

Gender Equality for Sustainable Development

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The paper is devoted to issues of gender equality for sustainable development. Gender equality is ensured at different levels depending on the region, national economy and fields of activity. The situation is gradually leveling off, although very few countries have achieved a gender balance in socio-economic relations. In some fields, this gap is particularly large, as well as at higher levels of government in organizations. The paper identifies the main sources of gender inequality in companies and society, including cultural and social barriers, workplace limitations and management policy. These sources lead to a gender gap, which is associated with unequal opportunities for men and women to exercise their political rights, economic access to work, equal pay and financial resources. Reducing the gender gap increases human resources potential, organizational efficiency improvements, increasing company profitability, and the formation of a culture of "gender equality", which will contribute to the goals of sustainable development of society.

Keywords: *sustainable development, gender equity, gender gap, gender policy*

Sustainable development requires the achievement of interrelated economic, social and environmental development goals. At the same time, the principle of gender equality - an integral part of human rights, as well as the driving force of development to achieve all sustainable development goals - is central to this aspiration.

The issue of gender equality has not enough developed, especially in some industries. The relevance of the study is also determined by the incomplete development and implementation of methodological frameworks that would ensure gender equality in organizations.

In this context, the importance of the activities of companies aimed at implementing the policy of equal rights and opportunities is growing. Therefore, it is important to identify aspects of gender equality in institutions and give some recommendations for its elimination.

The purpose of the paper is to substantiate the theoretical and empirical proves of ensuring gender equality in organizations and develop practical recommendations for its implementation.

In the broadest sense, gender can be defined as a system of values, norms and characteristics of male and female behavior, lifestyle and way of thinking, roles and relationships of women and men, acquired by them as individuals in the process of socialization, that primarily determined by the social, political, economic and cultural contexts of life and captures the perception of women and men depending on their gender.

At the international level, gender issues have been discussed for almost 70 years. The intensity of attention to gender issues in different periods was not the same. Initially, the emphasis was on the formation of legal framework for women's civil rights and their participation in political life. Further attention was focused on women's labor rights and equal pay, rights to education and social protection. In general, issues of equality between women and men are increasingly being raised, and the term "gender equality" is being introduced.

Gender equality implies equal opportunities for self-realization of women and men, guarantees of respect for rights and freedoms, taking into account the specifics of the sexes, mutual responsibilities and shared responsibility in the process of life.

Achievement of gender equality is a priority direction of activity of the overwhelming majority

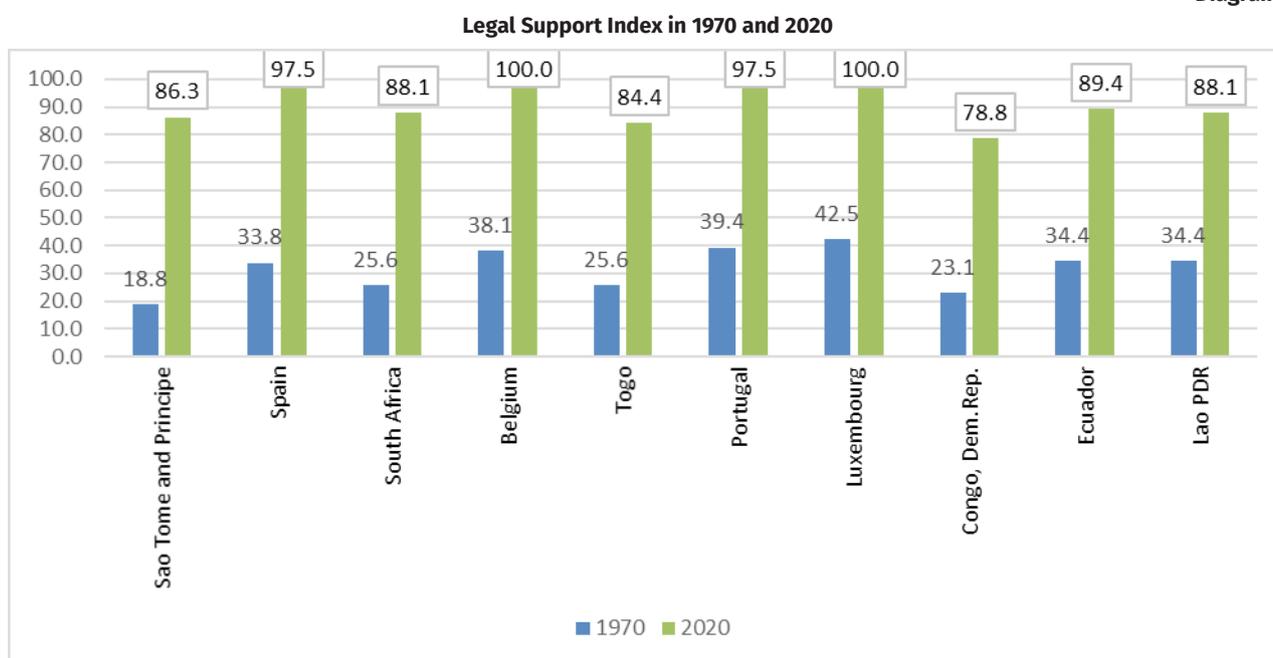
of international organizations, such as the UN, including UNICEF and UN Women, the World Health Organization, the World Food Program and others. The issue of ensuring gender equality in various spheres of public life is reflected in their strategies. Since 2000, gender equality has taken hold leading place in the work of UNDP, as well as partner organizations in the UN system and the world community. Gender equality is fundamental to sustainable development. New internationally agreed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) include a goal on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, as well as gender targets under other goals.

