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N° 74

Gender policy within social and labor relations: international and legal aspect

DOI: https://doi.org/10.46398/cuestpol.4074.23

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Abstract

The article aims to define the sectoral legal tools that can be incorporated into the legislations of the countries of the world for the development of gender policies in social and labor relations. The research methodology included methods of general and special scientific character, which aim to ensure the unity of approaches. Attention has been paid to the justification of subjective differentiation of working conditions in the acts of the

International Labor Organization. Legal conditions for the introduction of gender equality in legal systems were proposed in order to ensure the social and economic development of society. It is concluded that international standards of social and labor relations make it possible to implement gender equality policy in various variable models. Finally, among the special sectoral tools for solving gender problems, it is worth applying: subjective and social differentiation of working conditions; gender-neutral legislation; local acts as a method of raising the level of moral and ethical standards in professional groups, and; gender quotas and gender parity with differentiation in various spheres of economic activity.

Keywords: gender; gender policy; gender neutral legislation; social and labor relations; differentiation of working conditions.

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Política de género en las relaciones sociales y laborales: aspecto internacional y legal

Resumen

El artículo tiene por objeto definir las herramientas jurídicas sectoriales que pueden incorporarse a las legislaciones de los países del mundo para el desarrollo de políticas de género en las relaciones sociales y laborales. La metodología de la investigación incluyó métodos de carácter científico general y especial, que tienen como objetivo asegurar la unidad de los enfoques. Se ha prestó atención a la justificación de la diferenciación subjetiva de las condiciones de trabajo en los actos de la Organización Internacional del Trabajo. Se propusieron condiciones legales para la introducción de la igualdad de género en los ordenamientos jurídicos a fin de garantizar el desarrollo social y económico de la sociedad. Se concluye que los estándares internacionales de relaciones sociales y laborales permiten implementar la política de igualdad de género en diversos modelos variables. Finalmente, entre las herramientas sectoriales especiales para resolver los problemas de género, vale la pena aplicar: la diferenciación subjetiva y social de las condiciones de trabajo; legislación neutra en cuanto al género; los actos locales como método para elevar el nivel de los estándares morales y éticos en los grupos profesionales, y; cuotas de género y paridad de género con diferenciación en varias esferas de actividad económica.

Palabras clave: género; política de género; legislación neutra en cuanto al género; relaciones sociales y laborales; diferenciación de las condiciones de trabajo.

Introduction

Social and labor relations are the main way for citizens to realize the right to work all over the world and, accordingly, the right to social security in case of specific social risks. At the same time, there is still a certain gap between the real opportunities of women and men in the social and labor sphere. Since the level of social security services for citizens mainly depends on the quality and duration of labor relations, then the policy of legal levelling-off the position of women and men in social and labor relations was and remains one of the practical tasks for the international community and national authorities of the world countries.

The construction and development of democratic, legal, social states is impossible without the implementation of gender policy, which requires coordinated actions and systemic approaches at the level of international legal acts, in particular those that define international labor and social standards. The relevance of gender aspects for the realization of social rights must be considered not as means of material or financial support of citizens, but as a set of rights that establish, guarantee, implement and protect a decent standard of a person's living.

Therefore, gender policy is one of the means of preventing and combating poverty and social exclusion of people based on gender. The fact that gender issues are the subject matter of legal regulation in international legal acts of the United Nations (UN), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Council of Europe and the European Union (EU) indicates that the sphere of social and labor relations is topical in the social area of human existence.

The purpose of this article is to define the sectoral legal tools that can be included into national legislation of the world countries for the development of gender policy within social and labor relations.

1. Methodology of the study

The research was conducted on the basis of the latest scientific publications on gender issues and international legal acts covering the legal mechanisms for the implementation of gender policy. The methodology of this research includes methods of general and special scientific nature, which are aimed at ensuring the unity of epistemological, ontological and axiological approaches.

