

ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEMS OF "GENDER EQUALITY" IN THE COUNTRIES OF THE MIDDLE EAST AND CENTRAL ASIA

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Abstract. The article presents an analysis of the current state of gender equality in the countries of the Middle East, as well as the problems of implementing gender policy in the region and the prospects for its development. The main method in this work is the analysis of content data of available electronic resources. The authors analyzed socio-cultural and religious factors in the context of historical development, and also carried out a comparative analysis of the state of gender equality in the countries of the region and ways to resolve problems arising from discrimination based on gender. A analysis of the gender situation in the region is given in order to give a general assessment of the state of gender inequality. In addition, some aspects of gender inequality in the countries of Central Asia are analyzed. In the course of the work done, the need to revise the main provisions of the gender policy of the countries and its modernization was identified in order to achieve sustainable gender development.

Keywords: *gender equality, Middle East, Central Asia, content data, discrimination, gender policy.*

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ТАЯУ ШЫҒЫС ЖӘНЕ ОРТАЛЫҚ АЗИЯ ЕЛДЕРІНІҢ «ГЕНДЕРЛІК ТЕНДІК» МӘСЕЛЕЛЕРІН ТАЛДАУ

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Аңдатпа. Мақалада Таяу Шығыс елдеріндегі гендерлік теңдіктің қазіргі жай-күйіне талдау ұсынылған, сондай-ақ өңірде гендерлік саясатты іске асыру проблемалары және оның даму перспективалары қарастырылған. Бұл жұмыстағы негізгі әдіс-қол жетімді электрондық ресурстардың деректерін талдау. Авторлар тарихи даму контекстіндегі әлеуметтік-мәдени және діни факторларды талдады, сондай-ақ аймақ елдеріндегі гендерлік теңдіктің жай-күйіне және гендер белгісі бойынша кемсітушілік негізінде туындайтын проблемаларды реттеу тәсілдеріне салыстырмалы талдау жүргізді. Гендерлік теңсіздіктің жай-күйіне жалпы баға беру үшін аймақтағы гендерлік жағдайға талдау келтірілген. Сонымен қатар, Орталық Азия елдеріндегі гендерлік теңсіздіктің кейбір аспектілері талданады. Атқарылған жұмыс барысында орнықты гендерлік дамуға қол жеткізу мақсатында елдердің гендерлік саясатының негізгі ережелерін қайта қарау және оны жаңғырту қажеттігі анықталды.

Түйін сөздер: гендерлік теңдік, Орталық Азия, Таяу Шығыс, контент-деректер, кемсітушілік, гендерлік саясат.

АНАЛИЗ ПРОБЛЕМАТИКИ «ГЕНДЕРНОГО РАВЕНСТВА» В СТРАНАХ БЛИЖНЕГО ВОСТОКА И СТРАН ЦЕНТРАЛЬНОЙ АЗИИ

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Аннотация. В статье представлен анализ современного состояния гендерного равенства в странах Ближнего Востока, а также, рассмотрены проблемы реализации гендерной политики в регионе и перспективы ее развития. Основным методом в данной работе выступает анализ контент-данных доступных электронных ресурсов. Также, авторами, были проанализированы социокультурные и религиозные факторы в контексте исторического развития, а также, проведен сравнительный анализ состояния гендерного равенства в странах региона и способов урегулирования проблем, возникающих на почве дискриминации по признаку гендера. Приведен анализ гендерной ситуации в регионе, для того чтобы дать общую оценку состояния гендерного неравенства. Кроме того, проанализированы некоторые аспекты гендерного неравенства в странах Центральной Азии. В ходе проделанной работы была выявлена

необходимость пересмотра основных положений гендерной политики стран и ее модернизация, с целью достижения устойчивого гендерного развития.

Ключевые слова: Гендерное равенство, Центральная Азия, Ближний Восток, контент-данные, дискриминация, гендерная политика.

Introduction

At present, the issue of gender inequality has firmly entrenched itself in all spheres of human activity, significantly impacting the economy and social development of countries. Modern progressive society continually makes new attempts to establish gender equality to achieve one of the central UN Millennium Development Goals [1]. However, the gender situation in many countries remains unstable and marked by increasing discrimination based on gender and violations of fundamental human rights and freedoms. Inconsistent gender norms, shaped over many years and currently sparking numerous discussions, have come to the forefront, making it a relevant research topic. Despite the active engagement of existing international women's organizations, the issue of gender inequality annually takes the lead in discussions, revealing new consequences requiring solutions, especially pertinent in countries where the dominance of traditions and religious dogmas prevails in society.

