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## GENDER ASYMMETRY AT THE LABOR MARKET IN THE REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN

*The article considers the issues of gender asymmetry at the labor market in the Republic of Kazakhstan. Gender inequality has been estimated through the indices of labor market: the level of unemployment, the indices of economic activity, the size of wages etc. The research findings reveal the existence of gender asymmetry at the labor market of the Republic of Kazakhstan and disclose its basic reasons.*

**Keywords:** gender inequality; labor market; unemployment level; vertical segregation; poverty feminization.

Джамілія А. Сейтхожина

## ГЕНДЕРНА АСИМЕТРІЯ НА РИНКУ ПРАЦІ РЕСПУБЛІКИ КАЗАХСТАН

*У статті розглянуто прояви гендерної асиметрії на ринку праці Республіки Казахстан. Вимірено гендерну нерівність через показники ринку праці: рівень безробіття, показники економічної активності, розмір заробітної плати тощо. В результаті дослідження отримано докази існування гендерної асиметрії на ринку праці Республіки Казахстан та виявлено її основні причини.*

**Ключові слова:** гендерна нерівність, ринок праці, рівень безробіття, вертикальна сегрегація, фемінізація бідності.

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## ГЕНДЕРНАЯ АСИММЕТРИЯ НА РЫНКЕ ТРУДА РЕСПУБЛИКИ КАЗАХСТАН

*В статье рассмотрены проявления гендерной асимметрии на рынке труда Республики Казахстан. Измерено гендерное неравенство через показатели рынка труда: уровень безработицы, показатели экономической активности, размер заработной платы и т.д. В результате исследования получены доказательства существования гендерной асимметрии на рынке труда Республики Казахстан и выявлены её основные причины.*

**Ключевые слова:** гендерное неравенство, рынок труда, уровень безработицы, вертикальная сегрегация, феминизация бедности.

**Introduction.** The purposeful increase of investments in human capital, crucial for modernization of a country, which is being rather significant these days does not comply with the investments in economic development. It is also the necessary condition for a long-term strategic planning realized on the principle of gender equality. Human capital is mostly demanded at the labor market where human assets are formed and accumulated during a certain period of time and must be realized in full. Gender inequality emerges the labor market because social inequality of women and men is conditioned by gender stereotypes based on the division of labor in the society and fertility of women.

**Latest research and publications analysis.** In foreign and national science the gender analysis of the labor market (segregation and discrimination mechanisms) found its reflection in the works of M. Yergazina (2003; 2004), P. Pachy (2003), R. Sarsembayeva (2004; 2007), N. Shedenova (2000), Y. Shokamanov (2000; 2001) and others.

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The gender expertise of the labor market of Kazakhstan became possible with the appearance of special statistical literature, published by the Agency of the Republic of Kazakhstan of Statistics, the reports of the United National Development Programme in Kazakhstan and others.

**The object of the research** is the labor market of the Republic of Kazakhstan in 2001–2011.

**The research objective** is to reveal the facts of gender asymmetry and the reasons of its emergence at the labor market of the Republic of Kazakhstan based on the analysis of the scientific and statistical literature.

**The methods of research** are systematic and comparative analyses of the scientific and statistical literature, as well as the methods of induction and deduction and the statistical method.

**Key research findings.** Gender inequality at the labor market is measured according to the following indices:

- the level of unemployment;
- indices of economic activity;
- women share of the general number of the employed;
- transition to the informal sector;
- gap in the amount of wages;
- the level of vertical segregation;
- the level of horizontal segregation (Pachy, 2003).

In Kazakhstan we observe the following dynamics of women inclusion in social production: if in 1940 at the average annual number of all workers and employees in the national economy of the Republic the women constituted 30%, in 1960 – 38%, then by the beginning of the 80-s their share approached to 49% (in the USSR on average 51%), and this dynamics was stable in the following decade.

At the beginning of the 1990-s with the change of the socioeconomic system the share of women in the general number of employed began decreasing – in 1990 women constituted 49.4%, then in 1994 it decreased abruptly to 45.7%, and by the end of the XXth century it reached the level of 45–46% (Shedenova, 2000).

The recession of production in the first years of the reforms led to a significant reduction of the number of the employed population. The asymmetrical arrangement of a staff according to gender is one of the manifestations of gender inequality in the area of employment. The dynamics of the *level of unemployment* in 1992–1998 showed that among the unemployed 66% were women (Women and Men of Kazakhstan, 1999).

