

GENDER EQUALITY APPROACH IN VIETNAM FROM THE PERSPECTIVES OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY, STATE LAWS AND POLICIES, AND TRADITIONAL CULTURAL VALUES

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Abstract: *This paper examines gender equality in Vietnam from two fundamental dimensions: (1) the perspectives of the Communist Party, and the State's laws and policies on gender equality; and (2) the Party's viewpoints and the State's efforts to promote traditional cultural values in implementing gender equality. The study clarifies the interrelation among culture, gender, and sustainable development, highlighting the importance of preserving and fostering the nation's acceptable traditional cultural values while eliminating outdated norms and customs that impede gender equality. Based on these analyses, the paper proposes several practical solutions to effectively leverage cultural values to promote gender equality, thereby contributing to building a fair, progressive, and sustainable society in Vietnam today.*

Keywords: *Party perspectives, state laws and policies; Gender equality approach; Traditional cultural values; Vietnam.*

1. Introduction

Gender equality is a fundamental value of sustainable development and a key objective in building a socialist rule-of-law state in Vietnam. The Party and the State have consistently affirmed that promoting gender equality is both an urgent and a long-term task, closely linked to the process of industrialization, modernization, and international integration.

However, the realization of gender equality in Vietnam is influenced not only by the legal system and public policies but also by socio-cultural factors, particularly traditional cultural values. Traditional culture provides both positive foundations and implicit constraints, thereby significantly affecting the effectiveness of efforts to promote gender equality.

In this context, approaching gender equality from the perspectives of the Party's viewpoints, the legal framework, and State policies, in conjunction with traditional cultural values, is of significant theoretical importance. This article seeks to clarify the ideological, legal, and cultural foundations underpinning the Party's and the State's approach to gender equality, thereby providing a scientific basis for the formulation and

implementation of gender equality policies in contemporary Vietnam.

2. Research overview

In recent years, gender equality in Vietnam has attracted scholarly attention from multiple perspectives.

First, studies on the legal and policy framework have examined the formation and development of Vietnam's gender equality framework. Nguyen Thi Thanh Huyen (2017), in her article "The Implementation of the Law on Gender Equality in Vietnam: Emerging Issues" (Journal of Legislative Studies), identifies both the progressive aspects and the limitations in the enforcement of the 2006 Law on Gender Equality. Similarly, Pham Thi Huong (2020), in "Vietnam's Legal Framework on Gender Equality from the Perspective of International Integration" (Journal of Legal Studies), emphasizes the compatibility of Vietnamese law with international commitments, such as CEDAW and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In addition, reports by UN Women and UNDP (2016, 2021) assess the level of institutional completeness and the effectiveness of gender equality policies at the national level.

Second, research on the impact of socio-cultural factors has explored the relationship between traditional cultural values and gender equality. Tran Thi Van Anh and Le Ngoc Hung (2000), in their monograph *Women, Gender, and Development* (National Political Publishing House), provide an in-depth analysis of how cultural norms and traditional practices shape women's roles in the family and society. More recently, localized studies such as Vu Thi Hau's (2019) "Customary Practices and Gender Equality in Ethnic Minority Areas of Northern Mountainous Vietnam" (*Journal of Ethnology*) have highlighted the complex interplay between customs, customary law, and public policy in the practical promotion of gender equality.

Third, a number of studies have attempted to integrate policy perspectives with cultural analysis. For example, the National Report on Gender Equality in Vietnam (UN Women & Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs, 2021) emphasizes that, alongside improving policy frameworks, it is necessary to harness positive cultural values to foster social change. Nevertheless, most of these studies remain at the level of policy recommendations and have not yet developed a systematic theoretical framework that integrates the Party's viewpoints, State law and policy, and traditional cultural values.

Overall, although existing research has addressed political-legal aspects or socio-cultural dimensions of gender equality separately, there remains a lack of integrated, theoretical, and comprehensive studies on "gender equality from the perspectives of the Party, State law and policy, in conjunction with the promotion of traditional cultural values." This gap highlights the need for in-depth research to establish a solid scientific foundation for the coordinated application of political, legal, and cultural frameworks to advance gender equality in contemporary Vietnam.