International organizations led by the UN have made great efforts to bring the already prescribed norms into practice: from the adoption of conventions on gender issues (in particular, the Resolution on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, etc.) to the establishment of organizations of the appropriate orientation (United Nations Development Fund for Women, UN-Women).

International organizations focus on gender equality not only in terms of social justice, but also see it as a resource for socio-economic development. This can be confirmed by the example of countries where the active involvement of the potential of both women and men accelerates economic development, as, for example, in the Scandinavian countries in the 1970s and 1990s. It has been proven that in countries with a high level of gender equality, the economy and the quality of the citizens life are growing at a faster rate. As noted in the study “Women, Business and the Law 2020”, «equality of opportunity is a good economy (Work Bank Group, 2020). Indeed, it is estimated that women lagging behind in employment and entrepreneurship is costing the world about 15 percent of its GDP. So, it is not surprising that many countries are actively improving gender policy. Cases in point, since 2017, 40 economies have implemented 62 reforms to address gender inequality (Work Bank Group, 2020).

However, despite the enormous efforts of the international community, there are still real obstacles for women in many areas. On average women have only three-quarters of the legal rights granted to men. Women still have unequal access to economic resources, including land and property rights, and financial credit.

Diagram 1



Worldwide, in 2020 the share of women in the labor market was 48%, which is 3 percent less than in 2019, so the gender balance has deteriorated slightly. In addition, women spend three times

as much time caring for children and other household chores than men. This situation worsened during COVID-19 due to the increase in the time required to care for children and the elderly, as well as sick family members (The World Bank, 2020). The study showed that the pay gap between men and women is observed in all countries. Underutilization of women’s labor potential has resulted in global wealth losing \$ 172 trillion and human capital not adding about one-fifth of wealth (Wodon et al, 2020).

At the same time, over the last 50 years, there has been a significant strengthening of the balance between the legal rights of women and men, and legal gender equality is reflected in the fact that women’s rights now account for at least two-thirds of men’s rights (World Bank 2020). The index, which measures the legal support of women’s careers, shows that it is growing significantly in all groups of the world (Diagram 1). However, only seven countries, including, for example, Sweden, Latvia, France, and Canada, have reached the maximum rating.

The share of women in various positions significantly depends on the field of activity, as well as the level of hierarchy in the company. Demonstrating Different Studies (McKinsey & Company, 2020) show the proportion of women in different positions in corporate America demonstrates a decrease in gender equality for women in higher positions in companies (Diagram 2, 3).

