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France's International Strategy on Gender Equality in France

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate France's contribution to promoting gender equality through the implementation of France's International Strategy on Gender Equality (2018-2022) policy in the world of work. The research method used is descriptive. The data sources used are books, journals, and news that can be accounted for, as well as official statistical data from news portals and government agencies. The analysis technique used is secondary analysis, with a qualitative approach to explain French policies in supporting gender equality. Interviews, focus group discussions, web-based research, and document and archive studies were used to collect and analyze relevant data. The results of this study reveal that France has adopted a series of laws to promote gender equality in the workplace since the early 20th century. The French government responded to public demands through various demonstrations, including the #MeToo movement and Gender Equality demonstrations, and took concrete steps through France's International Strategy on Gender Equality.

Keywords

Policy, International Strategy, Gender Equality, France

1. Introduction

The history of gender inequality in France during the 19th century is marked by ongoing social, political, and legal changes. Following the French Revolution in 1789, women's rights were briefly restored but were rescinded by the Napoleonic Civil Code of 1804, which granted men legal authority over their wives and children. Article 213 of the Code established a hierarchical relationship between husband and wife, treating the wife as a minor. Although there were periods of legal reform in the 19th century, such as divorce becoming illegal until 1884, these changes were slow and inconsistent during the Bourbon and Second Empire reigns (Abalkhail, 2020). This period was also marked by the emergence of diverse feminist movements that fought for women's rights within a changing political and social context. Women participated in revolutions and demonstrations, with several feminist newspapers emerging, such as *Les Voix des Femmes* and *La Fronde*. The increase in female literacy also supported the spread of feminist ideas (Spencer, 2022).

In the mid-19th century, education for women expanded, increasing literacy rates and creating a new generation of female readers and writers. The feminist movement became more organized, with groups like the *Ligue française pour le droit des femmes* and the *Société le droit des femmes* advocating for women's rights through judicial and legal changes. By the late 19th century, some French feminists began to push for women's suffrage, although the movement was divided between more radical feminists and those who were more Republican (Spencer, 2022). Additionally, women began to expand their roles in culture and sports, with more women participating in activities such as cycling and mobilization. Despite significant social and political changes during this period, French women did not gain the right to vote until several decades later. However, the 19th-century feminist movement laid the foundation for the struggle for gender equality in France in subsequent centuries (Spencer, 2022).

In the 20th century, the feminist movement in France experienced significant developments, including in the French colonies. Although much research focuses on the second wave of feminism in the 1960s and 1970s, we must return to the early period after World War I to understand the demands of notable feminists such as Simone de Beauvoir, Christine Delphy, Hélène Cixous, and Monique Wittig. Despite the efforts of 19th-century feminist activists and writers like Hubertine Auclert and male feminist ally Léon Richer, women's suffrage was only proposed in 1919 and rejected in 1922 (Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères, 2022). The role of women during the French Resistance from 1940-1945 remained under-researched until the late 20th century. However, women's roles in the resistance and their positions in French society in the 1940s and 1950s began to emerge in women's studies and historical research. Women participated significantly in the resistance, even forming resistance groups, but did not always receive recognition or seek recognition after 1945.

France only granted women the right to vote in 1944, making it one of the last European countries to do so (Andriani, 2017). However, the proliferation of texts in the 1940s laid the groundwork for the second wave of feminism in the 1960s and 1970s and marked significant progress in the struggle for gender equality. France adopted a series of laws to promote gender equality in the workplace, including restrictions on working hours for women since 1892 and a ban on night work for them in industry (Abbas, 2018). Although women in several European countries, including France, were generally not allowed to work without their husbands' consent, Norway recognized both spouses as legal adults as early as 1888. The principle of equal pay for female and male workers was reinforced by the ILO Convention of 1951 and the Treaty of Rome in 1957, but the enforcement of this

right was further regulated by European court rulings in 1976 and 1978, following strikes by Belgian female workers.

