

THE POLICY OF GENDER EQUALITY AND ITS PROSPECTS ON EUROPEAN UNION

By

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Abstract

The paper has made efforts in this study to unveil the prospects of gender equality as a way to resolve gender discrimination in the European Union. This is important because social equality helps in gaining a win-win approach by incorporating female folks into social, economic, and political activities in Europe. In the study, two objectives were under consideration: to examine the emergence of the policy of gender equality in Europe and the prospects of gender equality in the European Union. The study used qualitative data through the use of secondary sources of materials such as books, journals, Internet, among others and was historically analyzed. The study employed Feminist Political Theory as a theoretical orientation to analyze the dominance of men over women in a social system. The findings emphasize that the policy of gender equality has more benefits as the female folks get exposed to education and paid jobs, which automatically increases the individuals' and the European Union's economic base. The paper concludes that gender inequality does not encourage productivity among women, that the clamour for gender equality is important because it enhances capacity building among women and also generate their latent talents for societal development through education. Finally, the paper recommended that gender equality should be observed consistently with all vigor for financial stability, acquisition of technical education, and participation in democratic institutions to enhance development in the European Union.

Keywords: Europe, Equality, Gender, Men, Union, Women,

1.0 Introduction

Gender equality has been the most developed European (EUs) social dimension. Individual member states have been under pressure in the area of working life. Gender equality has been identified as *an inherent value*, meaning that gender equality is not an instrument for achieving other goals rather than a matter for itself in line with the 2030 gender equality goal Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations (UN) (Hyman, 2008:54; Hix, 2005:34; Walby, 1999:59-80; Rees,2006:74). The agenda is directed towards the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. Nevertheless, gender equality also has *instrumental* value. Klasen and Lamanna (2009:91-132); Kabeer and Natali (2013:8); Klasen (2006: 51), argued that gender equality has positively impacted on economic growth through education and employment. But (Klasen, (2006:70); Dollar and Gatti (1999:77), opined that gender inequality reduces the human capital in a society, negatively impacting economic performance for not including talented women and limiting overall talent. Rees (2006:185), claimed that in the EU, gender equality has moved from a strategy of *equal treatment* by focusing on equal rights for workers thereby resulting in directives and legislation influencing member states, using *positive action* and the use of *mainstreaming*. Again in the EU there is a solid legal base for equal treatment for workers. However, gender equality and its related social systems such as social policy, educational policy and research and development have a weak legal basis in EU legislation wherein their roles are limited to promote cooperation between member

states and, when necessary, support supplement their efforts.

The strategy of equal treatment connotes that both women and men should enjoy the same rights and privileges without discrimination. According to Verloo and Lombardo (2017:56), the clamour for equal treatment attracts attention because historically, women have been kept out of the labour market, politics and other social contexts. The strategy's perspective is to eliminate gender discrimination. Each individual, no matter the sex, should be accorded the same principles and standards that ensure the same access to rights and opportunities.

1.2 Theoretical framework and methodology

The study employs Feminist Political Theory, which begins with the works of Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–1797), one of the first feminist writers in the liberal tradition. Feminist political theory as a term was only consolidated in the West during Women's liberation movement of the 1960s and 70s. The women's liberation movement was a collective struggle for equality. This movement, which consisted of women's liberation groups, advocacy, protests, consciousness-raising, and feminist theory, sought to free women from oppression and male supremacy (Tucker, 2014:1). In these movements, gender was only the social expression of male as a hegemonic being and female as a slavish being, opposite, unequal pay, unequal status, recipient of domestic violence and sexual violence. In addition, they examined a codified body of literature and other aspects of human endeavours to understand how gender differences and inequality prevailed across boundaries. It was seen that masculine values and men lord over female values and women in any social system or organization with domineering authority over a female. From historical view, the public remained the domain of male citizens, also having unrestricted access to the private which is the domain of women, children and slaves, who never had access to

the public. Feminist Political Theory criticized the position of Western political thought, pointing out that if you add women and the things that women do into the theories of Marx or Hobbes you get some very different outcomes. For example, Susan Moller Okin famously asked who was shopping, cooking, cleaning and looking after the children while Marx's post revolutionary man was hunting, fishing and philosophizing, and one is forced to wonder how humanity perpetuated itself in the Hobbesian state of nature where life was short, brutish and nasty. Feminist Political Theory typically emphasize democracy and political representation, including women breaking down the public/private divide, and systems of power and oppression (Stokes, 2015:48). Therefore, the paper is set to examine the policy of gender equality and its prospects in the European Union. The study used secondary data, such as books, journals, Internet, among others.

