

Prospects for Improving the Social Status of Women in Uzbekistan

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Abstract: This scientific article highlights information about the enhancement of women's social status in Uzbekistan and globally. It provides a comprehensive study of the current realities and the effectiveness of reforms aimed at ensuring progress in this area. Based on international experiences, the article outlines prospects for improving women's social positions in Uzbekistan.

Keywords: Woman, gender, women, protection from oppression and violence, "social elevator", "vulnerable workforce", "Esteemed woman" badge, STEM education.

INTRODUCTION

Women are the delicate creation of the Creator, the graceful beings of nature. By nature, women embody delicacy on one hand and serve as a powerful force in society on the other [1].

A woman is the foundation of the family and society, the essence and beauty of our lives. With women, life becomes beautiful and meaningful, and our homes are prosperous and radiant. A nation that respects and values women ensures a prosperous present and future. This is because society fully develops and progresses through the contributions of women [2]. In view of this, broad reforms have been implemented in our country to ensure equal rights and opportunities for women and men, to guarantee their equal participation in managing societal and state affairs, to support women socially and legally, and to protect them from harassment and violence. Solid legal foundations have been established in this regard.

Although Article 19 of the newly revised Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan states, "*All citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan have equal rights and freedoms. They are equal before the law regardless of their gender, race, nationality, language, religion, beliefs, social origin, or social status,*" Article 58 explicitly emphasizes that "*Women and men are equal in rights. The state guarantees equal rights and opportunities for women and men in managing public and state affairs, as well as in other spheres of society and state life*" [3].

In ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men in public service, the laws "*On Guarantees of Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men*" and "*On Protection of Women from Oppression and Violence*" are effectively implemented, along with the 2030 Strategy for Gender Equality in the Republic of Uzbekistan, approved by the upper chamber of the Oliy Majlis.

From a gender perspective, public service represents a specific hierarchical system with a defined socio-professional environment, where the professional activities of men and women as civil servants are developed and refined, considering their status, roles, value orientation, and personal characteristics.

According to the meritocracy principle established in our country, any civil servant, regardless of gender, can advance in position based on their abilities and professional qualifications.

At the same time, the democratization of modern society demands the active participation of women in the political life of the country. Necessary conditions are being created to expand their opportunities in this area [4]. Women, fully aware of their responsibilities, are making significant contributions to the development of the nation and the well-being of the people by working effectively in various fields.

However, certain structural issues in the relationships between central and local organizations, and insufficient cooperation between responsible ministries and agencies, have led to several shortcomings in the support of women.

For example, there are gaps in involving women in science, education, and creative activities, providing training in modern, in-demand professions in the labor market, assisting women seeking employment, protecting them from harassment and violence, increasing their social and political engagement and representation in leadership positions, as well as safeguarding their rights and interests [5]. In this context, enhancing collaboration among ministries, agencies, and non-governmental organizations in supporting women and strengthening their social status remain urgent priorities.

The primary goal of this scientific article is to provide proposals and recommendations to enhance women's social status not only in government institutions but also in the private sector, to further solidify their position in the labor market, and to adapt effective international practices to our national activities.

METHOD

The article utilizes analysis-synthesis and statistical analysis methods extensively. The real situation of women's social status in Uzbekistan, reforms being implemented in this field, and experiences of developed foreign countries have been comprehensively analyzed, generating new information that stimulates positive dynamics. Existing statistical indicators relevant to the field were analyzed and applied in the research.

RESULTS

In recent years, the participation of women in decision-making processes in Uzbekistan has significantly increased. Their presence in entrepreneurship has reached 37%, in political parties 46%, and in higher education 48%.

The proportion of women among managerial personnel in Uzbekistan is 28.2%. At the regional level, the highest percentages were recorded in Andijan region (38.8%), the Republic of Karakalpakstan (34%), and Fergana region (32.7%).

Women comprise 33% of deputies in the Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis, 24% of Senate members, and 25% of deputies in the Supreme Council of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, as well as regional and Tashkent city councils of people's deputies.

The share of women in ministerial or equivalent positions was 2.9% in 2018, but this figure has almost doubled to 5.7% currently.

A system has been introduced mandating that all government bodies, organizations, and entities with at least 50% state ownership, as well as their subordinate organizations, must appoint at least one female deputy among their leadership.