Equality is one of the fundamental ideals underlying the French Constitution. The principle of gender equality was introduced in the Preamble of the 1946 Constitution, which, like the 1958 Constitution, refers to the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen. France has a long history of gender equality legislation in the workplace, dating back to the Equal Pay Act of 1972. Over the years, numerous laws have been enacted to address gender gaps in employment, including the 1983 law on professional equality. France's history of gender equality issues continues to influence today, as there remains a gender pay gap between men and women, social harm from gender bias such as sexual violence and discrimination (Astier, 2018), and differences in social protection systems in European countries. Nonetheless, France continues to focus on gender equality issues through legal changes, public advocacy, and educational programs.

France has faced civil society demands with a series of demonstrations highlighting issues of sexual violence, gender pay, and female inequality. The French government has sought to address gender equality issues through various governmental bodies and laws and policies. Thus, France has engaged in the international policy-making process for gender equality, involving strategy development and evaluation and engaging various government agencies in cooperation with civil society organizations. Therefore, France's International Strategy for Gender Equality policy is the result of joint efforts between the government and civil society in addressing gender inequality challenges in France and internationally.

2. Literature Review

The review conducted; researchers found several studies that form the main foundation for this research. One of the reviews is a journal that discusses gender equality policies in France, focusing on the implementation of France's International Strategy on Gender Equality (2018-2022). This research underscores the importance of policy implementation in achieving gender equality and highlights the political dynamics and policies that influence these changes (Engeli & Mazur, 2021; Mazur & Engeli, 2020). Another review addresses the wage gap between men and women in the French labor market, with particular attention to the impact of motherhood on this gap (Laufer, 1998). Although female participation in the labor market has increased, the wage gap remains an unresolved challenge (Meurs & Pora, 2020). There is also research discussing women's empowerment policies in the workplace in Japan, particularly through the Act on Promotion of Women's Participation and Advancement in the Workplace. This research highlights the Japanese government's efforts to integrate female labor into traditionally patriarchal work environments (Subekti et al., 2021).

Easton (1992) identifies three main aspects in the discussion of political systems. First, a political system is characterized by the interdependence between its units, indicating coherence. Second, a political system must be neutral or free from ideological influence. Third, a political system refers to the co-variance and interdependence among the units that form the system, where changes in one unit can affect other units within the system. A prominent definition of politics is the struggle of individuals or groups to control social values, so the political system encompasses the principle of allocating social values (Mehta, 2010). The distinctive elements of a political system include identification, input and output, differentiation, and integration. A political system consists of elements such as input, conversion, output, feedback, and environment (Feola, 2015). Input consists of demands and support necessary to meet societal needs. The process of converting input into output illustrates how the political system operates (Easton, 1957). The output of

the political system consists of decisions or political policies that can affect the support and stability of the system. The environment of the political system includes social and physical systems that are not part of the political system itself (Doyle et al., 2015). The environment can exert pressure or disruptions that affect the sustainability of the political system. Easton categorizes political system analysis into four areas: the interaction of politics shapes societal behavior systems, the interaction of political systems with physical, social, and psychological environments, the response of political systems to threats and disruptions, and the adaptation of political systems to various conditions (Easton, 1992).

Gender analysis has become an important approach in enriching social critique across various fields. Through the application of gender analysis in critiques of capitalism or Frankfurt School theory, such critiques can become sharper and more comprehensive. Gender is a social or cultural construct, whereas sex is a natural biological difference. Gender can change over time and place, while sex remains constant (Johnson & Repta, 2012). In society, there are five forms of gender injustice impacts, including marginalization, subordination, gender stereotypes, gender-based violence, and gender bias in the division of labor. This research can be linked to thinking specifically in highlighting societal stigma towards men and women which leads to gender discrimination in various aspects, including state policies such as issues of wage inequality and sexual violence (Fakih, 2018).

