



ECONOMIC FACTORS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND FOREIGN EXPERIENCE IN WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Khamraeva Shakhnoza

Social specialist at International Consulting Company "Juru"

E-mail: hamroyeva@gmail.com

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17149546>

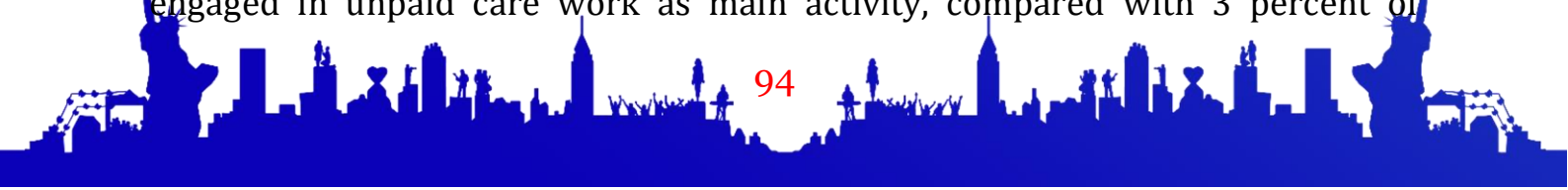
Annotation: This article focuses on issues such as economic empowerment of women and its impact on preventing violence against women in the country. In particular, economic dependence of women is shown as one of the main factors that lead to gender violence in the family. Also, the activities carried out in order to improve the economic situation of women, in Uzbekistan are analyzed, and a number of proposals are made for improving the situation concerning economic empowerment of women based on the experience of developed countries.

Keywords: women, violence, economic empowerment, gender equality, domestic violence, unpaid work.

Gender-based violence continues to be a serious problem globally, and economic factors contribute significantly to worsening vulnerabilities, especially among women. The role of economic factors is very important in combating and preventing violence against women and girls, as it directly affects the overall situation. By addressing these economic factors, we can work to improve the situation and reduce violence. It is important to recognize the link between economic conditions and gender-based violence in order to develop effective policies and interventions that address both aspects simultaneously. This comprehensive approach will lead to a more inclusive and safe society for all people, regardless of their gender.

As of December 27, 2023, 36,790,481 people live in the Republic of Uzbekistan. 18,590,230 of them are women [1], which is 50.5 percent of the whole population. Equal rights and opportunities are guaranteed in legislative acts as the Labor Code, the Employment Act and Law of Uzbekistan on Guarantees of Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men and other acts, however it is difficult for the state to provide women and men with job equally, especially taking into account women's role in the family.

In 2018, 60 percent of both women and men of working age were working. Most working women were full-time unpaid workers whereas, most working men were in employment. This gender division of labor is related to the known male breadwinner bias [2]. In Uzbekistan, 33 percent of working-age women engaged in unpaid care work as main activity, compared with 3 percent of





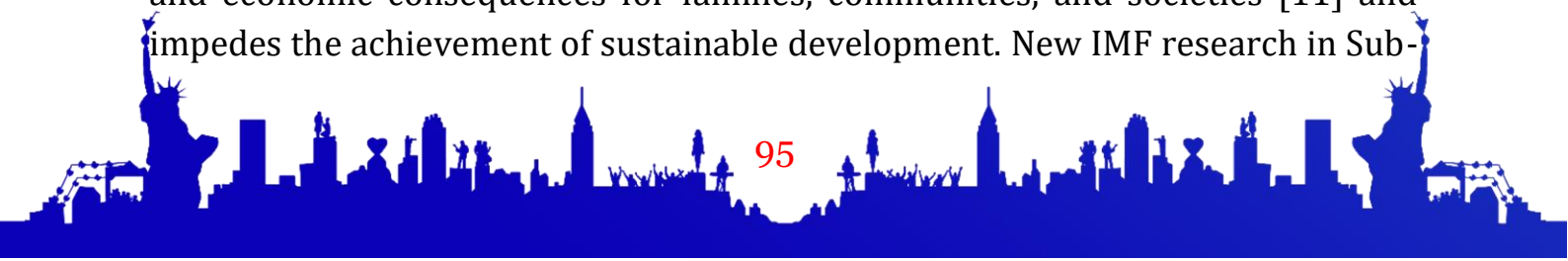
working-age men [2]. The labor for participation rate among females is 40% and among males is 73,3% for 2022 [3]. The undervaluation of women's work also contributes to gender inequality in pay of those with jobs.

