

# Gender Equality and De-Democratization Process in Spain: Aftermath of Economic Crisis in 2008

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## Abstract

This article examines about gender equality after the fall of General Francisco Franco in 1975 and de-democratization process in Spain following the massive economic crisis in the European Union in 2008. The purpose of this article is to find out how gender equality and gender roles in Spain after the fall of General Francisco Franco in 1975 until the economic crisis in 2008 resulted in de-democratization that occurred in Spain. The research method used is a historical descriptive research. The transition to democracy that was passed by Spain has experienced very rapid social changes and also a profound social economy, especially in gender roles. The culmination of the challenges experienced by Spain is when the global economic crisis occurred in 2008, where both European and Spanish states experienced a

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process of de-democratization that had never before occurred. During the transition to democracy, the economic crisis and after the economic crisis the Spanish government took many actions in the form of laws and policies related to gender equality between women and men, and also austerity decisions that ended up leading to the feminist movement as a result of rejection and anger women in Spain. Until the de-democracy process occurred as a result of the decline of democracy experienced by Spain.

**Keywords :** Democratization, De-Democratization, Gender Equality, Spain

## Introduction

Spain's transition period was demonstrated by the fall of General Francisco Franco in 1975 and has experienced profound economic and social changes especially in gender roles (Bustelo, 2016), which are the basis for the transformation in Spain. In this transition era, turning Spaniards into a society of pluralism and implies respect for social diversity as a democratic asset. The transition from authoritarian to democracy also implementing transitional justice for the victims of Franco's dictatorship and the Civil War. Transitional justice exists for countries that arise as a result of the oppression and violations of human rights in a large scale, so that the normal justice they had did not deal with it further.<sup>1</sup> Basically, the transition to democracy is a result of a group of civil society who jointly to against Franco's dictatorship, which is then institutionalized in the constitutional system and political parties. But even so, the Spaniards sometimes still remember about the values inherited from Francoism that were incorporated into the country's political culture.

The last years of the Francoism, economic development and modernization at that time affected the lives of women in Spain, such as a significant increase in prosperity and education. In addition, during the 1960s there were large-scale exoduses such as increased industrialization, increased consumerism, large-scale population movements to towns and cities. And the position of women doubled to 30% of the workforce in 1974 (Chislett, 2018). Until the early seventies, the opposition

to the regime was more open to the women's movement even though they were still covering it up. During the Franco period itself, there were many pioneers of the feminist movement from both the Communist Party and the Socialists. At this time too, women also played an active role in Catholic action groups, participated in housewives' associations, became illegal trade unions and began to work openly with the opposition (Limonero, 2014).

On the other hand, the process of the transition to democracy led by King Carlos I was not as easy as expected and had difficult problems, such as the Basque terrorist group ETA killing an average of 50 people per year in the first decade of democracy and the 1995 assassination attempt on the King and Prime The Minister, José María Aznar and also a coup in 1981 (Chislett, 2018), but the old democratic system installed since 1977 has produced the rule of law in modern Spanish history and the longest period of political freedom (Colom, 2017). During this transition, women in Spain still have few rights. But over time and the rise of a strong International Women's Movement, for the first time they can influence policy. In 1975 it became the beginning of contemporary feminism when the International Women's Year took place. Where Spanish women feel that they have the power to improve things. Until finally there was a new Constitution in 1978 which stated the rights to equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex and to enjoy real and effective equality. In 1983 a national institute for gender equality was formed called the Women's Institute. The institute was formed at the initiative of the Socialist Party in the government at that time and also women activists.

The economy, also experienced many problems that occurred in the 1980s. Spain sees a lot of unemployment, inflation, the dependence of resources on foreign countries, and the lack of income from domestic savings and investment. Meanwhile, the Spanish government made big strides in women's rights (Arango, 1985). Until finally in 1994, Spain made a recovery of its economy, by lowering interest rates, reducing deficits and public debt that led to stability (Brown, 2018). In the same period, the European Summit of Women in Power assisted by the Spanish feminist

Movement gained commitment in party leadership to achieve parity within four years (Valiente, 2005: 183). And in 1997, IU (United Left) and PSOE (The Spanish Socialist Workers' Party) supported the idea of 'parity democracy' built on gender equality between women and men into political office. This was followed by the Catalan Socialist Party (PSC) in 2000 and also the Initiative for Catalonia Greens in 2002 (Verge, 2012).

During the first period Socialist Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero (2004-2008) formed a law on gender violence in 2004 and also formed a new law on Gender Equality Act "*Ley de Igualdad*" which was passed in March 2007, laying the foundation of a policy that supports equality between men and women, also puts Spain in the forefront of making gender equality policies in the European Union (EU) (Field & Botti, 2013; Nacional Statistical Institute, 2007<sup>2</sup>). But in 2008 the beginning of the global financial crisis that hit the whole European Union, with Spain experiencing the most serious problems. And also when the Conservative People's Party (PP) won the general election in 2011 which put the Spanish economy under great difficulty. Where during the crisis there was a split between the public and the private sector which was then accompanied by unpaid labor in the social reproduction of private households, as one form of inequality. This provides an overview of how the political economy of gender and state theory approaches in uncovering the various effects of the economic crisis on women and men (Lux & Wöhl, 2015).