Currently, 241 women hold leadership positions in executive bodies at both national and local levels. These include 2 women serving as heads (ministers or committee chairpersons), 9 as deputy heads (deputy ministers, chairs, or directors), 14 as deputies to the Chair of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, regional, and Tashkent city governors, 4 as district (city) governors, and 212 as deputies to district (city) governors.

To further increase women's participation in public administration, a program titled "*Program to Enhance Women's Activity in Public Administration*" has been developed and implemented. Under this program, a talent pool of 25,055 women with managerial potential has been formed.

The Academy of Public Administration has established a specialized training course, "*School for Women Leaders*," where at least 100 women are trained annually for leadership roles.

A "social elevator" system has been created to promote women active in political parties to leadership positions. Specifically, proactive women leaders from political parties are selected and included in the National Talent Pool.

Since 2018, women who have demonstrated activity and initiative in social and public life, contributed effectively to family development and well-being, ensured maternal and child protection, raised a healthy and well-rounded generation, and promoted patriotism and devotion to the ideals of independence, as well as improving the moral and ethical environment and widely advocating national values, have been honored with the "*Mo'tabar Ayol*" (Esteemed Woman) badge [6].

At the same time, several steps remain necessary to expand women's participation in public service, make public service more appealing and convenient for women, enhance their competitiveness in the labor market, and provide training and retraining opportunities for women, especially those on maternity leave. Additionally, efforts are required to create favorable conditions for harmonizing family responsibilities, ensure access to quality medical care, and eliminate gender stereotypes that hinder women's career advancement [7].

When studying the social status of women in European countries, it was revealed that only six EU countries have achieved over 40% gender balance among parliament members. Furthermore, only five EU states have female heads of state, while the European Parliament comprises 40% women and 60% men, indicating near gender parity [8].

According to the European Institute for Gender Equality's 2024 statistics, the global gender gap across 146 countries was analyzed using 14 indicators on a 1-point scale. Iceland ranked first (0.935), followed by Finland (0.875), Norway (0.875), New Zealand (0.835), and Sweden (0.816). Uzbekistan participated in the ranking for the first time this year, placing 108th with a score of 0.681 [9].

Based on this data, it can be concluded that Uzbekistan needs to implement new reforms to strengthen the social status of women.

DISCUSSION

The results indicate that Uzbekistan is paying increasing attention to women within the social and state spheres. However, when compared to indicators from developed countries, it becomes evident that Uzbekistan's achievements are not yet as high as those of European nations. Notably, Scandinavian countries stand out for their exceptional success in ensuring women's social status.

There is no single formula for guaranteeing women's social status. Developed nations carry out reforms that consider women's rights as well as ethnopsychological and sociological factors. For instance, in the European Union, employers are required to provide necessary information to comply with equal pay regulations [10].

Additionally, Germany offers exemplary practices in protecting women's rights and ensuring gender equality. A law introduced in 2021 mandates that large companies with more than three board members must include at least one woman on the board [11]. In Uzbekistan, this area is still in its early stages.

It is also worth noting the growing importance of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) disciplines. STEM encompasses integrated education in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics [12].

According to UN forecasts, by 2050, 75% of professions will be related to STEM disciplines. Education based on this system is expected to produce professionals capable of solving future challenges and making new discoveries. Forecasts suggest that by 2025, there will be a shortage of 2 million workers in STEM fields. Currently, Uzbekistan has begun teaching STEM disciplines in Presidential schools [13]. Considering the future significance of STEM, specific policies for women in this area are necessary.

CONCLUSION

This scientific article addresses prospects for improving women's social status. Based on research and international experience, the following proposals are suggested to achieve the desired results:

1. In Uzbekistan, women are often viewed as a "weaker labor force," leading to wage disparities or other barriers in hiring. It is recommended that companies and organizations, similar to those in the European Union, be required to provide transparent information about salaries and employment opportunities. Implementing this proposal would ensure transparency and fairness in employment for women.
2. The current policy in Uzbekistan mandates appointing at least one female deputy in state organizations with 50% or more government ownership. It is suggested that a similar policy be extended to large private companies, akin to Germany's approach. This reform would strengthen women's positions in the private sector and enhance Uzbekistan's international reputation.
3. As the expansion of STEM education in Uzbekistan is inevitable, introducing scholarships and educational programs specifically for women in STEM, as practiced in Germany, would be beneficial.

Implementing these proposals in practice would further strengthen women's social status and align Uzbekistan's progress with international standards.

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