3. Research methods

This article employs a qualitative research approach, focusing on document analysis and synthesis, as well as content analysis of Party documents, laws, and State policies related to gender equality and the promotion of traditional cultural values. On this basis, the study elucidates

the Party's thinking and perspectives across different periods on guaranteeing gender equality rights and on the role of traditional cultural values in promoting gender equality.

In addition, comparative analysis and the logical-historical method are applied to identify the evolution of Vietnam's approach to gender equality from political, legal, and socio-cultural perspectives.

4. Research results

4.1. *The Vietnamese Communist Party's Perspectives on Gender Equality and Its Implementation*

Throughout its leadership of the revolutionary cause, the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) has consistently regarded women's emancipation and the realization of gender equality as fundamental objectives of social progress and as key indicators of the humanistic and democratic nature of the socialist regime. This perspective emerged at an early stage and has been continuously supplemented and developed in accordance with the requirements of each historical period, demonstrating the evolution of the Party's theoretical thinking on human beings, society, and sustainable development.

As early as the First Political Platform of 1930, the principle of "equality between men and women" was identified as a core component of the revolutionary line. This constituted a profoundly progressive viewpoint in the context of early twentieth-century Vietnamese society, which remained deeply influenced by gender prejudice and feudal ideology. The Party creatively assimilated Marxism-Leninism's ideas on human emancipation while also inheriting national traditions that respected and valued women's roles. In the same year, the Vietnam Women's Union was established to mobilize and harness women's strength for the revolutionary cause, affirming that women were not merely subjects of emancipation but also a major revolutionary force. Following the August Revolution of 1945, the Party consistently affirmed gender equality as a fundamental human right and an essential condition for building a new social order. Numerous Party documents emphasized that "the liberation of women is a condition for the liberation of society," underscoring the dialectical

relationship between women's liberation, class liberation, and national liberation.

From the Sixth National Party Congress (1986), when Vietnam embarked on the renovation process, gender equality was embedded within a strategic vision of human and social development. The Party identified the promotion of women's roles as an endogenous driving force of renovation, recognizing gender equality not only as a matter of social justice but also as a crucial resource for economic growth, innovation, and international integration.

During its leadership, the Party promulgated numerous resolutions and directives reflecting a strategic vision for women's affairs. Resolution No. 04-NQ/TW (1993) of the Politburo affirmed that women's emancipation aimed not only to eliminate discrimination but also to improve living standards, enhance social status, and build families that are "prosperous, equal, progressive, and happy." Directive No. 37-CT/TW (16 May 1994) of the Secretariat further clarified this orientation by emphasizing the development of female cadres as an objective requirement of the renovation process and calling on Party committees to plan, train, and effectively utilize them, thereby creating favorable conditions for their participation in leadership and management. Notably, Resolution No. 11-NQ/TW (27 April 2007) of the Politburo on women's work in the period of accelerated industrialization and modernization elevated gender equality to a national strategic level, highlighting women's roles in socio-economic development and strengthening their participation in the political system. The resolution also emphasized the notion of "substantive gender equality," aiming to narrow gender development gaps, particularly in remote, disadvantaged, and ethnic minority areas. Subsequently, Directive No. 21-CT/TW (20 January 2018) of the Secretariat on continuing to promote women's work in the new context further inherited and developed the spirit of Resolution 11, stressing the need to raise social awareness of gender equality and to build a contingent of female cadres with political integrity, moral qualities, professional competence, and credibility to meet new development demands.

By the Thirteenth National Party Congress

(2021), the Party's perspective on gender equality had been comprehensively developed in connection with the goal of Vietnamese human development. The Congress documents affirmed the commitment to "ensuring substantive gender equality and women's rights in all fields; promoting the role, potential, and creativity of women in renovation, industrialization, modernization, and international integration." This perspective reflects a new stage in the Party's awareness from formal equality in rights to substantive equality in opportunities, conditions, and outcomes. Gender equality is thus recognized not only as a human rights issue but also as a strategic resource for sustainable development. The Party also emphasized the promotion of cultural values and the admirable qualities of Vietnamese women such as intelligence, compassion, and creativity as vital spiritual resources in building the Vietnamese person in the new era.