The problem of gender inequality in the Middle East attracts numerous researchers since the situation regarding the observance of fundamental human rights and freedoms without gender discrimination is particularly critical in the region under study. In many Middle Eastern countries (Syria, Sudan, Egypt, Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, etc.), the rights of the female segment of society are still limited by religious or traditional frameworks. Each year, thousands of women in Middle Eastern countries

suffer social and legal injustice because of gender-based discrimination. In some countries, girls are deprived of the right to attend schools on par with boys, and adult women face obstacles to enrolling in universities. Even if they acquire the right to education, as in the United Arab Emirates, they struggle to pursue their professional interests after graduating from university, as employers refuse to hire them due to their gender.

As is known, a series of socio-political changes and processes (author's note: the 'Arab Spring,' democratic transformations, etc.) have occurred in the Middle Eastern countries over the past decade, which could not but affect the gender-related situation. The contemporary state of gender equality is reflected in the content data of electronic resources, which include official websites of international organizations and various institutions, as well as articles published in the online space. Analyzing both electronic and traditional media concerning gender issues allowed the authors to provide an evaluative analysis of the current state of gender equality in Middle Eastern countries.

The second part of this article involves an analysis of gender inequality in the countries of Central Asia. The authors did not intend to conduct a comparative analysis between the Middle East and Central Asia regions within the framework of studying gender inequality issues, as these regions differ in their cultural, historical, and social developmental definitions. Nevertheless, we found it interesting to analyze certain

aspects of gender inequality problems in the countries of Central Asia and present a brief analysis of this issue. Despite the differences between the regions, the ‘problem’ remains the same. Therefore, this article will provide a quick analysis of the gender situation in the countries of Central Asia. The authors hope that future research (articles, monographs, post-doctoral research, etc.), including this analysis of gender issues in Central Asia, will begin more extensive study.

Research Methods

The primary research method chosen was the method of internet content analysis, using which the authors of the article collected various data on the state of gender equality in the countries of the Middle East and Central Asia. Additionally, the authors applied methods including retrospective analysis, synthesis, deduction, and induction, which enabled an assessment of the current state of gender equality in the Middle Eastern countries. An overview analysis of the issues in the Central Asian Republics (CAR) was also conducted.

Discussion of Results

Overall, the question of the current state of gender equality in the region with a predominantly Islamic population is highly relevant. Based on the data obtained during the analysis of Professor Leyla Ahmed’s research, the following politico-economic factors influencing the development of gender policy in Middle Eastern countries can be outlined: violation of norms of ratified conventions and accepted commitments; inadequate implementation of gender policy in the region’s countries; domestic laws beyond international law that limit women’s opportunities; low representation of women in top

managerial positions in the political and economic spheres; high levels of gender segregation in the professional sphere; gender imbalances in the labor market – barriers to employment; maintenance of the gender pay gap; and consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As observed, gender inequality can be found in all major spheres of societal development, leading to regional imbalances. The social sphere is the most vulnerable in the conditions of contemporary realities because the primary reason for the absence of gender equality in Middle Eastern countries lies in the preservation of traditionalism and the influence of religious beliefs. Additionally, the role of gender stereotypes and sociocultural beliefs is increasing.

For the Middle East countries, achieving gender parity has been challenging for many years. Primarily, this is due to Islamic fundamentalism, which has solidified the patriarchal social structure [3]. Additionally, the intensified influence of gender and cultural stereotypes slows down the region’s social development process. Consequently, entrenched notions of gender roles persist, where women are primarily depicted as homemakers. Moreover, polygamy is widespread in many countries, where the overwhelming majority of women, due to religious convictions, are compelled to wear hijabs and care for the continuity of the lineage [4, p.48].

Some researchers note that Islamic patriarchy is evident in the reluctance of Muslim states to sign the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women – without any reservations, most of which concern women’s equality within the family. For example, there are family laws, also known as personal status

codes, in all Arab countries, which limit women in such crucial aspects of social life as marriage, divorce, child custody, and inheritance [4, p.52]. Subsequently, due to the enduring importance of values such as family honor and modesty, women’s engagement in non-agricultural or unpaid labor is associated with social stigma, while paid work is not perceived as part of women’s role. Additionally, women are predominantly engaged in “female” positions, in most cases without the opportunity for career advancement.

Furthermore, in most countries of the region, a husband has the full right to prohibit his wife from working or engaging in any activity.

Analyzing the legal norms of the countries of the Middle East, we relied on available data from Internet resources. As a result, we obtained data on the following countries belonging to the Middle East region: Kuwait, Algeria, United Arab Emirates, and Morocco. The results are shown in Table 1.