## The Research

From the introduction that the author has explained above, we know that the social role of the people in Spain's transition to democracy was already apparent when they worked together in resisting Franco's dictatorship at that time. During the leadership period after Franco, many gender roles, especially women, also had many important roles in government and organizations, although sometimes their presence was still covered up. Although there were many economic problems in the 1980s, during the Socialist period of Prime Minister Zapatero he had made new laws that

promoted gender equality between women and men which put Spain in the forefront in terms of making gender equality policies in the Union Europe Until the global economic crisis that occurred in 2008 which resulted in inequity in gender equality that led to de-democratization. So here the author wants to know how gender roles and equality after the global economic crisis have resulted in de-democratization.

### **The Research Scopes**

The focus of this article is to find out how gender roles and equality after the massive global economic crisis hit the European Union and several things that led to the de-democratization that occurred in Spain. So that the aspects seen are gender roles and equality, the process of de-democratization.

### **Research Methodology**

In writing this article, the author uses several methods to obtain data and how systematic preparation techniques are used. In writing this article, the author uses a qualitative approach using literature studies and descriptive methods derived from books, journals and previous studies related to how de-democratization process and gender equality aftermath economic crisis in 2008 that occurred in Spain.

According to Whitney (1960) descriptive method is the search for facts with the right interpretation. By studying problems in society, certain situations including activities, attitudes, the influence of a phenomenon and the processes that are taking place. So the authors use the literature study with descriptive methods in the hope that it can explore many related problems, so that readers can more easily understand this article.

### **Research Result**

From the transition to democracy discussed earlier in European countries including Spain, has re-emerged the rights of women's citizenship after the Franco dictatorship, the creation of gender equality institutions, the development of policies

on equality between men and women (Bustelo, 2016). Where if carried out in accordance with the reflection of the concept of democracy, it will have a positive impact on gender equality (Tilly, 2007). But when the global economic crisis arose and hit European countries including Spain, the status of women in Spain experienced irregularities such as the number of unpaid female workers, more part time jobs, and lower employment rates compared to men which resulted in unevenness gender there. This makes European member countries experience an unprecedented process of de-democratization of gender equality and also challenges for feminist projects (Lombardo, 2017).

Verloo (2017) argues that the more democracy, the more opportunities for gender equality, and also the more opportunities for democracy. Another definition of democracy according to Dahl (1971) is the participation to control the government (inclusion) and contestation, namely freedom to compete in government. Democracy also supports gender equality rather than autocracy, because it creates an egalitarian attitude of citizens (Inglehart & Norris, 2003). Actually, democratization and de-democratization are two sides of the political process, to distinguish between the two, Tilly (2003) states five elements in the political relations between the state and society, where four of them help to distinguish between democratization and de-democratization.

First, breadth is a proportion of the total population of citizens or citizens in participating activities and populations located within the jurisdiction of government. Then there is equality, namely equality of access between people who participate in political actors and government agents. Third, protection, to what extent is protection against political participation from arbitrary actions by government agents. And the last is consultation, the extent to which political participants carry out the binding of collective control of government agents, resources, and activities. It can be concluded, that de-democratization means a movement towards a narrower, unequal, less protected and less binding consultation (Tilly, 2007). The key to

democracy itself concerns not only about gender stability in political making decisions but also about social justice.

According to Walby (2015) democracy is not only a procedure in securing women or minority groups, but also governance of public services such as finance, education, with democratic procedures. Meanwhile Alonso & Lombardo (2018) argues that there are three aspects in the post-crisis de-democratization process in Europe, namely neoliberalism, authoritarian shifts, and political corruption. First, neoliberal de-democratization occurred in 2011 which struck the Spanish Constitution due to the failure of the bank crisis which was transformed into a public debt crisis. Where in mid-August, the constitution was committed to limiting the budget deficit in the EU and member countries with an emergency process (Bruff & Wöhl, 2016). In 2011, the European Union and Spain implemented austerity policies in the face of the economic crisis through National Reform and Stability Programs with the agenda of cutting public budgets and increasing taxes, privatizations and liberalizations of public services (Lombardo, 2017).

In relation to gender equality policies, neoliberal not only leads to restructuring but also the dismantling of gender equality institutions, and also significant government budget reductions for gender equality (Paleo & Alonso, 2013; Alonso & Lombardo, 2018). This makes Spanish citizens suffer due to budget cuts. Until May 15, 2011 the anti-austerity struggle in Spain linked the defense of social and democratic rights from the beginning of the *Indignados* protest movement (Alonso & Lombardo, 2018). According to Borobia (2013) The movement is a continuation of civic activism, which according to the existence of real democracy, criticizes the austerity measures, and supports welfare policies such as education, gender equality, public health, and others. On the other hand, feminists also struggle in anti-austerity through feminist organizations.

