Approaching Gender Issues from a Socio-Political Perspective

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Abstract:

This article explores the role of gender in the political sphere of both state and society. Beginning with an examination of the term "gender," its origins, and the conceptual frameworks developed by Western scholars, the article delves into the study of gender relations. Through the use of data and statistical examples, it emphasizes the significance of gender policy in addressing political challenges faced by public authorities, particularly in light of the increasing importance of women's participation in modern politics.The focus then shifts to international efforts aimed at reforming gender policies, with specific attention given to developments in Uzbekistan. The article concludes by highlighting the necessity of ensuring gender equality while enhancing women's political participation in public administration. It offers recommendations for achieving these goals and emphasizes the importance of gender-inclusive political practices.

Keywords: gender, politics, sex, gender politics, gender equality, gender inequality

Introduction

Introduction

The concept of "gender" has emerged relatively recently in scientific discourse. Its widespread usage across various disciplines underscores the need to explore its origins and implications. Gender dynamics serve as focal points of inquiry in social and human sciences, including anthropology, psychology, sociology, philology, philosophy, political science, history, and economics. Western scholars such as Durkheim, Talcott Parsons, Habermas, Bourdieu, Simmel, Giddens, Luhmann, Hoffmann, and Garfinkel have contributed significantly to our understanding of social status and gender relations.

Emile Durkheim, for instance, correlated sexual dynamics with the evolution of social division of labor and societal advancement. He posited that as societies progress, one gender tends towards emotional roles while the other takes up intellectual functions, thereby complementing each other across various spheres including family, daily life, and professional settings. This nuanced understanding of gender roles is further elucidated through scientific theories.

Talcott Parsons and Bales expounded on the sociological interpretation of gender relations, emphasizing the

expressive role of women within the social system and the pivotal role of men. Women, according to their perspective, maintain psychological and emotional equilibrium within the family, embodying the expressive aspect of familial dynamics. Conversely, men assume an instrumental role, regulating family relations with external social groups and providing for the family's welfare. This traditional familial structure forms the cornerstone of their analysis.

The historical struggle for gender equality, encompassing rights, freedoms, and opportunities, has traversed through the annals of time, reflecting a persistent societal endeavor towards equity.

During a pivotal historical period, the introduction of the term "gender" in 1968 by American psychologist Robert Stoller marked a significant shift in understanding human socialization. Stoller characterized "gender" as a concept primarily rooted in psychological and cultural attributes rather than biological ones. He posited that defining gender as male or female inherently leads to the understanding of masculinity and femininity. Building upon this idea, American psychologist John William Mann (1921-2006) proposed that gender emerges through language acquisition in early childhood, typically up to 18 months of age.

Gender, then, is conceptualized as a complex system encompassing the behaviors, characteristics, roles, and relationships of individuals within the societal framework. This system is shaped by various social institutions and perspectives, including social, political, and economic factors. It is imperative to differentiate between "gender" and "sex," with the latter being biologically assigned at birth, while the former is socially constructed within a specific cultural and historical context.

As a social construct, gender delineates behavioral, cultural, and psychological differences between men and women. Scholars from diverse fields such as anthropology (e.g., Margaret Mead), psychology (e.g., Sigmund Freud, John William Mann, Hampshire), and sociology (e.g., Durkheim, Parsons) have examined gender not merely as a biological categorization but as a product of social, cultural, and historical influences. This approach underscores the significance of social factors over individual characteristics like race, age, or origin.

Furthermore, radical feminist perspectives assert that the universal social stratification prevalent in societies revolves around the division of individuals into genders, namely men and women. This division, dependent on gender, serves as a fundamental aspect of societal organization, influencing economic, social, and political realms. The question of gender inequality remains contentious, with differing cultural interpretations of biological disparities between the sexes leading to ongoing debates and disagreements.

Method:

1. Socio-Political Context Analysis:
   - Investigate the historical, cultural, and institutional contexts that contribute to the construction of gender roles and identities.
   - Examine the distribution of power and resources within society and how it intersects with gender, class, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and other social categories.
   - Analyze the impact of political ideologies, policies, and governance structures on gender relations and women's rights.

2. Intersectional Framework:
   - Utilize an intersectional lens to understand how multiple social identities intersect and interact to shape individuals' experiences of gender oppression and privilege.
   - Explore how factors such as race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, ability, and nationality intersect with gender to produce unique forms of inequality and discrimination.