The level of unemployment in Kazakhstan achieved its maximum in 1999: the total number of the unemployed comprised 950 ths people (Statistic Daily of Kazakhstan, 2000). In the subsequent years unemployment in the country for both sexes reduced almost twice as much (Socioeconomic Development of Kazakhstan, 2008).

Nevertheless, the number of the unemployed women exceeds the number of the unemployed men in the country: by 104.3 ths in 2001 and by 44.3 ths in 2012. The share of the unemployed men in 2012 was 45%, women – 55%. Such distribution of unemployment by gender has been maintained for 10 years. The process of the reduction of female unemployment became slower (Table 1).

One of the reasons of unemployment irrespective of gender is the complexity to find a job after graduating from an educational institution. The peak of the level of unemployment belongs exactly to the age group (Table 2).

For girls the problem of unemployment is more urgent. The reasons of such situation should be considered in the context of the traditional obligation of men to support families. This explains their early start of labor activity. As a rule, women spend longer time studying and begin their active participation at the labor market after 25 (after getting education and often after the birth of the first child).

Young women under 24 constitute almost a quarter of all unemployed women in the country (Table 3).

Kazakhstan's legislation guarantees equal opportunities for all people in the realization of their rights and freedoms in the field of labor: "Nobody can be discriminated in realizing the labor rights depending on gender" (Labor Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2007). Nevertheless, for young women the additional obstacle to be employed is their families and children.

Among employers there is a wide-spread image about women as inconvenient and unprofitable employees burdened by a great amount of family issues and everyday duties that turns further into the formation of discrimination policy in employment, official promotion, establishment of wages, discharging of women, especially those of a fertile age.

Insufficient development and accessibility of a preschool education for children is the most important restraining factor in normalizing the position of women in the sphere of employment and rising their competitiveness at the labor market, since in most cases this is a woman who takes obligations for bringing up children (Gender Equality and the position of Women in Kazakhstan, 2005).

Under the reduction of general unemployment in the latest years we observe an alarming tendency of increasing the unemployment of the people with high educational level: higher, incompleting higher and secondary special education.

Women constitute the majority of unemployed, their educational capital remains underestimated at the labor market (Table 4).

One more evidence of the fact that Kazakhstani women in comparison with men experience more difficulties with job placement are the data about the duration of the female and male unemployment and about gender differences of the shares of long-term unemployed. The female indicator on this is twice larger. This suggests more time necessary for women to look for jobs. The duration of female unemployment can be partially explained by the non-coincidence of professional-qualification structures of unemployed women and the vacancies offered at the labor market: vacant working places are traditionally considered to be for men. Accordingly, the demand from the labor market is mainly focused on male work force (Table 5).

The reason for female unemployment leading in the percent relation – 94.2% is housekeeping (Economic activity of the population of Kazakhstan. 1995–2006, 2007). If we compare the duration of paid employment, women are much busier with housekeeping than men. According to the data of the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Population, women at average spend three times more time than men for household affairs (Gender equality and the position of women in Kazakhstan, 2005).

Table 1. The state of unemployment in the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2001–2012

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Unemployed, In all, this people, including	780.3	690.7	672.1	658.8	640.7	625.4	597.2	557.9	554.5	496.6	473.0	474.9
women, this	442.3	407.0	390.7	377.7	370.1	362.9	352.6	331.4	315.2	280.9	268.1	259.6
men, this	338.0	283.7	281.4	281.1	270.6	262.5	244.6	226.5	239.3	215.7	204.9	215.3
Level of unemployment, %	10.4	9.3	8.8	8.4	8.1	7.8	7.3	6.6	6.5	5.8	5.4	5.3
Level of female unemployment, %	12.0	11.2	10.4	9.8	9.6	9.2	8.7	7.9	7.5	6.6	6.2	5.7
Level of male unemployment, %	8.8	7.4	7.2	7.0	6.6	6.4	5.9	5.3	5.6	4.9	4.6	4.9

Constructed by the author on the data: Economic activity of the population of Kazakhstan (2007); Social-economic development of the Republic of Kazakhstan (2008); Women and Men of Kazakhstan 2007–2011 (2012); Basic indices of the labor market on 1 January, 2013.

Table 2. The level of youth unemployment by gender (15–24 years old), %

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
The Republic of Kazakhstan	12.3	9.5	7.5	6.8	5.2	4.6
Men	10.0	8.5	6.8	5.5	4.8	4.2
Women	14.7	10.5	8.2	8.2	5.7	5.0

Constructed by the author on the data: Women and Men of Kazakhstan. Concise statistic collection (2006); Economic activity of the population of Kazakhstan. 2007–2011 (2012).