3. Method

This study will systematically describe France's contributions to advocating for gender equality in the international arena using a descriptive research type. Descriptive research provides an orderly and accurate depiction of the phenomena or cases being investigated. The focus of the study will be on the implementation of France's International Strategy on Gender Equality (2018-2022) policies in the workplace in France, aiming to address ongoing gender inequality issues despite efforts to resolve them. The data sources used are secondary data from credible books, journals, and news. Data collection techniques will employ a secondary analysis approach by utilizing official statistics gathered through news portals or government agency press releases. This study takes a qualitative approach to data analysis, aiming to explain France's policies in supporting gender equality through France's International Strategy on Gender Equality. Qualitative methods are used to deepen the understanding of social phenomena and dynamics in international relations. The qualitative method in this study will utilize interview techniques, focused group discussions, web-based research, and document and archive studies to collect and analyze relevant data.

4. Result

4.1. The Issue of Gender in France

France has long been a leading force in the fight for gender equality, with a history of struggle that reflects significant social, political, and legal changes (Bakry, 2016; Nazari & Musa, 2022). Women in France have played roles in revolutions and feminist movements, participating in demonstrations to advocate for women's rights, particularly in the ever-changing political and social contexts. The feminist movement in France has rapidly evolved alongside rising literacy among women, expanding their roles in culture and sports, and pushing for legal changes that recognize women's rights. The history of gender inequality in France, especially during the 19th century, was marked by dynamic social periods. Following the French Revolution in 1789, women's rights were briefly restored, only to be rescinded by the Napoleonic Civil Code in 1804, which established hierarchical relationships between husbands and wives, treating wives as minors. However, the

feminist movement became more organized in the mid-19th century, fighting for women's rights through the judiciary and legal reforms (Weiler, 1989).

By the late 19th century, the French feminist movement began demanding women's suffrage, despite divisions between more radical feminists and more republican ones. Meanwhile, the influence of Catholicism in French politics encouraged women to remain in the domestic sphere. The role of women during the French Resistance from 1940-1945 highlighted women's significant contributions to the struggle. Although French women gained the right to vote in 1944, the feminist movement continued to grow, with the Second Wave in the 1960s and 1970s driven by legal changes and broader societal shifts. The *Mouvement de libération des femmes* emerged, advocating for abortion rights, which were eventually won in 1974. Today, although France has adopted a series of laws to promote gender equality in the workplace, there remains a wage gap between men and women across various sectors (Breunig & Rospabe, 2013). Women often receive lower wages in domestic work, industry, agriculture, and office jobs. Factors such as gender inequality, limited female empowerment, and differences in labor market qualifications contribute to this gap (Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères, 2022). The impact of the gender wage gap includes disruptions in economic development, social and political injustice, and inequity in access to education. France shows its commitment to addressing these gaps through various laws and initiatives.

Despite the employment rate of women contributing to economic growth and increased household income, gender disparities remain, as evidenced by a 15.2% wage gap between men and women in France in 2018, slightly below the European average of 16.2%. Additionally, part-time work is more prevalent among women, with 28.8% of female employees aged 15 to 64 working part-time in 2018, compared to 7.8% of their male counterparts (Martin, 2022). Over the years, the income gap between men and women has steadily decreased. For instance, in 1958, men earned about 59% more than women, then 20 years later, the gap decreased to 43%, and by 1998, the wage difference dropped to 26%. In 2014, it was around 21% and 20% in 2017, showing a 1% decrease over four years. Although the numbers are not as large as in previous years, the gender pay gap remains an issue in France.

This wage disparity is particularly evident in Paris, where the average hourly wage for women is 22 euros net, reflecting a 21% difference compared to men, who earn 27.80 euros per hour. Age further exacerbates this issue, as Parisian women over 50 face a shocking 32% wage gap compared to their male peers of the same age. This difference signals ongoing challenges in achieving gender equality in leadership roles within government institutions. The persistent gender pay gap underscores the existing inequality, with men earning 28.5% more than their female counterparts. Despite progress, this gap highlights deep-rooted issues that go beyond mere workforce participation, indicating systemic challenges in fair remuneration.