Countries of the Middle East	
Kuwait	1. Draft law on combating family violence. 2. Law No. 6/2010 on employment in the private sector includes the following definition of an employee: "a man or a woman who performs manual or intellectual work for an employer, under his supervision and control, in exchange for a wage." The specified law includes an entire section dedicated to women's employment issues and lays down the legal basis for expanding women's rights and opportunities. Article 26 of this law states, "Men and women receive equal pay for equal work." Thus, Kuwait fulfills its obligations regarding equal remuneration for work of equal value by its accession to Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention No. 111 of the International Labour Organization.
Algeria	The Constitution and various codes guarantee equality between women and men.
United Arab Emirates	In 2019, the UAE government issued a federal decree to ensure gender equality in the judiciary system. According to UAE legislation, female employees performing the same functions as men receive equal pay. They are also free to choose the desired position.
Morocco	Inclusion of provisions in favor of gender equality in the new Constitution of this country, adopted in July 2011. Article 19 explicitly establishes equality between men and women in the enjoyment of civil, political, economic, social, cultural, and environmental rights. The new Constitution also effectively introduces the principle of gender equality in several articles, mentioning the government's obligation to create conditions for achieving equality of all genders and equal representation of men and women in all spheres of activity and their equal access to decision-making bodies.

Table 1. Regulatory Acts in the Middle Eastern Countries (regarding gender issues)

Conclusion to the table: Based on the data from the four presented Middle Eastern countries, we conclude that gender issues are addressed in some countries within the framework of the Constitution, as well as norms regulating labor rights, equal pay, etc.

Despite the legislative acts in some Middle Eastern countries regulating women's rights, traditions still play a significant role in oppressing women's rights and their social status. For instance, female genital mutilation is a cultural practice that represents an extreme form of discrimination against women and girls¹. This practice, while receiving dubious endorsement in Islam, remains largely unknown in most Muslim countries. However, it is still performed in rural areas of both Muslim and non-Muslim parts of the region. Experts agree that this tradition originated from pre-Islamic beliefs and among tribal peoples. However, female mutilation in some countries is justified by religious beliefs, the validity of which lacks explicit confirmation. Presently, female genital mutilation is practiced in over 30 countries worldwide, primarily in the Middle East and Africa.

Another socio-cultural issue is the so-called "honor killing."² in countries like Pakistan, Iraq, Somalia, Jordan, and others, which have no grounds whatsoever. Besides the fact that potential perpetrators often go unpunished, justifying their actions by claiming the girl has dishonored the family, the victim's body is often buried in an unmarked

grave, visiting which is also considered shameful. According to data from The Guardian news portal, the number of "honor crimes," including rape, death threats, and assaults, increased from 884 in 2016 to 1599 in 2020, showing an 81% rise.

It can be observed that since the early 1990s, countries in the Middle Eastern region have made significant progress in reducing the gender gap in education and access to healthcare. Many young girls now have the opportunity to receive education and free medical assistance. However, these achievements have yet to lead to a more equal role for women in political and economic life. Thus, ensuring gender equality is essential to democratizing society and improving the population's lives. In a broader sense, it means providing equal rights and opportunities for both men and women, excluding any form of discrimination. In other words, gender equality is the foundation of stable social development. According to Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, equality between both genders is their fundamental right to life, which necessitates addressing gender issues [6].

Notwithstanding the implemented changes, the countries of the region still show a significant gender pay gap and unequal economic opportunities. Each year, the level of unemployment among women increases, and women face various barriers to employment. According to the National Organization for Women, in 2019, the unemployment rate among young women in the Middle East reached 38.5%, which is twice the rate among men. Additionally, the average lifespan of women in many countries is half that of

¹ Female genital mutilation includes all procedures that involve altering or injuring the female genitalia for non-medical purposes. This practice is recognized as a violation of women's and girls' rights on an international level.

² 'Honor killing' is a crime, the murder of a family member, often (but not necessarily) female, committed by relatives due to bringing shame or dishonor upon the family. Shame usually refers to forbidden sexual acts within that culture: adultery, premarital sex, rape, and homosexual relationships, among others, as well as apostasy.

men. For instance, in Kuwait, Lebanon, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates, the birth rate for each woman is less than two [7].

Analyzing statistical data, it's evident that there has been an increase in the gender gap worldwide over the past few years. Women in the Arab region, on average, find themselves in a more unfavorable economic, political, and social position. When considering the level of education and literacy among women in Middle Eastern countries in the context of urbanization and the region's oil wealth, there is a tendency toward relatively low indicators, especially among the adult female population. Women are also underrepresented in managerial and leadership positions, have limited economic and political opportunities, and face decision-making obstacles. For instance, only two countries – Israel and Tunisia – have reduced the gender gap by more than 20%, while the rest still need to overcome the 10% threshold for gender equality [7].

