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Progress and Challenges: Gender Equality in Contemporary Uzbekistan

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ABSTRACT

In this article, there is a discussion about the content and significance of gender equality, its fundamental principles, and issues related to the implementation of gender equality at the international level, as well as its application in the context of Uzbekistan's conditions and legal documents. It talks about possibilities related to the use of the concept of gender equality and its practical application in various aspects of life.

Keywords: Gender equality; Patriarchal system; Oriental gender roles; Social norms; Legal obligation; Social relations; UN women.

1. Introduction

In recent decades, gender equality has emerged as a global issue, dominating conversations and shaping policies worldwide. Uzbekistan, a country located in Central Asia, has made significant strides towards promoting gender equality in both its historical and contemporary contexts. This article aims to delve into the journey of gender equality in Uzbekistan, examining the challenges faced in the past and highlighting the progress achieved in recent years.

Throughout its rich history, Uzbekistan has been influenced by various cultural, social, and political factors that have shaped the status and roles of women in society. Traditionally, Uzbek society adhered to patriarchal values, with women occupying a subordinate position. Their primary role was often limited to domestic chores, child-rearing, and supporting their male family members. However, as Uzbekistan underwent socio-political transformations, particularly during the Soviet era, the country took significant steps towards enhancing women's rights and empowering them.

Under Soviet rule, substantial efforts were made to increase women's access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities. Women were encouraged to participate in public life, and numerous female leaders emerged across different professions. This period witnessed the rise of women's rights movements, resulting in legal reforms that aimed to address gender disparities.

However, in recent years, Uzbekistan has displayed a renewed commitment to gender equality. The current government has implemented a range of policies and initiatives aimed at creating a more inclusive and equitable society. Efforts have been made to combat gender-based violence, eliminate discrimination, and ensure women's full and equal participation in all spheres of life.

While immense progress has been made, challenges persist on the path to achieving full gender equality in Uzbekistan. Traditional gender norms and stereotypes continue to influence social attitudes, hindering women's advancement in certain areas. Additionally, the implementation of gender equality policies and programs requires sustained commitment and resources.

2. Materials and Methods

1. Literature Review: Conduct a thorough review of existing literature, including academic articles, reports, and official documents related to gender equality in Uzbekistan. This will help establish the historical context and identify key themes and trends.
2. Historical Analysis: Explore the history of gender roles and women's rights in Uzbekistan, tracing significant events, laws, and social movements that have influenced gender equality in the country. Analyze how historical factors have shaped the current status of gender equality.
3. Policy Analysis: Examine gender equality policies and initiatives implemented by the Uzbekistani government and other organizations. Evaluate the impact of these policies on promoting gender equality and identify gaps or areas for improvement.
4. Comparative Analysis: Compare the status of gender equality in Uzbekistan with other countries in the region or globally to provide a broader perspective on the challenges and progress in advancing gender equality. Identify best practices and lessons learned from other contexts.

By employing a multi-faceted methodology that combines historical analysis, quantitative and qualitative research, policy analysis, and comparative perspectives, the article aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the history and current state of gender equality in Uzbekistan.

3. Results

Eastern cultures have greatly valued human dignity and worth in their unique civilizations and centuries-old traditions. Particularly, women have played a significant role and have been highly respected. Even in the sacred Islamic religion, there is a special emphasis on honoring women as part of Eastern values. However, it is important to note that various narratives exist regarding this matter.

In today's world, the issue of gender equality is recognized as an extremely important topic in countries worldwide. Gender equality, or gender parity, refers to the concept and various legal frameworks that aim to ensure equal rights between men and women in the family and society. According to some researchers, gender equality represents the next stage of societal and gender relations beyond the patriarchal system. The concept of gender equality involves studying and eliminating all social norms that hinder the emergence of individuality as a person. It also encompasses creating equal social opportunities for men and women to understand and express their personalities in all aspects of life [1]. Based on this, the fundamental nature of gender equality lies in ensuring proper representation of women in society.

It should be emphasized that Uzbekistan has actively participated in the gender equality indicator ranking since 2019. According to the gender equality indicator ranking for 2019, Uzbekistan occupies the 62nd place among 189 countries. According to experts from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) [2], in Uzbekistan, 29 women out of every 100,000 die due to gender inequality, and the maternal mortality ratio for every 1,000 adolescent girls aged 15-19 is 23.8. Uzbekistan's ranking in the gender equality indicator places it alongside Costa Rica and

Uruguay, all with a score of 0.288. Among the Central Asian countries, Kazakhstan ranks 44th, Kyrgyzstan 82nd, and Tajikistan 70th, while no data is provided for Turkmenistan in the ranking.

In Uzbekistan, the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On Guarantees of Equal Rights and Opportunities for Men and Women” was adopted on September 2, 2019. The Gender Equality Commission has been operating in Uzbekistan since 2019, led by Tanzila Narbaeva, the Chairperson of the Senate of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan, who is responsible for gender equality issues.

In 2015, the United Nations Women's Division for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment prepared a report called “UN Women” focusing on gender equality and the expansion of women's rights in Pakistan. One of the central issues highlighted in the report was the issue of women's employment. According to the authors of the report, despite the historical achievement of a high number of educated women, their employment situation remained significantly disadvantaged. Young girls who completed universities with prestigious degrees, especially in fields such as medicine and mathematics, were often left behind compared to young men, unable to find suitable employment opportunities. Even those who managed to find jobs often lacked self-confidence due to societal skepticism. This issue is particularly prevalent in developing countries, where approximately 75% of women's jobs are not legally protected by the employer's obligations [3].