Uzbekistan ratified the ILO Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No 100) in 1992. Yet women are paid less than men, and jobs associated with women are undervalued and underpaid. Despite progress made until 2017, the overall gender pay gap rose to 38.6 percent in 2018, compared with 34.6 percent in 2017 [2].

Currently, 12.8 percent of women are unemployed, which is twice the number of unemployed men. Also, 5.8 percent of the employed women live below international poverty line.[4] This situation, in turn gives rise of gender-based violence in the country. According to the recent research [5], most of the women-victims of domestic violence return to their home and continue to live with their partners because of the economic dependence on their spouses. Due to their responsibilities related to the birth of children and their upbringing, women cannot work for a long time and consequently slowly lose their experience and skills, which reduces their chances to find a job. Moreover, in most cases, women and girls are simply not allowed to work outside their home, because of family traditions or improper interpretation of religious belief. Researchers revealed that, those people discouraged from participating in the labor market have significantly lower cognitive skills and to a certain extent, noncognitive skills than the employed and among discouraged individuals' decision making, in particular seems to be low [6]. This makes a huge importance to the rate of gender-based violence, because studies show, that, women who can make decisions on their own are less likely to be victims of violence [7]. So, giving protection orders for the women affected by domestic violence and defending them only with the means of law enforcement agencies is not always enough.

Studies around the world have shown that domestic violence and poverty are interrelated at both a household and community level [8][9]. According to them, using economic interventions with community-based intervention are effective in reducing the risk of domestic violence

Violence negatively affects women's physical and mental health and well-being at all stages of their life and impacts their professional development and economic empowerment [10]. Violence against women has also broader social and economic consequences for families, communities, and societies [11] and impedes the achievement of sustainable development. New IMF research in Sub-





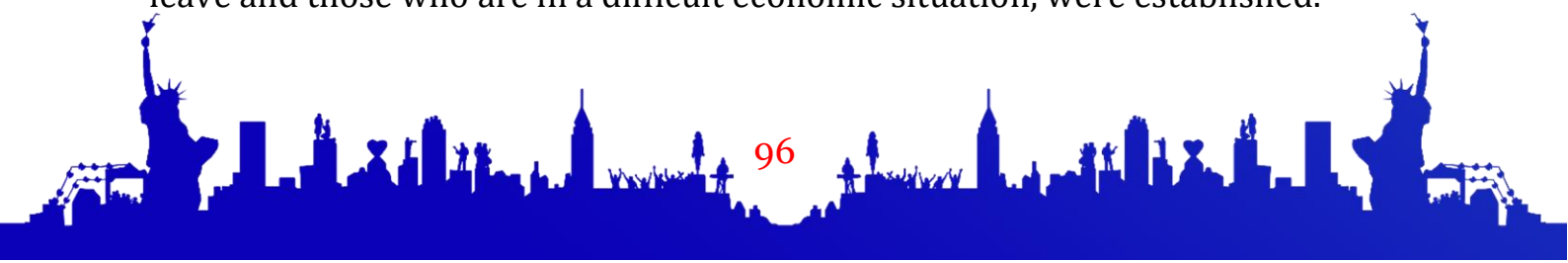
Saharan shows how violence against women and girls is a major threat to economic development in the region. An increase in violence against women by 1 percentage point is associated with a 9 percent lower economic activity [12]. At the global level, it is estimated that the cost of violence against women (public, private and social) amounts to US\$1.5 trillion [13].

If we come to the current situation in Uzbekistan regarding this issue, according to the information service of the Main Department of Crime Prevention of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, in 9 months of 2022, protection orders were issued to 37,959 women who suffered from violence and harassment [14].

These facts show the importance of developing more inclusive ways of providing job and economic empowerment, to reduce the cases of violence against women and girls and ensure equal opportunities for women along with men.