The dialectical method was used to determine the essence of subjectival and social differentiation of working conditions in the acts of the International Labour Organization. System analysis was used to determine the relationship between the possibilities of realizing the right to work and the right to social security services for women and men. Theoretical and prognostic method was used in the process of formulating approaches to the improvement of the national gender policy with the application of sectoral legal tools.

Suggestions for improving social and labor legislation based on the principle of equality between women and men in their rights, differentiation of working conditions and the application of gender-neutral legislation are methodologically built on the categories and methods of formal logic: definition, proof, judgment, analysis, synthesis, analogy, comparison, generalization, etc.

2. Analysis of recent research

Scientific studies demonstrate that the following relevant manifestations of gender inequality are currently observed:

- 1. Differences in the duration of working hours, i.e., "Women are less likely than men to be in full-time employment" (Mathieu Boniol *et al.*, 2019: 1);
- 2. "Occupational differentiation between men and women as well as a set of other factors related to underestimation of women holding management positions" (Kostiuchenko *et al.*, 2020: 2813);
- 3. Women report experiencing widespread discrimination across many areas of their lives with public, private, or governmental institutions including in health care, the workplace, and higher education, as well as in personal interactions through gender slurs, microaggressions, and harassment (Fisher *et al.*, 2019);
- 4. "The gender pay gap may be increased and this may reduce the participation of women in the labor force" (Sauré *et al.*, 2014: 17);
- 5. "Gender occupational and industrial segregation leads to a widening of the gender gap in employment" (Mansour *et al.*, 2022: 102149).

It is also scientifically sound to conclude that with a higher impact of trade liberalization, the simple gender wage gap is reduced and the final wage gap is increased. Scholars substantiate that:

The reduction in the gender labor force participation gap was driven by higher entry of women, in particular more educated women, and exit of the less educated men. This results in intrahousehold adjustments in work dynamics, with women entering the labor force to offset the lost income of male partners who left the labor force... trade liberalization increased female workers' unemployment rate and reliance on part-time jobs (Besedeš *et al.*, 2021: 574).

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Model approach to gender policy

Socially useful work is one of the main sources of ensuring human life. At the same time, various approaches to ensuring equal rights of women and men in the sphere of labor and social security are implemented in the context of social and labor relations in democratic states at the national level. Taking into account the fact that the female part of the population in some places, on the background of gender inequality, needs additional support from the state, democratic states have been implemented specific concepts of gender policy at the state level for a long time, which are also reflected in the legislation regulating social and labor relations.

It is inherent in a democratic society to choose the directions and vectors of its development, and therefore, the models of gender policy in various

countries differ. The variability of gender policy in the world community demonstrates that the modeling of the national model of gender policy allows taking into account specific features of national development and national traditions. At the same time, the construction of a national gender policy based on fundamental world models allows ensuring the implementation of a general international policy focused on preventing manifestations of any discrimination, particularly based on gender, etc.

Scholars distinguish four main approaches to gender equality. The first is the so-called formally egalitarian model inherent in the United States. Obligations regarding gender equality are legally enshrined within its framework, where the state is only partially sponsoring projects in this area. The second is a real egalitarian model introduced, for example, in the Scandinavian countries, where activities in this direction are institutionally and financially ensured at the state level. The third is a model of economic development, which includes an extensive system of assistance to working women. It exists in a number of Eastern European countries, for example, in Hungary. The fourth is a model of traditional family values, for example, like in Japan (Kormych, 2011).

Therefore, gender rights are not only a part of gender policy, but also a tool to ensure the levelling-off the position of women and men, in particular with the aim of ensuring a sufficient standard of living. Model approaches to defining the gender policy of the world countries take into account national traditions.

For example, the state minimally interferes in relations between employers and employees in the USA. At the same time, the employee's social security results from the quality and duration of his / her employment relationship, but not from the level of state financial support. The provision of gender equality in legislation is proclaimed in the USA in order to overcome the real gender gaps in social and labor relations, but such equality for women requires certain restrictions from them, which are sometimes contradictory in the context of career growth and motherhood.

