

EXPLORING OCCUPATIONAL SEGREGATION: VARIATIONS AND IMPACT

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Abstract

This article explores occupational segregation as a critical factor influencing labor markets globally, with a particular focus on Uzbekistan. Occupational segregation, defined as the unequal distribution of demographic groups across professions, manifests in various forms, including horizontal and vertical segregation. The study highlights how traditional gender roles and socio-economic structures contribute to disparities in employment, wages, and career advancement, particularly in the field of preschool education, which remains female-dominated. The article also examines the broader implications of gender, racial/ethnic, and educational segregation, identifying key barriers and potential strategies for promoting workforce diversity and equal opportunities. Addressing these issues requires comprehensive reforms in education, workplace policies, and cultural perceptions to ensure a balanced and inclusive labor market.

Keywords: occupational segregation, labor market, gender roles, horizontal segregation, vertical segregation, workforce diversity, wage disparity, preschool education, gender stereotypes, employment inequality, career advancement, social norms, Uzbekistan.

Occupational segregation remains a significant factor influencing labor markets worldwide. It refers to the unequal distribution of different demographic groups across occupations, often based on gender, ethnicity, or other socio-economic factors. This phenomenon is deeply rooted in historical, cultural, and structural aspects of societies, shaping employment opportunities and wage disparities.

In Uzbekistan, occupational segregation remains a pressing issue, influenced by traditional gender roles and socio-economic structures. Women are predominantly represented in sectors such as education and healthcare, while men dominate fields like engineering and construction. Despite recent efforts to bridge these gaps through legal and policy initiatives, significant disparities persist, impacting economic growth and workforce efficiency. Addressing occupational segregation in Uzbekistan requires targeted strategies, including education reforms, workplace policies, and cultural shifts that promote gender and social equality in professional environments.

One of the most critical areas affected by occupational segregation in Uzbekistan is the field of preschool education. Women overwhelmingly dominate this sector, reinforcing gender stereotypes and limiting career opportunities for men in early childhood education. Increasing male participation in preschool education could not only enhance diversity in teaching methods but also serve as a step towards breaking long-standing occupational stereotypes. Recognizing and addressing these disparities is essential for ensuring a more balanced and effective workforce in the education sector and beyond.

The study of occupational segregation is crucial for understanding labor market inequalities and developing policies to promote more inclusive employment practices. There are various forms of occupational segregation, including horizontal segregation, where different groups dominate distinct sectors, and vertical segregation, which pertains to disparities in hierarchical positions within the same field. These forms of segregation have far-reaching consequences, affecting economic mobility, job satisfaction, and overall workforce diversity. (CLAES, 1999) Occupational segregation refers to the unequal distribution of people across jobs based on characteristics such as gender, race, ethnicity, or other social factors. There are several types of occupational segregation:

Horizontal Segregation

Horizontal segregation refers to the unequal distribution of different demographic groups (such as gender, race, or ethnicity) across various industries or occupational fields. This form of segregation occurs when certain groups are disproportionately concentrated in specific job sectors, not necessarily because of differences in skills or qualifications, but due to social, cultural, historical, or structural factors.

Horizontal segregation is characterized by the separation of demographic groups across industries or occupations. Certain groups tend to dominate particular sectors, such as women being overrepresented in education, healthcare, and administrative jobs, while men are more prevalent in engineering, construction, and technology fields. Societal expectations and stereotypes play a major role in shaping career choices, as caregiving roles are often considered "female" jobs, while physically demanding or technical jobs are typically viewed as "male" roles. This division also limits career mobility, restricting individuals from transitioning between industries, and impacts wages and benefits, with jobs dominated by certain groups, such as women or ethnic minorities, often offering lower pay and fewer benefits compared to male-dominated professions, even when the required education and expertise levels are similar.

