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Essay

Short Review on Gender Studies in Central Asia

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Abstract: This advanced scholarly article examines gender equality, human rights, and women's rights in Uzbekistan, focusing on domestic violence and women's leadership. It explores their relevance to the region and their connections to global human rights discussions and social justice theories. The first section addresses the widespread problem of domestic violence in Central Asia, emphasizing the need for comprehensive understanding and effective measures. The second section assesses women's progress in achieving gender equality and leadership positions in the Uzbek workplace, identifying research gaps and the impact of recent reforms. The study employs an observational approach, integrating raw data and social media information to analyze gender equality and research. Findings and recommendations draw from global human rights debates and social justice theories, contributing to future research on gender issues in Central Asia. Overall, this article offers a comprehensive analysis, contextualizing the issues within local and global perspectives and contributing to the dialogue on gender equality in a cultural context.

Keywords: gender equality; human rights; female leadership; uzbekistan; philosophical understanding

1. Introduction

Gender equality, human rights, and women's rights are critical issues in today's global discourse on human rights and social justice. These discussions are particularly relevant in the context of globalization (Fredman, Goldblatt & UN Women, 2015). This study focuses on Uzbekistan, a country in Central Asia, and attempts to shed light on various dimensions of these pressing issues. Rather than addressing feminist debates, this essay focuses on domestic violence and women's leadership and includes two main sections. In fact, if we approach these issues from philosophical and geographical perspectives, we highlight their relevance to the region while also considering global human rights debates and social justice theories. This article focuses on domestic violence and women's leadership in Uzbekistan. Domestic violence is a widespread problem in Central Asia, as it is globally, and requires comprehensive attention. In the previous section, we examined the causes and sociopolitical consequences of family violence in the region. Given Central Asia's historical and epistemological context, it is clear that gender research is essential. Despite the limited data on domestic violence in Central Asia, existing approaches differ in theory and practice. To effectively address this issue, the development of accurate and transparent statistical databases, collaboration with experts, and comprehensive efforts are needed.

This paper aims to contribute to future research on gender issues in the Central Asian region by looking at the interconnectedness of oppression, gender inequality, and sexuality through the lens of global human rights debates and social justice theories. The following section of this article examines women's progress in attaining leadership positions and gender equality in the workplace. We assess the impact of recent reforms on gender equality in Uzbekistan. As this study is a pioneering effort, we present a detailed theoretical framework. We also attempt to identify research gaps in the field of gender studies. The study examines the proportion of women in the Uzbek labor force and the spatial distribution of women in leadership positions. Finally, we provide our findings and recommendations based on our research findings, which draw on global human rights debates and social justice theories. To analyze gender equality and gender research in Uzbekistan, this study

adopts an observational approach. We used a combination of raw data and information from social media platforms. Our analysis focuses primarily on domestic violence and gender equality and employs qualitative research methods to explore these issues in greater depth. Consequently, we interpret the relationship between gender concerns and culture, spirituality, ethnography, and traditions based on comprehensive and reliable information informed by global human rights debates and social justice theories.

2. Theoretical Background

Theoretical background plays a crucial role in understanding the complexities surrounding gender equality, women's rights, and domestic violence. In the context of Uzbekistan and Central Asia, several theoretical perspectives are relevant to shed light on these issues (Kane & Gorbenko, 2016).

First and foremost, it is crucial to acknowledge the contributions of feminist theories, encompassing branches such as liberal feminism, radical feminism, and intersectional feminism, in establishing a robust theoretical framework for analyzing and addressing gender inequality and women's rights violations. These theories strive to challenge patriarchal power structures and advocate for gender equality (Delmar, 2018). Moreover, they endeavor to identify the underlying causes of domestic violence, examine the influence of cultural norms and traditions, and promote societal transformation. However, it is important to recognize that feminist theories have encountered limited acceptance in Muslim-majority societies, including those in Central Asia, due to the differing perspectives and approaches already inherent in pure Islamic teachings (Fathi, 2006; Juraev & Ahn, 2022). Additionally, intersectionality theory has emerged as a valuable complement to feminist perspectives, acknowledging that gender intersects with other social categories such as race, class, ethnicity, and sexuality. This framework recognizes how these intersecting factors shape individuals' experiences of oppression and discrimination. In the context of Uzbekistan, it can be speculated that intersectionality theory can offer insights into understanding the multifaceted impact of various factors on gender inequality (Tlostanova, 2022). These factors encompass cultural norms, religious interpretations, socioeconomic conditions, and historical circumstances. So, by embracing the diverse dimensions of identity and inequality, endeavors to achieve gender equality can adopt a more comprehensive and effective approach (Pluckrose & Lindsay, 2020).