2. Literature review

Gender equality connotes equality between women and men. This implies that both sex should enjoy equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities. Equality means that rights and privileges are not to be decided because of male and female or whether they are born male or female. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognizing the heterogeneities of different women and men. Gender equality is both men and women enterprise. Equality between women and men is seen both as a human rights issue and as a precondition for, and indicator of sustainable people-centered development. Gender refers to the social qualities and prospects associated with being male and female, without discrimination. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially built and are learned through socialization processes. In most societies there are discriminations and inequalities between women and men in social responsibilities assigned, activities allowed, access to public offices and control

over resources, as well as decision-making opportunities (UN.2001:1). Furthermore, although inequalities still exist, the EU has made significant progress in gender equality over the last decades. Such as:

- equal treatment legislation
- gender mainstreaming, integration of the gender perspective into all other policies
- specific measures for the advancement of women

The encouraging trends are the higher number of women in the labour market and their progress in securing better education and training. However, gender gaps still remain and in the labour market, women are still over-represented in lower paid sectors and under-represented in decision-making positions (European Commission 2020:1).

Gender equality and the effort to cancel discrimination against women lies within the purview of the European Union's treaties. As important as it is, embedded in articles 2 and 3 of the Treaty on the European Union. Article 8 and 19 of the Treaty relating to functioning of the European Union spelled out that the Union must ensure equal rights and opportunities between men and women in all of its activities. The European Council and Parliament, and in article 23 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights, specifically in terms of wages and work, should ensure no discrimination. Following the above declarations, the European Union (EU) is committed to eliminating inequalities and promoting gender equality 'in all its activities' and has made considerable advances over the years. Nevertheless, the situation remains uneven across the EU, and in recent times progress has slowed, stalled or even regressed in some areas (European Commission 2020:2).

Yet, the evidence points clearly to the benefits of gender equality for individuals, the economy and society as a whole. Public opinion surveys show that a large majority of Europeans agree that promoting gender equality is important for a fair and democratic

society, the economy and for them personally and that a growing share of citizens would like the EU to do more in this area. Europeans also expect increased EU action on related policies. During the last legislative term, as part of a broader gender equality programme, the EU institutions have been working on proposals for new EU laws to improve work-life balance and combat violence against women. Promoting equality between women and men will remain one of the major challenges in the coming years. Demographic trends, technological developments and changes to the way we work are just some of the issues, where different impacts on women and men will need to be considered. Options for further EU involvement could include better implementation and enforcement of existing legislation, moves to modernize it, fill gaps in protection and address emerging issues, and non-legislative measures such as data collection and monitoring, awareness-raising, and support for national and grassroots initiatives (Prpic; Shreeves, & Dobрева, 2019:1).

As a matter of serious concern, the strategic engagement for gender equality 2016-2019 also look at the framework for the European Commission's work towards gender equality in the referred period, to focuses on the following 5 priority areas:

- increasing female labour market participation and economic independence of women and men
- reducing the gender pay, earnings and pension gaps and thus fighting poverty among women
- promoting equality between women and men in decision-making
- combating gender-based violence and protecting and supporting victims
- promoting gender equality and women's rights across the world

Thus the strategic engagement reaffirms its commitment of gender equality perspective into EU policies as well as into EU funding programmes (European Union, 2017:1).The

European Parliament has recently taken and approved several resolutions. Regarding European political life and male-female parity, which calls for effective measures to guarantee equality between men and women to improve the situation in the institutions, both from an administrative, and a political point of view (Schuman, 2019:1). Therefore, equal participation of women and men is a matter of fairness and is needed to strengthen democracy. It is also likely to benefit the EU's economic growth and competitiveness. From the foregoing, it is revealed from the literature reviewed on gender issues, that none has comprehensively related their gender studies to European Union prospects. It is in this area that the study contributes to existing knowledge.