The causes of horizontal segregation are deeply rooted in social norms, stereotypes, and systemic structures. Cultural beliefs shape perceptions of "suitable" jobs for men and women

or different ethnic groups. Gendered expectations in education and vocational training further reinforce these divisions, channeling individuals into predefined career paths. Discriminatory hiring practices can also contribute, either explicitly or through unconscious biases in recruitment policies. Additionally, workplace culture and networking opportunities in male-dominated industries may discourage women or minorities from entering or advancing in these fields.

In Uzbekistan, horizontal occupational segregation is evident in various sectors, with women predominantly working in education (73.8%) and healthcare (77.3%), while men dominate construction (93.7%) and transportation (92.9%). Women are also more likely to be employed in the public sector (58.7%) compared to men (41.3%). In agriculture, women tend to engage in work for family use, whereas men are more involved in production for sale or barter. These patterns are driven by societal norms and contribute to the gender wage gap, with women earning about 39% less than men on average. Addressing horizontal segregation is crucial for ensuring equal opportunities and reducing economic disparities in Uzbekistan. (Statistika qo'mitasi — ASOSIY SAHIFA, 2025)

2. Vertical Segregation

Vertical segregation refers to the unequal distribution of different demographic groups (such as gender, race, or ethnicity) across job levels or hierarchies within the same occupation or industry. This form of segregation occurs when certain groups are disproportionately found in lower-ranking or lower-paying positions, while others dominate managerial or leadership roles, often due to structural barriers rather than differences in skills or qualifications.

Vertical segregation is marked by an uneven representation of demographic groups across organizational hierarchies. Women and minorities often remain in lower-tier positions, while men, particularly from dominant ethnic groups, are more likely to hold senior leadership roles. Career advancement for marginalized groups is hindered by factors such as limited access to promotions, biased evaluation criteria, and workplace cultures that favor the dominant group. Women, for example, may face the "glass ceiling"—an invisible barrier preventing them from reaching top executive positions. Similarly, men in female-dominated industries may experience the "glass escalator," where they are promoted more quickly than their female counterparts.

The causes of vertical segregation stem from social, cultural, and institutional biases. Gender norms and stereotypes about leadership capabilities contribute to slower career progression for women and minorities. Workplace policies and recruitment strategies often favor individuals who fit traditional leadership profiles, reinforcing existing power structures. Additionally,

unequal access to mentorship, networking opportunities, and professional development further widens the gap in career progression.

In Uzbekistan, vertical segregation is prevalent across various industries, with men holding the majority of executive and managerial roles, while women remain in mid- and lower-level positions. In the public sector, women are well-represented in education and healthcare but rarely occupy top leadership roles. Cultural expectations and workplace biases contribute to these disparities, limiting career advancement opportunities for women and minorities. Addressing vertical segregation is essential for achieving workplace equality and ensuring fair career progression for all individuals.

Gender Segregation

Gender segregation refers to the division of individuals in the workplace, education, and other social structures based on gender, leading to unequal access to opportunities, resources, and career advancement. This segregation can be both horizontal (where men and women are concentrated in different industries or occupations) and vertical (where men dominate higher-ranking positions, while women remain in lower-level roles).

Gender segregation manifests in workforce distribution, with women often overrepresented in lower-paying sectors such as education, healthcare, and administrative work, while men dominate technical fields, leadership roles, and physically demanding jobs. This results in limited career mobility for women, preventing them from entering high-paying or leadership positions. Societal expectations and gender norms reinforce traditional career choices, discouraging women from pursuing STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) careers and encouraging men to avoid caregiving professions. Workplace discrimination, unequal access to promotions, and the "glass ceiling" effect further restrict women's career progression. Additionally, historical factors and legal frameworks influence labor market participation, with maternity-related policies often pushing women into part-time or less secure employment. (Y. Mubarakov, A. Seriktayeva, 2024)

In Uzbekistan, gender segregation remains a significant challenge in the labor market. Women predominantly work in education, healthcare, and administrative sectors, while men dominate construction, transportation, and executive roles. The gender wage gap persists, with women earning significantly less than men due to their concentration in lower-paid sectors and limited access to career advancement. Societal norms and expectations contribute to these patterns, as traditional gender roles influence educational choices and employment opportunities. Addressing gender segregation requires targeted policies that promote equal opportunities, encourage women's participation in diverse industries, and break down barriers to career advancement.