Diagram 2

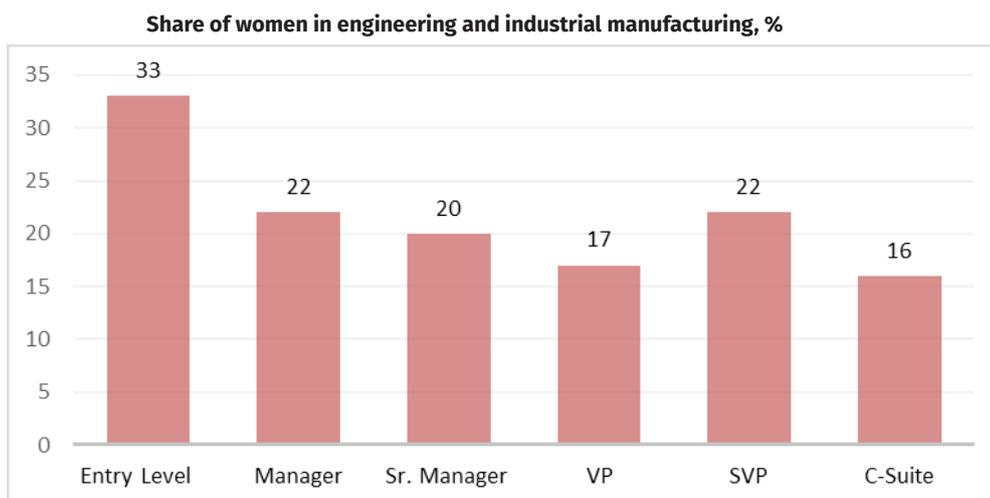
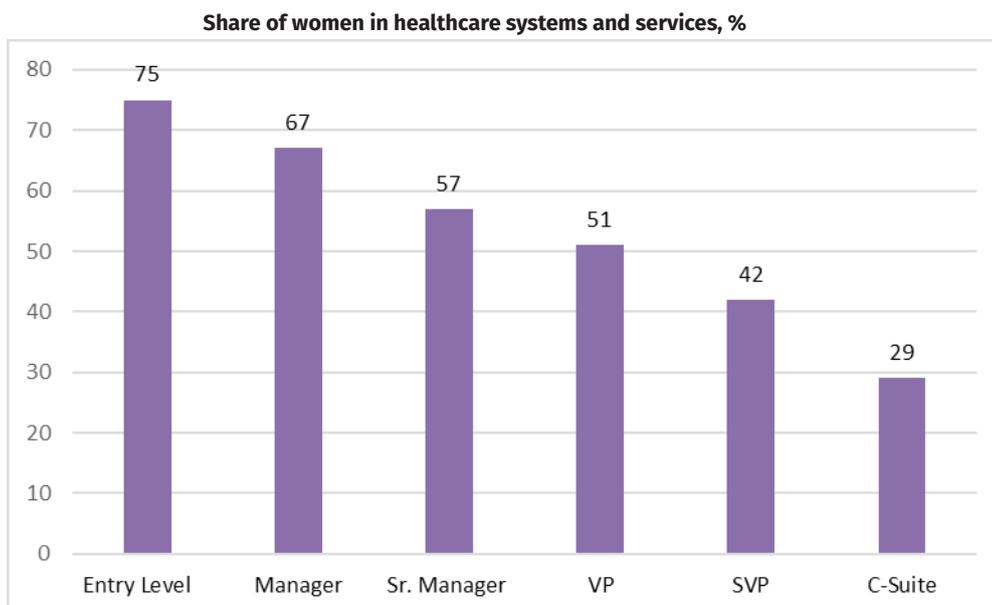