Overall, across successive Party Congresses, the CPV's perspectives on gender equality have developed continuously, from the revolutionary awareness articulated in the first political platform to the comprehensive and substantive approach reflected in the documents of the Thirteenth Congress. The Party's thinking has shifted from formal equality to substantive equality, from emphasizing equal rights to ensuring opportunities, conditions, and capacities for women's development. These perspectives aim not only to enhance women's status but also to recognize them as creative subjects and key forces in national development and international integration. Under the Party's ideological guidance, gender equality has become a humanistic and democratic value, reflecting the Party's theoretical and practical advancement in harmonizing economic development, social justice, and comprehensive human development.

4.2. State Law and Policies on the Implementation of Gender Equality

Gender equality is understood as equal treatment of men and women in all spheres of social life. The 2013 Constitution stipulates that "male and female citizens are equal in all respects. The State adopts policies to ensure gender equality rights and opportunities... and strictly prohibits

gender discrimination.” Vietnam has established a robust legal and policy framework to promote gender equality across political, economic, educational, health, scientific, and family domains. The Law on Gender Equality (2006) clearly articulates the objective of eliminating gender-based discrimination and creating equal development opportunities for both men and women in all fields. The Law on the Election of Deputies to the National Assembly and People’s Councils (2015) further affirms equal voting and candidacy rights for male and female citizens.

With the goal of achieving nationwide gender equality, the Party and the State emphasize women’s roles as a critical factor in sustainable development. Decision No. 622/QĐ-TTg (10 May 2017) of the Prime Minister on the National Action Plan for implementing the 2030 Agenda sets the goal of “achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls.” The Government promulgated Resolution No. 28/NQ-CP (3 March 2021) on the National Strategy on Gender Equality for the 2021–2030 period, aiming to narrow gender gaps and ensure equal opportunities across all sectors. Vietnam is also a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 1980) and has adopted the National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security (2024–2030).

In addition, numerous policies have been implemented to promote gender equality among ethnic minority communities, such as Prime Ministerial Decisions No. 449/QĐ-TTg (12 March 2013), No. 402/QĐ-TTg (14 March 2016), and No. 1898/QĐ-TTg (28 November 2017), approving the Project on “Supporting Gender Equality Activities in Ethnic Minority Areas for the 2018–2025 Period.” Provisions on gender equality in ethnic minority regions are also integrated into laws and subordinate legislation. Article 7 of the Law on Gender Equality (2006) and Decree No. 48/2009/NĐ-CP (19 May 2009) specify support for gender equality activities in remote, mountainous, ethnic minority, and particularly disadvantaged areas, providing a legal foundation for enhancing the status of ethnic minority women.

During the 2011–2020 period, the central

government promulgated a relatively comprehensive system of socio-economic development policies for ethnic minority and mountainous areas, covering infrastructure, education, healthcare, poverty reduction, cultural preservation, and community capacity building. According to the Committee for Ethnic Minority Affairs (2020), by October 2020, there were 118 ethnic policies in effect nationwide and 21 national target programs with indirect impacts on ethnic minority and mountainous areas. This system has been assessed as relatively coherent, contributing to improved living conditions, sustainable poverty reduction, and expanded development opportunities for ethnic minority communities. From 2021 to 2024, the Party and the State continued institutional reforms by integrating fragmented policies into the National Target Program on Socio-Economic Development of Ethnic Minority and Mountainous Areas for the 2021–2030 period (Decision No. 1719/QĐ-TTg, 14 October 2021). This strategic program aims to reduce multidimensional poverty, promote sustainable development, and narrow regional development gaps while addressing policy fragmentation (Government, 2021). According to the Committee for Ethnic Minority Affairs (2024a, 2024b), by mid-2024, approximately 112 specific policies were being implemented nationwide, many of which had been adjusted to suit regional conditions, particularly policies on residential land, production development, and human resource training. The systematization and streamlining of policies have created a more unified legal framework for the development of ethnic and mountainous areas, facilitating socio-economic progress and enhancing the role and status of ethnic minority women.