Racial/Ethnic Segregation

Racial/ethnic segregation refers to the division of individuals in the labor market, education, and other social institutions based on race or ethnicity, resulting in unequal access to opportunities, wages, and career advancement. This segregation can manifest in both horizontal (where racial or ethnic groups are concentrated in specific industries) and vertical (where they are underrepresented in leadership roles and higher-paying positions) forms.

Racial/ethnic segregation is evident in workforce distribution, with minority or migrant groups often overrepresented in lower-paying, labor-intensive jobs such as agriculture, construction, and domestic work, while dominant racial or ethnic groups occupy higher-skilled, white-collar, or managerial positions. This segregation results in wage disparities, fewer career advancement opportunities, and economic instability for marginalized groups. Historical factors, systemic discrimination, and biased hiring practices contribute to these patterns, preventing minority groups from accessing quality education and well-paying jobs. Language barriers, social exclusion, and workplace discrimination further reinforce these divisions, making it difficult for minority communities to integrate into certain industries or climb the corporate ladder. (ALONSO-VILLAR, DEL RIO and GRADIN, 2012)

In Uzbekistan, racial/ethnic segregation is observed in labor markets, particularly with migrant workers from neighboring countries such as Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan predominantly engaged in low-paying manual labor, including construction and domestic work. At the same time, native Uzbeks are more likely to hold administrative and managerial roles. Ethnic minorities within the country, such as Karakalpaks and Russians, may experience employment disparities due to language barriers, regional economic differences, and historical labor divisions. Addressing racial/ethnic segregation requires policies that promote equal employment opportunities, combat discrimination, and support the integration of diverse ethnic groups into all levels of the workforce.

Educational Segregation

Educational segregation refers to the unequal distribution of students in educational institutions based on factors such as socioeconomic status, ethnicity, gender, or geographic location. This segregation can result in disparities in access to quality education, resources, and future career opportunities. Educational segregation often perpetuates social and economic inequalities, limiting social mobility for marginalized groups.

Educational segregation is evident when students from different backgrounds attend schools with varying levels of resources, funding, and teacher quality. Socioeconomic disparities play a major role, as wealthier families can afford better schools, while lower-income students often attend underfunded institutions. Geographic factors, such as urban-rural divides, also

contribute to segregation, with rural schools often lacking access to advanced curricula and modern facilities. Additionally, language barriers and systemic discrimination can limit educational opportunities for ethnic minorities and migrant children. Gender segregation is another aspect, with traditional cultural norms influencing the education of boys and girls in certain societies. (Lex Borghans and Groot, 1999)

In Uzbekistan, educational segregation is most evident in rural versus urban schooling, where rural areas often have limited access to high-quality education, fewer qualified teachers, and outdated learning materials. Additionally, economic disparities affect access to private tutoring and advanced educational programs, placing lower-income students at a disadvantage. Language barriers can also create segregation, as ethnic minorities may struggle with the Uzbek-language curriculum. Addressing educational segregation requires increased investment in rural education, inclusive policies for ethnic minorities, and efforts to ensure equal access to quality schooling for all students.

Conclusion

Segregation in various forms: horizontal, vertical, racial/ethnic, and educational, remains a significant challenge in many societies, including Uzbekistan. These divisions limit opportunities, reinforce economic disparities, and perpetuate social inequalities. While progress has been made in addressing these issues through policy reforms and awareness campaigns, structural barriers and deeply ingrained cultural norms continue to hinder true equality. To combat segregation effectively, comprehensive strategies that promote inclusive education, equal employment opportunities, and non-discriminatory hiring practices must be implemented. Only through coordinated efforts can societies achieve true social and economic equity, ensuring that all individuals, regardless of gender, ethnicity, or socioeconomic background, have equal access to opportunities and resources.

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