

GENDER ISSUES OF WOMEN IN LABOR MIGRATION

Zaretdinova Nesibeli

Associate Professor of the Department of Social Sciences,
Faculty of History, Karakalpak State University named after Berdakh
Email: znesibeli@gmail.com

Khakimniyazova Mavluda

3rd year student of the Sociology department,
Faculty of History, Karakalpak State University named after Berdakh
Email: mavludaxakimniyazova167@mail.com

Abstract:

This article analyzes the specific issues faced by female migrants in the labor migration process. Due to gender asymmetry, women often face discrimination, sexual violence, and economic exploitation. Their legal protection is weak, and cases of undocumented work make it difficult to defend their rights. The article thoroughly discusses the economic, social, and psychological consequences of these problems. Additionally, the impact on female migrants' family relations, social equality, and personal development is explored. To address these issues, the development of gender equality policies, the establishment of migrant support systems, and strengthening international cooperation are proposed. The article holds scientific significance in the study of migration and gender issues.

Keywords: Female migrants, exploitation, discrimination, gender equality, labor rights, external labor migration, migration process, gender roles.

Introduction

Labor migration is one of the most significant social and economic processes globally today, with the participation of female migrants steadily increasing. Women are drawn into migration not only due to economic necessity but also to support the material well-being of their families. However, female migrants face unique problems and challenges during the migration process. The insufficient protection of their rights, along with issues such as economic exploitation, sexual violence, and discrimination, highlights the relevance of this issue.

At the same time, the working conditions of female migrants and their role in society can lead to social and psychological consequences. This article provides an in-depth analysis of the unique challenges faced by female migrants in the migration process, as well as the economic, social, and psychological impacts of these challenges. Addressing this issue requires a comprehensive approach that is crucial for the development of gender equality, labor rights, and social protection.

MAIN SECTION

Gender issues of female migrants are one of the key and urgent topics in today's global labor migration process. Women are drawn into migration not only to achieve economic independence but also to provide material support for their families. However, in this process, they face



economic, social, and psychological challenges. The following section provides a detailed analysis of these issues.

According to the data from the International Organization for Migration, as of January 1, 2021, the number of international migrants reached 281 million, which constitutes 3.6% of the world's population. Among them, more than 164 million (60%) are labor migrants, and 130 million (48%) are women. Furthermore, the scope of the International Organization for Migration has expanded, with the number of member countries increasing from 76 to 174 over the past twenty years. Based on these figures, it can be stated that researching issues related to ensuring safe, orderly, and legal migration has become a matter of urgent importance.

According to the data from the External Labor Migration Agency (ELMA) under the Ministry of Employment and Poverty Reduction of the Republic of Uzbekistan, as of December 2023, the number of Uzbek labor migrants abroad was nearly two million – 1,452,300 men (72.4%) and approximately 547,700 women (27.6%). This data reflects the integration of Uzbekistan's labor market into the global economy and highlights how actively our citizens are seeking employment opportunities abroad through labor migration. The significantly higher number of men compared to women reveals the gender characteristics of labor migration. Specifically, this indicates that physical labor, such as in construction, transportation, and agriculture, is dominated by men, while women are more active in sectors such as services, healthcare, and education.

Several factors influence the development of female labor migration. According to analysis, 40% of labor migration from Russia is directed to Kyrgyzstan, while in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, about 20% of labor migration consists of women. The scope and share of female labor migration are influenced by regional, social, and economic factors, reflecting the characteristics of each area. The higher share of women in labor migration to Russia is related to the high demand in sectors such as services, domestic work, and caregiving. In countries like Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, the relatively lower level of female labor migration can be explained by the following factors:

1. Social constraints and gender stereotypes: Women's migration in some societies is limited by cultural or familial norms. Their responsibilities related to family and childcare often make it difficult for them to migrate.
2. Limited opportunities for women: There are limited job opportunities and positions that are suitable for women. The lack of adequate security guarantees for women further hinders their participation in labor migration.
3. Lack of qualifications matching foreign demands: Many women lack foreign language skills or the necessary professional qualifications, which reduces their competitiveness in the labor market abroad.

At this point, researchers also emphasize that the number of women in higher positions is increasing. According to N. Richichina, having the necessary level of education, the desire for career advancement, and the aspiration to be equal and independent contribute to the growing number of women working in international companies. Moreover, policies ensuring gender equality and social justice create opportunities for women to rise to higher positions within companies. Additionally, the importance of competitiveness in hiring and skill development courses is increasing globally for women. This process not only helps women achieve economic independence but also strengthens gender equality in society. Scholars M. Sekach and S.



Mostikov also emphasize that psychological factors related to women's belief in their own abilities and their desire to organize their lives independently play a significant role in this process. According to them, women's self-confidence and desire for independence not only enhance personal growth and self-esteem but also serve as an important factor in ensuring gender equality. Psychological factors, including internal motivation for success and self-management skills, help women secure higher positions in international companies.