Table 3. Distribution of unemployed youth by gender, 2008–2011

	2008	2009	2010	2011
Unemployed in total, ths, including:	557.9	554.5	496.6	473.0
Women at the age of 15-24, ths	48.4	48.2	33.7	29.5
Men at the age of 15-24, ths	48.2	39.0	33.0	28.3
Women at the age of 15-24 of the general number of unemployed women, %	14.6	15.3	12.0	11.0
Men at the age of 15-24 of the general number of unemployed men, %	21.3	16.3	15.3	13.8

Constructed by the author on the data: Women and Men of Kazakhstan (2009; 2010; 2011); Women and Men of Kazakhstan 2007–2011 (2012).

Table 4. Distribution of the unemployed population by gender and education, %

	2002	2006	2011	2002	2006	2011
The unemployed having higher education (including the unfinished higher)				The unemployed having secondary special education		
Men	12	16.7	21.3	20.6	22.2	26.2
women	12.4	20.0	27.7	29.4	27.5	26.5

Based on the data: Economic activity of the population of Kazakhstan, 1995–2006 (2007); Women and Men of Kazakhstan 2007–2011 (2012).

The beginning of the 2000s was marked first by a weak tendency towards the growth of the *economic activity* of the population, and then by its stability that was conditioned by the economic rise of the country. The proportion of economically active women and men remained the same with insignificant changes: in 2002 – 49.0% of women and 51.0% of men, in 2007 – 49.4% of women and 50.6% of men, in 2011 – 49.0% of women and 51.0% of men (Economic activity of the population of Kazakhstan, 1995–2006 (2007); Economic activity of the population of Kazakhstan, 2007–2011 (2012)).

The structure of female employment by the types of economic activity is essentially different from the male one. Women in Kazakhstan during the years of changes were able to be present at the labor market – the level of their employment remained high enough, and the share of women among the employed hadn't changed in fact. But this happened mostly due to the reduction of the quality of employment: their concentration in the budget and scarcely paid branches of economy and also in less prestigious jobs.

At present *the share of women among the employed* according to the types of activity ranges widely. Women mostly prefer less payable but more stable employment in state organizations, for instance, such traditional "female" branches as healthcare and social services, education, hotels and restaurants.

Among the unemployed women looking for work by hire 83.3% chose looking for state organizations. As for men, they more often choose better payable, but more risky work in the private sector.

During the years of reforms in Kazakhstan a new form of employment is developing fast – *independent employment* which is often used by the population to realize the strategy of survival. We should point out that in Kazakhstan as in other countries of the CIS independent employment is often connected with the work in the non-formal sector of economy and, consequently, with the violation of labor legislation, weak social protection etc. Besides, non-formal employment is often accompanied by the depreciation of education, professional and qualification skills of employees, social risks.

Among working women independent employment is spread much wider, than among men. In 2002 43.7% of the employed women were engaged in independent employment in comparison with 36.4% of men. In 2011 the share of independently employed women constituted 33.4%, of men – 32.1% (Economic activity of the population of Kazakhstan. 1995–2006 (2007); Women and Men of Kazakhstan. 2007–2011 (2012)). The basic spheres of female independent employment are: trade and merchandise at food markets; crafts, producing and processing of rural products; everyday services; public catering; consulting and educational activities, folk medicine; cosmetology services etc.

In spite of the fact that independent employment in the country is mostly the female are of employment, in general Kazakhstani women are not sufficiently represented among the employers since in 2002 they comprised 15.8%, in 2006 – 24.4%, in 2011 – 39.3% of all employers (Economic activity of the population of Kazakhstan. 1995–2006 (2007); Economic activity of the population of Kazakhstan. 2007–2011 (2012)). One of the most important gender problems of the labor market of Kazakhstan is the high level of *vertical segregation*. Vertical segregation at the labor market determines the situation when men within the same sector of the economy as a rule get more skilled, responsible and better paid work. Career opportunities for women as in many other countries are limited by the phenomenon of "a glass ceiling".

Table 5. The level of long-term unemployment by gender, %

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
The Republic of Kazakhstan	3.3	2.8	2.5	2.2	2.1
men	2.3	1.9	1.8	1.6	1.4
women	4.3	3.7	3.3	2.8	2.7

Made on the data: Economic activity of the population of Kazakhstan, 2007–2011 (2012).

