

Feminist Perspective on Housewife Causes and Policy Protection

Siran Zhang*

College of Arts and Sciences, Ohio State University, Columbus, OH 43210, United States

*Corresponding author: zhang.13586@buckeyemail.osu.edu

Abstract. Feminism is preoccupied with the structural inequalities of all women, particularly housewives. This essay will focus on the causes of housewives and policy protection in an effort to improve the status of gender discrimination. A substantial body of evidence and theory reveals that housewives are disadvantaged in economic, social, and the majority of other power structures, as well as in patriarchal partnerships in general. By monitoring and evaluating the development and predicament of housewives, this article will learn the history of policy protection behind housewives and the structure of marriage they live in, as well as the policy contradiction matching this history. Consequently, this paper argues that this policy contradiction is essentially an inequality in the perception of housewives' careers that develops as a result of discrimination against women. As a result, the concept of public policy design must be revised and the policy reconstructed from the standpoint of the policy support system for housewives' career development.

Keywords: Housewife; feminism; protection policy; policy contradiction.

1. Introduction

In countries across the globe, housewives have long been regarded as a vulnerable demographic. With the advent of feminism worldwide, public policy researchers, notably feminist public policy scholars, have given this group a considerable deal of consideration. Diverse academics have performed in-depth research on policy protection for housewives from a variety of scholarly viewpoints. Several nations in Japan, the United States, and Northern Europe have issued and implemented policy protection in practice, including employment protection, tax incentives, and political engagement, in accordance with their respective national circumstances. These research endeavors and national norms have somewhat relieved the hardships experienced by housewives, but in fact, they do not resolve the inequity issues they face. Sorting out the causes of the inequality dilemma of housewives and examining policy protection practices in several countries, this paper reconceptualizes the group of housewives and their occupational attributes from the feminist and constructivist perspectives, considers the constructive differences between housewife and housewife and reconceptualizes the contradictions in the design and implementation of the policy protection system for housewives. On this basis, we suggest the construction of a policy support framework for the professional growth of housewives.

2. Many Inequalities Faced by Housewives and the Causes

Neither housewife nor the more contemporary term housewife can conceal the limited space in which housewives operate: within the family, a housewife is a married woman whose primary workspace is domestic, who is unpaid for domestic work and care of the children in the household, and who typically has no other job. It is possible to identify the intersections of economic, gender, and institutional structures that disadvantage housewives in intersectional inequality situations [1].

2.1 Housewives as Unpaid Workers who Lack Enough Legal Protection

First, from an economic standpoint, housewives are in an exploitative situation. Although housewives are frequently characterized as lazy individuals who perform only unskilled tasks, their condition is more accurately described as "unpaid laborers." According to Chizuko Ueno, if the entire labor area is divided between the market and the family, the market will dominate [2]. Despite the

fact that the family is always a private area in the professional sense, it is not a fixed unit that has no interaction with the outside world. The situation of proletariat work paying for labor in the market and the situation of the housewife's labor in the domestic sphere are fundamentally identical, with the exception that the housewife is in the mythologized private market of the home. The housewife performs a substantial amount of unpaid labor and assumes reproductive risks in the domestic sphere, yet she receives no compensation for her exploited labor. Because the domestic worker is divorced not only from the means of production but also from the means of exchange, she is materially dependent on the redistribution of the wage between her and her husband without the benefit of a contract other than the general contract of marriage in civil law [3].

Thus, when women enter the household as a unit for the reproduction of capital according to the traditional gender binary gender division, in a domestic position with no contractual guarantees and no public domain policy action, their labor is not formal labor. Domestic and care work has been excluded from socialized labor and is not protected by law or public sector policy for a very long time. Even in circumstances where rules safeguard financial compensation, it is impossible to compare the wages of domestic employees who have entered the legal employment system to those of housewives.

2.2 Housewives as Persecuted by Gender from Inside and Outside the Family

In addition to economic injustice, housewives also face gender persecution. In the home, which is considered the private sphere (as opposed to the public marketplace), domestic violence and rape culture frequently occur. WHO estimates that approximately one-third (30%) of women globally have experienced intimate partner abuse or non-partner sexual violence at some point in their lifetime [4]. Furthermore, the majority of economically dependent housewives are in a position of power vulnerability and cannot fight psychological and physical marital rape. The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV) estimates that between 10 and 14 percent of married women are raped by an intimate partner [5]. The aforementioned figures demonstrate the economic and gender-based exploitation of housewives. In addition, reporting and defining marital rape is difficult since the home has long been considered a private sector and because women are frequently affected by traditional cultural ideas that compel them to be obedient.