Gender equality in the Scandinavian countries is achieved by state support for women, which is ensured by state paternalism. State intervention in the regulation of social and labor relations in this model also has a paternalistic character. At the same time, the implementation of a real egalitarian model is quite often accompanied by the professional segregation of women.

Despite the originality and difference in ways to ensure gender equality, the model approach to gender policy allows improving the national legislation of states taking into account national traditions and providing different ways of levelling-off the legal position of women and men in the labor and social spheres.

It is important to note that the gender policy of the democracies of the world embrace gender planning as an active approach to planning, where the gender principle is used as the main variable or main criterion, which seeks to integrate a direct gender dimension into the policy or activities. The basic conditions for the development and implementation of a gender policy are also ensured through gender inspections, which are subjected to any policy suggestions in order to ensure the avoidance of all possible gender-discriminatory effects arising from this policy, as well as with the purpose to promote gender equality (Glossary of labor law and social and labor relations (with reference to the experience of the European Union), International Labour Organization, 2006: 89, 87).

So, we can state that gender policy is one of the tools of civilizational development of society. This policy is aimed at forming the main dominant in society regarding the free disposal of a person's own abilities and the awareness that different behavior and different aspirations of women and men are supported equally. But the policy alone is not enough for the implementation of gender equality.

The state must establish specific rules of conduct for the participants in social relations at the level of legislation in order its implementation. And the sphere of social and labor relations is no exception. At the same time, the specifics of the national legislation of various states of the world require certain uniform standards for regulatory provisions in matters of ensuring gender equality. International and legal acts can be currently considered as such standards, and these unified approaches are established in the system of social and labor relations by the ILO acts.

3.2. Basic international standards of gender equality

The UN was the primer initiator of the development and implementation of the principle of gender equality. It was this international organization that contributed to the full involvement of women in economic activity on a par with men. The preamble of the UN Charter states:

We the peoples of the United Nations determined... to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equality of men and women... to establish the conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained... (United Nations Charter, 1945; preamble).

Articles 1 and 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights state that all people are born free and equal in dignity and rights. Everyone should have all rights and all freedoms, in particular regardless of sex (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948: Articles 1, 2).

The obligations of states regarding non-discrimination of people, in particular on the basis of gender, are also enshrined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women establishes key international standards for the implementation of the principle of equality and respect for the human dignity of women on an equal basis with men in political, social, economic and cultural life.

It should be also noted that the Council of Europe and the European Community at their territorial level implement gender policy enshrined in their regulatory legal acts.

Given that European law is a special legal system that exists alongside the national legal systems of the EU Member States and international law, then it can be said to some extent that gender rights are the component of basic international standards. In particular, the Declaration of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe "On the equality of women and men" declares the continuation and development of the policy, which is aimed at achieving true equality of women and men in all spheres of life.

The European Charter for the Equality of Women and Men in the Life of Local Communities stipulates that the equality of women and men is a fundamental right. The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence emphasizes that "the realization of *de jure and de facto* equality between women and men is a key element in preventing violence against women" (The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, 2011: preamble).

In general, these regulatory acts are only part of the legal system, which enshrines the principle of equality between women and men. International fundamental legal acts generally demonstrate the formation and development of gender policy in a civilized, democratic world. The analysis of international acts establishing gender equality makes it possible to currently highlight the following basic standards in this area:

- The equal right for men and women to use all civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights for the growth of the well-being of society and the family.
- The ban of any discrimination against women with the regulatory establishment of anti-discrimination measures, including appropriate sanctions.
- Improvement of national legislation, in particular by repealing existing laws, regulations, customs and practices that constitute discrimination against women.