As highlighted in the report, gender equality is still far from being achieved even in developed countries. For instance, in Sweden and France, women earn 31% less than men, in Germany, the gap is 49%, and in Turkey, it reaches 75%. According to the authors of the report, one of the key pillars in the fight against gender inequality globally is ensuring women's right to access good job opportunities.

It should be emphasized that according to Article 42 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, discrimination against women in employment, dismissal on the grounds of pregnancy or having a child, and reducing their wages are prohibited and are legally established and enforced.

4. Discussions

In Uzbekistan, comprehensive efforts are being made to promote gender equality. The new revision of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan specifically emphasizes the rights and freedoms of women and girls. For example, Article 58 of our Constitution states, “Women and men have equal rights. The state ensures equal rights and opportunities for women and men in managing social and state affairs, as well as in other spheres of social and state life.” This provision, established and strengthened by the fundamental law of the country, serves as a legal confirmation of the aforementioned principles.

In addition to the efforts to promote gender equality in Uzbekistan, special projects are being implemented to advance the goals of gender equality and expand opportunities for women and girls. It is important to recognize the significance of such initiatives, as they aim to change entrenched stereotypes and norms in society and ensure systematic changes in the field. The objectives of these projects include:

Changing legal and social norms and regulations: This involves revising existing laws and regulations to ensure they are gender-inclusive and promote equal rights and opportunities for women;

Enhancing women's economic and intellectual independence: This entails creating an environment that empowers women economically and intellectually, promoting entrepreneurship, providing access to education and training, and removing barriers to women's economic participation;

Strengthening data collection and monitoring systems: This involves improving the collection and analysis of gender-disaggregated data to better understand the challenges and progress in achieving gender equality. Monitoring systems help track progress, identify gaps, and inform evidence-based policy decisions [4].

These key principles and their implementation play a crucial role in ensuring gender equality in Uzbekistan. They contribute to creating an inclusive and equitable society where women and girls have equal opportunities and rights.

The main collaborator of such projects is the Senate of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan, which represents the Commission on Gender Equality and Family Issues. Additionally, the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Committee on Women and Family Issues, the Ministry of Justice, the Prosecutor General's Office, the State Statistics Committee, the National Human Rights Institution, the Ombudsman, civil society organizations, and mass media organizations work in collaboration.

Furthermore, these reforms and projects are expected to yield natural and anticipated results. By the year 2025, the living conditions of youth, women, and vulnerable segments of the population will improve through social support. They will benefit from favorable employment opportunities and a fair and inclusive economic growth, leading to enhanced capabilities. Women, youth, and rural communities will have access to better skills, stable job positions, and improved living conditions.

Indeed, the mentioned objectives are present and, of course, the overall goal of the project is to contribute to the implementation of the gender equality strategy in the Republic of Uzbekistan. This includes:

- ✓ Introducing legislative amendments, increasing awareness, and expanding the rights of women through eliminating gender stereotypes.
- ✓ Enhancing opportunities for women's employment, promoting STEM initiatives to improve their social and economic conditions and opportunities.
- ✓ Developing methodologies for data collection and analysis, creating specific digital tools to enhance women's social and economic participation, gather and analyze data on gender-based violence, and strengthen the system of regular monitoring. This aligns with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which aims to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women [5]. The objectives mentioned above fall under these categories.

It is important to emphasize that the concept of gender equality is not universally accepted in a positive sense everywhere. In fact, there are critics who question this concept and argue that "men and women are inherently different, not only physically but also psychologically, and therefore, talking about 'equality' is not possible." They argue that in society, if men are forced to perform tasks traditionally associated with women (such as going to the store, buying clothes, using cosmetics, taking care of children, or doing household chores), they will not be happy.

Similarly, women, when solely confined to traditionally male occupations, will not be content. In rural areas, for example, tasks such as plowing fields, repairing machinery, operating bulldozers, and so on are considered necessary for livelihood.

However, proponents of the concept of gender equality emphasize that these critics overlook the basic principles of the concept, which aim to provide equal opportunities for everyone, regardless of their gender. They argue that the supporters of gender equality take into account the impact of patriarchal education and societal beliefs, stereotypes, and norms that have influenced generations. According to some sociologists, in modern society, the psyche, moral motives, and thinking style are influenced by gender.

Critics of the concept of gender equality, while acknowledging the essence of the concept, provide another definition. They argue that gender equality is the opportunity for women to develop as women and for men to develop as men. In summary, it can be said that an individual's gender and social situation are not the only determining factors in any given situation. Ensuring equal rights and providing appropriate conditions for women's role in societal life is the most crucial task.

It is important to note that there are diverse perspectives on the concept of gender equality, and different individuals and societies may interpret it differently. The understanding and implementation of gender equality can vary based on cultural, social, and historical factors.

5. Conclusions

In conclusion, Uzbekistan's journey towards gender equality reflects a complex blend of historical, cultural, and political factors. The country has come a long way in dismantling gender-based discrimination and empowering women. However, further efforts are needed to address the remaining challenges and ensure that women in Uzbekistan enjoy equal rights, opportunities, and representation. By fostering an inclusive and gender-responsive society, Uzbekistan can create a brighter future for all its citizens, regardless of their gender.

Declarations

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Consent for Publication

The authors declare that they consented to the publication of this study.

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