



| Research Article / Araştırma Makalesi |

## Impact of Education Level of Women in Russia on the Position of Women in Society (historical summary)

### Rusya’da Kadınların Eğitim Düzeyinin Kadınların Toplumdaki Konumuna Etkisi (tarihi özet)

Shanay Guliyeva-Kabaoğlu<sup>1</sup>

#### Keywords

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#### Abstract

*Purpose:* Since the 18th century, discrimination against women was part of official government policy in higher education institutions within Russia, as across the world until the beginning of the twentieth century. For many years, only men had the advantage of attending higher education. Thus, it can be said that women of lower socio-economic status had barely any rights in Czarist Russia. They had no right to divorce and extremely limited rights to own private property.

*Design/Methodology/Approach:* Only women who were at least of median socio-economic level could consider leaving their husband. Effects of both the industrial revolution in the western world and the labour movement within Russia during the 19th century along with a number of socio-economic changes within society, led to a system of values which ultimately allowed women to participate in educational life.

*Findings:* As it observed in most societies, a long period of awakening and raising awareness is required in order to ensure the desired level of equality of opportunity between genders in both education and work areas, as well as in other areas of society in Russia too.

*Highlights:* When it comes to the historical process in Russia's women's education, it can be said that the path taken in the field of women's education, considering the changes in the political, socio-economic and value system is practical and beneficial.

#### Öz

*Çalışmanın amacı:* 18. yüzyıldan itibaren dünya genelinde olduğu gibi Rusyada da yükseköğretim kurumlarında kadınlara yönelik ayrımcılık, yirminci yüzyılın başlarına kadar resmi devlet politikasını oluşturuyordu. Uzun yıllar boyunca, yükseköğretim kurumlarında sadece erkekler eğitim alma fırsatına sahipti. Düşük sosyo ekonomik düzeye mensup kadınlar Çarlık Rusya’sında neredeyse hiçbir bir hakka sahip olmadığı söylene bilir. Boşanama hakları yoktu, son derece sınırlı özel mülk haklarına sahipti.

*Materyal ve Yöntem:* Sadece orta sosyo ekonomik düzeye mensup kadınlar kocalarını terk etmeyi düşünebilirlerdi. 19. Yüzyılda hem batıdaki sanayi devriminin hem de Rusyadaki işçi hareketinin etkileri toplumda yaşanan bir takım sosyo-ekonomik ve değerler sistemindeki değişiklikler kadınların eğitim hayatına katılımını tetikleyen önemli etmenlerdendir..

*Bulgular:* Çoğu toplumlarda gözlemlendiği gibi Rusya’da da hem eğitim hem de çalışma alanlarında olduğu gibi toplumun diğer alanlarında da cinsiyetler arasında istendik düzeyde fırsat eşitliğinin sağlanması için uzun sürecek bilinçlenme ve bilinçlendirme süresi gerekmektedir.

*Önemli Vurgular* Rusya’nın kadın eğitimindeki tarihsel sürece bakıldığında yaşanan politik, sosyo-ekonomik ve değerler sistemindeki değişimler göz önünde bulundurulduğunda kadının eğitimi konusunda katedilen yolun pratik ve faydalı olduğu söylenebilir.

<sup>1</sup> **Corresponding Author**, Kastamonu University, Education Faculty, Department of Guidance and Psychological Counseling, Kastamonu, Turkey; squliyeva@kastamonu.edu.tr, <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6346-9146>