The influence of stereotypical gender roles instilled in women from childhood, which act as barriers to obtaining education and contribute to intolerance of domestic violence and harassment in the workplace, is also significant. According to UN Women for 2021, every third woman in the Middle East became a victim of physical and emotional violence. The situation worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic, with increased cases of murders and gender-based rapes [8]. According to CNN's official data, women's rights activist Hanan Al-Barassi was shot dead in Benghazi in 2020, and prominent woman politician Sheham Sergiwa was abducted from her home in 2019.

According to the Arab Barometer³, non-partisan research network, the region also experiences prevalent sexual harassment. Based on a 2019 survey, 39% of women respondents reported being subjected to sexual harassment in public places [9].

As noted earlier, the Middle Eastern region is known for its adherence to religious values and socio-cultural norms, which partly accounts for the high level of sex and gender-identity-based discrimination. Professional segregation is predominantly developed here, with high levels of gender pay gaps. Countries with lower levels of development tend to be at greater risk of gender inequality, considering that socio-economic poverty disproportionately affects women and girls. These issues are increasingly drawing public attention and often become the focus of the media, which, in one way or another, influences the situation in the region. In this context, it is advisable to conduct a comprehensive analysis of content data from electronic resources and identify their level of impact on addressing gender inequality issues [10, p.7].

Today, the media are one of the main tools shaping public opinion and creating a general picture of what is happening. They significantly influence people's behavior and actions, contributing to the widespread coverage of current issues. According to data from the Consortium of Women's Non-Governmental Organizations website, negative attitudes towards Arab women on social media amounted to 79%, with 81% of the content consisting of gender stereotypes

³ The Arab Barometer is a non-partisan research network that provides an understanding of ordinary citizens' social, political, and economic views and values across the Arab world. It conducts public opinion surveys in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region since 2006.

and negative comments about the position of women in the region, creating an unfavorable image for Middle Eastern countries [11].

However, the influence of the media also has positive aspects. For example, according to a recent survey, an average of 54% of social media users in 8 Middle Eastern countries report that they have become more tolerant because of using social media [12]. In addition, social media contributes to the rapid dissemination of necessary information and, consequently, swift mass reaction. One notable example is the Instagram page of Queen Rania of Jordan, where she actively promotes ideas of equality and expanding opportunities for the female population of the country [13].

An essential factor in implementing gender policies is the modernization of society in all spheres of life, which will subsequently impact the population's living standards. However, considering many wealthy countries in the Middle East (such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, etc.), there's a trend where stable economic status doesn't necessarily correlate with sustainable gender development. Moreover, these countries exhibit a significant gender imbalance in top leadership positions. According to the WEF (World Economic Forum), the region's average score for the political rights and opportunities sub-index is 10.2%, the worst among all regions [14, p.54]. According to the ranking of countries by the percentage of women in parliament for 2018, Middle Eastern countries have the lowest representation of women in parliamentary positions. For example, in Jordan's parliament, women constitute 15.4%, with 7.5% in Bahrain and 9.8% in Qatar. There are no women in the Yemeni parliament at all [15]. Overall, the average representation of women in

parliament is 15%, the lowest among all regions.

The resolution of gender issues is influenced by the fact that countries in the region are at different stages of economic, social, and demographic transformations. Therefore, it cannot be asserted that the gender situation in the region is solely built on religious and sociocultural grounds. There's even an opinion that high revenues from oil sales contribute to the formation of a conservative view of women's societal roles, and repressive political movements further exacerbate the situation. This is evident in the gender gap between countries with the best and worst indicators in the region, which is a significant 28% in the education level sub-index and more than 2% in health and survival indicators. The differences in gender parity are equally substantial in terms of economic involvement and opportunities, as well as the expansion of political rights, with an average difference of 32% in the gender gap between countries in the region [16]. All these factors lead to a severe wage gap, which, according to the Global Gender Gap Index's annual assessment, reached 61.1% over the past five years [17]. Thus, the Middle East region has the lowest score among all regions. If the gender situation remains unchanged, it will take approximately 150 years to eliminate the gender gap in this region.

Referring to the numbers provided by the World Economic Forum in 2020, gender equality has not significantly changed over the past 20 years. Israel, the country with the best indicators, ranks 64th in the overall index, while the rest of the region's countries did not even make it into the top 100 list. It is worth noting that low female involvement and unjustified gender discrimination against them are specific to the labor markets in

Middle East countries [18]. This affects the region's economic growth and the social cohesion of the population. For instance, the average regional score for the sub-index of economic participation and opportunities is 42.5%, which is the second-highest after South Asia (36.5%). In many countries, less than half of women are engaged in the labor market. In six countries, this figure is even below 20%, including Yemen, where the female labor force participation rate of 6.3% is the lowest in the world. Additionally, women's estimated earned income averages 28% of what men earn. In six countries, this figure is less than one-fifth [19].