- Gender equality as a legal phenomenon covers not only the anatomical and physiological differences of females and males, but also the social characteristics of men and women in the context of family upbringing and maternity as a social function. In this regard, special measures aimed at protecting maternity are not discrimination, but act as a mean of subject differentiation in order to levelling-off the legal position of men and women.
- Equality of women and men in the field of professional orientation, obtaining education and all types of professional training, in particular, regarding scholarships and other financial assistance during studies. Equality of rights of persons of both sexes in the field of employment, work, social security, health care, etc., in order to realize personal abilities and opportunities to provide a decent life for themselves and their family members.
- The same legal personality of men and women with the same opportunities for its implementation both while concluding contracts and managing property, and when applying to state and non-state institutions for the protection of their rights, in particular courts and tribunals.
- Protection of women from all forms of violence as a manifestation of violation of their rights and forms of discrimination, which results or may result in physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering to women, including threats of such actions, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, regardless of whether it happens in public or private life.

The given basic standards of gender equality are not exhaustive. They form the basis for the development and improvement of the national legislation of the world democratic states for detailing and expanding the principle of gender equality.

At the same time, special international institutions and organizations in various spheres of social life form appropriate standards in the sphere of their influence on the basis of selected basic standards. For example, the ILO is the leading international institution that takes care of establishing standards in the field of labor and social security, whose acts have internationally defined the equality of men and women in the field of work since 1919.

3.3. Gender equality and subjectival social differentiation in the acts of the International Labour Organization

The principle of gender equality in social and labor relations compared to international standards in the field of labor is a relatively new phenomenon. However, even when society did not implement a policy of gender equality, the ILO already declared legal means of levelling-off the legal position of women and men in the field of labor. At the current stage of the development of civilization, it is safe to say that gender equality was first of all actualized at the level of socio-economic human rights, the rights of the second generation, which are related to the improvement of the socio-economic status of women.

A number of the ILO Conventions are focused on levelling-off the legal status of women and men. Such ILO Conventions include: Maternity Protection Convention, 1919 (No. 3); Night Work (Women) Convention, 1919 (No. 4); Night Work (Women) Convention (Revised), 1934 (No. 41); Night Work (Women) Convention (Revised), 1946 (No. 89); Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100); Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102); Maternity Protection Convention (Revised), 1952 (No. 103); Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111); Convention concerning Equal Opportunities and Equal Treatment for Men and Women Workers: Workers with Family Responsibilities, 1981 (No. 156); Night Work Convention, 1990 (No. 171) and others.

It is worth noting that gender equality of women and men in social and labor relations is mainly ensured by the operation of the principle of "unity and differentiation of legal regulation", which allows levelling-off the legal position of women and men in accordance with the grounds of differentiation of legal labor regulation: 1) objective; 2) subjective; 3) social.

For example, the ILO Maternity Protection Convention, 1919 (No. 3) established the working conditions of women in industrial enterprises, in particular regarding the right not to work and to leave work with the payment of benefits before and after childbirth, as well as the right to an additional break during working hours days for breastfeeding (the ILO Maternity Protection Convention, 1919 (No. 3).

Granting such rights to a woman is primarily due to the objective physiological functions of the female body. Further consolidation of international standards regarding the working conditions of women at industrial enterprises, such as: mines, quarries, construction enterprises, processing enterprises, etc., took place with the consolidation of the differentiation of the level of work of women and men, primarily with the aim of preserving the reproductive functions of women and the ability to perform her social function – maternity.

Maternity, as a key social role of a woman in society, serves as the basis for social differentiation of woman's working conditions and her social security, in particular for the period before and after childbirth. Maternity at the international level is recognized as requiring additional protection, and in this regard, a number of social and labor rights are provided for women employed in industrial and non-industrial enterprises, engaged in agricultural work, as well as housewives, which act as means of levelling-off the position of women compared to men in the process of performing a mother's function. At the same time, maternity care covers:

- 1. restrictions for the employer regarding the use of the labor of mothers in certain jobs, the granting of leave in connection with pregnancy and childbirth;
- 2. medical care, including care and observation before, during and after childbirth, provided by qualified medical personnel;
- 3. financial and material support of a woman in connection with pregnancy and childbirth. The international standard in the field of labor regarding the mentioned monetary and material assistance enshrines a woman's right to such material support. At the same time, the ILO does not indicate to its Member States the specific sources of financing such payments, noting that monetary and material assistance is provided either from the funds of the mandatory social insurance system or from state funds (The ILO Maternity Protection Convention (No. 103), 1952).

