



THE HISTORICAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF INEQUALITY BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN: TRADITIONAL GENDER ROLES

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ABOUT ARTICLE

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Abstract: This article analyzes the historical and social roots of gender inequality and traditional gender roles. It highlights that the formation of inequality between men and women is influenced by social, cultural, and economic factors. The development of gender roles in ancient philosophy, religious views, and medieval societies is examined, along with discussions on the challenges and achievements of ensuring gender equality in modern society.

ERKAKLAR VA AYOLLAR O'RTASIDAGI TENGSIZLIKNING TARIXIY VA IJTIMOIY ASOSLARI: AN'ANAVIY GENDER ROLLARI

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Kalit so'zlar: Gender tengsizlik, an'anaviy gender rollar, patriarxal jamiyat, islom madaniyati, ayollar huquqlari, ta'lim, mehnat bozori, siyosiy faollik, zamonaviy gender siyosati.

Annotatsiya: Ushbu maqolada gender tengsizlikning tarixiy-ijtimoiy ildizlari va an'anaviy gender rollari tahlil qilinadi. Erkaklar va ayollar o'rtasidagi tengsizlikning shakllanishi ijtimoiy, madaniy va iqtisodiy omillar bilan bog'liq ekani ta'kidlanadi. Qadimgi falsafa, diniy qarashlar va o'rta asrlar jamiyatlaridagi gender rollarining shakllanishi, shuningdek, zamonaviy jamiyatda gender tengligini ta'minlash muammolari va yutuqlari muhokama qilinadi.

ИСТОРИЧЕСКИЕ И СОЦИОЛОГИЧЕСКИЕ ОСНОВЫ НЕРАВЕНСТВА МЕЖДУ МУЖЧИНАМИ И ЖЕНЩИНАМИ: ТРАДИЦИОННЫЕ ГЕНДЕРНЫЕ РОЛИ

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О СТАТЬЕ

Ключевые слова: Гендерное неравенство, традиционные гендерные роли, патриархальное общество, исламская культура, права женщин, образование, рынок труда, политическая активность, современная гендерная политика.	Аннотация: В данной статье анализируются историко-социальные корни гендерного неравенства и традиционные гендерные роли. Подчеркивается, что формирование неравенства между мужчинами и женщинами связано с социальными, культурными и экономическими факторами. Рассматривается становление гендерных ролей в древней философии, религиозных взглядах и обществах Средневековья, а также обсуждаются проблемы и достижения в обеспечении гендерного равенства в современном обществе.
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Introduction. Eliminating social, economic, and cultural inequality between men and women is one of the most important directions in the development of society. In order to effectively combat this issue and implement meaningful reforms, it is first necessary to thoroughly analyze the root causes of this inequality. Gender inequality has formed throughout various stages of societal development, and its primary causes are directly linked to social structures, economic systems, and cultural values. Historical processes show that this inequality is not a natural state but rather a complex social phenomenon that emerged as a result of specific conditions and factors.

Main part. According to researcher Zarina Tojimurodova, “Equality between women and men refers to a concept and legal relationships that aim to achieve equal rights between men and women in both the family and society” [1]. However, one of the main obstacles to achieving gender equality is the persistence of traditional gender roles.

Throughout the historical development of society, socially defined roles for men and women have been established. This stereotypical division has reinforced gender inequality for many centuries. According to traditional views, men have been seen as the leading members of society and the primary providers for the family, while women have been confined to domestic work, child-rearing, and maintaining the household. Although these gender roles were accepted as norms in certain periods of social development, the processes of globalization and modernization today increasingly necessitate their reevaluation. Therefore, analyzing the

formation of gender roles, their historical roots, and their relevance in modern society helps us to understand the essence of the issue more deeply.

Over the course of history, societal attitudes toward women have changed in accordance with the social, cultural, and political structures of different periods. These processes are reflected in the works of contemporary thinkers of their time. Philosophical, legal, and religious views have interpreted women's roles in society in various ways, and their place in social life was often determined by the socio-economic conditions of the era. Some thinkers viewed women primarily within the domestic sphere, while others supported their participation in education, politics, and economics. For this reason, studying the status of women in historical sources and scholarly works is of significant academic value in understanding how this issue was approached in different eras.

