

Czech University of Life Sciences Prague

Faculty of Economics and Management

Department of Humanities (FEM)



Bachelor Thesis

**Gender Discrimination in the Workplace and Market:
Unveiling Inequality and Seeking Solutions. Comparison
Kazakhstan and Czech Republic**

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BACHELOR THESIS ASSIGNMENT

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Business Administration

Thesis title

Gender Discrimination in the Workplace and Market: Unveiling Inequality and Seeking Solutions. Comparison of Kazakhstan and Czech Republic.

Objectives of thesis

The thesis will look at gender-based discrimination in the workplace and the market by comparing case studies in Kazakhstan and the Czech Republic. It will look at existing theoretical frameworks defining gender-based discrimination, the various forms it takes and the harms and wrongs involved in it. It will examine and compare the legal frameworks regulating discrimination in both countries and evaluate them based on contemporary debates.

Methodology

The thesis will use exploratory qualitative case study analysis, comparing the practices, experiences and attitudes towards gender discrimination and workplace equality in workplaces in Kazakhstan and the Czech Republic. To complement this, it will investigate and compare the existing legal frameworks regarding discrimination in both countries, and examine both in light of contemporary debates about the definitions and wrongs of discrimination.

The proposed extent of the thesis

30-40 pages

Keywords

Discrimination, Gender, Workplace, Kazakhstan, Czech Republic, Equality

Recommended information sources

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Declaration

I declare that I have worked on my bachelor thesis titled "Gender Discrimination in the Workplace and Market: Unveiling Inequality and Seeking Solutions. Comparison Kazakhstan and Czech Republic" by myself and I have used only the sources mentioned at the end of the thesis. As the author of the bachelor thesis, I declare that the thesis does not break any copyrights.

In Prague on 15.03.2024

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Gender Discrimination in the Workplace and Market: Unveiling Inequality and Seeking Solutions. Comparison Kazakhstan and Czech Republic

Abstract

The thesis is focusing on the study and comparison of the phenomenon of gender discrimination in the workplace and on the labour market in Kazakhstan and the Czech Republic, as well as the development of recommendations for overcoming it. The paper includes analysing of theoretical approaches and concepts related to gender discrimination, as well as statistical information and empirical research on gender inequality in the labour market and workplace in these two countries. The main causes, forms, consequences, and factors of gender discrimination are highlighted, and existing measures and mechanisms to fight it are assessed. Recommendations are being developed to improve the situation with gender inequality in the labour market in Kazakhstan and the Czech Republic, as well as to increase gender consciousness and gender competence of workers and employers.

Keywords: discrimination, gender discrimination, gender inequality, bias, workplace, labour market, Kazakhstan, Czech Republic

Diskriminace na základě pohlaví na pracovišti a na trhu: Odhalení nerovnosti a hledání řešení. Srovnání Kazachstánu a České republiky

Abstrakt

Práce se zaměřuje na studium a srovnání fenoménu genderové diskriminace na pracovišti a na trhu práce v Kazachstánu a v České republice a na vypracování doporučení pro její překonání. Součástí práce jsou analýza teoretických přístupů a konceptů souvisejících s genderovou diskriminací, a zároveň i statistických informací a empirických výzkumů genderové nerovnosti na trhu práce a na pracovišti v těchto dvou zemích. Jsou zdůrazněny hlavní příčiny, formy, důsledky a faktory genderové diskriminace a zhodnocena stávající opatření a mechanismy pro boj proti ní. Jsou vypracována doporučení pro zlepšení situace v oblasti genderové nerovnosti na trhu práce v Kazachstánu a České republice a pro zvýšení genderového povědomí a genderových kompetencí pracovníků a zaměstnavatelů.

Klíčová slova: diskriminace, genderová diskriminace, genderová nerovnost, předsudky, pracoviště, trh práce, Kazachstán, Česká republika

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1 Introduction

Gender inequality in the labour market and in the workplace is one of the most acute and important socio-economic problems of our time, which affects the interests and rights of millions of people, limits the opportunities of both women and men, affects the development and well-being of countries, as well as the achievements of global sustainable development goals.

Kazakhstan and the Czech Republic are two different countries in culture, history, politics, and economics, which nevertheless face common problems of gender discrimination in the workplace and labour market, such as the wage gap, occupational segregation, glass ceiling, sexual harassment, etc. Therefore, it was appropriate for me to conduct a comparative analysis of the situation in these two countries, and the main goal that I pursue in this study is to identify differences and similarities in how gender discrimination manifests itself and what measures are taken to prevent it, to reveal its main causes, forms, consequences, and factors of gender discrimination, and also suggest possible ways to overcome it.

