

[Field Research]

Kazakhstan's Gender Policy: Problems and Prospects

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to review, analyze and identify the suitability of Kazakh gender policy for the changes taken place in the society with suggesting necessary changes.

Research design, data, and methodology – After meticulous reviews of germane literature, the researchers applied an analytical approach which focuses on analyzing the Kazakh's gender policy and its issuance guidelines based on the present requirement in the society. Even though the policy has introduced with astonishing prudence, present-day living trends in society require imperatively some notable modifications which protect the rights of women and minority sections of the society.

Results – Through this gender policy, government has proffered required legal, financial and preferential support country's women to participate in the management and legislation of the country. Kazakh gender policy requires upgradations which flawlessly support women in the lifestyles of the feminine community.

Conclusions – In achieving gender equality in the economy as a priority area, Kazakh government monitoring persistently and closely the changing trends of women and their requirements which introduce necessary modifications to the existing gender policy of the country with the cooperation of international organization.

Keywords: Gender, Women, Social Roles, Kazakhstan.

JEL Classifications: J16, J18, J19.

1. Introduction

In the context of human resources development, the empowerment of women is of paramount importance. It has already proved that in any country where a high degree of gender equality is greater in terms of both opportunities and benefits, there is absolutely high economic growth and prevails better quality of life. Addressing gender inequalities and women empowerment is the prime concern to any country in every part of the globe. In 2000, the majority of UN member states adopted the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action to enhance the advancement and empowerment of women and to promote gender equality. Women around the world are struggling for their human rights. Globally, there has been a gradual positive change in terms of advancement of the status and role of women, the reduction of their inequality, democratization and humanization and the creation of equal opportunities for women and men. Gender problem is important and is linked to the development of gender disparities, infringes on the rights and possibilities of people who have barriers to any society's sustainable development. Gender problem is more important because it is a problem which hinders the development of every sector of the economy. As Shakirova (2015) said, modern Kazakhstani society can be described as a complicated mixture of cultural and ideological features like Nomadic style of life, belonging to Turk language family, domination of Islam, Post-Soviet postcolonial mind, liberal democracy, market economy, Central-Asian regional leadership, Eurasian geopolitical ideology, etc. The Government of Kazakhstan through its resolution # 1190 on 27th November, 2003 approved gender policy for the country. This gender policy has given clear directions on the achievement of balanced participation of men and women in the power structures, the provision of equal opportunities for women's economic independence, entrepreneurship and career development, creation of conditions for equal exercise of rights and responsibilities in a family and freedom from gender-based violence (The Decree of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2005). The traditional power oriented domination of men over women has been changing drastically in the last two to three decades. Even though significant attitudinal changes

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have taken place in the male community, it is not up to the mark to comprehensively eradicate gender inequality. Particularly, Kazakhstan since its independence has achieved highly alluring progress in the protection of rights and legitimate interests of its men and women. In this milieu, the researchers attempted to meticulously review the existing gender policy based on the present situation to identify whether the policy is suitable to the present situation or not.

2. Kazakhstan Gender Policy

The objective of any gender policy is working towards an organization which implements gender point of view as a focal point to frame its internal and external policy. The gender policy is featured by the truth that societal customs regarding men and women are broken and that both the sexes have equal access to power, authority and resources which is perceptible in the goals, strategy, structure and culture of the organization. Gender policy can be framed on the gender analysis which includes: a) main goals; b) short term goals, detailed towards concrete results; c) measures to achieve those results; d) responsibilities; e) communication plan; f) budget; g) timetable; h) reportage and evaluation (Zenska-Mreza, 2016). Right from its inception, Kazakh gender policy is strictly in the directional lines of the policy framework. In 1998, Kazakhstan joined the convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and ratified the convention on the political right of women and the convention on the nationality of married women. Gender imbalance prevents the formation of high-grade types of social activities. The experience of men and women needs to be considered. Limiting women's participation in the political life of the country, their removal from power at all levels will limit the efficiency of the state and its policy. Sustainable gender development is the creation of social infrastructures which promote dynamic economic growth, the formation of civil structures, creating conditions for personal expression of every human being, both men and women. They should have equal access to economic, political, educational resources and be able to express their interests and achieve their vital goals. Since its independence in 1991, Kazakhstan has witnessed tremendous notable changes in every facet and sector of the economy. By acceding to the UN Convention on the elimination of discrimination of women in 1998, it acknowledged its commitment to advance the rights and interests of women. Kazakhstan also joined more than 60 international agreements on human rights. The gender policy adopted by Kazakhstan defined the following main directions of gender policy: a) achieving balanced participation of men in women in power b) ensuring equal opportunities for women's economic independence c) developing their own business; d) career promotion e) enabling equal rights and responsibilities in the family; f) freedom from violence. The strategy of gender equality for 2006-2016 developed in Kazakhstan provides solutions to achieve equal rights and opportunities for women and men.

