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GENDER STEREOTYPES IN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

In the modern world, international organizations such as the United Nations, the European Union, NATO, and the World Bank act not only as architects of the global agenda but also as mirrors reflecting the deepest contradictions of the international community. While proclaiming the principles of equality, democracy, and human rights, these institutions simultaneously remain arenas for the reproduction of gender stereotypes, which significantly affect their effectiveness, legitimacy, and ability to adequately respond to global challenges.

Today, the issue of gender equality is extremely important both at the national and international levels. Despite considerable attention to this problem, gender stereotypes continue to exist even within structures designed to overcome them. This negatively impacts the overall effectiveness of international organizations.

An analysis of recent research and publications shows that the problem of gender stereotypes is widely covered in academic literature. In particular, it has been studied by such scholars as Hrytsai I. [1], Kimmel M. [2], Lavrynenko N. [3], and Martsenyuk T. [4]. In their works, they examine the nature of gender stereotypes, the causes of their emergence, and their influence on social processes.

The purpose of this article is to study the peculiarities of the manifestation of gender stereotypes in international organizations, determine their impact on the activities of these institutions, and outline possible ways to overcome them.

An analysis of the phenomenon of gender stereotypes in international organizations is impossible without understanding the nature of the phenomenon itself. Gender stereotypes are established, simplified perceptions of qualities, behavioral models, and social roles that society considers "natural" for men and women. They are formed under the influence of culture, historical experience, and social institutions, penetrating all levels of social interaction – from individual consciousness to organizational structures. In the context of international relations, these stereotypes acquire particular weight, as they influence the formation of foreign policy priorities, personnel policy in diplomacy, and approaches to solving global security problems [4, c. 132].

At the level of the organizational structure of international institutions, a phenomenon is observed that researchers call vertical and horizontal gender segregation. Vertical segregation manifests itself in the "glass ceiling" phenomenon – an invisible but tangible barrier that prevents women from occupying the highest leadership positions. Despite the fact that women constitute a significant part of the staff of international organizations in junior and middle positions, their representation drops sharply at the level of secretaries-general, program directors, and heads of strategic departments.

This leads to strategic decisions that determine the fates of millions of people being made in a gender-homogeneous environment, which inevitably narrows the range of considered perspectives and interests.

Horizontal segregation, in turn, manifests itself in the distribution of spheres of responsibility: women are traditionally concentrated in "soft" sectors – social policy, education, culture, human rights, while men dominate in "hard" spheres – economy, security, technology, political issues.

The organizational culture of international institutions is another powerful factor in the reproduction of gender inequality. This culture was historically formed by men and for men, which is reflected in informal norms, rituals, and practices. Important decisions are often made in informal settings – during dinners, unofficial meetings in the corridors, on golf courses, or in other spaces where access for women may be limited for various reasons. Professional networks, which play a crucial role in career advancement, are often built on the male principle and exclude women. Moreover, in such cultures, a hyper-masculine communication style often prevails, where aggressiveness, categoricalness, and competition are valued, while emotionality, empathy, or the desire for consensus may be perceived as signs of weakness and incompetence [3, c. 5].

The thematic agenda of international organizations is also formed under the influence of gender stereotypes. Issues traditionally associated with women – such as the fight against domestic violence, motherhood, girls' education, reproductive health – are often marginalized, receive insufficient funding, and are considered secondary compared to "grand" politics. Even when these issues reach the agenda, they are often isolated in separate departments or programs that work in parallel with the main areas of activity, instead of being integrated into all spheres of the organization's work. This phenomenon, known as "gender mainstreaming," proclaimed at the Beijing Conference in 1995, still remains a declaration of intent rather than a real practice.

The issue of resource distribution in international organizations deserves special attention. Analysis of budgets from a gender perspective reveals striking disparities: programs aimed at economic development, security, or technology receive incomparably more funding than gender equality programs. Even in structures directly involved in development issues, the gender component is often underfunded and viewed as an "addition" to the main activity, rather than its integral part. This creates a vicious circle: due to lack of resources, gender programs cannot demonstrate their effectiveness, and the lack of noticeable results is used as an argument for further underfunding [2, p. 316].

Criteria for evaluating professional performance and leadership qualities are also permeated with gender stereotypes. Research has repeatedly confirmed that the same behavior is evaluated differently depending on who demonstrates it – a man or a woman. Assertiveness in a man is interpreted as determination and leadership potential, while in a woman, the same quality may be perceived as aggressiveness or scandalism. A man who takes responsibility in a crisis situation is considered a hero; a woman in an analogous situation risks being labeled a "careerist" who uses someone else's misfortune for her own advancement.

An important aspect is also the issue of work-life balance. The traditional model of the "ideal worker" in international organizations implies total dedication to work, readiness for frequent and long business trips, working in an irregular mode, and unlimited mobility. This model ignores the fact that the main responsibility for caring for children and elderly relatives has historically been placed on women. The lack of flexible schedules, parenthood support programs (not just maternity), and accessible childcare facilities at headquarters creates a situation where women are forced to choose between career and family, while for men, such a choice often does not exist.

The problem of gender stereotypes is particularly acute in international organizations working in the field of security, such as NATO or UN peacekeeping missions. Here, stereotypes of men as "natural protectors" and women as "passive victims" of conflict have a direct impact on the effectiveness of operations. Female service members face biased attitudes, sexual harassment, and doubts about their professional suitability. In peacekeeping missions, the insufficient presence of women limits opportunities for communication with the local female population, which is often not ready to speak about its problems with male peacekeepers [1, p. 4].

Paradoxically, even those organizations that are leaders in promoting gender standards at the global level often demonstrate a lag within their own structures. The European Union, which has some of the most progressive legislation in the field of gender equality, faces the problem of women's underrepresentation in the highest positions of its institutions. The UN, which through the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) establishes global norms, is itself an object of criticism for the insufficient number of women in leadership positions, especially in peacekeeping operations and political missions. This gap between declared values and internal practice undermines the moral authority of international organizations and provides grounds for accusations of hypocrisy.

The consequences of gender stereotyping in international organizations go far beyond individual career trajectories. They directly affect the quality of global governance. Research convincingly proves that diversity of perspectives in decision-making leads to more balanced, innovative, and effective solutions. When half of humanity is systematically excluded from policy-making processes, the results are inevitably incomplete and biased. Policies developed without considering the needs, experiences, and views of women cannot be truly effective, whether they concern climate change, international trade, or conflict resolution. Gender inequality in global governance institutions is, therefore, not only a matter of justice but also a matter of the quality and legitimacy of governance itself.

Ways to overcome this problem must be comprehensive and multi-level. First, systemic changes at the level of policies and procedures are necessary: the introduction of transparent selection and promotion criteria that minimize the influence of unconscious bias; the establishment of clear targets for women's representation at all levels, including the highest leadership positions; the creation of effective mechanisms for reporting discrimination and sexual harassment with a guarantee of protection for complainants.

Second, the transformation of organizational culture is critical. This involves training staff on gender sensitivity and unconscious bias, encouraging diverse leadership styles, and creating favorable conditions for work-life balance for all employees regardless of gender.

Third, the integration of a gender perspective into all aspects of the organization's activities – from budget planning to the evaluation of programs and projects – is necessary.

In conclusion, overcoming gender stereotypes in international organizations is not merely a matter of internal personnel policy; it is a fundamental condition for their ability to fulfill their mission in the 21st century. Building a just, peaceful, and sustainable world order is impossible without the full participation of all humanity, and international organizations must become leaders on this path by starting with their own structures and practices.

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