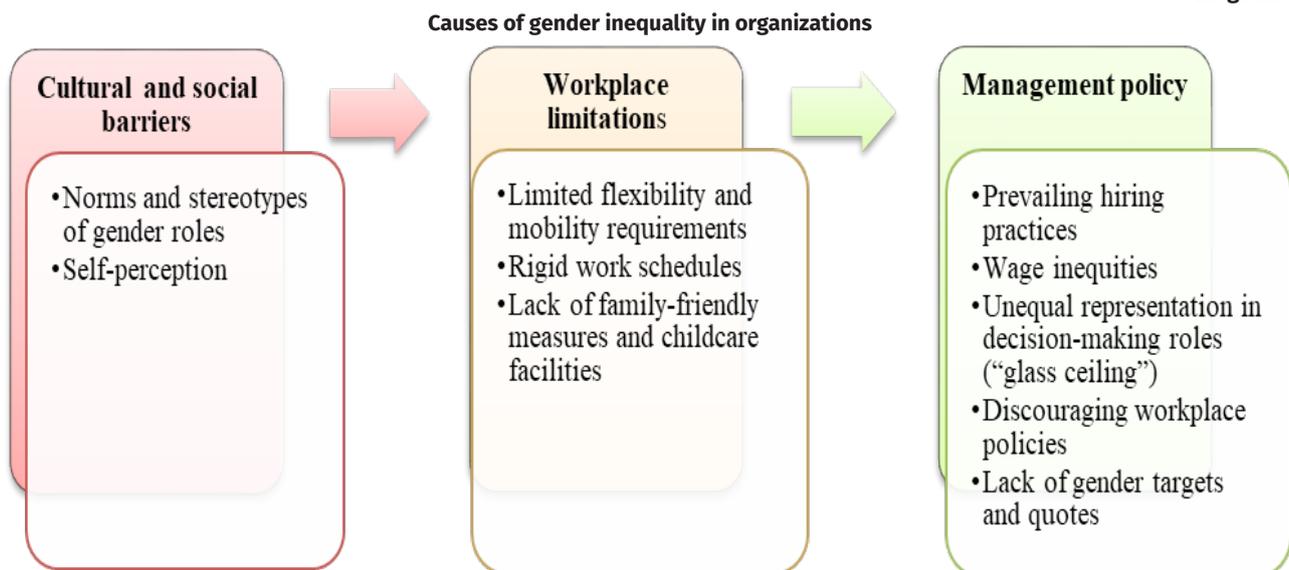
Diagram 3



The causes of unequal socio-economic opportunities have been traced since 2006 and are deeply analyzed by the World Economic Forum in determining the Global Gender Gap Index (World Economic Forum, 2020). This index takes into account such key dimensions as Economic Participation and Opportunity, Health and Survival, Educational Attainment, and Political Empowerment. Since the calculation of the Index is carried out by the same method, it becomes possible to draw conclusions about the size of the change in indicators and the speed of such changes. The largest gap is observed in the dimension of Political Empowerment. The second largest gap is the Economic Participation and Opportunity, which indicates the persistence of significant inequalities in the ability to get the same job, as well as in the amount of salaries for men and women in the same positions. There is deterioration in women's participation in the labor market, as on average only 55% of women have the opportunity to get a job in the labor market, while the share of employed men is 78%. Women earn 40% less in the same positions in companies.