In the political sphere, the Party and the State have promulgated numerous policies concerning female cadres and ethnic minority officials, from constitutional provisions to resolutions and specific projects, such as Resolution No. 11-NQ/TW (2007) on women’s work and Decision No. 402/QĐ-TTg (2016) on developing ethnic minority cadres, civil servants, and public employees. These policies have significantly contributed to human resource development in ethnic minority areas, particularly among female

cadres.

In the economic domain, between 2016 and 2018, the Government and the Prime Minister issued 41 documents prioritizing the development of ethnic minority and mountainous regions, including 15 direct ethnic policies and 26 general policies with indirect impacts (Committee for Ethnic Minority Affairs, 2018). Policies on poverty reduction, financial support, infrastructure development, livelihood transformation, and market access were implemented in a relatively coordinated manner, resulting in improvements in living standards and incomes. Since 2021, the implementation of National Target Program 1719 has further streamlined and integrated policies, prioritizing targeted investment in disadvantaged areas and focusing on livelihood support, essential infrastructure development, electricity and clean water provision, and vocational training for ethnic minority labor, with particular attention to female workers.

In education, policies targeting ethnic minority students have been increasingly coordinated, helping to narrow gaps in educational opportunities. By 2024, Vietnam had 318 boarding secondary schools for ethnic minorities serving approximately 105,000 students, and 1,139 semi-boarding schools serving over 245,000 students (Ha Anh, 2025). Policies such as Prime Ministerial Decision No. 66/2013/QĐ-TTg (11 November 2013) and Government Decree No. 116/2016/NĐ-CP (18 July 2016) have provided substantial support for meals, accommodation, and learning conditions, particularly benefiting female students. The Ministry of Education and Training (2024) continues to prioritize the development of ethnic education through infrastructure investment, the preservation of ethnic languages and scripts, and improvements in teaching quality, thereby ensuring sustainable, gender-equal access to education.

In healthcare, the policy framework for ethnic minority areas has been progressively strengthened, with particular emphasis on women and children. The Government has issued eight major policies, notably Decree No. 39/2015/NĐ-CP (27 April 2015) on health insurance, which expanded access to basic healthcare services. During the 2021–2025 period, Project 7 People's

Healthcare, Improving Physical Fitness and Stature of Ethnic Minority Populations (Decision No. 2415/QĐ-BYT, 5 September 2022) has focused on grassroots healthcare and reproductive health. Decree No. 75/2023/NĐ-CP (19 October 2023) on continued support covering 70% of health insurance premiums for ethnic minority people for 36 months has further increased insurance coverage, improved community health, and promoted equity in healthcare access.

4.3. Party, Legal and Policy Perspectives on Promoting Traditional Cultural Values in Advancing Gender Equality

Over more than nine decades of revolutionary leadership, the CPV has consistently affirmed culture as the spiritual foundation of society, simultaneously a goal and a driving force of sustainable development. The Resolution of the Fifth Plenum of the Eighth Central Committee on “Building and Developing an Advanced Vietnamese Culture Rich in National Identity” explicitly states that “culture is the spiritual foundation of society, both the goal and the driving force of socio-economic development” (Communist Party of Vietnam, 1998). This perspective reflects a strategic vision that places culture at the center of development, recognizing its role in shaping and orienting all development processes, including gender equality. Resolution No. 33-NQ/TW (9 June 2014) of the Ninth Plenum of the Eleventh Central Committee further emphasized that “culture truly becomes a solid spiritual foundation of society and an important endogenous force ensuring sustainable development and firmly safeguarding the Fatherland” (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2014). This marked an evolution in the Party's thinking, viewing culture not merely as a distinct sector but as a form of “soft power” that shapes behaviors, values, and social norms including those related to gender equality. Promoting traditional cultural values is thus understood not only as preserving national identity but also as a means to establish new norms of conduct and gradually eliminate gender stereotypes and outdated customs embedded in community life. The Politburo's Conclusion No. 76-KL/TW (4 June 2020) reaffirmed that “culture is the soul of the nation, the solid spiritual foundation of society, and an