3. Analysis

3.1 Emergence of the policy of gender equality in the European Union.

The origin of the principle of equal treatment in the EU goes back to Article 119 in the EEC Treaty of 1957 (later 141, now 157) on women's and men's rights to equal pay. The Article was originally introduced into the Treaty regarding distortion of market competition. France was worried that lower salaries and limited social benefits for women in other member states would distort competition in the European market. In this context gender equality was not a goal, but a means to reach fair competition in relation to principles of a free, competitive market and economic growth (Silander, 2019: 187). Article 119 clearly referred to women as paid workers; however, it still provides a moral foundation for the development of legislation for equal opportunities in the EU. Article 119 was a principle without a clear legal definition, and it did not come with any organizational capacity for action. In 1970s, the Defrenne vs Sabena case (case no. 43/75), gave substance to the Article just as the European Court of Justice (ECJ) adjudicated that the Belgian flight attendant Gabrielle Defrenne could not be forced to retire at 40

when this was not the case for her male counterparts.

Defrenne had complained that lower pension rights and lost future earnings violated her right to equal treatment on grounds of gender (Hoskyns, 1996:12). The ECJ ruled in favour of Defrenne and held that the Article was enforceable between individuals and the government, also between private parties. By doing so, the principle of *direct effect* was enforced, meaning that the provisions would have direct force without the need to be transposed into national law. In this way, Article 119 served as a basis for the Commission to establish a framework for supporting national harmonization of women in paid work. Although the Commission tried to bring about proposals relating to non-work-related issues of gender equality, the focus continued to be on women as workers and the principle of equal treatment continued to be characterized as an economic issue. The legislation on gender equality in relation to work is comprehensive and includes *the Directive of equal pay for equal work* (Directive 75/117/ EEC), *the Directive on equal treatment regarding the access to employment, vocational training and promotion* (Directive 76/207/EEC), and *the Directive on equal treatment in connection with social security* (Directive 79/7/EEC). The strong focus on working life is further emphasized by the narrow interpretation of the ECJ in, for example, the Hofmann case (Case 184/83), that ruled that the equal treatment directive was not designed to settle questions concerning the organization of the family, or to alter the divisions of responsibilities between parents. Although equal treatment legislation is limited to the labour market, early legislation on equal treatment forms an important basis for equal treatment policy in the EU.

Feminist have argued that the policy has limitations in focusing on the formal rights of women as workers. According to Squires, (1999:169), that feminists have also criticized this approach to gender equality as

it seeks to change society without really challenging male norms or the existing patriarchal structures. The equal treatment approach stems from the basic principle of men and women as similar and the belief that if hindrances and distortions in society are removed and men and women are treated equally, then inequality will disappear accordingly.

If the strategy of equal treatment focuses on men and women as similar, the approach of *difference* problematizes the existence of an unquestioned norm that women need to imitate or be compensated for. According to Rees (2006:56), the *positive action approach* recognizes that the differences between men and women are because of cultural, social and economic reasons that have led to unequal choices among, and access to, careers in limitations in focusing on the formal rights of women as workers.). Because men and women are different, it is necessary for specific actions to overcome their unequal starting positions in society. The solution is therefore to address these differences by targeting women specifically. In addition, positive action can include positive discrimination in which the use of affirmative actions or quotas increases the share of women. Instead of equality of possibilities, the focus is on equality of outcomes. According to Rees (2006:56), between 1980s and 1990s, EU politics gradually moved from equal treatment approaches towards positive action approaches. A directive dealing with part-time work (Directive 97/81/EC), targeted structural discrimination against part-time workers (of which a majority were women) in terms of benefits and working conditions. Another directive dealt with protecting health and safety for pregnant women and women breastfeeding (Directive 92/85/EEC). Both directives aim to facilitate the process for women to combine work with family life. The directives were to a large extent motivated by economic goals and the need to enlarge the workforce in order to combat

demographic changes of an ageing population and decreasing birth rates.

Other examples of positive action were the adoption of action programmes by the Commission aimed at projects related to childcare and women's rights networks. Both decisions made by the ECJ reaffirmed the rights of the member states to adopt positive actions. Including Justice and Home Affairs into the Maastricht Treaty also opened up the possibility for the EU to react against violence against women. The Maastricht Treaty agreement on social policy confirmed the EU's orientation towards workers by including the wording of Article 119. By introducing a paragraph, they stressed that they should not prevent member states from maintaining specific benefits in order to make it easier for women to pursue vocational activity or compensate for disadvantages in their professional careers (TEU Article 6§3). The statement clarified that member states were free to take positive action to combat discrimination.

