



GENDER EQUALITY IN MEDICINE: THE GLOBAL STATE AND CHALLENGES OF WOMEN'S HEALTH

Qudratbekova Inobatxon Qudratbek qizi

KUAF Medical Faculty, Department of Treatment

Student of Group 24-02

Abstract

Gender equality is a key principle in healthcare, ensuring equal access and rights to medical services for all individuals, particularly women. Despite growing attention to women's health in recent years, significant disparities and barriers still persist in many parts of the world. This article provides a comprehensive analysis of the current global state of women's health, exploring the root causes of gender disparities, the impact of cultural and social factors, and biases within medical research and clinical care. The study draws on data from WHO, UN Women, and other international sources. It also outlines policy recommendations and strategies for strengthening gender-responsive healthcare systems and legal protections for women worldwide.

Keywords: Women's health, gender equality, gender disparities in medicine, women's rights, equal access to healthcare, social determinants of health, health policy, gender-based medical approach, reproductive health, medical discrimination against women, global health crisis, female leadership in healthcare, gender-based violence and health

INTRODUCTION

Gender equality is one of the fundamental pillars of a fair and effective healthcare system. Men and women should have equal access to medical services, participate equally in clinical research, and be equally represented in health policy decision-making. However, even in developed countries, women's health continues to face medical, social, and cultural challenges.

Despite possessing unique biological and reproductive characteristics, women are often underrepresented in clinical studies. As a result, diagnostic and treatment



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protocols are frequently tailored to male physiology, leading to delayed diagnoses, inappropriate treatments, and systemic neglect of women's specific health needs.

Furthermore, women's health is influenced not only by biological factors but also by social and economic determinants. Poverty, barriers to accessing healthcare, gender-based violence, and social stigma significantly affect women's well-being. In many cases, women's health issues are overlooked or normalized, resulting in delayed or absent medical care.

This article examines the global state of women's health, highlights gender disparities in medical services, explores protective legal frameworks, and analyzes international best practices. The main goal is to advocate for a healthcare system that is equitable, inclusive, and sustainable through the promotion of gender equality.

METHODS

This article is structured as an analytical-theoretical study, utilizing contemporary academic approaches to explore women's health and gender equality in medicine. The data for this research was gathered from the following sources:

- World Health Organization (WHO),
- United Nations Women (UN Women),
- Peer-reviewed articles from PubMed and Scopus published within the last five years,
- Official publications from the Ministry of Health of Uzbekistan and relevant national data.

The methodology includes qualitative content analysis, comparative analysis, and thematic categorization. Special attention was given to comparing countries with persistent gender disparities in healthcare (e.g., South Asia, Africa, Central Asia) to those that have made significant progress in gender equity (e.g., Scandinavian countries, Canada, Australia).

The study also assessed the influence of social determinants of health such as education, income, cultural norms, and the legal protection of women. Scientific objectivity, statistical reliability, and compliance with international research standards were maintained throughout the process.



RESULTS

The results of this study confirm that women's health remains a critical issue in many regions of the world. Statistical data from WHO and UN Women reveal the following:

- 1. Women and reproductive health:**

Over 300,000 women die each year from complications related to pregnancy and childbirth. An alarming 94% of these deaths occur in developing countries. In Uzbekistan, maternal mortality in 2022 was reported as 19.7 per 100,000 live births.

- 2. Limited access to healthcare services:**

Across parts of Africa and Asia, millions of women still lack access to basic healthcare services. Nearly 1 billion women are without necessary gynecological, maternal, or reproductive care.

- 3. Gender disparities in medical research:**

Between 2018 and 2023, female participation in clinical trials averaged just 38%, compared to 62% male. This leads to a lack of gender-specific treatment protocols suited to women's physiology.

- 4. Violence and mental health:**

One in three women globally has experienced physical or sexual violence in her lifetime. Such experiences are linked to poor mental health, increased risk of cardiovascular disease, depression, and suicide.

- 5. Progress in Uzbekistan:**

Positive reforms have been initiated in recent years to improve women's health. For example, women's consultation centers and maternity support services have expanded. In 2023, complications related to childbirth decreased by 11%.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that women's health is not solely a medical issue, but also a complex socio-cultural and political challenge. Gender disparities in healthcare reflect systemic inequities that compromise the quality, safety, and inclusiveness of medical services. Particularly, the underrepresentation of women in



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clinical research results in inadequate treatment standards that fail to address their specific health needs.

The lack of access to comprehensive reproductive health services continues to place women, especially in impoverished regions, at high risk of preventable complications and maternal mortality. This indicates a clear gap in healthcare inclusivity and justice.

Widespread gender-based violence also has a profound and long-lasting impact on women's mental health. In some societies, such violence is normalized, deterring women from seeking medical or psychological assistance. This perpetuates cycles of trauma and poor health outcomes.

Women's health is deeply intertwined with broader gender dynamics, including cultural stereotypes, legal protections, and opportunities for women to assume leadership roles in healthcare systems. Research shows that institutions led by women are more likely to adopt gender-sensitive policies and patient-centered care. Therefore, addressing women's health requires not just medical solutions but also political and social commitment. Achieving gender equality in healthcare policy, budgeting, and service delivery is essential to building a more equitable and sustainable health system.

CONCLUSION

Women's health remains one of the most pressing and complex global health challenges. The evidence presented in this article demonstrates that substantial gender disparities persist in access to healthcare, participation in clinical research, and the quality-of-care women receive.

The effectiveness of any healthcare system depends on its ability to ensure gender equality at all levels. Women's health must be addressed not only through medical interventions but also through the lenses of social justice, economic opportunity, and political engagement. Enhancing women's involvement in scientific research, leadership in healthcare, and the development of gender-sensitive medical services must be top priorities.

Furthermore, women must be protected from medical neglect, psychological harm, and cultural biases through stronger legal frameworks and advocacy efforts. Each



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nation should prioritize women's health as a central pillar of its public health strategy.

In conclusion, ensuring gender equality in medicine is not just a moral imperative — it is a strategic investment in the sustainability, effectiveness, and humanity of global healthcare.

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