

GENDER EQUALITY ISSUES IN UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract:

Uzbekistan's efforts to ensure gender equality are aligned with international standards, and national measures have been developed to expand women's rights and opportunities. This article highlights that ensuring gender equality is not only a matter of human rights but also crucial for economic growth and sustainable development. It analyzes issues arising from gender inequality in society, particularly stereotypes based on national traditions and culture. The study also examines the impact of "selective abortion", which has led to an imbalance in the birth rates of boys and girls in Uzbekistan.

Keywords: Gender equality, Sustainable Development Program, equal rights and opportunities, labor rights, stereotypes, selective abortion.

Introduction

In accordance with the UN General Assembly resolution, the Republic of Uzbekistan has committed to implementing "national goals and objectives in the field of Sustainable Development Goals by 2030". Gender equality is one of the key issues to which the United Nations pays special attention and emphasizes the need for support.

According to Goal 5th of the international document – Achieving Gender Equality – by 2030, all forms of discrimination against women must be eliminated, and women's full and effective participation in all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and social life should be ensured, along with equal leadership opportunities. Furthermore, this goal includes incorporating gender equality principles into the process of adopting State Programs at various levels of government.

Gender equality is a crucial indicator of a country's democratic development [7, 8, 9, 10].

The Main Findings and Results

Gender refers to a concept based on the social roles of women and men, encompassing equal rights and opportunities in all spheres of society, including politics, economics, law, culture, education, science, and sports.

It is important to emphasize that gender equality does not mean the absolute sameness of men and women; rather, it refers to equality in their life opportunities [19, 20, 21].

"Ensuring gender equality is not just a matter of human rights; it is also a matter of improving economic performance and sustainable development"[1].

According to the World Bank's recommendations and conclusions on the gender situation in Uzbekistan, significant progress has been made in ensuring gender equality since 2017. Specifically, standards guaranteeing equal pay for equal work for both men and women have been adopted. Additionally, restrictions on employing women in certain sectors have been lifted



[16, 17, 18]. In October 2022, a new Labor Code was adopted, incorporating regulations aligned with international labor rights standards and conventions.

The newly revised Constitution of Uzbekistan has granted special attention to the legal rights and interests of women. In particular, Articles 42nd and 58th of the Constitution provide for the prevention of violations of women's labor rights, the creation of decent living and working conditions, and the guarantee of equal rights and opportunities for women in all spheres of society alongside men [2].

Several laws and presidential decrees have been adopted in Uzbekistan to ensure women's rights, particularly in gender equality, protection from violence and oppression, and the promotion of women's entrepreneurship [11, 12, 13, 14, 15]. Notably, the 2019 adoption of the laws "On Guarantees of Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men" and "On Protection of Women from Harassment and Violence" was widely welcomed by the public as an important step in strengthening women's role and status in society. These laws not only provided a legal definition of "gender" for the first time but also outlined the key directions of state policy in protecting women from harassment and violence [3, 4].

Why is achieving gender equality so important?

Globally, 2.4 billion working-age women do not have the same economic opportunities as men. In 178 countries, there are legal barriers that prevent women from making decisions about their own lives. In 86 countries, restrictions are imposed on the employment of women. Every year, 80% of those losing their jobs are women.

"Gender equality in the economy plays a key role in creating conditions for sustainable development and increasing the competitiveness of CIS countries"[5]. Addressing gender gaps is critical to the success of Uzbekistan's inclusive transformation. Uzbekistan's national income would be about 29% higher if women participated in the workforce at the same rate as men. If working women simply caught up to the wages earned by men, the increased income would lift more than 700,000 people out of poverty [6].

In the summer of 2019, a documentary that shocked many was screened in New York. Nanfu Wang and Jialing Zhang, co-authors of *One Child Nation*, courageously spoke for the first time about the deep psychological trauma inflicted on the Chinese people. Filmmaker Nanfu Wang spent nearly her entire life under China's "one family, one child" policy. This policy was adopted in 1979, incorporated into the Constitution of the People's Republic of China in 1982, and was only abolished in 2015. For 36 years, Chinese families were allowed to have only one child, leading to the widespread killing of baby girls immediately after birth.

Now, let's look at the statistics of selective abortion – abortions based solely on the fetus's gender. According to the U.S. National Academy of Sciences, in 12 studied countries, the birth gender ratio has dramatically shifted over the last 47 years, with a preference for male children leading to gender imbalances. This has been driven by gender biases (favoring sons in families), advancements in prenatal sex determination technology, and access to selective abortions. Researchers estimate that, in just these 12 countries, selective abortions have prevented the birth of 23.1 million girls over the past 47 years.

A total of 23 million parents decided to terminate otherwise normal pregnancies simply because they were expecting a girl. To put this number in perspective: 23 million is nearly half the



population of Spain or almost the entire population of Australia. This figure is twice the population of Belgium or Cuba and four times the population of Denmark or Finland. Between 1970 and 2017, American and Singaporean scientists analyzed birth statistics from 200 countries and found that, over time, the sex ratio of newborns had shifted sharply and disproportionately.

Conclusion

According to the Statistics Agency of Uzbekistan, from January to May 2024, civil registry offices in Uzbekistan recorded 374,400 live births, of which:

- **boys:** 180,400
- **girls:** 167,000

This means that, in the first five months of this year, 13,400 fewer girls were born compared to boys.

What is causing the perception of girls as “unwanted children” in our society?

The answer is **gender inequality** – manifested in worldview, consciousness, psychology, and societal attitudes. Deeply rooted stereotypes persist among people:

“a son will take care of his parents”, “a mother of a son is a general” (even a TV show with this title exists – *General Qaynona (mather-in-law)*), “a girl belongs to someone else’s family”, “what good does educating a girl do? (having a daughter is a disgrace’ (a phrase frequently repeated in the popular TV series *Qizim (My daughter)*). Even today, daughters-in-law who fail to bear sons often live in silence, unable to speak up within their families.

To combat the perception of girls as “unwanted children”, we must influence all layers of society to challenge and change gender-based stereotypes.

Ensuring gender equality – by providing equal opportunities for the birth, education, and employment of women – will allow them to become financially independent, mentally strong, and secure about their future. In short, it will enable them to live a full and dignified human life.

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