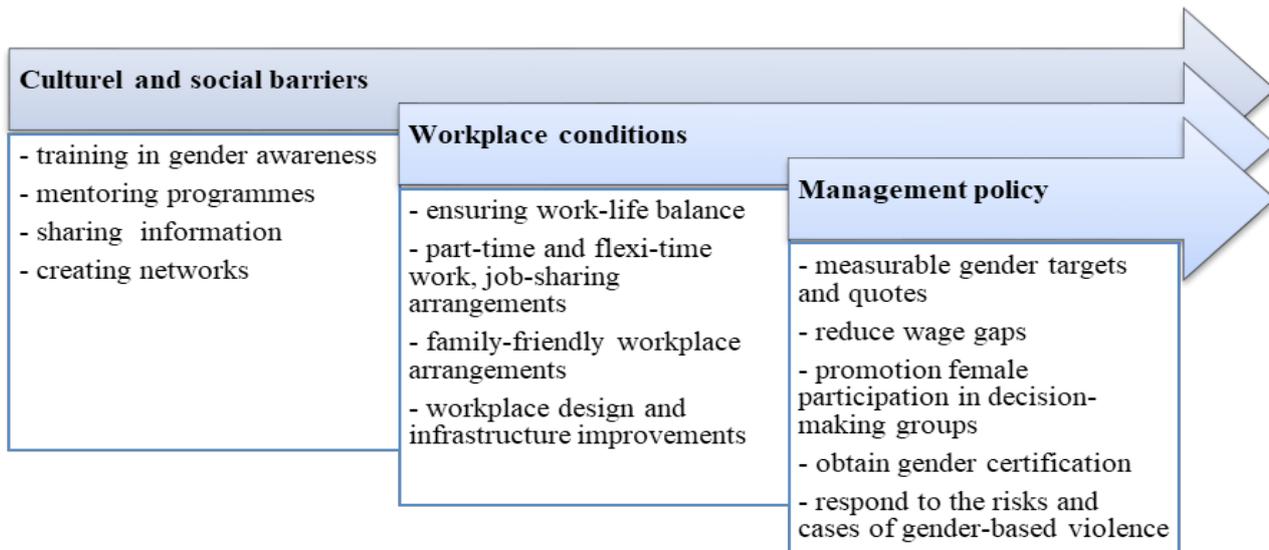
The increase in the share of women in organizations in different fields is associated with overcoming a number of obstacles associated with both social and cultural norms in society (diagram 4). It is also necessary to develop or strengthen gender policy in companies. Such barriers impede gender balance throughout all stages of a woman's career in organizations, from the chances of getting a job and upgrading to leadership positions in companies.

Diagram 4



Causes of gender inequality, in turn, identify areas for strengthening the gender balance in organizations (diagram 5). Measures to ensure gender equality must implement at all levels of companies. Senior management in organizations should develop or revise gender policies to empower women in companies, promote and demonstrate the value of gender equality in a transparent manner, and create conditions for the unacceptability of any gender-based violations. The establishment of quotas for the participation of women in the governing bodies of companies, which provides for their more active promotion to higher levels of government, will contribute to strengthening gender equality. Such a policy demonstrates to employees a focus on gender diversity and an awareness of its importance as women receive additional employment and career opportunities. Dissemination of such values contributes to the creation of a culture of “gender equality” in companies. Educational work in focus groups and discussion of the benefits of gender diversity, organization of seminars and workshops are also important for bridging the gender gap. Transparency in wage setting for men and women will help reduce the pay gap for equal work (Bennedsen et al, 2019).

Measures to ensure gender equality in organizations



A study of the labor market on the basis of gender showed that the imbalance of men and women in the workplace in various industries leads not only to a decrease in innovation in fields where there is a lack of gender diversity, but also to an increase in gender gaps. Monitoring the gender balance in companies will allow adjusting the state of the labor market to a fairer situation in the future.

Iceland, Norway, Finland, and Sweden are the leaders in 2020 in reducing the gender gap. An important task for ensuring the sustainable development of society is not only to reduce the gender gap, but also to accelerate this progress. It is estimated (World Economic Forum, 2020) that reducing the existing gap will take more than 250 years, provided that the current pace of progress on these issues is reduced. The Global Gender Gap Report 2021 (World Economic Forum, 2021) points to an increase in skilled professionals among women, but still notes a large gap in women's and men's wages, slowing the narrowing of the gap in Economic Participation and Opportunity. The slowdown is also due to the low proportion of women in management positions. The situation is complicated by the consequences of pandemic restrictions. Reducing the gender gap, as well as the development of other socio-economic processes based on sustainable development (Gagnidze, 2018; Kubiniy, 2019, Ossovskaya & Yanishevskaya, 2020) will accelerate economic growth.

The focus in identifying ways to improve the gender balance should be on providing the conditions for bridging the gender gap, the priority of which may vary from country to country, industry and company. Organizations need to significantly review the system of norms and standards of staff behavior, gender policy in hiring, promotion and remuneration of employees solely on professional grounds. Ensuring gender equality will promote empower the human resources potential, organizational efficiency improvements, increasing company profitability, and formation of "gender diversity" culture.

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