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The role of women in the history of Russia is currently an important issue. As in other parts of the world, the status and roles of all social groups within Russia, especially women, have been affected by the natural environment, geographical position of the country, lifestyle of the many ethnic groups, the social value system, religion as well as socio-political and economic development. Our concern was to determine the degree of women's involvement in the periodical enlightenment process and to keep track of the determination of their position in society. Therefore, our aim was to evaluate the image of woman in Russian society by referring to the historical facts, statistics, and scientific literature. The education level of women and recognizing the opportunities from which women themselves and the society benefited were the most crucial issues in this regard. The socio-political, scientific, and technical changes increased the educational and professional level of women and caused a need for increasing women's role in society. Thus, the degree of change in the role and importance of women in society increased the overall attention to women in various social, political, scientific, industrial, and creative fields. In Russian society, women's emotional state, social, and physiological behaviours are affected by their social role, status, involvement in education, and business life. The recent socio-political change, Soviet disintegration, and formation of new socio-political administration has affected the position of women in society and the family unit. Women are often the first to be fired in Russia as is the case of the societal transition process throughout the world. This has increased the desire of women to participate in education and be qualified employees for the purpose of protecting their position in society (Мороз В.А., Аверкина Т.О.2016).

It is known that societal events are formed through individual behaviours, thus they are related to self-praise or protecting one's self-esteem. The aim of ensuring gender equality during the Soviet period contributed to the participation of women in education and business life. However, during the transition process from the Soviet Union to Russia, the weakening of the economy, change in political balance, and financial difficulties negatively affected the position of women in society. As the reasons mentioned are considered, women tended towards protecting their self-esteem and position within society by breaking the gender roles (Баскакова М.Е. 2005).

## 2. Body

As is known, the issue of gender inequality has been an important research topic since the early stages of the development of capitalist society. There has been a significant amount of research regarding women's educational attainment in Russia. This issue was an inseparable part of governmental policy and scientific interest both during the Soviet period and modern era. Due to the fact that the policy towards women was primarily aimed at using woman for the labour force, development of the education system, and starting new businesses was to be ensured. Also, the historical aspects of this issue should be analysed for comparative analysis as well as the ideological propaganda used. The specialists in this field are N. Kozlova, O. Bayukova, M. Y. Baskakova, D. Bondarenko, E. B. Demintseva, O. I. Kavykin, I. V. Sledzevsky, and D. A. Khalturina. These scholars have attempted to research this issue in various ways, including historical, psychological, cultural, economic, political, gender, and the national aspect.

Education is an important manifestation of the development level of any society. It is quite understandable that the opportunities lost in women's education so far may affect the development of Russian society, because Russia is a country with vast potential in human capital. To illustrate, women's business life was restricted to the service sector until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and women did not occupy other sectors of the economy at a desirable level correlate to the society, and as a result, women were repeatedly directed to certain sectors of education. Importantly, throughout the world, as in Russia, the third millennium may be considered the millennium of women. As a result, women are increasingly represented within society and should be considered as a service to education. As stated earlier, education itself is directly related to social and environmental conditions.

### Women's Education in Modern Society

If globalization, as a process of integrating knowledge within education, firstly requires increasing the general education level of society as well as the development of all social groups who may effectively work and/or study in the most current fields of science and learning, it is highly probable that the most crucial global need for educators is to adopt the concept of toleration. Tolerance can be considered as an essential part of personality, and a crucial and inseparable part of social skills. The following characteristics and indicators define the skills of individuals and social groups such as a tendency towards sustainability, establishing and developing social and intercultural relations, settlement of disputes, managing emotions, and accomplishing objectives (Бондаренко Д. М., Деминцева Е. Б., Кавыкин О. И., Следзевский И. В., Халтурина Д. А.2007).

In today's world, modern women are independent in every aspect of life within Russia, therefore, they have the right to plan an independent life, study in higher education institutions, have a business life and/or decide on marriage as well as the right to choose their spouse, sexual freedom, and/or birth control. The concept of family has lost some of its cachet for modern women compared to its historical significance because they often do not restrict themselves to the maternal role and instead attach greater importance to their career. Studies indicate that it is important for modern women to clearly understand their role in society as well as fulfil their responsibilities in this regard. Consequently, the successful implementation of crucial and exciting social roles brought together for students within the university environment is extremely important (Мороз В.А., Аверкина Т.О. 2016).

