

Article

Violence Against Women as an Urgent Social Problem

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Abstract: This article examines violence against women as one of the most pressing social problems in modern society. The study analyzes various forms of violence (physical, psychological, economic, and sexual), their underlying causes, and their impact on women's social status and rights. In addition, the article explores international experience in preventing violence, legal mechanisms, and the role of social work practice. The social, cultural, and economic factors of the problem are analyzed comprehensively, and effective strategies for its prevention and elimination are proposed. The findings of the study contribute to the protection of women, the enhancement of their social activity, and the promotion of gender equality in society.

Keywords: Violence against women, social problem, gender equality, domestic violence, social protection, human rights, psychological violence, physical violence, social work, prevention, legal mechanisms, social services.

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Introduction

In the renewed Uzbekistan, numerous reforms are being implemented. In particular, this can be understood from the following words of the head of our state, Shavkat Mirziyoyev "As we speak about women, who are dear and sacred to all of us, first and foremost, we bow with deep respect before the image of the Mother - the one who gave us life and nurtured us with her pure milk. On Earth, the person most worthy of the word 'sacred' is, above all, the Mother. Our people have always lived honoring and cherishing the image of the mother. The magnificent monuments erected in our country in honor of mothers are also evidence of this." [1]

In today's process of globalization, ensuring human rights and freedoms is considered one of the main priorities of every state. In particular, women's rights, social protection, and their role in society are among the most pressing issues. In recent years, significant efforts have been made in Uzbekistan to ensure gender equality, increase women's social activity, and provide them with comprehensive support. Nevertheless, violence against women still remains a pressing problem.

Violence not only causes physical or psychological harm, but also undermines a person's self-confidence, social activity, mental well-being, and overall quality of life. In particular, this process negatively affects a woman's development as an individual, as well as her activities within the family, workplace, and society. In this regard, it is not sufficient to limit the prevention of violence against women solely to legal or physical measures. It is necessary to address the root causes of the problem by identifying and eliminating the psychological and social factors that give rise to it.

According to the United Nations, approximately 736 million women worldwide - nearly one in every three women - have experienced some form of violence at least once in their lifetime. Most tragically, the majority of violence against women is committed by their husbands (including former husbands) or intimate partners [2].

Today, violence against women in Uzbekistan - including physical, psychological, economic, and sexual violence - still persists, and this problem is often concealed. This makes its identification and prevention more complicated. Although government and public organizations are carrying out activities aimed at eliminating this problem, a comprehensive approach, particularly the application of socio-psychological methods, is of great importance.

The concept of "violence" is one of the most painful social problems in human history and is interpreted differently across various fields of science. Each discipline approaches violence according to its own subject matter, explaining its causes, forms, and consequences [3].

In psychology, violence is regarded as a set of aggressive actions consciously directed toward causing physical or psychological harm to another person. These actions are associated with aggression, anger, and negative emotional states, and may arise as a result of the perpetrator's internal psychological problems, childhood psychological trauma, or improper upbringing.

In sociology, violence is interpreted as a form of imposing one's will on others through force, pressure, or coercion within social relations. Sociologists mainly associate violence with social inequality, gender roles, economic problems, and cultural values. In particular, gender-based violence is explained in connection with male dominance in the social system, patriarchal values, and the positioning of women in a secondary role.

In jurisprudence, violence is defined as any form of physical, sexual, psychological, or economic coercion prohibited by law, and it is considered an infringement upon an individual's rights and freedoms. Various forms of violence (such as domestic violence, child abuse, and sexual assault) are clearly defined in the Criminal Code and other normative legal documents, and legal liability is предусмотрено for such acts.

In pedagogy, violence is mainly viewed as forms of coercive and negative influence that arise in the educational process. It may be manifested through physical punishment, verbal humiliation, neglect, or emotional rejection toward a pupil or child under care. Pedagogical violence negatively affects a child's personal development, lowers their self-confidence, and leads to negative social adaptation.

In medicine, violence is assessed as an external factor that harms human health. It is associated with numerous medical problems such as physical injuries, psychological stress, depression, traumatic syndrome, sleep disorders, and the aggravation of chronic diseases. Medical professionals play an important role in identifying victims of violence and providing them with assistance.

Thus, violence is a multifaceted and complex socio-psychological phenomenon, and each discipline approaches it from the perspective of its own field. In all disciplines, the common focus is directed toward preventing this phenomenon, identifying its causes, and finding ways to mitigate its consequences.

Based on the concepts discussed above, various scholars have proposed different definitions and approaches regarding the causes of violence, its specific characteristics, and ways to eliminate it.

The famous English philosopher Thomas Hobbes, in his work *Leviathan* [4], interprets the concept of violence in connection with the natural state of humanity - that is, a condition in which there is no state, law, or social order.

According to T. Hobbes, human beings are naturally self-interested creatures who distrust others and constantly struggle for their own security. He argued that when humanity exists in a natural state, disorder and constant threats within society lead to the well-known expression, "man is a wolf to man" (Latin: *homo homini lupus est*). If there is no centralized authority capable of maintaining order among people - in other words, no strong state - violence, chaos, and constant conflicts will prevail in society.