For instance, Aristotle, in his work *Politics*, expressed his views on the place of women in society and considered them to be naturally inferior to men [2]. He emphasized that women were naturally subordinate and believed they had a limited role in social and political life. According to him, men were suited for leadership, while women were primarily intended for fulfilling domestic duties.

In our opinion, approaching Aristotle's view from a modern perspective, his worldview can be understood as a product of the historical and cultural conditions of his time. During his era, women were not granted equal rights and were mainly responsible for household duties and child-rearing. Therefore, Aristotle's thoughts might have seemed logical from the standpoint of that society.

However, today's reality is completely different. Modern women actively participate in all areas of society, achieving great success in science, politics, economics, technology, and other fields. Personality and intellectual potential are not determined by gender but by a person's pursuit of knowledge, hard work, and goal orientation. We believe people should be evaluated not based on gender, but on their abilities, experience, and competence. While Aristotle's views are valuable as a part of historical heritage, it would be incorrect to treat them as a foundation for today's society, which strives for equality. True progress lies not in limiting people's opportunities based on gender, but in enabling everyone to fully realize their potential.

Similarly, in Confucian teachings, the family plays a central role in ensuring order and stability in society. According to Confucius, every person should fulfill a specific societal role. Particularly, women were seen as primarily responsible for maintaining order within the family rather than participating in governance or political activities. In our view, these ideas from Confucian teachings are also tied to the historical context and should be reassessed in today's

modern world. While women in those times mainly engaged in child-rearing and household tasks, today they are active in various spheres of society. Women's contributions go beyond family relationships and are also significant in economic, scientific, and cultural domains. In Confucian philosophy, the concepts of *xiao* (filial piety) and *li* (observing norms of etiquette) were considered key to maintaining social stability. However, in the modern world, these principles must be balanced with human rights and gender equality. Therefore, we believe certain aspects of Confucian thought do not align with the demands of contemporary life. Although his teachings were aimed at strengthening family values, the development of today's society also requires individual freedom and equal rights.[3]

In medieval European society, gender roles were strictly defined, and women participated in only limited areas of social life. Their roles were mostly confined to domestic duties, child-rearing, and religious activities. The Catholic Church had a strong influence at the time, and gender relations were interpreted mostly through a religious lens. The Church supported the idea that women must submit to their husbands and that their primary role was as mothers and wives.

The 13th-century thinker Thomas Aquinas, in his "Summa Theologica,"[4] stated that women are naturally weaker than men and should primarily fulfill family responsibilities. In his view, women were intellectually and physically inferior to men and therefore should be subordinate to them. While this view matched the prevailing religious and social outlook of that era, from a modern perspective, it clearly contradicts the principles of gender equality.

A similar viewpoint was expressed by the 16th-century reformer Martin Luther, one of the founders of the Protestant Reformation. He stated: "*A woman is created to be a housewife. Her highest duty is to give birth and preserve the household environment.*"[5]

Luther believed that women held a secondary position compared to men and that their participation in political and social life should be restricted. This view aligned with that of Aquinas, demonstrating how strictly gender roles were defined in medieval European society.

In our opinion, the views of thinkers like Aquinas and Luther stemmed from the socio-economic conditions of their time, but they cannot be accepted as universal truths. Throughout history, women have also made significant contributions to science, politics, and culture. For example, Joan of Arc, a 15th-century French heroine, and Émilie du Châtelet, an 18th-century scholar in mathematics and astronomy, proved that women can also achieve great intellectual and political success.

Today, as the principles of gender equality continue to evolve, the medieval views on women, while historically understandable, are no longer relevant for modern society. Contemporary scientific and sociological research has shown that women are not intellectually

or morally inferior to men. On the contrary, when given equal opportunities, they can succeed in all fields. Therefore, medieval perspectives should be viewed as historical phenomena, but they cannot serve as the basis for modern gender policy.