important endogenous force ensuring sustainable development and firmly safeguarding the Fatherland” (Politburo, 2020). This perspective underscores the Party’s consistent development line, treating culture as a pillar of human and social development and as a basis for building a progressive, democratic, egalitarian, and humanistic cultural environment essential prerequisites for substantive gender equality. At the National Cultural Conference in 2021, General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong further emphasized the need to “build a comprehensively developed Vietnamese culture oriented toward truth, goodness, and beauty, imbued with national spirit, humanism, democracy, and scientific values,” while also “preserving and promoting traditional cultural values and gradually eliminating outdated customs, prejudices, and gender inequality” (Nguyen Phu Trong, 2021). This guidance closely links cultural development with gender equality, identifying the enhancement of women’s status and the elimination of gender discrimination as benchmarks of social progress and cultural civility.

A consistent thread in the Party’s thinking is the selective inheritance and promotion of positive traditional cultural values including customary law as important endogenous resources for sustainable development. Culture functions not only as the spiritual foundation of society but also as a guiding pillar for human development, ensuring harmony among economic growth, social equity, and environmental protection. In this relationship, culture and gender interact deeply: culture shapes gender perceptions, norms, and behaviors, while progress in gender equality contributes to the renewal and elevation of cultural value systems toward greater humanism, equity, and sustainability.

Recognizing this interaction, the Party and the State advocate selectively preserving positive elements of customary law and traditional culture while gradually eliminating outdated practices, gender biases, and customs that hinder progress. This is not merely a sociological adjustment but a sustainable development strategy grounded in cultural foundations, transforming core community values into drivers of gender progress. When values such as respect, solidarity,

responsibility, diligence, creativity, and matrilineal traditions present in many ethnic minority communities are appropriately promoted, they can become endogenous forces that enable women to assert their roles, status, and contributions to collective development. Conversely, if outdated practices such as son preference, patrilocal residence, or norms restricting women’s participation in socio-economic decision-making persist, they undermine human potential and obstruct the achievement of sustainable development goals. Therefore, linking gender equality with culture should be understood as a process of “dual transformation”: preserving and promoting positive cultural identities while reshaping unequal gender norms through education, cultural dialogue, and community participation.

This approach reflects the Party’s humanistic and inclusive orientation, treating culture as both a condition and a means for achieving substantive gender equality. In ethnic minority areas where customary law, beliefs, and traditions exert profound influence on social life the promotion of positive ethnic cultural values combined with renewed gender awareness contributes to building an advanced culture rich in national identity, providing a solid foundation for sustainable economic, social, and human development.

This spirit has been institutionalized in national legal and policy frameworks. Notably, the National Target Program on Socio-Economic Development of Ethnic Minority and Mountainous Areas, Phase I (2021–2025), allocates Project 8 to “Implementing Gender Equality and Addressing Urgent Issues Affecting Women and Children,” aiming to raise awareness, transform stereotypes, and protect and improve the material and spiritual well-being of women and children in particularly disadvantaged areas (Committee for Ethnic Minority Affairs, 2021). In addition, Projects 5 and 6 under the Program focus on capacity building for grassroots cadres and ethnic minority women, linking gender equality with the promotion of positive traditional cultural values.

In sum, Vietnam’s approach to gender equality exhibits distinctive characteristics, combining traditional cultural values with modern principles

of human rights, women's rights, and sustainable development. The Party and the State view gender equality not solely through legal or economic lenses but also within a cultural space, recognizing that transforming perceptions, behaviors, and social norms is central to achieving substantive gender equality. This comprehensive, humanistic approach is particularly suited to Vietnam's socio-cultural context, especially in ethnic minority regions where traditional values and customary law continue to shape gender relations in community life.

5. Discussion

The research findings indicate that the Communist Party of Vietnam has developed a comprehensive, humanistic, and culturally grounded approach to gender equality. As early as the Resolution of the Ninth Plenum of the Eleventh Central Committee on building and developing Vietnamese culture and people, the Party affirmed that "culture is the spiritual foundation of society, as well as the goal and driving force of development" (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2014). This viewpoint was further concretized in the Documents of the Thirteenth National Party Congress, which emphasized the need to "promote Vietnamese cultural values and the Vietnamese people in achieving rapid and sustainable national development" (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2021). From this perspective, gender equality is not merely a legal issue or a matter of human rights, but also a cultural value that must be cultivated and embedded in social life.