In the study of international migration processes, special attention is given to female labor migration. Female labor migration exists in several forms: legal, illegal, and semi-legal. The legal form is the best but least common type of female labor migration, where women ensure complete safety by signing employment contracts with employers in the receiving countries. The illegal form is one of the most common and dangerous types of female labor migration, where women enter the host countries with illegal or short-term tourist visas and can only work in the illegal or semi-legal sectors of the economy. Due to their illegal status in the receiving country, they are particularly vulnerable and often face exploitation, violence, and abuse. The semi-legal form is another prevalent and dangerous form of female labor migration, where women may be promised legal work and official documentation in the receiving country before leaving their country of origin, but upon crossing the border, their passports are confiscated, and they may become victims of human trafficking, forced labor, or sexual slavery [8]. Female migrants often find employment in the informal sector, engaging in low-paying jobs. They face wage discrimination, labor exploitation, and financial insecurity. The harshness of working conditions, such as long working hours and uncomfortable labor environments, limits their economic opportunities. These challenges contribute to the vulnerability of female migrants, making it difficult for them to achieve financial independence or improve their living standards.

Women face sexual violence, humiliation, and discrimination. Many of them work without proper documentation, which limits their ability to protect their rights. Prolonged separation from their families due to migration negatively impacts their family relationships.

Several important methodological and analytical points can be made about the gender issues faced by labor migrants, particularly the challenges encountered by female migrants, as well as the economic, social, and psychological consequences they experience:

1. Economic challenges faced by female migrants: Female migrants often receive lower wages compared to men, which intensifies gender inequality. Their working conditions are frequently unpleasant and hazardous, especially in sectors such as domestic services, agriculture, and construction. In many cases, female migrants experience violations of their rights, with poor living and working conditions. The lack of legal protection further exacerbates their vulnerability, putting them in a weak economic position. Without access to adequate legal and social protections, they struggle to improve their financial standing and are more susceptible to exploitation and economic hardship.

2. Social challenges and impacts: Female migrants often go abroad to economically support their families, which leads to difficulties in their social relationships, family dynamics, and their role in society. Female migrants are also often forced to continue fulfilling family responsibilities, including raising children. The absence of the mother can negatively affect the upbringing of the children, leading to emotional, psychological, and social challenges for them. Additionally, the physical distance from family members can weaken their social bonds and create a sense of



isolation, further complicating their ability to balance both work and family life. These challenges are particularly difficult for women who are already economically and socially marginalized in the countries they migrate to.

3. Psychological consequences: Women who migrate for work often face psychological challenges such as emotional stress, anxiety, and social isolation. Being separated from their families and adapting to a new culture can jeopardize their mental health. Feelings of loneliness and detachment from family and society can lead female migrants to experience depression and heightened anxiety. The constant pressure of balancing work with emotional strain, combined with the lack of social support in foreign countries, can significantly affect their well-being. These psychological effects often remain unaddressed, as many migrant women may not have access to mental health resources or support networks.

Research conducted by UNICEF has revealed that the migration of parents, particularly of mothers, negatively impacts children's education, health, nutrition, and social well-being, and can lead to conditions like depression. When children are left behind and are burdened with household chores, they are forced to mature prematurely. Often, mothers migrate while leaving their children under the age of six, a critical period for child development, as it is the time when relationships between parents and children are being formed. Naturally, children whose parents have migrated exhibit emotional and psychological changes. Among the children raised by guardians, various forms of aggression, such as disobedience, fighting, rudeness to adults and peers, running away from home, and behavioral problems, are commonly observed. Almost 37% of children live under the care of relatives, highlighting the social and psychological challenges faced by children of migrant workers.

Guardians use various methods for raising and controlling children, which often have negative effects. Sociological studies have shown that 12% of children are deprived of privileges, 3% are belittled with derogatory terms such as "stupid" and "lazy," and 8% face rough treatment from their guardians (9). Additionally, the interruption of communication between children and their parents during migration severely impacts the children's mental state and future social development. The lack of psychological and social support has a negative influence on children's ability to self-identify and adapt to society. Furthermore, the different approaches of guardians in child-rearing can directly affect children's future relationships and success in life. When parents migrate, it is essential that their children receive considerable attention, love, and care, as this is a critical stage for the children's growth and development.

In recent years, the reforms aimed at regulating external labor migration in Uzbekistan have become one of the government's top priorities. The President of Uzbekistan has paid special attention to labor migration in the process of developing cooperation with neighboring countries. In this regard, the President emphasized, "During the state visit, we reached an important agreement on labor migration. Our position on this matter is clear: no matter where a person is, they should be able to work and support their family and children" [10]. The President's policy of strengthening cooperation with neighboring countries in the field of labor migration is particularly important. In this process, ensuring the social protection of migrants, providing them with professional training, and protecting their rights at the international level are highly relevant issues. Special attention to social protection, professional training, and legal protection in the



context of external labor migration plays a key role in improving the living conditions of labor migrants and guaranteeing their rights.

CONCLUSION

The issues faced by female labor migrants, their gender roles, and the weakness of their rights are critical and pressing aspects of the global migration process. This article analyzed the challenges in the process of women's migration, including economic exploitation, sexual violence, weak legal protection, and psychological isolation. These problems negatively affect not only women's working conditions but also their personal development, social relationships, and mental health.

It is necessary to develop policies aimed at ensuring gender equality for female migrants. This can be achieved, in particular, through the protection of their labor rights, ensuring safety, and increasing access to education and healthcare services. Furthermore, it is crucial to establish special legal and social protection systems for female migrants and to improve their working conditions.

In conclusion, to reduce the economic, social, and psychological challenges faced by female migrants, it is essential to strengthen relevant measures, including legal protection, information, and education programs. International cooperation and the effective implementation of gender equality policies will contribute to improving the role and status of female migrants in society.

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