Then the second, Authoritarian Shifts, according to (Bruff & Wöhl, 2016) development in emergency situations in Europe to face the economic crisis has moved the Spanish government in making decisions that are considered authoritarian

shifts. During Prime Minister Rajoy's regime, he refused to handle the press and was present at the press conference to answer questions. In addition, he is not responsible for unpopular austerity decisions taken during the economic crisis but also many cases of corruption affecting his party (Alonso & Lombardo, 2018). In addition, the Prime Minister also reduced accountability to reduce opportunities for the opposition and the press to question related by cutting government budgets for welfare policies and also gender equality. Catalan secessionist tensions on October 1, 2017 also show the existence of authoritarian shifts, when the police carried out attacks on Catalan citizens who preferred a referendum for independence. As a result, hundreds of Catalan residents were injured and this was criticized by human rights organizations.

Conservative attacks were also launched such as reproductive rights and women's sexual, in which the Spanish government restricted the right of abortion for women, which made the feminist movement in Spain continue and become stronger (Lombardo, 2017). As in Walby (2015), the dynamics of democratization center on the role of political contestation as vital to democracy. The last aspect is political corruption, which is one of the important aspects in European countries because it is a source of financial and economic problems (Cunha, 2015). And a major political problem for Spanish democracy that has significant implications for gender, namely the increasing perception of corruption that shows the potential to erode public support for the welfare state, (Alonso & Lombardo, 2018), on the other hand corruption is also the core of the social struggle for democratization. This has triggered the arrival of the *Indignados* movement because of its anger towards politicians who commit corruption and are not considered to be good representatives.

## Research Discussion

After the fall of the Franco's dictatorship to the time of Zapatero's leadership, we have seen how the roles of genders from men and women in the process towards democracy in Spain. Where if we look at gender roles especially women have been



found and have equality with men in Spain. This is good, because every individual human being, both male and female, has the right to get freedom of life, get decent work, freedom of speech, and also has the right to be part of a leader in government. Gender equality is one of the definitions of what democracy is. Because humans are social creatures, humans cannot stand alone without the help of others. Therefore, everything must be done equally, without having to distinguish whether he is male or female. But unfortunately, after the global economic crisis that hit the European Union including Spain in 2008 made gender equality unequal especially experienced by women, because there were a number of unpaid female workers, more part time jobs, and lower employment rates compared to with men. This has resulted in an unprecedented process of de-democratizing gender equality and also challenges for feminist projects.

Meanwhile, according to Alonso & Lombardo (2018) there are three aspects in the post-crisis de-democratization process in Europe, namely neoliberalism, authoritarian change, and political corruption. Where from the three aspects there are several problems related to gender equality and others. So, we can conclude that gender equality is still a problem in every aspect of life, it cannot be said as a democratic country if the government and people who have interests still compare capacities between men and women. Because essentially all humans have the right to get it.

## Conclusion

During the transition period following the fall of General Francisco Franco in 1975, Spain has experienced profound social economic changes, especially in gender roles (Bustelo, 2016). The transition to democracy itself is the result of rejection and opposition from Spanish community groups in the Franco dictatorship. In the last years of Francoism there have been economic developments and modernizations which have influenced the lives of women in Spain, such as a significant increase in prosperity and education. Where the position of women doubled in 1974 and in the

seventies women in Spain also played an active role in Catholic action. Even though during the transition period women in Spain had few rights, but over time and the rise of the strong International Women's Movement, for the first time they could influence policy.

Until Prime Minister Zapatero formed a law on gender violence in 2004 and also formed a new law on the Gender Equality Act "*Ley de Igualdad*" which supports equality between men and women, also put Spain at the forefront in making gender equality policy in the European Union (EU). But since the emergence of the economic crisis in 2008 which hit the whole European Union including Spain, the status of women in Spain has experienced irregularities such as the number of unpaid female workers, more part-time work, and lower employment rates compared to men resulting in unevenness gender. In addition, there were austerity decisions from the Spanish government in response to the economic crisis. This makes Spain experience a setback of democracy or de-democratization after the 2008 economic crisis which is seen through three aspects namely neoliberalism, authoritarian shifts, and political corruption (Alonso & Lombardo, 2018).

## The Suggestions

However, the issue of gender equality between men and women is one of the problems that is often faced and encountered in many countries including Spain. From the existence of this article, it is expected to be able to be used as learning for the future and become a source of information so that later we know what is the meaning of democracy itself. If there is incorrect writing, please correct it. The author also realizes that there are still many shortcomings and errors in writing this article, hopefully in the future the writer can be even better.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> “What is Transitional Justice?” International Centre for Transitional Justice (ICTJ), <https://www.ictj.org/about/transitional-justice>

<sup>2</sup> The *Ley de Igualdad* (“Gender Equality Act”) in Spain and gender mainstreaming in government statistics, [https://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/Rome\\_Dec2007/docs/1\\_Spain.pdf](https://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/Rome_Dec2007/docs/1_Spain.pdf)

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