There are many problems of gender inequality in Kazakhstan. In real life, women have fewer rights and opportunities than men. From the results of sociological surveys and analyses elsewhere we can draw a conclusion: gender inequality still exists in Kazakhstan. During 1990-2000, the decrease in total employment took place, mostly, at women's expense and there was an active migration of women from paid labor to unpaid house work, and/or towards irregular non-qualified employment. Unemployed women in Kazakhstan constitute 58 per cent, and their wage in all types of activities adds up to only 60.8 per cent of cumulative male's pay. Even in traditionally women-dominated spheres, like health care, education, social protection and others women earn less in comparison with men (Panorama, 2011). In 1979 UN "Convention on abolishment of all types of discrimination against women" was ratified by Kazakhstan in 1998. This convention is directed to ensure the following women rights: a) To elect and be elected in all publically elected organs; b) To take part in the formation of the state policy and be a state employee; c) To be a member of a non-governmental organization, working on the social and political problems of the country's life (Lyudmila & Svetlana, 2011).

Representation of women in the Parliament has decreased in 1999. It amounted to 11.2%, in 2007 – 9.5%, while in 2010 r. – 13.6 %. The number of women in power is decreasing depending on the height of the position. In spite of the growth in the number of women as political civil servants (9.5% in 2000, 10.3% in 2007 and 9,4 % in 2010), there are only four women ministers, 8 deputy ministers, three committee chairs, five deputy and only one district akims (mayor/governor). There are no women region and/or town akims. Women deputy district akims make up only 17 %. Women are not in demand on the labor market. Of all women who applied for jobs to the Employment Services, only every sixth has been placed. Among persons employed for hire 50% are women but their salaries make up only 60% of men's salaries. Women are engaged in low paid job seven in such sectors as healthcare and education. In 2011, women's salaries comprised between 85% - 84% of men's salaries. Women can bring to management a new set of criteria, change the traditional management style based on mutual relations, consistence of actions and humanistic landmarks. The future of humanity depends on the level of women's education, their social status and health. To provide legal mechanisms of women's rights protection in Kazakhstan it is necessary to improve legislation, i.e.: a) Increase the number of women in bodies of authority b) create economic exemptions and preferences for women c) provide increased legal and social guarantees for women.

Currently, women in Kazakhstan are insufficiently represented in government and political bodies. There is a typical gender-biased pyramid of power, with women occupying its lower and middle levels, but are not found at the top (decision-making) level. Although the proportion of women in Parliament in 2006 grew to 15.9% (17 women), the overall number of women there amounted to 12.7% in 2007 and 13.6% (21 women) in 2010. The proportion of women in local administration in 2010 was 51%,

<Table 1> SWOT Analysis on Kazakh Gender Policy

Strengths	Weaknesses
1. Convention on Liquidation of All forms of discrimination against Women 2. Gender Equality Strategy 3. Cooperation with international organizations 4. Women's civic activity 5. Government support of credit lines for women's business development 6. Legislature development	1. Women's traditional roles and places in society 2. Formal equality 3. Imperfection of legislature 4. Lack of government-NPOs interaction 5. Absence of gender policy government monitoring
Opportunities	Threats
1. UN member states have commitments to eliminate gender disparities 2. Policy for achieving gender equality; 3. Strengthening NPO; 4. Developing ties with international organizations on gender issues; 5. High level of education among women	1. Financial crisis 2. Underrepresentation of women in management 3. Discrimination of women in career promotion and in staff reduction 4. Legal illiteracy 5. Prevalence of women unemployment. 6. Women's minority in power.

with only 9.4% among political civil servants and 55.9% in administration. Such distribution of employees in various structures of governance shows a low representation of women in politics. This is a barrier to a greater gender sensitive political participation and representation. Despite the fact that the fundamental principles of gender policy in Kazakhstan establish constitutionally guaranteed equal rights and freedoms for men and women, they are not backed up by guaranteed opportunities. In pursuance of the "Strategy of Gender Equality" the law "On Equal Rights and Opportunities of Women and Men" was developed in Kazakhstan. It provides for special measures (by introducing quota) to be implemented to increase the representation of women at decision making level. Following the practice of developed democracies and in order to build up the political capacity of women who are party members, a system of quota (of not less than 30%) has been introduced for women nominated as candidates for election or for appointments for leadership positions. This measure is aimed at eliminating the discrimination of women and inclusion of the principle of gender equality. A special government body needs to be created to oversee due procedures and processes and take special measures to maintain equality. Improving the collection and analysis of statistical data of the state of gender equality is a priority in the implementation of gender equality principles in Kazakhstan. It ensures an effective monitoring of gender policy in the country. An enabling environment is being created in Kazakhstan for gender-sensitive budgeting at both national and local levels. The Social (Gender) Budgets Project aims at capacity building of the national commission, civil servants, members of Parliament, women NPOs through the application of gender analysis. However, the full use of gender budgeting requires a political will which will ensure a sustainable application of gender approaches in budgeting. Women's personal development is understood as a condition of men's personal development since men's personal development is a prerequisite for women's growth and participation. The entire society will benefit as a result. A huge untapped potential of

creative forces and capabilities will be involved which will shape up modern gender models. This will change the ratio of goals and priorities of gender policy.

3. Conclusion

Kazakhstan's gender policy confidently achieved optimistic results since its inception develops with a perfect blend of international experiences and the national features. The President also reiterated the significance of women participation in decision-making and also declared that it will be necessary to expand the participation of women in production, in particular at new enterprises, to help them to occupy eventually large political posts. In 2010 World Economic Forum, it was noted that in a rating of gender equality, Kazakhstan occupied an honorable 41 place among 135 states and ahead of 14 states of the European Union on this indicator (CA-New, 2011).Based on the recent developments in Kazakh society, gender policy requires some upgradations with flawlessly supporting the lifestyles of the feminine community.

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