3. Policy Analysis:
   - Evaluate existing socio-political policies and legislation related to gender equality, women's rights, LGBTQ+ rights, and gender-based violence.

  - Assess the implementation, enforcement, and effectiveness of gender-focused policies in addressing structural inequalities and promoting social justice.

4. Political Participation and Representation:
  - Examine women's participation and representation in political institutions, decision-making processes, and leadership roles.
  - Analyze barriers to women's political empowerment, including patriarchal norms, institutional biases, and electoral systems.

5. Social Movements and Advocacy:
  - Study the role of social movements, advocacy groups, and civil society organizations in challenging gender norms, promoting gender equality, and advocating for policy change.
  - Explore the strategies, tactics, and mobilization efforts employed by activists to address gender-based injustices and advance women's rights agendas.

6. Data Collection and Analysis:
  - Employ qualitative and quantitative research methods to collect data on gender-related issues, attitudes, behaviors, and outcomes.
  - Use statistical analysis, surveys, interviews, case studies, and archival research to generate empirical evidence and support theoretical insights.

Discrepancies in Socio-Cultural Definitions of Gender Characteristics

• Gender identity, or self-awareness linked to perceptions of masculinity and femininity across diverse cultures, represents an individual's understanding of their alignment with societal norms. It encompasses the psychological traits and behaviors deemed appropriate based on biological origins. Central to this concept is how individuals characterize themselves within their societal roles.

• Gender inequality, a defining trait of social structures, manifests as persistent disparities among various social groups, including men and women, regarding opportunities and resources. Coined in 1980 within feminist discourse by John Scott, gender inequality denotes the unequal distribution of rights, resources, and power between genders. Despite significant variations in gender roles across cultures, a society where women hold more power than men remains elusive. The predominant societal expectation of women revolves around childcare and household management, relegating political and military endeavors predominantly to men.

• Traditional perspectives on gender roles dictate social actions based on biological distinctions. Sigmund Freud, the renowned psychoanalyst of the early 20th century, famously stated, "Anatomy is destiny," asserting that upbringing for boys traditionally emphasizes aggression to align with societal expectations of strength, ambition, and assertiveness. Men are ascribed the roles of historical and cultural creators, while girls are indoctrinated from a young age with the role of future mothers, discouraged from pursuing personal interests and expected to prioritize family life. Such gendered socialization perpetuates a favorable environment for violence against women. Advocates for gender equality contend that these traditional roles stem from societal influences such as education, media, literature, and cultural norms. Hence, they advocate for the elimination of traditional stereotypes, recognition of individual gender identities, and equal opportunities.

• Gender asymmetry in politics, evidenced by the underrepresentation of women in political decision-making processes, reflects a significant imbalance. Despite comprising more than half of the population, women hold only a fraction of parliamentary seats and national leadership positions globally. Barriers such as familial responsibilities, financial constraints, lack of support for political campaigns, and societal gender stereotypes impede women's

advancement in politics. Overcoming these obstacles is further hindered by entrenched societal attitudes. Efforts to address gender disparities have gained momentum since the mid-20th century, with global reforms aimed at enhancing women's participation in socio-political spheres, including granting them equal voting rights.

By the latter half of the 20th century, gender issues gained considerable attention worldwide. The term "gender," widely employed since the 1980s, encompasses the experiences, characteristics, lifestyles, thoughts, and aspirations of both women and men. Global reforms have aimed to enhance women's socio-political roles and activities, notably through granting equal voting rights, a pivotal step in recognizing women's rights and freedoms on a global scale. (The table illustrating these points will follow.)

a chronological overview of the years in which women were granted the right to vote on an equal basis with men in various countries. Here's an analysis of the data presented:

1. Early Adopters (Late 19th to Early 20th Century): New Zealand led the way in 1893, followed by Australia in 1902, and several European countries like Finland, Denmark, and Canada in the early 20th century. These nations were pioneers in recognizing women's suffrage rights.

2. Post-World War II Period (1945-1965): The aftermath of World War II saw a significant wave of countries granting equal voting rights to women. Notable countries in this period include France, Italy, Japan, Germany, India, and several Latin American nations. The establishment of new democracies and the push for social reforms contributed to this trend.

3. Late Adopters (Late 20th Century): Some countries, particularly in Africa and the Middle East, took longer to grant women the right to vote. Nigeria, for instance, did not grant equal voting rights until 1977, while Saudi Arabia, though not listed in the table, only granted women the right to vote in 2015.