2.3 Housewives with Limited Access to Forms of Protection

In addition, the current legislation and enforcement of protection for housewives are insufficient to defend the rights of housewives properly. The implementation of this strategy in China might be improved. The compensation received by housewives pales in comparison to the wages of domestic workers joining the job market and their means of subsistence. In a few cases, including one decided by the Fangshan District People's Court, a housewife was paid 50,000 yuan in divorce compensation. In contrast, the average domestic helper pay in China is 41,444, which equates to 20 per hour [6].

This article discusses how public policy affects disadvantaged communities. In recent years, with the advent of the second wave of feminism, "personal is political" has become a general motto for feminists, who have centered their attention on the study and protection of housewives, particularly those who are subject to intersectional exploitation. This article focuses on the various public initiatives that protect vulnerable communities. It covers the content, goal, and policy function ties of policy protection to reduce or alter the institutional vulnerability of disadvantaged groups.

For a very long time, researchers of public policy have viewed housewives as a marginalized, oppressed group. In addition, at the policy and institutional levels, policy scholars have studied housewives more from the perspective of how to do an excellent job of policy protection, ignoring to a certain extent the existence of housewives as a necessary occupation in modern society rather than as a disadvantaged group. With the advent of industrial capitalism, ignorance developed, and the general work process was separated into two distinct units: the domestic unit and the industrial unit. This division in the labor process led to a division of the labor force, mostly along gender lines: women in the household and men in the industry. The latter is the production unit of capitalism,

whereas the former is the reproduction unit of capital. Domestic work realizes the value of selling labor while staying outside the application of the law of value as privatized labor. In other words, it is unrelated to capital yet directly contributes to the creation of commodity labor [3]. Consequently, domestic labor is essential, as is the worker who does domestic labor, which is typically female by default. This thesis will begin by evaluating the causes of housewives as well as the disparities that arise from those causes. These disparities in this occupation's perspective arose due to discrimination against women. On this basis, it is advocated that the idea of public policy design must be modified to emphasize the policy support system for the professional growth of housewives and the development of a new professional support framework.

3. The Policy Protection for Housewives Modified to Reflect the Designation of this Occupational Group

3.1 Policy Safeguards for Job Equity and Paradox

Modern urbanization and industrialization brought about a shift in the social and familial structure, which led to the emergence of housewives. In contrast, population reproduction, family, and housework require someone to pay for related labor, and more women must return to the home. Nonetheless, because this domestic labor does not directly create revenue, it is discriminated against by males who earn a living in society. Therefore, married women who perform unpaid domestic labor are exploited by the situation's benefactors, their husbands [7].

Long-term feminists tended to advocate for female independence, believing that the lack of economic independence of housewives led to a lack of personal freedom, isolation from socialized mass production and public life, and even a crisis of divorce and infidelity. This portion of academics would argue that economic independence is a precondition for women's independence and that women must obtain work. Long ago, women were caught between the necessity for independent employment and the requirement to pay more for household labor than males in terms of policy protection, i.e. rules that protect women's and equitable employment. To assure fairer employment treatment for women, for instance, the state must tighten market limits. The protection of women's job rights and interests has been greatly increased to prevent fresh instances of discrimination, yet this might lead to policy contradictions. For instance, China presently prohibits employers from discriminating against women based on their gender, imposing maternity restrictions on women, or terminating pregnant employees. The state intends to align itself with its goals by tightening policies and regulations and increasing market limitations so that market units (such as businesses) can also encourage women's employment. However, corporations whose primary objective is to pursue the economic rewards of the current system will select their personnel so as to maximize labor efficiency. The most efficient workforce model is built on patriarchy, ableism, and capitalism, that is, a largely healthy male population of young adults, while specifically excluding women who are likely to be burdened with home tasks and care for young and elderly family members. As a result, the majority of corporations and businesses will adopt tacitly sexist recruitment practices. On the Weibo account @EmploymentSexDiscriminationPantry, for instance, there are several submissions linked to employment sex discrimination, with "this position is restricted to males" and "men first" as the prerequisite conditions.