Also, a human rights framework provides a normative basis for analyzing gender inequality and women's rights violations. International human rights instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) affirm the equal rights and dignity of all individuals, regardless of gender. This framework allows for the examination of government policies, legislation, and practices in Uzbekistan in relation to international human rights standards (Sobirovich, 2021). It highlights the importance of protecting women's rights as a fundamental aspect of achieving gender equality. In addition, social justice theories offer insights into the structural and systemic factors that perpetuate gender inequality and women's rights violations. The capabilities approach, which emphasizes enhancing individuals' freedom and capabilities, and distributive justice theories, which focus on the fair distribution of resources and opportunities, are relevant in addressing gender disparities in Uzbekistan. These theories underscore the need to address socioeconomic disparities, access to education, employment opportunities, and social support systems to achieve gender equality (Hudson, 2009).

Moreover, critical discourse analysis provides a methodological approach to examine language, power, and social relations in the context of gender equality and women's rights. It helps us understand how language, rhetoric, and media representations shape societal perceptions, norms, and practices. Applying critical discourse analysis allows us to uncover underlying power dynamics, the influence of cultural norms and beliefs, and the discursive construction of gender roles and identities (Peters & Wolper, 2018). Thus, if we incorporate feminist theory, intersectionality theory, human rights frameworks, social justice theories, and critical discourse analysis, a comprehensive theoretical background is established to deepen the understanding of gender equality, women's

rights, and domestic violence in Uzbekistan. These theoretical perspectives highlight the need for systemic changes, the empowerment of women, and the dismantling of oppressive structures to achieve a more equitable and just society (Pluckrose, Lindsay & Boghossian, 2021).

3. Women's Leadership Matters

In New Uzbekistan, significant reforms have been implemented in the new Uzbekistan to promote human rights, develop a robust civil society, and ensure equal rights and opportunities for men and women. However, outdated prejudices against women persist, hindering their recognition and progress in society. This article aims to examine the spatial aspects of gender relations and gender equality in Uzbekistan, focusing on women's leadership positions. By analyzing statistical data and exploring feminist and gender studies perspectives, we seek to identify the challenges and potential solutions to gender equality in leadership positions. Uzbekistan has a long history of valuing women, with notable female leaders in the past (Juraev & Ahn, 2022). Even in ancient times, courageous women such as Tamaris held leadership positions, and talented stateswomen emerged during the Timurid dynasty. In the Soviet era, women held various leadership positions, including governors. However, despite these historical examples, gender equality in leadership positions has not been universally achieved. Therefore, Uzbekistan has taken steps to improve gender equality and enshrine it in its constitution and laws. The government has appointed women leaders at various levels, and the Republican Women's Committee plays an important role in advocating for gender equality (www.lex.uz). However, challenges remain, including limited access to credit for women entrepreneurs and the need for comprehensive gender studies and geographic surveys (Juraev, 2022).

Therefore, this study conducts a spatial analysis of women's leadership positions and examines the distribution of women in different economic, educational, and professional sectors. By examining the prevalence of gender norms in education and economic growth, we aim to understand the factors that influence women's advancement to leadership positions. The study also addresses the impact of cultural views, gender stereotypes, and family responsibilities on women's advancement to leadership positions.

Drawing on feminist and gender perspectives, this article looks at different theoretical approaches to understanding women's leadership. It examines the historical transition from feminism to gender studies and emphasizes the need to consider the intersectionality of different identities and the concept of hegemonic masculinity. The study recognizes the importance of considering spatial categories such as family, occupation, society, local customs, and religious beliefs to understand women's leadership (Juraev, 2022). Although Uzbekistan has made progress in promoting gender equality and women's leadership, challenges and societal biases persist. Spatial analysis and insights from women's and gender studies offer valuable perspectives for identifying areas that need further research and for developing effective strategies to improve women's participation in leadership. So, by addressing these issues, Uzbekistan can continue its path toward gender equality and women's empowerment in all sectors of society.