Social equality between men and women was not achieved in the past. The position of women, who manage the responsibilities of family and the maternal role, have often occupied the lowest level of society. Even though historians and sociopsychologists have recognised a leading role of women in public life (i.e., matriarchal societies), the image of women during the Soviet period was observed as female mother, female employee, and socially active female. Firstly, we should look at the current education status of women in Russia. In 2010, only 12,000 out of 33 million women in Russia, listed as having worker status, had not received any form of primary school education. This becomes concerning for men because 22,000 men had only received primary school education out of a total of 33.4 million men.

Moreover, when the education level of men and women over 15 is analysed in Russia, this fact changes dramatically. For example, 469,000 women out of a female population of 64 million received primary school education while 244,000 men out of a male population of 53 million received primary education. Thus, the number of men completing primary school education in Russia is approximately half the number of women. In general, these figures show that there has been an improvement in women's education in Russia over the past half century. On the contrary, a setback has been observed in men's education. Women have almost surpassed men in terms of higher education. For example, 16 million women out of a female population of 64 million over the age of 15 are university graduates while 11.5 million men out of a male population of 53 million are university graduates. This rate will not change even if the employees within the field of economics are considered. That is to say, 11.5 million women and 9.2 million men have earned more than one diploma in higher education (<https://vz.ru/economy>).

A pattern of development dynamics can be recognised in this regard. However, certain conditions must be considered. For example, transition to an open society with socio-political and economic processes during the independence period required new forms of connection (relations) within all fields of social life such as at the level of public awareness, including the formation of political culture. This includes women as an important social and demographic group. In this regard, an increase in the political activities of women requires researchers in the fields of social and political activities to conduct longitudinal studies regarding gender relations.

Additionally, the formation of public policy within the market economy to include women accelerates the expansion of women in these overall activities. Providing scientific reasoning regarding the elimination of women's unemployment, gender education, achieving gender equality, and standards of living should be based on the principle of ensuring social rights and additional social assistance for women's maternal and family needs as well as various benefits and essential improvements to their working and living conditions. Furthermore, it has been observed that these principles may vary according to the current conditions at each stage of development within Russian society.

Marriage, as one of the most crucial social institutions in modern society, involves important challenges, one being the sharp increase in divorce due to high levels of conflict within families. Every year, gaps in raising the younger generation, the number of single parent families, children with a single parent, and children who have both parents but are sent to boarding schools or child welfare institutions has increased.

Importantly, there have been many political changes in Russia over the last two centuries. For example, capitalism has gradually started to replace colonialism. During this time, specialization in fields and professions dramatically changed the pace of economic and social development as well as expanded the direction of socio-economic development. Women, however, have unfortunately not been able to fully participate within the fabric of social change and growth at what is considered a desirable level.

### **History of Women's Education in Russia**

Studies show that women's participation in education has a long history in Russia. Historical facts indicate that...

"Girls started to receive education in Russia in the 11th century and Anna Vsevolodovna, sister of Vladimir Monomax, founded a girl's school at St. Andrew's Monastery in Kiev in 1086. The first schools where girls could receive education in Moscow and St. Petersburg, which were private and provided secular education, were founded during the period of Peter I. The nuns were instructed to educate orphans of both genders and teach girls to sew and other handcrafts in 1724. The first schools providing midwifery education were founded in Moscow and St. Petersburg, and then in the other cities in 1754. While private boarding houses funded by foreigners were founded for women in Russia starting from the middle of the 18th century" (<http://izron.ru/articles/pedagogika-psikhologiya>).

Research shows that historically the choice of educational specialization has been considerably restricted among women even though the overall education level of women continues to increase each year. In general, education, health, the food industry, and agriculture sector have been the primary areas of educational specialization among women in Russia. Today, this continues to be the case, and to illustrate this fact, open secondary education for women started to improve within the Mariinsky educational institution beginning in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. While a general education and training program was prepared for all 34 education institutions in 1817, six more schools were founded between 1817 and 1827, and it was recorded that approximately 23,000 orphan girls received education within these schools (Козлова, Н.И. 2006).