In addition, the neglect of women's unpaid chores may result in government measures that give women with market incentives to work. In addition, the policy trend increases women's time burden [8]. In this situation, businesses may face a complex dilemma: if they do not implement policies to protect women, women's employment rights will be compromised; on the other hand, the more they strengthen policies to protect women, the more likely it is that employers will use various excuses to avoid hiring women. For instance, the establishment of maternity insurance coverage will balance the load of women's maternity costs on employers. However, corporations will remain the primary contributors. Moreover, various hidden or incidental expenses will be connected with women's maternity, such as reduced work due to women caring for children, disruptions, and a lack of job

continuity due to maternity leave. The costs will be primarily borne by businesses and pregnant women. The costs are borne mostly between the employer and the pregnant employee.

3.2 Reconceptualization of the Housewives' Occupation and Analysis of the Policy Protection

Social perspectives have evolved. On the one hand, society acknowledges that caring and domestic duties such as cleaning, cooking, and child care are valued as reproductive labor. Other feminist scholars would underline that housekeeping is labor and that women contribute time, physical power, and energy at home, despite the intensification of childcare responsibilities. Domestic labor is not essentially distinct from socialized types of domestic labor that exist in the commodities sector, despite being frequently mistreated as worthless. The sole distinction is that the market economy compensates laundry, restaurant, and nursery workers but not housewives [9]. In some nations, laws and other measures protect homemaking as a career. In an increasing number of nations, new technical tools and public policies are employed to restructure traditional family and societal institutions.

3.2.1 Exploration of the Housewife System in Japan

The Japanese housewife system has a long history, dating back to the national policy of giving tax breaks to male employees whose spouses are full-time housewives, the establishment of a basic pension system for housewives, and the establishment of a lifetime employment system in the corporate system to guarantee a stable family income. This arrangement discourages housewives from participating in market work. According to the survey, Japanese housewives are anxious that their income would surpass the support level (1,300,000 yen), so requiring them to pay additional social insurance premiums and lowering the amount of time they spend working outside the home [10].

Studies have shown that the emergence of housewives in Japan is intimately tied to the country's post-World War II economic growth and the rise of the middle class [11]. The growth of the middle class has contributed to the popularity of housewives in Japan. For example, The 1963 national White Paper on the People's Livelihoods shows that the popularity of housewives has reached an equalized level among Japanese households of all incomes [11]. The widespread acceptance of housewives is an essential indicator of the birth of the contemporary housewife [11]. Moreover, after Japan's industrialization, the contemporary Japanese urban lifestyle is particularly conducive to the prevalence of full-time housewifery, which is more likely to exist with the higher income level of the husband. International studies show that Japanese women spend considerable time on housework because it is considered a "service of love" rather than labor [12].

However, when women return home as housewives, they rely solely on men for their children's education and their families' upbringing; they are forced to rely on men to provide for their families and educate their children. Thus, this leads to a dilemma for both men and women, as men do not wish to return home after work but rather seek solace in a bar (it is evident that many Japanese men do not wish to return home after work but rather seek solace in a bar). Women also suffer from the expectations and demands of society as a whole as housewives. Nowadays, many Japanese youngsters do not even wish to get married. The Japanese housewife model has not yet proven itself successful in every way. In the present day, Japanese policies are also undergoing transformations, such as fostering flexible employment for women after marriage and dividing family duties between men and women. There is also a "de-housewifeization" tendency. However, public policies do not strongly support these reform measures, including policies advocating flexible employment for women after marriage, which give housewives less flexibility for flexible employment outside the home due to differences in employment time limits and tax levies on men, and the housewife pension policy. Japan has emerged as one of the countries with the largest gender disparity among high-income nations, with the World Economic Forum's 2022 Global Gender Gap Report indicating that Japan ranks 116th in the global gender gap, at the bottom of both the East Asia and Pacific area and the G7 nations. The survey indicates that Japanese women have low involvement rates in politics and the economy [13].