4. Discussion: Gender Equality

Gender equality has been a priority for Uzbekistan since independence, but it was not until 2017 that significant gains were seen. The country has made progress on women's rights, although feminism is not allowed. The perception that women are being promoted to leadership positions is currently positive (Juraev, 2022). However, Uzbekistan ranks 158th in terms of women's representation in ministerial positions, with only 8% in 2020, and women hold 29% of seats in parliament, below the 30% quota for women in decision-making recommended by the UN. From 2014 to 2018, less than 1% of women in Uzbekistan held leadership positions. The percentage of women in leadership positions should increase to 7% by 2021, but there is a lack of transparent statistical analysis to determine which areas this number refers to (www.stat.uz).

Under current Uzbek law, women and men are treated equally, but in practice, women are more likely to hold leadership positions in society. There are female leaders in local government, business, entrepreneurship, and nongovernmental organizations, although the overall number remains low.

However, female district governors have been appointed since 2017, which is a positive development. According to official sources, about 26.6% of leaders in Uzbekistan are women. The percentage varies by region, with the highest in Karakalpakstan at 33.8% and the lowest in Jizzakh at 17%. In the Legislative Chamber, 33% of members are women, and in the Senate, 23.7% (www.lex.uz & www.stat.uz). Despite these figures, there is still a gap in achieving the minimum 30% of women in decision-making bodies. In terms of employment, the percentage of women is high in sectors such as education, health, social protection, science, and the arts. However, in sectors such as finance and information and communications, women are significantly less represented, although specific data on female managers are not available. The lack of spatial data in the national statistical analysis further complicates the assessment of progress in gender equality in different sectors (Table A1).

Barriers to women's participation in leadership positions include difficulties in finding work due to household responsibilities and social status, concerns about working hours, gender discrimination in promotions, long hours, and low pay (Juraev, 2022). Traditional attitudes and stereotypes also contribute to the slower development of an environment for women's active participation in society. To increase women's participation in society, it is necessary to work with various organizations and political parties, train socially active women, improve their skills, and actively recommend them for leadership positions. In addition, efforts should be made to combat cultural attitudes and prejudices against women in leadership positions, as they hinder progress in gender equality.

5. Improving Gender Equality: Progress, Challenges, and Human Rights Implications

Uzbekistan has made significant efforts to promote gender equality and women's rights, although challenges and societal attitudes remain. This article examines progress in gender equality, existing obstacles, and human rights and migration implications. It also addresses global human rights debates and relevant theories that shed light on the situation. Uzbekistan has enacted 25 laws on gender equality and women's political participation, including the important law "*On Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men*". Women's representation in the national parliament has reached the level required by the UN (UN Women). Women make up a significant portion of the electorate and increasingly participate in political processes as candidates, observers, and media representatives. Despite reforms, deep-rooted gender inequalities persist. Cultural beliefs, such as the notion of women's traditional role in the kitchen, remain pervasive. To address violence and oppression against women, the law provides protection orders and regulations for victims. Rehabilitation centers and a special hotline have been established to help women, but the collection and analysis of data on violence against women are still limited (Juraev, 2022).

However, Uzbekistan has established treatment facilities and prevention centers for victims of violent crimes and suicide, but comprehensive data analysis is lacking. Efforts to collect and analyze gender-based statistics are essential to effectively combat violence and raise public awareness of the issue. Under the initiative of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, gender equality has become an open topic of discussion in Uzbekistan. Structural and institutional changes are underway, and legislation is being improved to promote gender equality. A state award for gender equality has been introduced to recognize achievements in this area. It is noteworthy that for the first time, a woman has been appointed president of the Senate, which represents progress in women's political participation (USAID).

Uzbekistan has introduced a quota system that requires 30 percent representation of women in the nomination of candidates by political parties. The introduction of the women's registry aims to provide women with socioeconomic, medical, legal, and psychological support and assistance. However, women still face problems such as unemployment, crime, domestic violence, and harassment. Progress in gender equality in Uzbekistan is thus in line with the global human rights discourse, which emphasizes equal rights and opportunities for women. The challenges faced in promoting gender equality are indicative of broader issues related to cultural attitudes, stereotypes, and traditional gender roles. These factors can impact human rights and migration movements by shaping societal perceptions and opportunities for women's active participation (UN Women).