In practice, the mainstreaming of gender into development policies in Vietnam has yielded positive outcomes. National programs such as the National Strategy on Gender Equality for the 2021–2030 Period and the National Target Program on Socio-Economic Development of Ethnic Minority and Mountainous Areas have placed strong emphasis on enhancing women's status while simultaneously promoting traditional cultural values within communities. In particular, the inheritance and promotion of cultural values such as solidarity, respect for mothers, and the recognized roles of women in families and communities have contributed to making gender equality policies more socially acceptable,

culturally resonant, and sustainable.

Nevertheless, significant challenges remain in integrating traditional cultural values into the practical implementation of gender equality. In many ethnic minority areas, outdated customs and customary laws persist, limiting women's participation in community life, especially in decision-making processes and inheritance rights. Some gender equality policies still tend to emphasize "support" rather than genuine "empowerment," thereby constraining the full realization of women's agency and subjectivity. Moreover, communication and education on gender issues linked to cultural contexts have not yet been sufficiently extensive or profound, resulting in the persistence of latent gender stereotypes in social life (Nguyen Phu Trong, 2021).

To address these limitations, a set of coordinated strategic measures is required. First, it is necessary to further institutionalize the Party's perspective on integrating culture with gender equality, aiming to build a "culture of gender equality" and "culturalizing gender policies" as core social values. Second, the positive role of communities-particularly village elders, clan leaders, and other respected local figures-should be strengthened in selectively identifying and standardizing progressive elements of customary law, while eliminating feudal and patriarchal components embedded in traditional practices and community norms. Third, there is a need for fundamental innovation in education and communication efforts, not only to raise awareness but also to shape new cultural norms of gender equality, especially within families and schools. In parallel, enhancing women's capacity and expanding their opportunities to participate in grassroots political systems and socio-economic activities should be regarded as an endogenous driver of sustainable development in ethnic minority regions.

6. Conclusion

Approaching gender equality in Vietnam from the perspectives of the Party, State law, and public policy reveals a harmonious integration of social progress with the nation's traditional cultural values. The promotion of positive cultural values, alongside the gradual elimination of outdated

customs, constitutes a crucial foundation for building a “culture of gender equality” a solid spiritual base that contributes to sustainable

development and enhances women’s status across all spheres of social life.

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TIẾP CẬN BÌNH ĐẲNG GIỚI Ở VIỆT NAM TỪ QUAN ĐIỂM CỦA ĐẢNG, PHÁP LUẬT, CHÍNH SÁCH CỦA NHÀ NƯỚC VÀ GIÁ TRỊ VĂN HÓA TRUYỀN THỐNG

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Tóm tắt: Bài viết phân tích cách tiếp cận bình đẳng giới ở Việt Nam trên hai phương diện cơ bản: (1) Quan điểm của Đảng và pháp luật, chính sách của Nhà nước về bình đẳng giới; (2) Quan điểm của Đảng, chính sách của Nhà nước về phát huy giá trị văn hóa truyền thống trong thực hiện bình đẳng giới. Trên cơ sở đó, nghiên cứu làm rõ mối liên hệ giữa văn hóa, giới và phát triển bền vững, nhấn mạnh vai trò của việc kế thừa, phát huy các giá trị văn hóa truyền thống tốt đẹp, đồng thời loại bỏ những định kiến và tập tục lạc hậu cản trở bình đẳng giới. Từ những phân tích này, bài viết đề xuất một số giải pháp nhằm vận dụng hiệu quả giá trị văn hóa trong thúc đẩy bình đẳng giới, góp phần xây dựng xã hội công bằng, tiến bộ và phát triển bền vững ở Việt Nam hiện nay.

Từ khóa: Quan điểm của Đảng, pháp luật và chính sách của nhà nước; Tiếp cận bình đẳng giới; Văn hóa truyền thống; Việt Nam.