees are female, accounting for 6.45%; all committees have female members; the proportion of female deputies to People's Councils (PC) for the term 2016-2021 is 26.54% at the provincial level, 27.85% at the district level and 26.59% at the grassroots level) [4]. This is a testament



to the superiority of the cause of women's liberation and human liberation of the Communist Party and State of Vietnam, and also shows the progress of Vietnamese women, bringing the position of Vietnamese women participating in the National Assembly to the 2<sup>nd</sup> position in the Asia-Pacific region, the 6<sup>th</sup> position in Asia, surpassing the average of 19% of Asian countries and 21% of the world [12].

The implementation of gender equality in politics is first of all reflected in the participation of women in the Party organization. The Communist Party of Vietnam plays the leading role, is the organization that sets out national policies and strategies, therefore, if the proportion of women's participation in the Party organization is low, it means that they have fewer opportunities to influence the country's development and major national decisions. Moreover, the equal participation of women in the Party's structures is an important condition to continue to promote them to leadership positions in the political system in the future. At present, the total number of Party members of the Communist Party of Vietnam is over 5 million, of which women account for 33% of the number of Party members [2]. The proportion of women in the Central Executive Committee in the period 2010-2015 accounted for 8.9%, it increased to 9.4% in the period 2015 – 2020 and it decreased to 8.5% in the period 2020 - 2025; At the provincial level, the corresponding rates are 11.8%, 12.6% and 16%; at the commune level are 15.1%, 20.8% and 25.6%, respectively. However, in the term 2020 - 2025, there is a new point, the high-level leaders and heads of the 63 provinces and cities, 9 women were elected as Provincial Party Secretaries (14.3%), it is the highest proportion ever [6, 157].

Regarding leadership positions, the percentage of women holding the positions of Chairperson and Vice Chairperson of the People's Council at all levels (province, district, commune) is very low, 17.6%, 10.2% and 11.8% respectively [6, 159-161]. For female leaders in public management and administration, Vietnam is ranked 183<sup>rd</sup> out of 191 countries in the world. In the period 2019 - 2020, Vietnam is one of 9 countries in the world without women holding the position of Minister and only 7 out of 92 Deputy Ministers of 18 ministries are

women, accounting for 7.08% [6, 162]. Up to now, Vietnam has only has 1 female Minister (Ministry of Home Affairs) appointed since April 08, 2021 and 1 female Acting Minister (Ministry of Health) appointed since July 15, 2022, it can be seen that the proportion of women holding ministerial positions in Vietnam is still very low. At the local level in the term 2016 - 2020, only 32.14%, 32.64% and 21.95% at the provincial, district and commune levels respectively have female key leaders in the People's Committee. At the department and sector level, the proportion of female leaders in central departments, ministries and branches accounts for 13%. Thus, one of the targets set in the National Strategy on Gender Equality for the period 2011 - 2020 is "95% of Ministries, Ministerial-level agencies, Government agencies, and People's Committees at all levels have key leaders who are female" [6, 162]. However, by 2021, this goal has not yet been achieved, with only 45% of ministerial-level agencies and Government agencies having key female leaders.

Despite the progress made in implementing gender equality in general and gender equality in leadership and management in particular, there are still manifestations of gender inequality in general and inequality in leadership and management in particular. This has created a significant gap not only in terms of the number of women participating in leadership and management roles, but also in terms of their status, influence, and the impact of their values and decisions on community and social issues. Based on the current situation of gender equality in leadership and management in Vietnam, the problems can be summarized as follows:

The proportion of women participating in leadership at different administrative levels has not yet reached the set targets, and there is still a significant gap between men and women. This has significantly limited the impact of women on the way and content of political decision-making. An evaluation of the implementation of the 22 indicators of the National Strategy on Gender Equality for the period 2011-2020 shows that there are still 8 indicators that are expected to be achieved by 2020 and 2 indicators that were not achieved in the period 2016-2021, including: the indicator on the proportion

of women participating in Party committees, National Assembly deputies, people's councils at all levels, and the indicator on female key leaders". Specifically, in some localities, there are no female cadres holding the positions of secretary or deputy secretary, such as in Cao Bang, Dien Bien, Dak Nong, Quang Binh, Vinh Long, etc. Some Party committees, such as Khanh Hoa, Hau Giang, Binh Dinh, do not have female cadres participating in the Standing Committee. The proportion of women participating in the most important Party body at the central level is still very low, with only 3 out of 19 female members of the Politburo; 15 female members of the Central Executive Committee (7.8%) compared to 166 male members (92.2%) [3].

The reason why the rate of women's political participation in Vietnam still has a large gap with the political participation of men may stem from many factors in policies and laws regarding for supporting, creating conditions and opportunities for women to participate in leadership and management; inspection and supervision of policy and law implementation still have certain limitations; the issue of gender stereotyping and prejudice is still quite heavy, especially in areas with low educational levels, causing women to encounter many barriers and confine themselves to the traditional roles that many people still consider to be women's vocation.