In recent years, digitalization created huge opportunities for females for a more equal participation in labor market and engaging in entrepreneurship. Women are more skilled at social communication, and it give them advantage over men in the digital age. International Trade Centre research shows that the share of women-owned firms doubles when moving from traditional offline trade to cross-border e-commerce; however, women still tend to export to fewer markets than their male counterparts [15].

A number of measures have been implemented in the Republic of Uzbekistan to increase the employment of women and support their entrepreneurial activities. On March 7, 2019, the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On measures to further strengthen the guarantees of women's labor rights and support entrepreneurship"[16] was adopted, in which prohibitions on the use women's labor in certain fields or professions were abolished. Also, if at least three months of childcare leave is used by the father, either father or mother will be granted childcare leave with an additional month of allowance in accordance with Article 234 of the Labor Code. Moreover, with this decision, "Women's Entrepreneurship Centers" were established, and they began to operate in all regions and in the city of Tashkent. As the main tasks of such centers, in addition to providing consultative and financial assistance in setting up a business for women who want to start a business, retraining to the professions required in the labor market those who are on long-term childcare leave and those who are in a difficult economic situation, were established.





Furthermore, Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On additional measures to strengthen families and increase the activity of women” was adopted on 21st of December of 2023[17]. The decree states many measures to enhance women’s employment and entrepreneurship, among which are: covering the first three-month rents (up to 10 times of the basic calculation amount starting from January 1, 2024) of buildings at the expense of entrepreneurship fund for the women who started manufacturing modern national costumes;

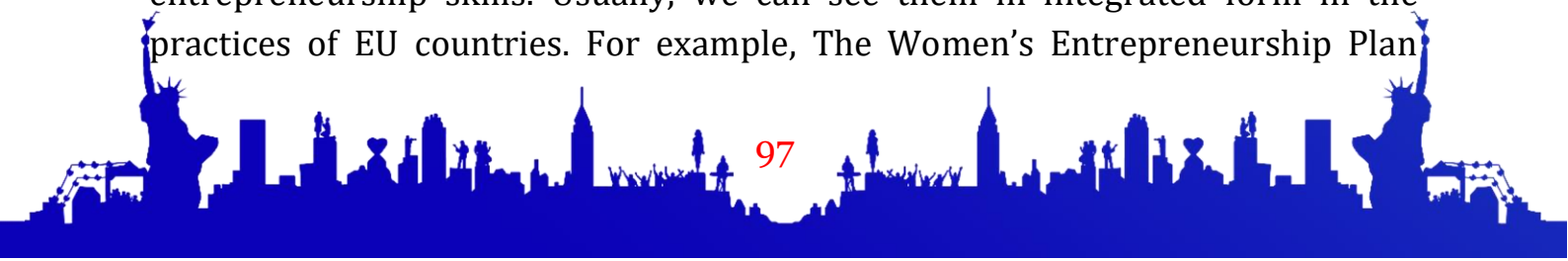
Creating a quarterly list of women who are struggling to find a market for their products and organizing for them training seminars, including online, aimed at building their skills in social media marketing and allowing unemployed women to work as clerk in self-governing bodies of citizens on the basis of paid public works for a period of up to eleven months.

When analyzing the practice of foreign countries on the state policy aimed at supporting women's entrepreneurship, we can see several different directions.

First, one of the most widely used methods is the Women's Entrepreneurship Ambassadors Program. According to this program role models, e.g. women who are successfully running their own business volunteer to encourage other women by giving talks at schools and universities and by appearing in the media. This method is common in countries like Sweden, Czech Republic, Ireland and Great Britain [18]. Volunteer businesswomen communicate directly with those who want to learn, and their activities are studied as case studies in training and courses. A good example of this practice is the "Frauen Unternehmen" network created in Germany. This network promotes entrepreneurship for women, but also offers opportunities for women entrepreneurs to build their own entrepreneurship networks, exchange experiences, mentoring, promote their business and participate in lectures and workshops [19].

Such policies have been proven to be effective, e.g. surveys of new entrepreneurs in the Netherlands in the retail, hotel and restaurant sectors and business services find that one-third of entrepreneurs wouldn't have started their businesses without their role model [20].

