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## Research Article

# GENDER EQUALITY IN UZBEKISTAN: AN OVERVIEW AND PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE

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## ABSTRACT

This article provides an overview of the current status of gender equality in Uzbekistan, the prospects for the future, and solutions for increasing gender equality. The article highlights the challenges faced by women in Uzbekistan, including gender-based discrimination in the workplace, a gender gap in education and healthcare, and barriers to accessing employment opportunities and reproductive rights. The article also discusses the initiatives being taken by the government and the UNDP to promote gender equality and provides solutions for increasing gender equality, such as addressing the barriers women face in accessing education and the workforce, promoting gender-sensitive policies and practices, and changing cultural and social norms.

## KEYWORDS

Gender equality, gender, rights, inclusive, education, action discrimination, equality, opportunities, CEDAW, STEM, Women's Development, Uzbekistan.

## INTRODUCTION

Gender equality is a fundamental human right and is considered to be a key aspect of sustainable development. Uzbekistan, a country located in Central Asia, has made significant progress in promoting gender equality in recent years, but there is still much work to be done. Despite the constitution of Uzbekistan guaranteeing equal rights and freedoms

for all citizens, regardless of gender, and the country's ratification of international treaties promoting gender equality, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women CEDAW on 19th of Jul 1995 and the Beijing Platform for Action, gender inequality remains a major challenge.

Method. Currently women in Uzbekistan face significant challenges in accessing employment opportunities and often experience gender-based discrimination in the workplace. The rate of female participation in the labor force is lower than that of men, and women are often paid less for equivalent work. This can make it difficult for women to support themselves and their families and can limit their ability to participate fully in society.

One of the most pressing challenges is the under-representation of women in leadership positions. Despite making up over half of the population (17,4M women, 17,2M men) women hold only a quarter of parliamentary seats and just over a third of senior management positions. This disparity is not just a matter of fairness, but it also undermines the potential of the entire nation by limiting the diversity of voices and perspectives in decision-making. To address this imbalance, the government has implemented affirmative action measures, such as setting targets for women's representation in leadership positions and increasing funding for women's entrepreneurship programs. However, to increase representation of women in leadership positions, there are some other potential solutions that can be implemented:

- Encouraging and supporting women to pursue leadership positions through mentorship and training programs
- Implementing gender quotas in political and corporate leadership positions
- Providing flexible work arrangements to help women balance work and family responsibilities

Another major challenge is the unequal treatment of women in the workforce. Despite having the right to equal pay and equal opportunities, many women in

Uzbekistan continue to face discrimination and limited career opportunities. Women in Uzbekistan continue to face discrimination in the workplace, including unequal pay and limited career opportunities. The government is working to address this issue by increasing the availability of childcare and encouraging employers to adopt family-friendly policies. However, there are some additional solutions that can help improve gender equality in the workforce:

- Conducting pay audits to ensure equal pay for equal work
- Promoting women's access to job training and career development opportunities
- Encouraging employers to adopt family-friendly policies, such as flexible work arrangements and parental leave

The issue of violence against women is also a pressing concern in Uzbekistan, with high rates of domestic violence and limited access to justice for survivors. In just 2022, according to official statistics 32 783 women suffered from harassment and violence. It is noted that more than 27,000 cases of harassment and violence were committed in the family, more than 3,000 – on the street, more than 1,000 – at a public place, 81 – in an educational institution, and 429 – at the workplace.

Physical violence – 9,155, sexual violence – 68, economic violence – 340, mental violence – more than 18,000, harassment – more than 6,000.

The government has taken steps to address this issue by passing legislation criminalizing domestic violence and establishing a network of shelters for survivors. However, much more needs to be done to ensure that women and girls are safe and secure in their homes and communities. To prevent violence against women, the following steps can be taken:

- Implementing comprehensive education and awareness campaigns on gender-based violence
- Strengthening the legal system to ensure that perpetrators are held accountable for their actions
- Providing adequate support and resources for survivors, including access to medical care, legal aid, and counseling

Education is another critical area for promoting gender equality in Uzbekistan. Investing in education for girls and women is not only a matter of fairness, but it is also a key driver of economic growth and social development. The government has recognized this and has implemented a range of initiatives including programs to encourage girls to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields, where women are underrepresented. In addition, from the 2022 the state will pay for tuition fees of girls in the master's degree. To achieve these goals, 200 billion Uzbek soums (about 17,773M USD) will be allocated. Thus, the state will pay tuition fees for 23,000 female students to improve access to education for girls and women. It also became known that every year 50 girls will be sent to foreign countries to study at foreign universities, 10 – to obtain a master's degree.