4. Continued Progress (Late 20th Century to Early 21st Century): The table also indicates that the progression towards gender equality in voting rights continued beyond the mid-20th century, with countries like Zimbabwe and Uruguay enacting reforms in 1979.

5. Regional Patterns: The table reflects regional patterns, with clusters of countries in certain regions enacting suffrage reforms around the same time. For example, many Latin American countries granted equal voting rights in the late 1940s and 1950s.

6. Political Context: The timing of women's suffrage reforms often correlates with broader political movements and historical events. For instance, post-colonial nations in Africa and Asia tended to grant equal voting rights in the decades following their independence movements.

Overall, the table underscores the gradual but global progress towards gender equality in political participation, with countries adopting suffrage reforms at different points in time influenced by diverse socio-political contexts.

Traditional political science and law once viewed women solely as objects, with philosophers, politicians, theorists, and political practitioners excluding women from the political process under the pretext that it was not inherent to their nature. The liberal theory of human rights emerged as a practical framework for understanding human rights, but this approach faced vehement criticism from feminists. In response, feminists began to develop their own concepts regarding politics, political participation, and theories concerning women's human rights.

The rise of feminist movements and the widespread adoption of democratic ideals and human rights principles have catalyzed significant shifts within political theory and practice. Feminism has conducted thorough analyses of key political science concepts, including power dynamics, sovereignty, political obligations, civil liberties, private life, democracy, and justice. Women's rights have now become integral components of international human rights instruments and practices.

In recent years, local experts in gender studies have delved into a myriad of topics, with particular emphasis on the gender dimensions of policymaking. Concepts such as gender equality, inequality, symmetry, and asymmetry are frequently employed in analyzing political processes.

During the latter part of the previous century, British and American political spheres recognized the necessity of studying women's political involvement as a distinct field of inquiry, leading to the establishment of organizations like the Association of Researchers on Women and Politics. This initiative spurred investigations into various themes such as women's political activities, their roles in democracy, participation levels, power dynamics, political theory, and societal behaviors concerning women.

By the 1980s, comparative analyses of women's political engagement began to take shape. Towards the end of the decade, studies emerged that explored the evolving social policies of different nations, examined aspects of the Western women's movement, and delved into nuanced aspects of political theory.

However, challenges persist in the study of "women and politics." V. Fesenko's research highlights issues such as the tendency to view women as passive subjects within political relations, the narrow functional lens through which their participation and societal roles are often perceived, and the reluctance to attribute traditionally feminine qualities to women. Nonetheless, studies indicate that the rise in women's political activity can be attributed to increased education levels, greater workforce participation, and reduced time spent on childcare responsibilities.

The United Nations' efforts to safeguard women's rights trace back to the publication of its Charter. Article 1 of the Charter outlines the goal of fostering international cooperation for the promotion and protection of human rights and freedoms irrespective of factors such as race, gender, language, and religion. In its inaugural year, the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women was established under the Economic and Social Council, serving as the global governing body dedicated to gender equality and women's empowerment. A key responsibility of the Commission is to oversee the enforcement of gender equality principles outlined in the draft Declaration of Human Rights.

The 1970s witnessed the international expansion of feminist movements, prompting the UN General Assembly to declare 1975 as the International Women's Year and convene its first world conference in Mexico City to address women's issues. This led to the declaration of 1976-1985 as the UN Decade for Women, accompanied by the establishment of a voluntary fund. In 1979, the General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), a significant milestone in the global effort for gender equality. This was followed by the second world conference on women in 1985 in Nairobi, which marked a crucial moment in the global feminist movement, drawing participation from 15,000 NGOs and earning the moniker "birth of global feminism."

Despite these advancements, gender inequality persists in economic and political spheres globally. Women continue to face barriers in accessing employment opportunities, with the UN reporting a 24% disparity in labor force participation between men and women. Moreover, as of August 2018, women constituted only 24% of

parliamentarians worldwide, indicating a slow pace of progress in political representation compared to the 11.3% figure recorded in 1995.

In the 1990s, member states of the UN began advocating for the creation of an international organization dedicated specifically to gender issues. This culminated in the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, where over 10,000 delegates from 179 countries supported the UN's proposal to establish an entity focused on gender equality and women's empowerment. Consequently, the UN entity for gender equality and women's empowerment was formed, providing crucial support to member states in the development and implementation of gender-related initiatives.