3.2 Prospects of gender equality in the European Union

Mainstreaming

Although positive actions may have some impact on certain areas, they do not address systematic culture change. The idea of gender - equality as *transformation* problematizes the gendered world itself, as *gender mainstreaming* is put forward to change. Understanding the gender mainstreaming approach is the idea that existing institutions are not gender neutral, but favour male gender over women, in a variety of subtle and often invisible ways. This approach also recognizes that differences exist between the sexes yet embraces these differences as bringing added value to the working environment. Council of Europe (1996:23), cited in European Parliament (2019:1) in the EU, defined gender mainstreaming as the development and assessment of policy processes to ensure gender equality in all policies and at all levels by the actors involved in policy-making".

This also means 'not restricting efforts to promote equality to the implementation of specific measures to help women, but mobilizing all general policies and measures specifically for the purpose of achieving equality'. Gender mainstreaming is not just about women, but about ensuring that women's as well as men's experiences and concerns are built in to the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policy, legislation and spending programmes, and that both individual rights and structural inequalities are addressed. It also entails looking at institutions and how they work, including gender representation within policy areas and decision-making structures.

Mainstreaming gender equality has given the EU the possibility to take action in several areas where they have no provisions in the treaties. Domestic violence is one such area, and including women in science is another. In this way, mainstreaming changed the limitation of the EU to move outside areas covered in the treaty, although the mandate to act is still more diffuse (because of this very lack of provisions in the treaty). The idea of mainstreaming had existed in the EU since the beginning of the 1990s, but it was the 1995 Platform for Action decided in Beijing that was the real starting point. Calvo et al., (2009:12), the European Commission and its member states had actively pushed for mainstreaming at the Beijing meeting, and the EU delegation played a leading role in promoting the policy. The Beijing Platform defined mainstreaming, and all participating nations agreed to work to incorporate the gender perspective into all policy-making areas. In 1996, mainstreaming was officially adopted by the European Commission, defined as the organisation of policy processes according to the definition above. Pollack and Hafner-Burton (2000:34), the Commission adopted the Fourth Action Program on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (1996–2000), wherein mainstreaming was presented as the single most important component. Three themes

were introduced in order to reach gender equality: the first was that mainstreaming should be the organizing principle. The mainstreaming approach was further strengthened by the Treaty of Amsterdam in 1997, which included several new provisions with equal opportunities, such as a reinforcement of the old Article 119 and introducing the co-decision procedure for equal opportunity legislation strengthening the role of the European Parliament, traditionally a strong gender equality supporter (Silander, 2019: 191).

3.3 Employment: In Europe 2020, the EU employment rate for men of working age was 77.2 % in 2020, exceeding that of women (66.2 %) by 11.0 percentage points. The unemployment rate was 7.4 % for women and 6.8 % for men. In fifteen Member States, the unemployment rate was higher for women (Eurostat, 2021:1). This scenario made gender equality a strong European value, together with the importance of democratic institutions for economic and territorial cohesion and solidarity, respect for the environment, and cultural diversity (although related to other European values), Europe 2020 primarily addresses women as a supply to the labour market. Gender equality is a tool for economic growth and welfare. On first impression, gender equality does not seem to play an important role (the term only appears three times), but a closer look reveals that women are viewed as central for a European economic recovery as they make up an important pool of recruitment in order to meet the main target of 75 percent of the population in the workforce: Policies of gender equality has to do with promotion and increase in labour force participation thus adding to growth and social cohesion. To achieve the 75 percent target of the population in the workforce, the pool of women needs to be used. The employment level of the population aged 20–64 need to increase from the current status with involvement of women, older workers and integration of migrants. Hence, from the perspective of gender equality, Europe 2020

almost only deals with ways to increase women's participation in the workforce (Eurostat, 2021:1).

This situation is further emphasized as the demographic. They view the situation in Europe as highly problematic and Europe's 2020 calls for a need to make full use of the populations. It therefore put gender equality forward as an important way to reach the employment target Employment rates need to be raised all over, but we emphasize women as an important potential group. Three ways the European Commission, (2010a:9), are suggested to increase the chances for women to contribute to the following target: "support measures to reconcile work and private life, gender mainstreaming, and actions for tackling gender-based segregation in the labour market." The first way calls for policies on work–life balance. Here, the Commission urges the member states to facilitate the reconciliation of work and family life at home to promote novel forms of work–life balance and active ageing policies and to increase gender equality. A review of the document indicates that an important measure to reconcile work and private life and to promote new forms of work–life balance as mentioned is to increase the participation in early childhood education: "In order to increase labour participation access to childcare facilities and care for other dependents are important" Second, the need for gender mainstreaming is mentioned; however, no specific actions are expressed. A third and more substantial action is to evaluate the impact of employment-relevant non-discrimination directives. The development of gender equality work and work on discrimination should further take place through the use of soft tools. Besides these strategies, the increasing introduction of flexible policies supports female participation in the workforce. Female participation calls for an increase in flexibility in the work organization or of working time (for example, short time working arrangements). "Flexibility allows men and women to combine work and allows