Thus, Uzbekistan has demonstrated its commitment to gender equality through legal reforms, increased political participation, and the establishment of support systems. However, challenges rooted in cultural norms and societal attitudes remain and require further efforts to address gender-based violence, promote women's leadership, and achieve comprehensive equality. Improving data collection and analysis, engaging in global human rights debates, and addressing migration movements can help advance gender equality and ensure the realization of women's rights in Uzbekistan (Juraev, 2022).

6. Rationale

This study aims to contribute to the global dialogue on gender equality, women's rights, and human rights by examining the specific challenges faced in Central Asia, particularly in Uzbekistan. It highlights the importance of sociopolitical commitment to women's rights and the need for effective reforms in the region. By analyzing the progress made, identifying existing gaps, and proposing future research directions, this study provides valuable insights into the complexities of promoting gender equality within a cultural context. The pervasive issue of gender-based violence, including domestic violence, transcends borders and affects women worldwide. By focusing on Uzbekistan, this study establishes a connection to the global discourse on combating violence against women and promoting gender equality, emphasizing the significance of addressing these issues both nationally and within the framework of international human rights. This study aligns with the principles of human rights philosophy, which advocates for equal rights and opportunities for all individuals, irrespective of gender. It addresses ongoing debates surrounding the interpretation of religion, the abuse of customs, and discrimination as underlying causes of domestic violence. By examining these debates, the study contributes to a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted nature of human rights and the challenges involved in implementing gender equality within diverse cultural contexts.

Furthermore, this study goes beyond its primary focus on gender equality and women's rights by fostering broader discussions on human rights and social justice. It raises critical questions regarding the role of various sectors such as media, film, journalism, academia, and science in advancing women's human rights and interests. The study emphasizes the importance of collaborative efforts across sectors to address social issues and promote social justice. It also aligns with the findings and concerns highlighted in prominent global studies on gender equality, domestic violence, and women's empowerment. In addition, it reflects the work of international organizations like the United Nations Development Program, which aims to raise awareness about domestic violence and its impact on women. By building upon existing research and addressing the specific challenges faced in Uzbekistan, this study contributes to the collective knowledge base and supports global endeavors to promote gender equality and women's rights. In conclusion, this study on gender equality and women's rights in Uzbekistan makes a novel and significant contribution to the ongoing global discourse on domestic violence, gender inequality, and human rights. By recognizing the unique challenges confronted by Uzbekistan and emphasizing the necessity of sociopolitical engagement, this study enriches the broader discussion on human rights philosophy, social justice, and cross-sectoral collaboration. Moreover, it builds upon existing global research and concerns, enhancing our understanding of gender equality and women's rights within the cultural context of Central Asia and Uzbekistan.

Appendix A

Table A1. Gender Equality Statistics in Uzbekistan (Summary).

Aspect	Statistics
Women in ministerial positions (2020)	8% (158th place)
Women in the Uzbek parliament	29% (61st place)
Women participating in decision-making processes	Below 30% (UN recommendation)
Women in leadership positions (2014-2018)	Less than 1%

Women in leadership positions (expected in 2021)	7% (lack of sector-specific data)
Women in local government leadership roles	1,405 female leaders, 9,309 chairmen of districts and deputy chairmen appointed
Women leaders in business and entrepreneurship	Not specified
Female district governors appointed since 2017	Boyovut, Olot, Buston, Karshi, Turakurgan, Kattakurgan
Women leaders in NGOs	High, but low overall
Women leaders in Uzbekistan (official reports)	26.60%
Women leaders in Karakalpakstan (highest)	33.80%
Women leaders in Jizzakh (lowest)	17%
Women in the legislative chamber	33%
Women in the Senate	23.70%
Women in education sector	High percentage, specific data unavailable
Women in finance sector	1%
Women in information and communication sector	1%
Women in health, social protection, and sports sector	82.60%
Women in science, education, arts, and culture sector	72.10%
Women in agriculture sector	45.50%
Women in industry sector	38.50%
Women in construction sector	8%

Sources: www.stat.uz, www.mehnat.uz & www.lex.uz (The author prepared using existing data). Note: Specific data for certain categories, such as female managers in finance and information and communication sectors, is not available in the given context.

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