The French Enlightenment thinker Jean-Jacques Rousseau explained the concept of violence most profoundly in his 1762 work *The Social Contract* [5]. According to him, the existing state system, legal order, and restrictions on individual freedoms in society can be regarded as forms of violence. He associated violence with social inequality, forced obedience, and the violation of natural human freedoms. In this context, economic disparities, social privileges, and social stratification within social systems are considered the roots of violence. People are compelled to struggle in order to protect their territory, property, reputation, and rights. As a result, certain groups within society resort to violence against other groups in order to defend their own interests.

The famous psychoanalytic scholar Sigmund Freud interpreted violence as an inseparable part of the human psyche in his work *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* [6]. According to S. Freud, aggression and violence are based on human biological instincts, that is, innate inner drives. He explained this idea through the theory of the "life and death instincts." Eros represents the instinct for life, love, and creativity, whereas Thanatos represents the instinct toward death, destruction, and violence.

S. Freud explained violence not merely as a result of social or external influences, but as a biological force deeply embedded in the layers of human consciousness.

In our opinion, although S. Freud's instinct theory provides an important basis for understanding the biological roots of human aggression, it does not sufficiently take into account the social, cultural, and economic factors of violence. Certain conditions existing within society - such as social inequality, oppression, helplessness, and injustice - may serve as the main causes of violence. Therefore, in order to fully understand violence, biological and psychological approaches should be studied in harmony with the approaches of the social sciences.

Method

There are a number of internationally recognized norms and standards aimed at protecting women from violence. These norms have been developed to protect human rights, ensure gender equality, and eliminate all forms of violence against women, and they have been recognized and implemented by many countries.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women [7] was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 18, 1979, and entered into force on September 3, 1981. This convention is aimed at guaranteeing women equal rights in political, economic, social, and cultural spheres.

In addition, the "Convention on the Political Rights of Women" [8], adopted by the United Nations in 1952, is an international legal document intended to ensure women equal access to political rights.

The Convention on the Political Rights of Women not only views women as participants in political life, but also aims to eliminate restrictions and discrimination in the exercise of their political rights. Through the inclusion of women in politics, this document ensures that the necessary measures are taken to achieve political and economic equality in society. Furthermore, this convention strengthened the international legal foundations for promoting women's political participation and protecting their political rights. In turn, this serves to promote women as equal members of society.

The World Conference on Human Rights, held in Vienna in 1993, marked a historic turning point in the global protection of human rights. One of the main outcomes of this conference was the adoption of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action [9]. For the first time,

the declaration recognized violence against women as a serious violation of human rights. The conference emphasized that violence against women is not merely a social problem, but also a phenomenon that threatens the stability of society as a whole.

In recent years, strengthening the position of women in society and ensuring their rights and freedoms have become one of the priority directions of state policy in the Republic of Uzbekistan. In particular, systematic reforms are being implemented to ensure gender equality, protect women from all forms of violence, and strengthen their social protection. In terms of its essence and content, this approach fully corresponds to the principles of the Beijing Platform for Action adopted by the United Nations in 1995. This platform identified combating violence against women, improving legislation, and increasing public awareness as key priorities.

A solid normative and legal framework has been established in the Republic of Uzbekistan for the prevention of violence and harassment against women, and the documents adopted in this field have become the main foundation of systemic reforms. In particular, the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On Measures to Fundamentally Improve Activities in the Field of Supporting Women and Strengthening the Institution of the Family” [10], signed on February 2, 2018, as well as Presidential Decree No. PF-4947 “On the Strategy of Actions for the Further Development of the Republic of Uzbekistan” [11], created a strong basis for the development of gender policy in the country.

In addition, Resolution No. PQ-3827 “On Measures to Improve the System of Social Rehabilitation and Adaptation, as well as the Prevention of Domestic Violence” [12], adopted on July 2, 2018, established practical mechanisms for combating violence against women and providing social protection for victims.

One of the most important documents is the Law On Protecting Women from Harassment and Violence [13], adopted in 2019. This law defined the concept of violence, its forms, methods of protecting victims, the institution of protection orders, as well as the legal basis for the activities of authorized bodies.

The activities of the Commission are of great importance not only in the domestic policy of Uzbekistan but also on the international stage in terms of improving legislation on gender equality and applying best practices. This, in turn, contributes to enhancing Uzbekistan’s reputation in the international arena.

Article 26 of the new edition of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan guarantees the inviolability of a person’s honor and dignity. This provision serves as an important legal foundation, particularly in the fight against violence. The constitutional norm strictly ensures the protection of a person’s honor and dignity, and also stipulates that no one shall be subjected to torture, violence, or other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment [14].

From a gender equality perspective, this provision is considered one of the most important legal guarantees for women. This is because violence, harassment, and discrimination against women are widespread in many societies. Article 26 of the Constitution makes it possible to define the protection of women’s rights and their safeguarding from violence as a fundamental constitutional right of citizens.