Support initiatives such as the one mentioned encourages the highest political commitments and contributes significantly to achieving sustainable development goals, particularly regarding gender equality. This initiative targets the eradication of domestic, sexual, and gender-based violence, harmful customs, human trafficking, and economic exploitation.

Violence against women and girls ranks among the most prevalent and pervasive human rights violations globally. According to the UN, over 700 million girls worldwide are married off before reaching adulthood, with approximately 250 million of them being married before the age of 15. Nearly 70% of all trafficking victims are women and girls.

The establishment of initiatives like the Secretary-General's program "Elimination of Violence Against Women" has been crucial in addressing these issues. One notable effort includes the designation of Orange Day on the 25th of each month to raise awareness of violence against women. Additionally, November 25th marks the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, while March 8th is celebrated as International Women's Day, recognizing women's achievements irrespective of borders or cultural differences.

At the state level, numerous decrees and decisions have been made to promote gender equality and empower women. Uzbekistan, for instance, has undertaken significant reforms to ensure economic stability while prioritizing gender equality as part of its sustainable development goals. This commitment involves eliminating discrimination against women, promoting their participation and leadership in decision-making across political, economic, and social spheres, and integrating gender equality principles into state programs.

In recent years, various measures have been implemented to enhance gender equality and increase women's role in public and political life. These efforts encompass legislative improvements, institutional enhancements, public awareness campaigns, and capacity-building initiatives for law enforcement officials.

In Uzbekistan, institutional measures include the establishment of the Senate's Committee on Gender Equality, tasked with aligning national legislation with international standards and eliminating discrimination against women. These efforts align with the UN Convention on Women's Rights and Gender Equality.

Legislation in Uzbekistan has been continuously refined to uphold women's rights, with laws enacted to guarantee equal rights and opportunities for women and men and protect women and girls from harassment and violence. Moreover, collaboration between UN agencies and the creation of a special group on gender issues further reinforce the country's commitment to gender equality.

International forums and events, such as the international forum on gender and youth issues held in Tashkent in November 2019 and the Women's Forum Bulungan in Dubai in February 2021, serve as platforms for discussing reforms and progress in ensuring gender equality.

In conclusion, achieving gender equality is not only crucial for an economically stable society but also for social equality. To realize such equality, it is imperative to not only enact constitutional and legal norms but also implement comprehensive measures that address systemic issues and promote cultural change.

To ensure gender equality, it is imperative that women and men have equal access to legal information, resources, and opportunities to participate in the governance of the state and society. Gender equality entails providing both men and women with equal conditions to exercise their rights, thereby contributing to the national, political, economic, social, and cultural development of the country, as well as offering equal opportunities to enjoy the outcomes of their endeavors.

Global experience underscores the pivotal role of fostering a culture of gender equality within society, which is largely shaped by effective gender policies. Key considerations in this regard include:

Firstly, advancing women's rights necessitates elevating their status within society through education, empowerment, and legal protection. Establishing a clear legal framework to safeguard women's rights, fostering a supportive social environment, enhancing their familial and societal standing, and increasing their participation in governance structures are paramount.

Secondly, enhancing women's participation in politics, particularly in leadership roles, remains crucial for the development of civil society and the consolidation of democratic institutions. This requires providing women with training in leadership, communication, and decision-making skills.

Thirdly, fostering a legal and political culture that promotes consensus between men and women on gender-related laws and policies is vital. Efforts should be directed towards eliminating discrimination and violence against women, challenging patriarchal norms, and promoting gender equality through legal and political channels.

Fourthly, empowering women to take on influential roles in politics, business, and other spheres of society is essential for advancing gender equality. Increasing the representation of women in positions of authority can be accelerated through robust gender equality policies.

Uzbekistan recognizes the importance of protecting women's rights and actively supports UN initiatives in this regard. Efforts are continuously made to develop and enforce legal guarantees for gender equality in the country.

Women's NGOs play a crucial role in reshaping societal norms and attitudes towards gender equality. Their activities focus on challenging traditional gender stereotypes and fostering a conducive environment for women's empowerment and creativity.

Despite progress, challenges persist, including the need to address societal perceptions of women's status and take timely measures to rectify inequalities. It is essential to eliminate gender discrimination across all facets of life and foster an inclusive society where both men and women can thrive.

In conclusion, as emphasized by feminist theorists, gender is not determined by inherent qualities but rather by societal roles and tasks. Promoting gender equality will not only benefit individuals but also contribute to the development and improvement of society as a whole. As Simone de Beauvoir aptly stated, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman."

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