To increase access to education for girls and women, the following steps can be taken:

- Improving the quality of education for girls, especially in rural areas
- Encouraging girls to pursue careers in traditionally male-dominated fields, such as STEM

In addition to these challenges, women in Uzbekistan also face significant barriers in accessing healthcare and reproductive rights. The country has made progress in increasing access to maternal healthcare,

but there are still significant gaps in access to comprehensive reproductive health services. This can have serious consequences for the health and well-being of women and their families.

Results. Despite these challenges, there is reason for optimism about the future of gender equality in Uzbekistan. The government has made a commitment to promoting gender equality and has taken steps to address the barriers that women face in the workforce and in accessing education and healthcare.

One of the key initiatives aimed at increasing gender equality in Uzbekistan is the National Action Plan for Women's Development. This plan outlines the government's commitment to promoting gender equality and includes specific goals and targets for improving the status of women in Uzbekistan. The plan focuses on increasing access to employment opportunities for women, improving gender equality in education, and increasing access to healthcare services for women and girls.

Another important initiative aimed at promoting gender equality in Uzbekistan is the "Gender and Development" program, which is implemented by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). This program aims to improve gender equality in key areas, such as the workforce, education, and healthcare, and provides support for women and girls to access these opportunities.

There are several solutions that can be implemented to increase gender equality in Uzbekistan. One of the key solutions is to address the barriers that women face in accessing employment opportunities. This can be done by providing training and support to women to help them gain the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in the workforce. Additionally, employers can be encouraged to adopt gender-sensitive policies

and practices to create a more inclusive work environment.

Another solution is to address the gender gap in education by providing girls and women with access to quality education and training opportunities. This can be done by investing in programs that promote girls' education and by providing support to women to pursue careers in STEM fields.

It seems that for the government of Uzbekistan, the low economy is the reason why gender equality is still not so popular in society and is slowly being integrated into it. Therefore, they are looking for various solutions and methods to improve the economic situation, but gender equality itself is the solution to improve the economic situation of the state.

Ensuring full gender equality in Uzbekistan would have significant positive impacts on the economy. Some of the ways that gender equality could be influenced to improve the economy include:

1. Increasing women's participation in the workforce: Women make up a significant portion of the population in Uzbekistan, and increasing their participation in the workforce would lead to higher economic growth and increased productivity.
2. Closing the gender pay gap: If women are paid the same as men for equal work, it would reduce poverty and increase economic growth by providing women with more financial independence and increasing their purchasing power.
3. Improving women's access to education and training: Women with higher levels of education and training are more likely to participate in the workforce and to be employed in higher-paying, skilled jobs. This

would contribute to overall economic growth and development.

4. Reducing gender-based violence: Gender-based violence has a negative impact on women's ability to participate in the workforce and contribute to economic growth. By reducing gender-based violence and creating a safer and more supportive environment for women, the economy would benefit.
5. Promoting gender-sensitive policies and practices in the workplace: Employers who promote gender equality and provide equal opportunities for men and women will be able to attract and retain the best talent, regardless of gender. This would result in a more competitive and productive workforce, contributing to economic growth and development.

Gender equality is a crucial aspect of sustainable development and remains a major challenge in Uzbekistan. Despite the progress that has been made in recent years, there is still much work to be done to ensure that women in Uzbekistan are able to fully participate in society and enjoy equal opportunities and rights.

The government has shown its commitment to promoting gender equality through initiatives that given above National Action Plan for Women's Development and the "Gender and Development" program, but there is still a long way to go.

Conclusions. In order to achieve true gender equality in Uzbekistan, it is important to address the barriers that women face in accessing employment opportunities, education, and healthcare. This requires a multi-faceted approach that includes improving access to education and training opportunities for women, promoting gender-sensitive policies and practices in



the workplace, and increasing access to quality healthcare services for women and girls.

Moreover, promoting gender equality also requires changing the cultural and social norms that contribute to gender inequality. This can be done by raising awareness about the importance of gender equality and the benefits of having a more inclusive and equal society. It is also important to engage men and boys in this process, as they play a crucial role in breaking down gender stereotypes and promoting gender equality.

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