Resolution No. 3 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan, adopted on January 4, 2020, and the attached Regulation “On the issuance, enforcement, and monitoring of protection orders for women who are victims of harassment and violence” [15] is an important legal document aimed at strengthening the system of protecting women from violence and harassment. This normative legal act strengthens Uzbekistan’s efforts in ensuring gender equality and protecting women’s rights.

Today, the main directions of the state policy of the Republic of Uzbekistan in the field of protecting women from harassment and violence are as follows.

The first direction: Uzbekistan’s gender equality legislation is aimed at ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men, as well as preventing harassment and violence. The Istanbul Convention clearly defines the strengthening of the legal framework for eliminating violence against women. In Uzbekistan, the Law “On Guarantees of Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men” [adopted in 2019] corresponds to the requirements of Article 3 of the Istanbul Convention.

2nd direction: The establishment of centers providing psychological, legal, and material assistance to women who are victims of harassment and violence, as well as supporting rehabilitation processes, is an internationally applied practice. Articles 22–23 of the Istanbul Convention set out measures for creating such centers and providing legal assistance to them. Educational and awareness-raising activities play an important role in preventing violence against women in society and in developing family education and a conscious approach. The importance of promoting education against violence is emphasized in Article 10 of the Istanbul Convention.

3rd direction: Measures are being implemented to ensure equal opportunities for women in the labor market, promote gender equality, and achieve a balance between family and working life.

4th direction: In order to increase the effectiveness of measures in the field of protecting women from harassment and violence, regular monitoring, research, and statistical data collection are carried out.

In the Republic of Uzbekistan, a systematic approach to the protection of women from harassment and violence has been formed, and the powers of a number of state and non-governmental structures in this area have been clearly defined.

In particular, the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan, local state authorities, internal affairs bodies, state education management bodies, health care system management bodies, as well as the Agency for Oila va xotin-qizlar davlat qo'mitasi have their own competencies in the field of protecting women. These include implementing preventive measures, providing legal assistance, establishing rehabilitation centers, and strengthening monitoring mechanisms.

In addition, there are legal provisions ensuring the active participation of self-governing citizens' bodies (mahalla citizens' assemblies), non-governmental non-profit organizations, and other institutions of civil society in this process. Their activities are mainly related to prevention, social assistance, and monitoring, through which the goals of preventing harassment and violence against women, as well as ensuring social justice and equality in society, are pursued.

Based on the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Comprehensive Measures to Ensure the Provision of Quality Social Services and Assistance to the Population and to Establish an Effective Monitoring System", issued on June 1, 2023, the National Agency for Social Protection under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan (hereinafter referred to as the Agency) was established.

The main objective of the Agency is to improve the system of providing social services and assistance to the population, particularly vulnerable groups, including women who have been victims of violence [16].

Results and Discussion

Today, cases of violence against women not only intensify family-related problems but also seriously hinder women's social activity and their ability to fully realize their potential in society. Therefore, there was a need for a unified centralized system in this area. The establishment of the National Agency for Social Protection created a foundation for addressing this issue through a systematic approach.

The main tasks of the Agency in this area include the centralized provision of psychological, legal, medical, and other forms of assistance; creating temporary shelters, support services, and opportunities for social rehabilitation for victims of violence; assessing the actual condition of existing support systems and developing proposals for their improvement; combating stereotypes against women and raising their legal awareness; and establishing mechanisms for rapid and targeted responses to cases of violence at the regional and district levels.

The Agency carries out its activities in cooperation with other state bodies, non-governmental organizations, and civil society institutions. This ensures coordination and systematic cooperation in protecting women from harassment and violence.

In this regard, the National Agency for Social Protection is of exceptional importance not only in providing social assistance but also in creating a safe social environment where

women's rights are protected. This reform represents a continuous extension of efforts toward social equality, women's rights, and gender equality.

Conclusion

Violence against women is one of the most urgent social problems of the modern world and requires a comprehensive, multidisciplinary response. This study has demonstrated that violence against women manifests in multiple interconnected forms — physical, psychological, economic, and sexual — each of which inflicts serious harm on women's health, dignity, social participation, and overall quality of life. The findings confirm that violence is rooted in deep-seated social, cultural, and economic structures, including patriarchal norms, gender inequality, economic dependency, and weak institutional mechanisms for victim protection. At the same time, the study highlights that significant legislative progress has been made in Uzbekistan through the adoption of key normative documents, including the Law "On Protecting Women from Harassment and Violence" (2019), the establishment of the National Agency for Social Protection, and the alignment of national policy with international standards such as CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action. However, legislative frameworks alone are insufficient. Effective prevention requires the consistent development and implementation of socio-psychological support services, rehabilitation mechanisms, awareness-raising programs, and inter-agency coordination at the national and local levels. The integration of social work practice, psychological assistance, and legal protection is essential to ensuring that women who experience violence receive timely, qualified, and holistic support. Ultimately, eliminating violence against women requires a fundamental transformation of social attitudes, the promotion of genuine gender equality, and the active engagement of all institutions of society — state bodies, civil society organizations, educational institutions, and the community — in building a culture of respect, dignity, and equal rights for all.

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