The problem of gender equality for women is mainly present in professional activities and in family and domestic relations (Bass *et al.*, 2021). At the same time, the development of gender policy in democratic states also influenced the improvement of international standards in the field of social and labor relations.

In order to overcome gender problems in the field of work, neutrality in the conceptual apparatus is increasingly used when formulating the provisions of international acts. Gender-neutral legislation is being formed, where the employee's gender is maximally leveled as a condition for access to one or another right. A bright example of such gender-neutral legislation in the social and labor sphere is the right of employees with family responsibilities.

Gender-neutral legislation in the social and labor sphere does not replace legislation with the conditions of subjectival and social differentiation of the work of men and women. It gives men and women equal opportunities to fulfill their family responsibilities in those parts of social and labor relations, where it is possible. For example, both a woman (the child's mother, grandmother) and a man (the child's father, grandfather) can take care leave in Ukraine before the child reaches the age of three.

In fact, when talking about gender rights and political ways of their implementation, it is necessary to proceed not from the position of equality or identity of the rights and duties of women and men, but from the fact that these are tools for levelling-off the legal position of people of both genders. The policy in this context acts as a kind of tool for introducing the leading ideas of modernity, which embody justice, freedom, democracy and equality. It is worth emphasizing that international standards in the field of labor and social security convince that gender equality as an embodiment of justice and counteracting manifestations of discrimination based on gender includes:

- equality of men and women in the realization of rights and responsibilities, in particular in social and labor relations;
- differentiation for realizing the rights and obligations on the basis of:
 1) objectively physiological differences between the male and female body;
 2) social differentiation caused by a woman's performance of her social role in society maternity;
- gender-neutral legislation, which creates legal conditions for the realization of a number of social and labor rights regardless of gender, in particular for employees with family responsibilities.

This approach allows accomplishing the levelling-off the legal position of men and women, which in its essence is a manifestation of justice. For example, if the right to take care of a child before reaching a certain age can be used by both a man and a woman, social leave in connection with pregnancy and childbirth can be granted only to a woman for objective physiological reasons. At the same time, the right to free choice of occupation and profession is exercised on the basis of equality.

3.4. Legal conditions for the introduction of gender equality into national legal systems to ensure social and economic development of society

Based on the fact that socially useful work is the basis of the socioeconomic development of society, each state tries to create such a legal regulation of labor to ensure the competitive advantages of its labor market over the labor market of other states.

Therefore, the globalization of the labor market does not prevent the development of national legislation to attract competitive employees. But, developing the national labor market and legislation, states should proceed from the fact that: "The state, declaring human rights as the highest social value ... must define the gender equality as an integral part of its state policy. Only a balanced combination of men and women in one team provides a competitive advantage" (Samilyk *et al.*, 2021: 7).

According to the analysis of international standards of gender equality, the national gender policy is based on the choice of a model of gender equality. At the same time, equal rights of men and women in social and labor relations is more difficult task, because people in the process of socially useful work realize both their abilities to work and their physiological characters and social roles. In this regard, there is a need to find a balance between the equality of men and women and the subjectival differentiation of working conditions. Finally, gender-neutral legislation also acts as a specific legal mean of levelling-off the legal position of men and women in social and labor relations.

We believe that there are all the necessary legal tools to overcome modern manifestations of gender inequality in social and labor relations. Those tools are capable to improve the national legislation of states regarding gender equality in social and labor relations.