Second, no less effective approach is creating training courses, mentoring or women’s entrepreneurship centers for women to develop their entrepreneurship skills. Usually, we can see them in integrated form in the practices of EU countries. For example, The Women’s Entrepreneurship Plan

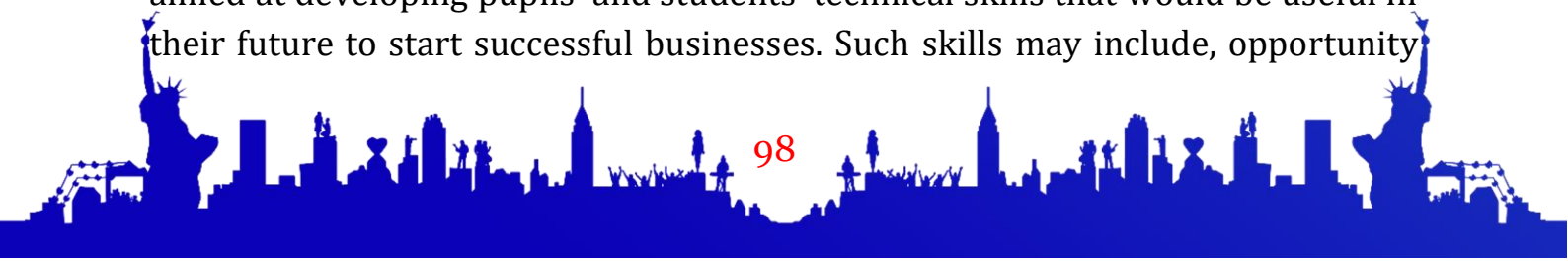




was launched in 2013 by the Ministries of Women's Rights; National Education, Higher Education and Research, and carries out its support in 3 pillars: Improve information dissemination to women entrepreneurs on available public support; 2) Providing individual supports to entrepreneurs (e.g. mentoring, networking); 3) Improving access to finance [21].

When it comes to provide financial support for the women start-ups, typically either small grants (approximately EUR 10 000) or large-scale grants are (EUR 25 000) [22] announced in order to choose from the applications, business ideas or business plans. Another approach is to involve as many investors as possible to invest in the entrepreneurial ideas of the women. For this purpose, platforms or websites are created to provide women with information from where to get sources to start their business. For this, a good example can be Springboard Enterprises, which was established in the United States, has both programs and a large network of founders, advisors and investors who want to contribute to the growth of women's entrepreneurship [23]. Importantly, when women led start-ups are financed in one or another way, they are usually given educational support and business advise as well, so that they can independently continue their business after financial support ends. One more way to improve chances of businesswomen to get financed for their ideas is crowdfunding which is widely practiced in other countries. Crowdfunding is carried out through a platform where business idea is placed and people can invest to ideas which they believe will have success for a share in the new start-up company (equity based crowdfunding, where people get the share from the company) or for a reward (reward based crowdfunding - people receive a product or service related to the project, with the value depending on the amount donated) [24].

Last but not least, very effective approach for increasing number of entrepreneurs among women, and among the whole population of the country, is of course to start training business skills from the early education at schools which is practiced in many developed countries. According to the age of the children, the skills that are taught can vary, but it is very crucial at every stage of their development they acquired some level of entrepreneurship skills and visit local businesses and witness how they are operated in everyday life. We think that instead of theory based economic classes at schools, lyceums and universities, it would be expedient, to include into the curriculum the courses aimed at developing pupils' and students' technical skills that would be useful in their future to start successful businesses. Such skills may include, opportunity





recognition, team building, negotiation, strategy development, risk management, financial planning, and marketing [22].

Women's economic empowerment cannot be increased without providing them work-life balance following the delivery of child. When it comes to the policies on parental leave, they are also diverse from country to country. Finland, Denmark, Sweden, Belgium, Iceland, Canada are considered to be most progressive in this field. For example, under the new law of Finland on Family leave (08/01/2022) 30 working days of pregnancy leave and after the birth of the child 320 working days of paid parental leave, 160 days for each parent are guaranteed. Only one parent at a time can take parental leave. Parents can, however, take 18 working days of parental leave or pregnancy and parental leave at a time [25]. After 160 days for each parent or 320 working days of parental leave for single parents, childcare leave can be taken, which is at least 30 days at length. Both parental and childcare leaves can be taken part-time, i.e. mother can work in the morning and father in the afternoon.