3.2.2 Exploration throughout the United States and other Nations

Diverse countries in Europe and the United States employ vastly different strategies. For instance, the United States promotes female employment, and there are numerous female vice presidents, chief executive officers, and other professional women. The market-driven strategy addresses the reproduction of this segment of women. For example, a white middle-class woman may hire a person of color from the working class to care for her family, whereas women of color may be forced to hire their moms or even more marginal illegal immigrants to care for them. As a nation of immigrants, the United States intersectionality differs considerably from place to region. Diverse classes and ethnicities acquire childcare services on the market for childcare, cascading reproductive labor downward to meet caring shortfalls. As a result, each woman must pay an additional amount to support her children. In addition, this unbalanced distribution disproportionately impacts women with lower socioeconomic positions. They have higher morbidity among family members and less access to social services that help reduce the burden of care because they have less income to purchase care from the market and tend to have more children [14]. Even nations like the Philippines, where Filipino domestic workers are the backbone of the economy, exploit third-world nations. This "global chain of care" has also contributed to the global reproductive crisis's spread.

3.2.3 Nordic Countries Model

According to the World Economic Forum's 2022 Global Gender Gap Report, the Nordic countries, led by Iceland, are the world leaders in gender equality out of 146 countries. Iceland has been the most gender-equal country in the world for 13 consecutive years, while fellow Nordic countries Finland, Norway, and Sweden are the second, third, and fifth-ranked countries for gender equality [15]. Women and the Nordic countries have a tight relationship. The state assists women during pregnancy, childbirth, and parenting by providing different material advantages and public services, as well as low-cost, high-quality childcare services. The Nordic countries have the greatest rate of female political participation in the world, which is another component of the tight relationship. Even Finland elected its youngest "post-1980s" female prime minister in 2019, who leads a cabinet with a majority of women. Due to a long-standing commitment to gender equality, Nordic women are at the heart of social life, and their fertility rate is greater than the European average. Iceland, Norway, and Sweden have implemented standard parental leave, allowing parents to determine the length of their leave within the legislative limit. Paid parental leave for mothers is also greater than 11 months, while fathers receive a quota-based leave [16]. If one member of the family takes half of the leave, the state will provide an additional payment for gender equality.

According to a quantitative study by Evertsson and Duvander, in Sweden, parental leave does not significantly affect women's advancement possibilities or salaries. Moreover, if women return to work within a maximum of 15 months after having a baby, their professional prestige is expected to grow by at least 10 percent. This approach is extremely effective in improving female childcare motivation and gender equality in Nordic employment [17]. The circumstance outlined above reduces social discrimination towards pregnant women.

4. Policy Support System for Housewife Career Advancement: an Exploratory Study

In order to overcome the conventional feminist thinking of disadvantaged groups and to reconceive the housewife profession, it is necessary to further refine the housewife profession into multiple stages where people of different genders can enter the profession at different stages. Men can, like in the Nordic model, become housewives at a certain age. Second, the specific qualities of this profession should be evaluated, and a number of state welfare measures should be devised to encourage employment in this field. Legislation is also required for the protection of these policies.

To completely comprehend the features of the housewife's career and its needs for professional skills at various phases, differences, and time duration, and to stimulate the diversification of other

occupations by offering chances for lifelong learning. Policy support for the coexistence of full-time and part-time occupations to compensate for the difficulty of attaining a market-level income in the housewife's sole occupation and successfully increase its labor worth.

By maximizing the space provided by information and digital technologies for the career development of housewives, we effectively increase the participation rate of housewives in many types of work, broaden their employment options, and encourage housewife entrepreneurship, thereby significantly expanding the employment scale of housewives with low levels of education. In China, the digital economy has created 57 million female jobs in digital trade, e-commerce, live streaming, and more, according to a statistic. More housewives have realized lucrative economic rewards, improved family life, and increased their sense of accomplishment and access.

In the event that there are still several misconceptions about the job of a housewife, such as the assumption that it should be performed only by women or that it does not immediately generate cash, these prejudices should be dispelled. It does not generate value and merely necessitates high professional standards emphasizing lifelong learning, not holding two jobs simultaneously, not supporting the coexistence of full-time and part-time employment, and more. The path towards the professionalization and rationalization of housewives is still somewhat lengthy. Numerous nations have conducted investigations tailored to their own circumstances. To encourage improved human reproduction and the sustainable development of society, it is worthwhile to examine them in depth and derive effective strategies to promote them.

5. Conclusion

Feminism is concerned with the nature of inequality and the public policy decisions that result from it. In order to make better public policy decisions in response to the international challenge of housewives' inequality, feminist public policy experts must have a thorough understanding of the nature of this inequality dilemma.