Thus, in order to minimize the differences in the duration of working hours of women and men, it is necessary to implement and develop gender-neutral rules for determining the duration of working hours, where the specific number of working hours should be calculated not because of the employee's gender, but because of the conditions of production and work at the workplace.

If we talk about the creation of equal opportunities for men and women in terms of spending specific time for professional activities with the fulfillment of family responsibilities, then in order of levelling-off the legal position of men and women, such compensatory mechanisms can be used as: social benefits, social holidays, rules for transferring the next certification of an employee, state quotas of workplaces at employers, state monetary compensation to the employer for the costs of professional development or retraining of a woman after being on maternity leave.

Regarding the professional differentiation of men and women in the context of the underestimation of women's work in managerial positions, this problem can be solved through direct state intervention in the legal regulation of labor relations at the legislative level, where it is necessary to establish gender quotas and gender parity in labor relations. We should also note that direct state intervention in the social and labor sphere by establishing gender quotas and gender parity in not all spheres of economic activity is appropriate, and therefore, the application of these tools should be applied differently both in relation to subjects obliged to comply with such quotas, as well as regarding spheres of economic activity.

That is, if it is possible to talk about gender parity or gender quotas in the field of education and science or in state or local authorities, then, for example, it would not be correct to dictate to the owner of the enterprise a parity procedure for the formation of management boards in the private sector of the economy. It is also necessary to assume that gender quotas or gender parity are not necessarily equal shares of women and men in specific positions.

Gender quota or gender parity can be determined by a specific ratio, for example, at least 10% or a third of the total number of the board members. It is also necessary to remember that a number of management positions are elective positions. Therefore, it is impossible to force people to choose their representatives, leaders or managers based on gender.

Regarding the problem of persecution of women and their discrimination, this problem, in our opinion, requires the construction of an ideological base of legal education and an increase in the level of moral and ethical norms in public life. The authorities are the main actors that can directly influence the dynamics of gender-based violence by addressing the factors that increase the incidence of violence against women and girls (Havronska *et al.*, 2021).

At the same time, eradicating discrimination against women, as well as the problem of violence against women, is a practical task not only of the state, but also of non-state institutions and society in the whole. Moral and ethical standards of public life regarding non-discrimination on the basis of gender should be raised in society and supported, in particular, by state programs and regulatory consolidation for professional groups at the level of local acts.

Overcoming the problem of gender payment gaps is primarily determined by the division of labor both in the sectoral context and by the division of job categories, and therefore, the gender payment policy should be based on regulatory provisions of the ILO Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100), where the rule of equal remuneration of men and women for work of equal value is clearly established (the ILO Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100): 1). Levelling-off the position of men and women, according to the issue of gender inequality in employment, depending on professional segregation by professional groups in various spheres of economic activity and job hierarchy, should probably take place through financial support of women employed in less profitable spheres of activity.

At the same time, financial support should correspond to the general model of social security in the state. It is also worth separately studying the social compensatory factors of work in non-profit economic spheres, in particular: establishing a lower work rate due to increased rest time; establishment of flexible work schedules; increasing the social package at by state support programs, etc.

Conclusion

International standards of social and labor relations allow implementing the policy of gender equality in various variable models. The tools of labor law and social security law used in regulating social and labor relations can be used to improve the national gender policy of the state.

Among special sectoral tools for solving gender problems, it is worth applying: subjectival and social differentiation of working conditions; gender neutral legislation; local acts as a way to raise the level of moral and ethical standards in professional groups; gender quotas and gender parity with differentiation in various spheres of economic activity; the application of financial and socially significant compensatory mechanisms for levelling-off the position of men and women in labor relations, for example, establishing a lower work rate due to increased rest time; establishing flexible work schedules; expansion of the social package at the expense of state support programs, etc.

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CUESTIONES POLÍTICAS

Vol.40 Nº 74

Esta revista fue editada en formato digital y publicada en octubre de 2022, por el Fondo Editorial Serbiluz, Universidad del Zulia. Maracaibo-Venezuela

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