the contribution of women to the formal economy and to, through paid work outside the home. Europe's 2020 employment targets are further developed in "An agenda for new skills and jobs, with the overall target set of 75 % of the population in employment. In 2017, the overall employment rate in the EU reached 72.2 per cent. Eurostat (2018: 34), in terms of gender, employment figures are lower for women than for men, although the gender employment gap is shrinking.

The only stipulated action taken related to gender according European Commission (2010c:16), in the crucial document, is to examine the impact of employment-relevant non-discrimination directives 2000/78/EC10 and 2000/43/EC. The directive 2000/78/EC10, called the Employment Equality Framework Directive) establishes a framework for the same and equal treatment of employment and occupation by prohibiting employment discrimination because of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. The directive 2000/43/EC, called the racial directive, regulates equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin. According to EU law, member states are required to align their national legislation with all directives. At the national level, the Treaty provisions, and in particular, the directives must be implemented. This means a transposition of the legal provisions into national law. This is partly done by amending relevant national legislation. According to the European Equality Law Network, all member states have transposed the directives in their national legislation. Documents related to Europe 2020 and employment show that gender equality is viewed as an important measure to reach full employment and economic growth. Involving more women in the workforce is a way to increase the overall employment rate in Europe. Only one point in the document includes a reference to gender equality as an important value. Gender equality is an intrinsic value that plays a marginal role in the text. That the strategy of equal treatment is present as the

only concrete action stipulated in the document is itself a reflection of the impact of discrimination-related directives. Gender mainstreaming is mentioned, but only without detailing how mainstreaming will influence the advancement of women's participation in the workforce. To make gender equality into an issue related to employment is not a new strategy in the European Union. We have already seen this to be used as an example in Defrenne. It can, however, be interpreted as an example of political entrepreneurship. To call for work-life-related action in order to increase employment is a way to step outside the limitation set by the provisions in the treaties (Silander, 2019:194).

3.4 Research and Innovation

The target set for research and innovation is described in detail in the EU flagship initiative 'Innovation Union', which set out to improve framework conditions and access to finance for research and innovation. Furthermore, to strengthen the innovation chain and boost levels of investment throughout the Union (Silander, 2019:194). Research and development are closely linked to employment, and when gender equality is of concern in the document, it is regarding the improvement of working conditions in order to attract women to a research career. Also in the area of research and innovation, the main idea is to use the pool of women to increase the number of researchers. In the Innovation Union, member states are recommended to have strategies to train enough researchers to meet their national R&D targets and to promote attractive employment conditions in public research institutions and '[g]ender and dual career considerations should be fully taken into account in these strategies. The Commission stated their intention to support measures to remove obstacles to mobility and cross-border cooperation, and to ensure through a common approach quality of training, attractive employment conditions and gender balance in research careers' (European Commission, 2010a). More people need to be engaged in research, and

therefore the research career needs to be attractive also to women.

The aim for the member states should be that 'frameworks for research careers, including doctoral studies, offer sufficiently attractive conditions to both men and women in comparison to international standards, especially those in the US' (European. The interest in increasing the number of women in research is focused on science and technology disciplines as the problem of too few girls taking science to an advanced level still exists. Eurostat (2018:58), is the overall target for research and innovation to improve conditions for innovation, research and development, particularly to increase combined public and private investment in Research and Development (R&D) to 3 % of GDP by 2020. This figure stagnated at around 2.03 per cent and as a result, the target is still far away. Eurostat (2018: 59), statistics show that the numbers of researchers being trained have increased. This is especially the case for science, technology, engineering and mathematics(STEM) disciplines, but large gender gaps still exist. The EU increased its output of tertiary graduates in science and technology (59 percent between 2003 and 2015), but women remain underrepresented in these fields of study, as they were just around half that of male graduates. They linked the area of research and innovation to employment policy, and in a similar way, gender equality is an instrument for increasing the number of researchers rather than an aim. This is strengthened because the interest of the Commission in R&D is mainly focused on the fields in which they expected research to have an effect of economic growth, the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics(STEM) disciplines. As in the rest of the employment area, the strategy of equal treatment is at work, as European Union law also applies as employment-relevant non-discrimination directives. Apart from the anti-discrimination legislation, the main strategies for supporting the member states to increase the number of researchers take place

