

THE SOCIAL STATUS OF WOMEN IN UZBEKISTAN DURING THE SOVIET PERIOD

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ABSTRACT	KEYWORDS
This article analyzes the labor activity of Uzbek women during the Soviet period, the problems that arose in their everyday lives, the changes that occurred in their social life, as well as the positive and negative aspects of these processes.	Social life, working hours, protection, labor, wages, leave, motherhood and childhood.

Introduction

The issue of attitudes toward women has always been one of the complex social problems in human history. At the same time, during the Soviet period, the situation of Uzbek women was not given much attention as an important social issue in society. The Soviet government and the Communist Party mainly addressed this issue from the perspective of political and economic interests, often disregarding numerous international documents adopted by foreign countries.

During the research period, the social, political, and legal status of women, their activity in society, and their roles within the family are analyzed separately. Although women in the former Soviet Union had equal rights with men in public affairs, their traditional family responsibilities and material conditions often remained unchanged. Moreover, measures aimed at activating women in various spheres were frequently driven by the interests of the Party and the state.

Results and Discussion

Although the issue of attitudes toward women has always been one of the complex social problems in human history, during the Soviet regime the situation of Uzbek women was not regarded as an important social issue. The Soviet government and the Communist Party approached this socio-political problem primarily from their political and economic interests, addressing it in a radical manner. As a result, many international documents adopted by foreign countries to resolve women's issues were largely ignored by the former Soviet authorities [1]. For example, these included the 47th Convention adopted in Geneva on June 21, 1935, "Concerning the Reduction of the Hours of Work to Forty Per Week," the Convention on Paid Annual Leave adopted on June 24, 1936, the 103rd Convention on the Protection of Maternity adopted in Geneva in 1919 and revised on June 28, 1952, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women adopted by the UN General Assembly in New York on December 18, 1979, which came into force in 1981. As a result,

during the Soviet period, women's rights lagged far behind international standards in terms of social protection [2;403].

The recognition of deficiencies in women's issues as a global social phenomenon, along with consistent efforts to eliminate these deficiencies, contributed to increased women's participation in social life and improved their status in society. Women partially freed themselves from economic dependence and gained the opportunity to fully realize their talents and abilities. This phenomenon led almost all countries to reconsider their policies toward women and their societal roles. The world came to understand that the future of a nation and society could only be complete with active women's participation, and that only when women were actively involved in all spheres of social life—including science, technology, production, and administration—could a society achieve comprehensive development. It was evident everywhere that life for destitute and fearful women was also impoverished and dangerous. It became clear that deprived women could not give birth to and raise strong and capable children. This contributed to the feminization of society and created opportunities for women to achieve significant success in various social fields.

During the Soviet period, women's participation in public affairs increased due to the policy of granting "equal rights with men." While women participated equally with men in public and social activities, their traditional and ethnic roles within the family—such as femininity, motherhood, and family responsibilities—remained largely unchanged, and they continued to bear a significant workload. From its earliest days, Soviet authority and the Communist Party applied a policy of dividing the population into classes and groups. This undermined the idea of social cooperation and created social tension among local populations. This situation negatively affected women's lives and further exacerbated their condition.

The Soviet government attempted to mask the colonial nature of its policies toward women in various ways. For example:

Without considering the unique mentality of Uzbek women, their national and religious traditions, or their spiritual values, the authorities attempted to change their social status and way of life.

Feelings of rebellion and militancy among women were redirected toward material production, mobilizing them to struggle against their own national and religious customs.

Policies aimed at preventing the formation of political and legal consciousness among Uzbek women suppressed their natural needs to understand their national identity and strive for independence.

In pursuit of these goals, efforts were made to activate women in all areas. This process was also evident during the war years. From the very first days of the war, the movement of women providing free labor in military hospitals expanded. In more than 30 hospitals stationed in Uzbekistan, women actively participated in caring for severely wounded soldiers alongside medical staff.

However, the former Soviet Union's emphasis on production tasks pushed social issues into the background. Consequently, social protection for women forced to actively participate in production was extremely limited. Access to household and medical services was very low. Despite high demand for women's labor, attention to creating suitable conditions for them was minimal [4;153–154]. After the war, women in Uzbekistan continued to actively participate in all areas of social life during the reconstruction and development of the national economy. The proportion of non-working women in Uzbekistan was higher than the Soviet average, and the number of women living below the officially defined minimum consumption level exceeded similar indicators in other Soviet republics.

Low-skilled, heavy, and poorly paid labor slowed down the socio-economic and spiritual development of society. Such labor alienated those who worked and strengthened their desire to protect their children from such harsh conditions. In the final years of the Soviet Union, 14% of Uzbekistan's working-age population (compared to 5.5% in other republics) were unemployed, nine out of ten of whom were women [5;11].

In conclusion, the laws enacted and measures implemented were mainly aimed at directing women toward socially useful labor and promoting production achievements. Insufficient attention was paid to their daily lives, living conditions, and family problems. Leaders of the Soviet authorities, guided by the interests of the Communist Party, attempted to exploit women's labor in every possible way through incentives and coercion—and largely succeeded in doing so.

Conclusion

During the Soviet period, Uzbek women were largely neglected in terms of social and legal rights, and their lives and family responsibilities were often defined according to the interests of the Party and the state. Measures aimed at activating women in all spheres were primarily focused on fulfilling production tasks, while issues of social protection and living conditions were frequently overlooked. At the same time, women's active participation in society was significant during the war years and the subsequent post-war reconstruction period, and their labor and responsibilities played an important role in all spheres of social life. The analysis shows that although Soviet policies involved women in social activities, their material, legal, and spiritual needs were often left unmet.

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