The current state of gender equality in Middle Eastern countries can also be viewed through the lens of the development of feminism and activist movements advocating for women's and minorities rights. Due to several reasons, including resource scarcity and high levels of accountability, the actions of the social movement were covert and largely undocumented. The Iranian Revolution of 1979 is considered a pivotal point in establishing feminism in this region, prompting the development of

feminist movements. Subsequently, in the 1990s, the Zanan magazine became an influential platform for social justice and gender equality for Muslim women in the Middle East [4].

The beginning of the 21st century brought about significant changes in the development of feminism. In 2003, Iranian lawyer, writer, and educator Shirin Ebadi received the Nobel Peace Prize for her active involvement in promoting democracy and defending human rights in Iran, particularly those of women and children. This event was pivotal in the history of feminist movements, as Ebadi became the first Muslim woman and the first Iranian to receive this award. Following this, campaigns were initiated to repeal discriminatory laws against women, large-scale human rights movements emerged, and international protests were staged to defend women's fundamental freedoms — notably, the online initiative 'Women2Drive' aimed to express discontent regarding the ban on women driving. Moreover, women throughout the region actively participated in events from 2010 to 2012, asserting their civil stance and vocally advocating for their rights [20].

Figure 1. Data on Gender Gaps in some Middle Eastern Countries as of 2020.

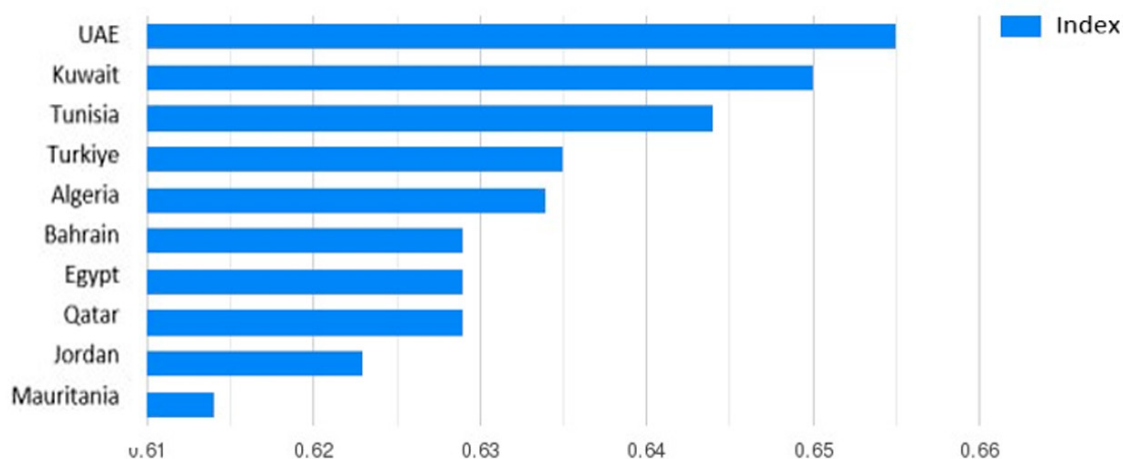


Figure 1. The diagram presents data on gender gaps in some Middle Eastern countries in 2020, where an index of 1 indicates a high level of gender equality, while ‘0’ signifies the absence of gender equality altogether.

Source: Gender Gap Index according to the Humanitarian Research Portal of the World Economic Forum [21].

Today, due to the active position of regional and local organizations advocating for gender equality and women’s rights, we can observe positive shifts in expanding the rights and opportunities for women across the entire region [22]. However, it is essential to consider that achieving gender parity occurs unevenly. For example, comparing the two countries in the region with the lowest and highest gender gap index (Mauritania and the UAE, respectively), it can be noticed that the distribution of equality between men and women varies due to different economic and social indicators. Additionally, according to the ranking of countries based on gender equality levels [23], it is evident that the overall status of gender equality in the region remains similar.

Thus, we have examined the issue of gender inequality in Middle Eastern countries. However, it is stereotypical to assume that violations of women’s and men’s rights based on gender aspects are more prevalent only in Muslim nations with deep traditions and firm moral motives. Inequality is typically observed between the rich and poor, as those with financial means can solve problems, while others lacking economic power cannot resolve household or other issues. However, paradoxically, one of the most acute and pertinent problems of recent decades in the 21st century is the issue of gender inequality.