In Eastern culture, traditional gender roles have also been strongly embedded. The spread of Islam in Central Asia brought significant changes not only in religion but also in the cultural and social status of women. Between the 7th and 10th centuries, the introduction of Islam transformed the traditional social structure and values. Islamic religious norms, sharia laws, and interpretations of the Qur'an imposed new social responsibilities on women, often limited to the domestic sphere.

However, it must be noted that Islamic values, compared to Western culture, promoted more respectful attitudes toward women. Islam emphasized respect and the protection of women's rights. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) emphasized treating women with dignity and respect, not only in the family but in society as well. His hadiths urged good treatment of women and not to leave them in need. For example, in Tirmidhi's collection: *"The best among you is the one who is best to his family."* (Tirmidhi, Hadith 3282).

This hadith emphasizes the utmost importance of showing respect and compassion to women. Through it, the Prophet (peace be upon him) presented kind treatment of women as a noble virtue. In Islam, a person's goodness is measured by how they treat their family—especially women. This not only aims to improve family life but encourages better social treatment of women overall. Islam teaches respect and compassion for women and discourages mistreatment as part of ethical conduct. Reading such a hadith compels one to reassess their behavior and build respectful, kind, and mutual relationships with women.

Although in the medieval period in Central Asia, women's societal roles were often limited, there were exceptions. The 10th-century historian Narshakhi mentioned in his "History of Bukhara" that women at that time were active as merchants. Despite social constraints, this illustrates their participation and potential in society. Today, due to changing social conditions and global influences, women's roles in Central Asia continue to expand. Governments, international organizations, and some social groups are working to protect women's rights and promote gender equality.

However, traditional patriarchal values and social norms still limit women's full access to rights in some areas. Nevertheless, there is hope that gender equality and the expansion of women's roles will continue to progress. The continued influence of traditional cultural norms highlights the need to further develop mutual respect and compassion for women and to create broader opportunities for them in society.

One of the key factors affecting gender equality is women's limited access to education. Historically, in many societies, including Uzbekistan, girls' opportunities for education were restricted, which hindered their professional and economic development. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, women's education in Central Asia was rare. During that period, madrassas mainly educated boys, while girls were taught religious and domestic skills. Attention to women's education only increased in the second half of the 20th century, leading to significant achievements in gender equality. Today, major reforms are being implemented in this regard, which will be discussed in more detail below.

The roots of economic and cultural inequality are key factors that continue to exacerbate gender inequality in society. The roots of cultural inequality are tied to patriarchal social traditions and gender stereotypes perpetuated by the mass media. Patriarchal values in society have historically reinforced male dominance while restricting women's social activity. In the media, women are often portrayed only in traditional roles—such as homemakers, mothers, or devoted wives—which diminishes their participation in the labor market and political life. Some religious and cultural customs have also limited women's status in society and made it difficult for them to engage in political and economic activities. Thus, the roots of economic and cultural inequality intensify gender inequality in society and restrict women's opportunities for development.

Over the past centuries, labor market discrimination has also significantly influenced the struggle for gender equality. Women have often been forced to work in low-paying or informal sectors, with limited access to leadership positions. Historically, during the Industrial Revolution in Western Europe and the United States, women were primarily employed in textile factories, the service industry, and as domestic workers in low-wage jobs. Although women's participation in the workforce increased in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, their wages were significantly lower than those of men. For instance, during World War II, when men went to the front, women began working in factories and plants. However, after the war ended, they were forced to return to their traditional roles as housewives.

Conclusion. In Uzbekistan, although women were widely involved in production during the Soviet era, the majority of them worked in agriculture and the service sector. After gaining independence, various reforms were implemented to promote gender equality, and significant progress has been achieved in this area. Today, the role of women in the labor market is steadily expanding. Women are increasingly represented in high-level leadership positions, and these positive changes demonstrate ongoing development toward achieving gender equality. As

women's roles and opportunities in society continue to grow, this will ultimately lead to the full elimination of gender inequality in the future.

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