through the use of soft governance tools such as benchmarking, recommendations on best practices and guidelines through the open method of coordination process (OMC). Focus has been on improving gender-based statistics (for example, the figures) in order to assess the share of women graduating and reaching higher positions as researchers. As the EU does not have any formal right to act in research and development, including R&D in employment is a typical example of how the EU expands its powers and can be viewed as an example of political entrepreneurship. Turning the focus of women's underrepresentation in science to recruitment as an example of political entrepreneurship (Silander, 2019:195).

3.5 Education

Employment is related to education in the sense that education improves female participation in the workforce. According to the European Commission (2010a:26), the opportunity gender equality offered to women to access education had a positive impact in *reducing the school drop-out rate*, which increases the number of the population aged 30–34 that have *completed tertiary education* to at least 40 per cent, women perform better than men. Also, women have met the 40 per cent target for *tertiary education*, whereas men have not. Between 2002 and 2017, the share of tertiary educated grew from 23.6 per cent to 39.9 per cent. Growth was considerably faster for women, who in 2017 were already clearly above Europe's 2020 target of 44.9 per cent (Eurostat, 2018: 91). He emphasized that the share of female graduates has grown, resulting in a gender gap in favour of women in 2017. The target is an effort to increase the female share of the workforce and an opportunity for female folks to join the labour market. In Barcelona in 2002, objectives were set to remove hindrances preventing women from labour force participation, considering the demand for childcare facilities and in line with national patterns of provision, to provide childcare. Eurostat (2018:97) avers that participation in early

education has been rising continuously in the EU since 2002, reaching 95.5 % in 2016 and exceeding the benchmark of 95 per cent. The Commission views education as an important tool for growth and prosperity in the European Union. One of the important actions for increasing the number of women on the labour market is the spread of early childcare education, which will also empower women, increase their economic independence and thus strengthen gender equality. The objective is not gender equality, but gender equality is the likely result. None of the targets in education have provisions in the treaty. Education has a weak legal basis in the treaty, as the EU's role is solely to promote cooperation between member states and, when necessary, support and supplement their efforts. The EU can only act through soft tools within the framework of the Open Method of Coordination process (OMC). The Commission has strategically acted as a political entrepreneur by moving the area of education by creating a link between education policy and employment policy, where education and improvements in terms of gender equality in the sphere were seen as a condition for a competitive EU. This link was central, as it justifies the Union's influence on education as part of creating jobs, employment and growth (Silander 2019:198).

3.6 The Fight Against Poverty

The European Commission (2010b:10) pointed out that Europe's 2020 target is the reduction of Europeans that are poor by 25 per cent, to lift over 20 million people out of poverty. The prospect of gender equality is noticeable more in women than men, reducing poverty in some ethnic minorities. The provision of employment according to the European Commission (2010c:11), paid policy attention to anti-discrimination policies to fight poverty. They availed women of the opportunities and rights that are available to address the gender income gap which formally led to higher rates of poverty in the female population. This development helped to reduce poverty

by raising the number of women who work, thus increasing the economic independence of women. Similar to the area of employment, the strategies in this area include improving and reviewing the anti-discrimination legislation in the EU, which falls into the category of equal treatment. The other strategy is related to employment policy and involves increasing the number of women who work. Actions here include increasing early childhood education and the number of women in education, which are outside the Treaty and fall under the category of soft tools. Signs of political entrepreneurship in this area are less evident (Silander, 2019:201)

3.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, it is assertive that gender equality has many positive effects on individuals and society at large. Gender equality encourages a high level of employment and productivity and could respond to challenges related to the aging population in the EU. The women who were formally discriminated against and subjected to domestic affairs have ultimately had all the rights and privileges to be educated and gain employment, thereby contributing to national development. It is therefore recommended that efforts should be made to have system maintenance to ensure women are equally contributing their quota to national development. With the involvement of women in economic and political activities in the European Union, poverty will be drastically reduced and it will appreciate the living standard of individuals. None of this will come to pass if we do not lay emphasis on education, particularly technology, research and development.

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