Representatives of the female gender, being an integral part of modern society, gain education, acquire and develop professional skills, contribute to societal

development, hold official positions, and make decisions of national importance. However, it hasn’t always been this way, and even today, unfortunately, not all women have these opportunities. What is the reason for this, and what are the current trends in the issues related to women’s rights in Central Asia? It is important that despite the prevailing opinion about the perceived lack of demand for scientific research in the field of gender inequality in Central Asian Republics, scholars have conducted significant research in the area of gender policy in Central Asia.

Researchers such as S. Shakirova, in her article ‘Women’s and Gender Issues in Scientific Periodicals in Kazakhstan: A Quantitative Analysis’ [24], examine 100 articles, including those in foreign languages, analyzing gender issues and the level of academic writing in articles. Equally interesting is the research within R. Sarbayeva’s doctoral dissertation on Gender Policy of International Organizations – UN and OSCE: Historical and Contemporary Aspects [25], as well as the works of Yerimpasheva A.T., Lipovka A.V., Tarakbayeva R.E., and Zakirova A.A. on Comparative Analysis of Gender Stereotypes in Central Asia and Central Europe [26]. Temirbekova Z., Yergebekov M., Beisembayev S., Bekmurganova M., ‘Issues of Gender Equality in Kazakhstan: Women in the Economic, Political, and Socio-Cultural Spheres’ [27], Garibova F.M., Gender Equality in Tajikistan’ [28], Marzabayeva B.T., Tashybayeva A.K., Asanakhunova Z.M., and Babakulova R.B., ‘Legislative Support for Gender Equality in the Kyrgyz Republic’ [29].

All these works explore various aspects of gender issues in Central Asia. The substantial number of authors on gender-related topics speaks to the interest and relevance of such studies.

Today, among the current issues raised within gender studies in Central Asian Republics, the problem of violence is increasingly being addressed. The issue of violence against girls and women must be a gender-related issue, which aligns with the priorities in the field of gender issues outlined by the United Nations (UN).

Unfortunately, in Central Asia, as well as worldwide, violence against women and girls remains a widespread phenomenon. According to event organizers, nearly 80% of sexual violence victims in almost all Central Asian countries are women and girls [30].

A sociological study titled ‘Ensuring equal participation of women in local government’ conducted within one of the UNDP projects showed that 53% of respondents noted the necessity of dedicating themselves to family caring for elderly parents and children. In comparison, 44% of survey participants highlighted the stereotypes of a traditional family, where women are expected to stay at home and manage household chores taking care of children. Independent

analysts recognize that while addressing gender issues, it is crucial to consider that in Uzbekistan, women’s wages are 35% lower than men’s. During job interviews at major companies, despite experience and knowledge, women may still be denied employment in favor of male applicants. The reasons for this could be the potential maternity leave, children who might get sick, and the most banal reason – the assumption that she might not cope with the responsibilities entrusted to her. Not all husbands are pleased with the career growth of their wives, with many believing that a woman must guard the family hearth rather than pursue a career [31].

Since the legislation and other normative legal documents of Central Asian states enshrine the rights and opportunities for the entire population without gender discrimination, it remains puzzling that women’s rights violations persist. Moreover, headlines in the press and articles on social media occasionally highlight harsh stories of harassment and violence against girls in public places and workplaces.

In exploring the issues of gender policy in Central Asian countries, we decided to examine the availability of normative legal acts in these countries, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Legislative Acts in Central Asia

CAR	
Kazakhstan	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Decree of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan on the National Commission on Family Affairs and Gender Policy under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, dated February 1, 2006, No. 56. 2. Strategy for Gender Equality in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2006-2016. Approved by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, dated December 29, 2005, No. 1677. 3. Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated July 1, 1998, No. 220-I On State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women. 4. Kazakhstan 2030 Strategy adopted by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan on May 4, 1998.