In Norway mothers can take 35 weeks at full pay or 45 weeks at 80% pay, and fathers can take between zero and 10 weeks depending on their wives' income. Together parents can receive an additional 46 weeks at full pay or 56 weeks at 80% of their income [26].

Based on the abovementioned, followings are proposed to implement to the government policy, legislation, and normative acts.

- Improving the activity of the State Purpose Fund for the support of women and girls by cooperating with international organizations, such as World Bank, Asian Development Bank, and other international funds, which can donate for enhancing Women Entrepreneurship, and taking measures to improve financing the women led businesses by announcing grants for the best business ideas and plans among women;

- Within Women's entrepreneurship centers (or supporting the NGOs) to create network among the successful women entrepreneurs, leaders of the companies, investors and women start-ups, and establishing mentorship programs and crowdfunding for women and girls who want to start their businesses;

- Including the curriculum of the schools, lyceums and universities entrepreneurship classes aimed at developing students' skills to establish successful businesses in the future;

Making amendments to the articles 404 and 405 of the Labor Code of Uzbekistan, by increasing the maternity leaves and making them fully paid, as

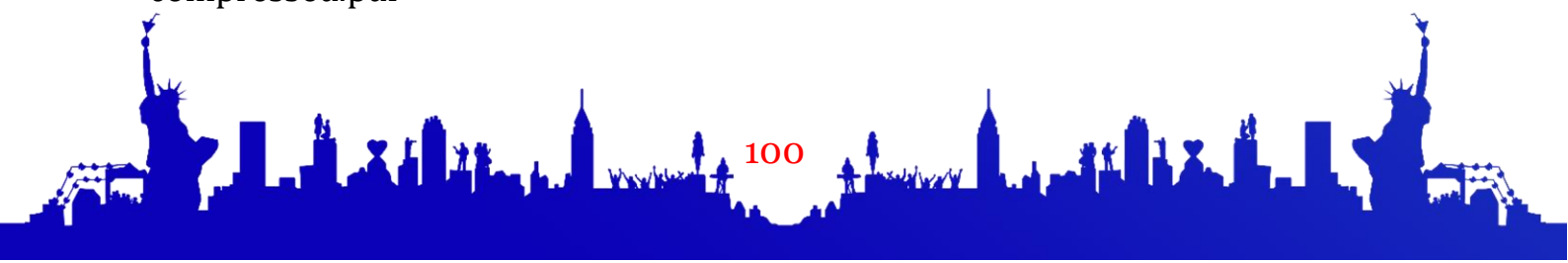




well as providing opportunity for both mothers and fathers to take full-time or part-time childcare leaves. Also, after parental leave, giving mothers the option to work online or partly online would allow them to raise their children without leaving work for long periods of time.

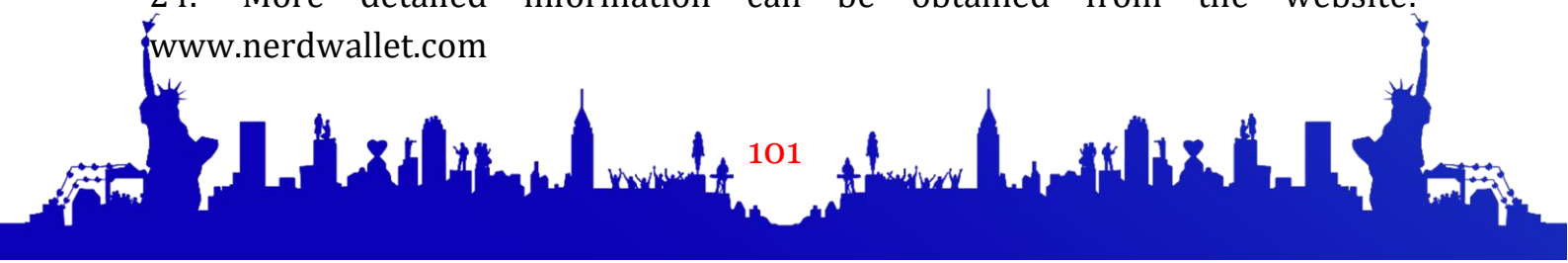
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