Considering the myriad of developments in this regard, several issues remained to be resolved regarding the education of women in Russia. There has been rapid improvement regarding the education of women from the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present. For example, in 1897, a Women's Medical Faculty was founded, and in 1900 there were women's higher education institutions established in Moscow, Odessa, and St. Petersburg. Also, Lesgaft's higher education institution course was active in

1910 with higher education institution courses opened in Kharkov, Kazan, Novocherkassk, and several other locations as well as private technical courses being organized between the years of 1905 and 1910. Eventually, women also earned the right to work in higher education institutions in St. Petersburg (Козлова, Н.И. 2006).

Considering this general overview, the history of women's education in Russia is rich and complex. Firstly, gymnasiums and schools were founded, however only a small number of girls from the upper class of society had the advantage of education, while girls and boys from the lower class did not receive the opportunity of education. It can be said that education covers a narrow framework in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Thus, the number of specialization fields was limited and restricted to areas of moral life, the household, and family. As a result, educated women playing a leading role in family and participating in business life did not seem plausible.

Courses such as foreign language, the arts, literature, ethics, moral conduct, and handicrafts were provided to children in the gymnasiums for girls (Ахундов.Ф.2001). The living conditions of women and their status in society has changed over time as well as their need for knowledge and education has increased. They have also tended towards various professions which require education at the level of secondary and/or higher education. As a result of these factors, it can be stated that the overall education level of women has increased.

The development of science and technology has to be related with this increase. As is known, the problems of modern people have increased the need for knowledge and the ability to acquire this knowledge. The content and quality regarding claims and tendencies of human beings continually change and every human attempt to overcome obstacles in accordance with their mind, will, and socio-economic conditions. This starts with family because the moral and psychological environment within the family unit defines the attitude of each family member towards the family as a whole. To solve the problems individuals face, self-structure, and a material and non-material values system should be shaped, thus an individual may "avoid" mistakes or instead make the correct choices when faced with undesirable situations within society.

After the collapse of the USSR and formation of independent republics, some factors such as regional conflicts, the transitional period, integration into the world community, migration, social change and global economic problems, affecting almost all countries, appeared. It can be said that factors such as moral, cultural and socio-psychological problems, new norms and values, changes in international relations, and family situations have had significant impacts on the educational status of women.

According to some researchers, the issue of organization of research in education as well as the relation between the socio-political activities of women, the role of family, and the optimal balance of control over the primary direction of social policy of the state ultimately plays an important role in shaping the social status of women (Бондаренко Д. М., Деминцева Е. Б., Кавыкин О. И., Следзевский И. В., Халтурина Д. А. 2007).

In this regard, the process of shaping the basic characteristics of women and the issues of managing these processes should be continually researched.

### **Modern Education Level and Status of Women in Russia**

As can be understood from the above explanations, the opportunities and methods for women in social life differ based on the political and socio-economic status and lifestyle within Russia. However, the literacy, knowledge, and education level of women has increased steadily, thus accelerating their integration into society. As a result, women have started to be further involved within the socio-economic, political, and values system. It can be said that there are issues, which remain to be solved in this regard. When the context of a capitalist system covering a massive historical stage is considered, all social powers in society including women should be relied on.

Thus, there are key factors necessary to solve issues regarding women. According to specialists, discrimination regarding overtime pay and wage discrepancies for women in Russia has been observed even though their education level is higher than men's. Statistics show that 37% of women are educated, whereas only 29% of men have received higher education. Also, the wages of women are only 73% of men's average wages, thus discrimination is clearly observed according to this data. Specialists explain this by stating that women are integrating their professional responsibilities with the responsibilities of housework and child-raising. Thus, a specific strategy for females regarding this situation was developed and implemented by the Russian government (<https://www.rbc.ru/rbcfreenews/>).

Researchers have determined the primary reason for these processes through the two world wars which occurred in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. According to demographic statistics, it has been observed that the rate of women among university professors has constantly increased within Russia since 1990. To illustrate this point, in 1995, 107,000 (45%) of university instructors were women out of a total of 240,000 university instructors in the society as a whole. While the number of female university instructors reached 168,000 in 2013, making up 57% of the total number of these university instructors which was 288,000. Thus, it was determined that the rate of women working in higher education within Russia was 10%, while the level in G7 countries was 16% in 2013 (<http://www.forbes.ru>).