	<p>5. National Plan for Gender Equality for 2006-2016, approved by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan on January 16, 2006.</p> <p>6. Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated November 30, 2012, No. 34-V ZRK on Amendments and Additions to Some Legislative Acts of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Guarantees of Women’s Rights and Gender Equality.</p> <p>7. Strategy for Gender Equality in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2016-2020, approved by the Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan on February 18, 2016.</p>
<p>Uzbekistan</p>	<p>1. The Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Additional Measures to Support the Actions of the Women's Committee of Uzbekistan was issued on May 25, 2004.</p> <p>2. National mechanisms for promoting gender equality and enhancing the role of women have been improving since 1995. By the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated March 2, 1995, on Measures to Increase the Role of Women in the State and Public Construction of the Republic of Uzbekistan, a new position of deputy prime minister overseeing family, motherhood, and childhood social protection issues was introduced. Similar roles were established in all regional government structures.</p> <p>3. Action Strategy of Uzbekistan for 2017-2021 and UN Sustainable Development Goals until 2030 (2017). United Nations, Tashkent, Uzbekistan.</p> <p>4. Presidential Decree No. 4235 of March 7, 2019, on Measures to Further Strengthen Labor Rights Guarantees and Support Women’s Entrepreneurship.”</p>
<p>Tajikistan</p>	<p>1. By the Government Resolution of the Republic of Tajikistan dated May 29, 2010, No. 269, the National Strategy for Activating Women's Roles in the Republic of Tajikistan for 2011–2020 was approved.</p> <p>2. On March 1, 2005, the Law on State Guarantees of Equality of Men and Women and Equal Opportunities for Their Implementation was adopted. It proclaims state guarantees to ensure equal opportunities for men and women in public service, socio-economic spheres, exercising electoral rights, etc.</p> <p>3. The President of the country issued the Decree on Enhancing the Role of Women in Society on December 3, 1999. The decree aims to expand women’s representation in leadership positions of state bodies. The country’s government, state authorities, and management began appointing women, based on their competence, professional and business qualities, to the management of ministries, state committees, agencies, state-owned enterprises, institutions and organizations, higher educational institutions, country’s government, state authorities, and management began appointing women, based on their competence, professional and business qualities, to the management of ministries, state committees, agencies, state-owned enterprises, institutions and organizations, higher educational institutions, and other educational establishments, as well as appointing experienced, competent women-specialists to positions of one of the deputy heads.</p> <p>4. By the Law of the Republic of Tajikistan on Amendments to the Family Code of the Republic of Tajikistan dated July 21, 2010, No. 613, the marriage age was increased from 17 to 18 years. Raising the marriage age aims to ensure girls’ rights to education and prepare them for independent life.</p>

	http://docstore.ohchr.org/SelfServices/FilesHandler.ashx?enc=6QkG1d%2FPP RiCAqhKb7yhsqWC9Lj7ub%2FHrJVf1GxZMHFUaPKd6QbFQ5ZhuzDqzvl KJGCKQuGvBFjgyit10YSVsFw60b9xaedHsa32uQYp2ng9trIt0EupOVJrVGx hhJpfnEdnPZ4wFgpnHfS59SUwgA%3D%3D
Kyrgyzstan	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. THE NATIONAL STRATEGY of the Kyrgyz Republic for Achieving Gender Equality by 2030. http://cbd.minjust.gov.kg/act/view/ru-ru/159472 2. Resolution of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic dated November 19, 2018, No. 537 on Amendments to the Resolution of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic on the National Strategy of the Kyrgyz Republic for Achieving Gender Equality by 2020 and the National Action Plan for Achieving Gender Equality in the Kyrgyz Republic dated June 27, 2012, No. 443. 3. Decree of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic dated December 31, 2013, No. 527-r (On an interdepartmental commission to assess the effectiveness of legal norms providing for responsibility for violence against women). 4. Resolution of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic dated December 31, 2012, No. 872 on the Fourth Periodic Report of the Kyrgyz Republic on implementing the norms of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. 5. THE NATIONAL STRATEGY of the Kyrgyz Republic for Achieving Gender Equality by 2020, according to the Resolution of Government for the Kyrgyz Republic dated June 27, 2012, No. 443. 6. Since 2020, the Jogorku Kenesh (Supreme Council) has amended the Criminal Procedure Code, alimony law, and guaranteed legal assistance law, supported by the UN-EU Initiative, Beacon of Light. Amendments to the Labor Code, Code of Administrative Offenses, and Criminal Code to combat workplace sexual harassment have also been developed. Projects on Amendments to Some Legislative Acts of the Kyrgyz Republic in the Field of Ensuring and Protecting Against Domestic, Sexual, and Gender-based Violence, on Amendments to the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic, on State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women, and a draft law combating discrimination are expected to be considered soon.
Turkmenistan	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Law of Turkmenistan dated August 18, 2015, No. 264-V on State Guarantees for Ensuring Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (with amendments and additions as of December 10, 2017). 2. The Constitution of Turkmenistan (new edition) dated September 14, 2016. Article 29: A man and a woman in Turkmenistan have equal rights, freedoms, and opportunities for their implementation. Violation of equality based on gender entails responsibility established by law. https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2022-12/Report%20NAP%20gender%20PDF.pdf

Conclusion based on the table: the highest number of laws related to gender policy is in the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Republic of Kyrgyzstan, while Turkmenistan shows the lowest number.