Table 6. Vertical segregation by gender among specialists in Kazakhstan, 2007–2011, %

Employees	Men					Women				
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Heads of administration bodies and management of all levels including the heads of organizations	63.2	62.0	61.0	63.0	61.5	36.8	38.0	39.0	37.0	38.5
Specialists of a higher level of qualification	32.0	32.1	27.0	25.5	23.0	68.0	67.9	7.0	74.5	77.0
Specialists of a medium level of qualification	37.0	34.6	37.3	37.0	37.1	63.0	65.4	62.7	63	62.9
Employees involved in the preparation of information, completion of documents, registration and servicing	23.0	27.2	27.4	32.0	32.0	77.0	72.8	72.6	68.0	68.0

Based on the data: Economic activity of the population of Kazakhstan. 2007–2011 (2012).

Table 7. Dynamics of an average monthly nominal wages for men and women (150.78 KZT = 1 USD)

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Women	72	84	102	115	142	169	205	273	273	353	406	480
Men	117	143	165	189	230	277	330	425	310	534	616	706
Proportion of wages of women to the wages of men, %	61.5	58.7	61.8	60.8	61.7	61.0	62.1	64.2	88.1	66.1	66.0	68.0

Constructed by the author basing on the data: Regions of Kazakhstan (2004); Women and Men of Kazakhstan, Gender statistics (2006); Women and Men of Kazakhstan. Gender statistics (2007); Social-economic development of the Republic of Kazakhstan (2008); Data of the webresource Mojarplataz of 25.09.09, 15.06.11.



This is especially acute for the sector of public management, industrial production, farming, science, education and healthcare. In particular it is testified by the data of the gender structure of employees and specialists (Table 6).

Professional advance of women is prevented by lower opportunities in comparison with men. Fulfilling the reproductive function, young women leaving the market of payable labor are losing their skills and experience. Returning to their working places, due to their family duties, they are not striving or they even can not occupy leading career positions.

Considering the vertical segregation in employment we can't help pointing out that among professionally employed women the level of education is not lower than that of men. Thus, in 2011 among all the employed 55.1% of women had higher education, 49.6% of women – secondary professional (special) education (Economic activity of the population of Kazakhstan. 2007–2011, 2012).

The level of payment of women labor on average is lower than that of men. The average monthly nominal wages of women for the period of 2000–2011 increased by 408, while men's by 589 USD (Table 7).

According to all basic groups of jobs and professions the wages of men in 2012 were higher than women wages comprising 286 ths KZT, or 1897 USD for leading job positions (The data of the Agency of the Republic of Kazakhstan on statistics, 2013).

One of the key reasons of the existing gender gap in labor payments is the *horizontal segregation* by the types of activity, namely, the concentration of professionally employed women in the branches with little payment – more than 60%. The increase of the gap in women's and men's labor payment may be explained by the increase of the level of the average wages according to "male" specialties as far as the "female" specialties are becoming less profitable. As a rule, men occupy higher positions even in "female branches" (Women and Men of Kazakhstan, 2012).

*Feminization of poverty* is a proof of gender inequality. On average, in the Republic the share of the population with the revenue below the level of the living wage among women constitutes 44.9%, while among men – 33.2%. Single mothers, disabled women, mothers of disabled children and unemployed constitute a risky group. Women constitute 71.3% of all pension receivers. The gap in the investments of men and women in the accumulation pension funds on average is around 30% due to low medium wages, unpaid maternity leaves, absence of pension deductions at this period in comparison with men, the earlier age of retirement in comparison with men, a smaller length of service necessary for pension charges. Men have a high risk of poverty among the unemployed, single pensioners and disabled (The life standard of the population and poverty in the Republic of Kazakhstan (2005); Women and Men of Kazakhstan. 2007–2011 (2012)).

### **Conclusions:**

1. The asymmetry facts at the labor market in favor of men allows making a conclusion that gender roles in Kazakhstan society remain traditional.

2. Inadequate evaluation of time expenditure of women leads to deepening of the differences in the size of time expenditure of gender categories for paid and unpaid types of activities. Women spend unjustified high share of their time for working about the house, looking after family members, while men demonstrate a tendency to overspend their time for market types of labor activity. Higher level of economic activity and employment is the characteristic of men.

3. The existing situation at the labor market reduces women stimulus for investment in acquiring new labor skills and education. As a result, this limits their potential opportunities.

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