To address the gender wage gap, France has enacted laws regulating women's working hours since 1892, along with other initiatives such as banning night work for women in industry. In 2012, the Interministerial Committee for Women's Rights and Gender Equality was established to combat gender stereotypes and discrimination. Additionally, France adopted the July 7, 2014 law on international development and solidarity strategy, which asserts gender equality as one of its priority objectives. Other laws, such as the August 4, 2014 law on real equality between women and men and the August 8, 2016 labor law, provide a strong legal foundation for combating gender inequality. Despite progress, women in France still face significant wage gaps. Demonstrations and movements like #MeToo illustrate the spirit of the struggle and the push for broader positive change. The French government has also established institutions and initiatives to address gender

equality issues, demonstrating a strong commitment to achieving better gender equality in the future.

4.2. The Policy of France's International Strategy on Gender Equality with David Easton's Political Systems Theory

France has taken concrete and significant steps in promoting gender equality through its foreign policy and development efforts, as illustrated in France's International Strategy on Gender Equality 2018–2022. This strategy not only reflects the strong political commitment of the French government but also responds to societal demands for the integration of gender equality in all aspects of foreign policy and development (Onuf, 2023). Within the framework of David Easton's political system theory, France can be viewed as an entity responding to inputs from the external environment, including societal demands for gender equality. The Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen of 1789 serves as an important reference in the formulation of these policies. France has conducted an in-depth evaluation of its previous gender policies and strategies, establishing a strong political commitment to prioritize gender equality.

The policy formulation process involves differentiation, where specific measures are taken to address gender disparities, such as enhancing equality in the workplace and senior management. Additionally, integration is evident in how this policy is aligned with broader political and legal structures, consistent with human rights principles. The outputs of this policy include concrete initiatives such as the publication of a gender pay equality index and sanctions against companies failing to meet gender equality standards in the workplace. This demonstrates a political response to societal demands regarding gender equality. Through France's International Strategy on Gender Equality, France seeks to incorporate the theme of gender equality into its political agenda, encompassing sectors like development cooperation, economic diplomacy, and cultural cooperation.

David Easton's political system theory helps explain how societal inputs drive the formation of this policy, while the policy itself acts as a systemic mechanism linking societal demands with concrete policy outputs (Bang, 2020). Thus, the steps taken by France in terms of gender equality not only reflect a strong political commitment but also set an example for global gender equality efforts, encouraging other countries to adopt similar policies. This strategy aims to achieve tangible changes in practices and policies within France and beyond its borders, towards a more inclusive and gender-just society.

5. Conclusion

France's long journey to overcome gender inequality has involved social, political and legal changes since the 19th century. France has responded to civil society demands with a series of demonstrations highlighting issues of sexual violence, the gender pay gap and women's inequality. The #MeToo movement in 2017 marked the peak of resistance against sexual violence, followed by the Gender Equality demonstrations in 2018 and the Women's Life demonstrations in 2019. These demonstrations showed that French society wants to see more equitable and inclusive change for women. The French government has demonstrated its commitment to addressing gender equality issues through various bodies and initiatives, such as the Ministerial Delegation for Gender Equality and the Directorate of Women's Rights and Gender Equality. The international policy-making process for gender equality in France involves strategy development and evaluation involving various government agencies, as well as collaboration with civil society organizations. Gender equality policy in France reflects the government's efforts to respond to society's demands regarding gender issues. David Easton's political theory model is used to explain how input from society, such as demands

for gender equality, influences policy formation by the political system. Community demonstrations are one of the inputs that encourage the political system to adopt policies such as menstrual leave. France is creating a more inclusive work environment and responding positively to societal demands regarding gender equality.

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