In addition to the pressures of earning a living, Vietnamese women are actively participating in almost all economic activities and jobs to generate income for their families. However, when they return home, they have to take on many different roles without the sharing of men. Women often have fewer conditions to take care of themselves and have fewer opportunities than men to study, improve their qualifications and professional skills, participate in political and social activities, and improve their knowledge. These are the foundations for women to participate more deeply in leadership and management activities in party organizations and state management agencies. Therefore, in order to achieve real gender equality between men and women, resolving these difficulties and challenges is an objective requirement that requires the involvement of the entire political system and the

active participation of both men and women as insiders.

### **3.3. Some solutions to promote gender equality in leadership and management in Vietnam**

To promote gender equality in leadership and management in Vietnam today, it is necessary to focus on the following basic solutions:

In terms of awareness: Focus on disseminating, propagating, and raising awareness among cadres, party members, and the people, especially in ethnic minority areas, about the implementation of Party lines, state policies and laws on gender equality in general and gender equality in politics in particular. In order to increase women's political participation, raising men's awareness of gender equality and gender equality in politics plays a very important role. The cause of liberating women and empowering women cannot be achieved without the participation, support and creation of all conditions for men both in the family and in society. Therefore, removing barriers of gender prejudices, gender stereotypes, backward customs and practices that relegate women to positions and roles associated with "kitchen" or simply "the rear" of the process of economic, political and socio-cultural development... is the driving force that contributes to raising the status, promoting the power and ability of women for the development of society.

In terms of practice: Regularly conduct surveys, inspections, and assessments of the status of female leadership and management cadres at the Central and local levels to thereby build plans and projects for the arrangement and appointment of female leadership and management cadres in state agencies at the Central and local levels. Specify the goals, criteria, and proportion of women's participation in leadership and management activities, and at the same time create conditions to effectively realize the set goals and criteria. Strengthen the coordination mechanism with the Central Organization Commission, the Ministry of Home Affairs, and local authorities and administrations to unify the effective implementation of female cadre work in accordance with the set goals of the National

Program on Gender Equality. Participate in the development of related policies and regulations on female cadre work, such as: recruitment, use, planning, training, fostering, evaluation, appointment, reappointment, transfer, rotation, resignation, dismissal, delegation; discipline, rewards, dismissal, retirement; salary and welfare policy; on the proportion of female candidates for National Assembly deputies and people's council deputies in accordance with the gender equality target in the next term, ensuring gender equality in the negotiation process, creating opportunities for female candidates for National Assembly deputies and people's councils at all levels [12].

In terms of policies and laws: It is necessary to review the regulations and policies of the Party and State on training, professional development, political training, rotation, nomination, and appointment to eliminate discriminatory practices against women such as setting age differences between women and men to be trained, rotated, and planned for cadres... These activities must comply with the Law on Gender Equality. It is necessary to build a mechanism to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the indicators on women's participation in the political system [6, 163-164]... Integrate gender equality issues into the process of formulating policies, programs, and projects for socio-economic development, creating a premise for implementing gender equality in general and gender equality in politics in particular. Gender mainstreaming for women's advancement needs to be linked to the process of raising the status and voice of women in lawmaking; policy formulation; monitoring the implementation of policies and laws related to gender equality.

Thus, promoting gender equality in leadership and management contributes to strengthening the cooperation and mutual support relationship between men and women in leadership and management to promote the strengths and potentials of both genders, and enhance the effectiveness of leadership and management of fields of social life to serve the cause of National construction and defense, improve the people's living standards, and realize the "aspiration for national

development, prosperity, and happiness" [7, 111]. In order to promote gender equality in leadership and management in Vietnam today, it is necessary to implement comprehensive solutions, concretize the goals, tasks, ways and methods... to increase the proportion of women's participation in leadership and management, and raise the status and voice of women in decision-making on major national issues. The National Strategy on Gender Equality for the period 2021-2030 has affirmed: Continuing to narrow the gender gap to create conditions and opportunities for women and men to participate and enjoy equality in all spheres of social life, contributing to the sustainable development of the country. In the political field, strive to achieve 60% by 2025 and 75% by 2030, local government agencies at all levels have female key leaders [5].

#### **4. Conclusion:**

The issue of gender equality in general and gender equality in leadership and management in particular has been assessed by our Party and State as having an important role in the country's development. Gender equality is considered a development goal of Vietnam, a factor to enhance national growth capacity, poverty reduction, and effective state governance. Based on clarifying some theoretical issues, the article analyzes the current situation, clarifies some problems raised, and thereby proposes some solutions to promote gender equality in leadership and management in Vietnam today. To raise awareness of gender equality in leadership and management in Vietnam today, it is necessary to condemn acts that violate or hinder the implementation of gender equality rights, such as domestic violence, gender discrimination, harmful customs and practices, and patriarchal views... At the same time, legal conditions should be created to enhance the status of women and promote the realization of the right to gender equality between men and women in politics in general and leadership and management in particular in Vietnam today.

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