The primary reason for a high participation rate of women in education and social fields was the massive demographic loss for Russia during World War I and the Russian Civil War. Also, according to calculations, especially during World War II between 1941 and 1945 (the number of losses remains controversial) is estimated that 10 to 15 million people killed between 1917 and 1922,

and almost 26.6 million lost between 1941 and 1945. These losses were primarily from the male population. Consequently, one percent of the entire male population in Russia from these generations were lost (<http://www.forbes.ru>).

On the other hand, the developing market economy in Russia during the 1990s, created a massive demand for professionals who could swiftly adapt to the new market conditions. All the accounting specialists, teachers of economics, and lawyers were mostly women, as a result, they suddenly faced a massive demand and became an influential class of society. Therefore, the increase in demand for higher education in law caused an increase in the number of specialists and teachers within this field, especially in the social and economic sciences. Consequently, these two factors increased the rate of women in education based on the drastic demand for higher education within Russia during the 1990s and 2000s (Рослякова А.И. 2001).

### 3. Conclusion

The necessity for reform to the education system in Russia is based on several contradictions between the needs of specialists within a variety of fields as well as the opportunities for providing the needs of the system. As a result, the analysis of the aspect of gender in educational reform, impacts of these contradictions on the formation of social status among girls and boys, and the social equality of genders may be determined. In this regard, it was important in the current study to monitor and analyse the following:

- Determining acceptance plans for certain specialities in different education institutions;
- Formation of new social, professional, and value trends;
- Ensuring the freedom of choice for professions in the future;
- Creating democratic and humanist culture between teachers and students;
- Establishing high-quality and creative relations between education institutions and academic institutions, media and public institutions;
- Creating a mechanism for children from the upper class of society to help transfer property and culture; ensuring the horizontal and vertical transition from one social group to another;
- Creating an environment for continuing education, employment, and professional education;
- Role of education in the development of personal qualities related to modern civilization;
- Implementation of new education models meeting modern requirements;
- Implementation of issues regarding curriculum in the formation of national culture, moral and ethical values among young people;
- Material and non-material work incentives of teachers;
- Democratization of relations between teachers and students;
- Student-centred education process; and
- Organization of education processes in different universities and the impact of this on gender equality.

As in most societies, if we are to evaluate the issue of women by considering them both historically as well as under the current conditions, women in Russia have directly or indirectly, struggled against past social-economic oppression and continue to suffer both within their families and society at-large. Conflicts with their social role, inequality of opportunity in many areas of society, restriction to the right of education, and wage inequality in the labour market are some examples of social oppression experienced by women in Russia. Thus, it can be posited that these factors have increased the anxiety level of women in Russian society and have negatively affected their overall socio-economic success. As a result, it is necessary to foster the long-term awareness of this deleterious situation and seek to ensure an equality of opportunity in all fields of society including the fields of education and business.

In this current research, it was pointed out that the education of women in Russia has been related to the general attitude of society towards women. During a considerable part of history, Russian society held a negative attitude towards the education of women. For example, women, especially those of low socio-economic status, have had difficulty in attending education. Ultimately, the needs of society have shaped the educational opportunities for women in Russia. These improvements can be regarded as practical and beneficial when these changes are political, socio-economic, related to the value system or the historical process of women's education in Russia.

In conclusion, it is incredibly crucial for the development of a country that the equality of opportunity be ensured for women in all areas of society as well as that women are properly represented throughout the social-economic system. For this reason, a conscious and qualified educational process afforded to all women regardless of socio-economic status is necessary.

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## 6. Statements of publication ethics

I hereby declare that the study has not unethical issues and that research and publication ethics have been observed carefully.

## 7. Ethics Committee Approval Information

Ethics Committee Approval is not required for this this research because it is a compilation study.

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