Several standard features can be highlighted when assessing the gender policy of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan. Firstly, all countries have joined international legal mechanisms for gender equality. Consequently, at least at a declarative level, there is a common understanding of the need to expand women's rights and opportunities: specifically, the elimination of their discrimination in the country's political and social life and ensuring their right to participate in policy formulation and hold top positions, as well as work at all levels of government. Secondly, most reviewed countries have adopted and begun to implement national strategies to observe women's rights and interests, particularly in the political sphere, and to some extent, are refining legislation. However, based on the example of the gender development strategy in Kazakhstan, we have noted a trend of moving away from designating gender policy as an independent direction, resulting in the focus shifting from overcoming gender gaps to addressing a broader set of social policy tasks. Thirdly, all Central Asian countries acknowledge the significant role of gender statistics and publish statistical reports on the status of women.

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Nevertheless, none provides data on all significant indicators included in the System of Global Sustainable Development Goal Indicators and the set of gender indicators of the Statistical Commission of ECOSOC. This complicates the cross-country comparison of women's political participation. The absence of official statistical data is considered an attempt to present statistics about their country in a more favorable light than it actually is. Progress in collecting gender-disaggregated statistics that meet the criteria of availability, openness, and completeness is observed in Kazakhstan. Enhancing the representativeness of data will facilitate the development of practical measures to eliminate gender inequality in political life. Fourthly, despite individual attempts, the mechanism of gender budgeting has not yet gained widespread use, which could indirectly impact the expansion of women's opportunities in politics. Fifthly, as a characteristic policy instrument of the post-Soviet space, gender quotas should be noted. Two countries – Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan – have introduced gender quotas in

electoral lists. Nevertheless, considering the complexities in implementing this measure (mainly the existence of legal ways to bypass quotas), it is challenging to assess the effectiveness of this tool [32].

Conclusion

The current state of gender equality in the Middle East remains unstable. There is still a gender gap in all spheres of public activity, with discrimination based on gender and violence against fundamental rights and freedoms of minorities.

Following the analysis of content data from electronic resources, it has been found that today, in the Middle East, the gender issue is viewed in the context of social contradictions, conditioned by the continuing influence of religious and cultural values. Additionally, gender stereotypes and perceptions concerning the role of women in social institutions continue to have a pervasive impact on the development of the gender situation in the region.

Therefore, it is necessary to resolve the identified problems through the modernization and development of society, eradication of gender stereotypes, and reducing the influence of religion and cultural values. Furthermore, the modification of the fundamental principles of gender policy in most countries of the region, with the aim of a comprehensive analysis of the gender situation in the Middle East, holds particular importance. One of the fundamental solutions in addressing gender problems is increasing the representation of women in the political and economic spheres, as well as the adoption of legal norms capable of protecting fundamental rights and meeting the basic needs of the female population. It is necessary to bridge the gender pay gap by providing economic freedom to women and creating new

jobs that correspond to the demand for potential employees. Additionally, there is a need to review the Criminal Code and strengthen penalties for domestic violence, physical and sexual harassment, and ultimately eliminate practices related to “crimes of honor” and illegal operations that violate the rights of women and girls.

A distinctive feature in attempts to address the problem of gender inequality is the activity of international non-governmental women’s organizations, which also advocate for women’s rights and solutions to the problem of discrimination against women in social, economic, educational, and other spheres of life. However, despite the existing laws, organizations, and projects fighting for equal rights, the issue of gender inequality in the Middle East remains largely unresolved.

Thus, the current state of gender equality in the Middle East can be assessed as unstable due to the identified contradictions and low gender equality index indicators.

An overview analysis of the gender situation in the Central Asian Republics shows that in comparison to the Middle East, “traditional” discriminations, such as the prohibition of girls’ education, refusal to employ women, unequal pay to men and women, etc., are not as pronounced. Women participate in society, study equally with men, get jobs, and are not discriminated against in wages. However, if we consider the issue of gender inequality within any specific CAR country, significant differences can be observed. Mainly, a trend of increased oppression of women’s rights has been manifested in recent years in Turkmenistan. Women are prohibited from undergoing cosmetic procedures, using makeup, driving cars, sitting in the front seat of a vehicle, and more. In other

words, the “freedom” of women in terms of rights is curtailed by existing laws of Turkmenistan, which are being reinforced by societal perceptions of the role and position of women in society. Such facts, along with the increased violence overall in all CAR countries during and after the

COVID-19 pandemic, also indicate the necessity to revise the legislation of some countries concerning women’s rights since the non-observance of women’s rights can be considered a violation of human rights.

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