This article reconstructs the group of housewives and their vocational characteristics from feminist and constructivist viewpoints. It acknowledges the ambiguities inherent in the protection of housewives in a new latitude. On this basis, this paper proposes supporting the legalization of housewives' occupations through policy, implementing lifelong learning systems to promote the realization of housewives' multiple occupations, and breaking the temporal and spatial limitations of housewives' employment through information and digital technologies. The article also wants to use this investigation as an opportunity to expedite the resolution of the housewives' inequality challenge.

References

- [1] Kimberle Crenshaw. Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics. University of Chicago Legal Forum, Vol. 1989, Article 8. Retrieved on January 1, 2023. Retrieved from <http://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/uclf/vol1989/iss1/8>
- [2] Ito, Setsu. Chizuko Ueno, Patriarchy and Capitalism: The Horizon of Marxist Feminism. Economic Review, Hitotsubashi University. 1992, 43(1): 87-89.
- [3] Seccombe, W. The Housewife and Her Labour under Capitalism (2nd ed.). IMG International Marxist Group, 1968.
- [4] ERI. China Domestic Helper Wage. SalaryExpert. December 30, 2022. Retrieved on January 1, 2023, Retrieved from <https://www.salaryexpert.com/salary/job/domestic-helper/china>
- [5] National Coalition Against Domestic Violence. National Coalition Against Domestic Violence. National Domestic Violence Hotline. December 30, 2022. Retrieved on January 1, 2023, Retrieved from <https://www.thehotline.org/>
- [6] China News, Full time wife gets 50000 household compensation after divorce, and the presiding judge responds. February 22, 2021. Retrieved on January 1, 2023, Retrieved from <https://www.jiemian.com/article/5711267.html>

- [7] Delphy, C. *The main enemy : A materialist analysis of women's oppression* (1st ed.). Women's Research and Resources Centre Publications London, 1975.
- [8] Beneria, L., Berik, G., & Floro, M. *Gender, Development and Globalization: Economics as if All People Mattered* (2nd ed.). Routledge, 2015. Retrieved on January 1, 2023. Retrieved from <https://www.routledge.com/Gender-Development-and-Globalization-Economics-as-if-All-People-Mattered/Beneria-Berik-Floro/p/book/9780415537490>
- [9] Molyneux, M. *Beyond the Domestic Labour Debate*. *New Left Review*, 1979, 23(1). Retrieved on January 1, 2023. Retrieved from <https://newleftreview.org/issues/i116/articles/maxine-molyneux-beyond-the-domestic-labour-debate>
- [10] Wangyi News. *Since October, new regulations have been issued, making it more difficult for housewives to work in Japan*. October 2, 2022. Retrieved on January 1, 2023, Retrieved from <https://www.163.com/dy/article/HIMN8HC405188DJM.html>
- [11] Kaku, S. *Contemporary Patriarchy and the Housewife in Japan*. 5th ed. Brill, 2013: 99-134.
- [12] Fuess, H. *Patriarchy in East Asia: A Comparative Sociology of Gender*. *Journal of Family History*, 2014, 39(4): 447–449.
- [13] OCHA Services. *Global Gender Gap Report 2020*. Reliefweb. December 20, 2019, Retrieved on January 1, 2023. Retrieved from https://reliefweb.int/report/world/global-gender-gap-report-2020?gclid=Cj0KCQiAnsqdBhCGARIsAAyjYjReJX8Tvyb1c0R1zG7d_UN-Uqj1wI7CVpm57DGYSK5aX9W9e54fH54aAqDnEALw_wcB
- [14] Razavi, S. *The Political and Social Economy of Care in a Development Context*. *Gender and Development Programme Paper*, 2007, 50(3).
- [15] WEF: *Global Gender Gap Report 2022*. WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM, 13 July 2022, Retrieved on January 1, 2023. Retrieved from <https://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2022>.
- [16] Ellingsæter, A. L. *Scandinavian welfare states and gender (de) segregation: Recent trends and processes*. *Economic and Industrial Democracy*, 2012, 34(3). 6
- [17] Evertsson, M., & Zofie, A. *Parental Leave—Possibility or Trap? Does Family Leave Length Effect Swedish Women's Labour Market Opportunities*. 3rd ed. Oxford University Press, 2008: 435-450.