This comparative context makes the study more informative and useful for both countries. And I hope that the research I have conducted can contribute to efforts to eliminate discrimination, help create a better understanding of how serious this problem is, and that the work I have done can contribute to the creation of a more equitable work environment where everyone has equal opportunities for professional growth and dignity wages. The contribution of such analysis is important for achieving global goals of sustainable development and the well-being of nations.

The thesis is divided into two main parts: a comprehensive review of existing literature on the topic of discrimination, gender discrimination with a focus on the labour market, which examines various theories and research findings on this topic, and a practical component that includes some interviews from different workplaces in Czech Republic and in Kazakhstan among ordinary workers, managers, and business owners.

2 Objectives and Methodology

2.1 Objectives

The thesis has three objectives. The first is the main goal, and the next two serve as additional goals:

1. Study and compare the phenomenon of gender discrimination in the workplace and on the labour market in Kazakhstan and the Czech Republic.
2. Identify the main causes, forms, and consequences of gender discrimination, as well as factors influencing it.
3. Develop recommendations to overcome gender discrimination and improve gender equality in the labour market.

2.2 Methodology

A mixed research method that combined qualitative and quantitative methodologies was employed in order to achieve these goals. The theoretical part is based on the analysis of secondary data, including scientific publications and articles, comparative analysis of official statistics on gender inequality in areas like wages, employment rates, leadership positions, and access to training. The practical part includes semi-structured interviews with diverse groups (women, men, employers, employees, HR-managers) in both countries in different companies and workplaces to gather and understand personal experiences, perceptions, and cultural influences on discrimination. I tried my best to make a comprehensive overview of the situation and the opinions of different people with completely different working positions and this gave me a wide range of conclusions from which I analysed, compared the two countries, and gained important insights for the research. As a result of the interviews, I was also able to do a case study of a travel agent in Kazakhstan.

3 Literature Review

3.1 General overview of discrimination

Before moving on to a discussion of unfair treatment of certain genders in the workplace and the difficulties in finding work for women, in my opinion, it is first necessary to understand what constitutes an infringement of rights. And the most important thing is to consider in detail the key object of study - discrimination and its general concept, as well as its types, forms, and aspects. This is necessary to identify and overcome the various forms of unequal and unfair treatment that individuals or groups of people may experience or be subjected to on the basis of their differences or similarities. So, thinking about what really discrimination is and what it is not gives us the distinction between these two concepts, as well as an understanding of their significant differences.

Discrimination is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that requires careful and critical analysis, as it involves various forms of unequal treatment based on common stereotypes, prejudices and prejudices and affects various aspects of social, cultural, and personal identity, as well as power, privilege, and oppression.

Moreover, studying the concept of generalized discrimination allows us to gain a deeper understanding of how our thinking can influence our perception and interaction with the world around us. This analysis also makes us realize that fighting discrimination requires changing our own thinking and behaviour.

By better understanding the essence of generalized discrimination, we contribute to more effective measures to combat gender discrimination and other forms of inequality. This is the first step towards a more just and equal society, where everyone has equal opportunities and rights.

According to Frej Klem Thompsen, “In slightly more technical terms, there are benefits both to a lexical definition, which aims to clarify and spell out our inherent concept of discrimination as employed in linguistic practices by competent speakers, and to an explicative definition, which aims to produce a definition that will not merely reflect but

enhance our understanding of what is at stake. The discussion in the following attempts to balance the considerations that speak in favour of each of these types of definition, that is, to retain enough of our inherent concept for it to be acceptable as more or less what we mean when we speak of discrimination, while noting where we have reason to revise, e.g., because the concept would otherwise blur an important distinction” (Thompson, 2018).

In this section we will cover the following questions:

- What is discrimination and how can it be defined?
- What are the types, forms, and dimensions of discrimination?
- What’s wrong with it?

As was previously said, we frequently use the term "discrimination" without always understanding what it actually means and sometimes without realizing that we are the targets of discrimination. Discrimination leads to a number of negative outcomes and rude forms of treatment that people experience. That is why knowing discrimination is necessary for becoming aware of inequality in society, as well as to understanding the politics and historical background of numerous countries. Indeed, comprehending discrimination may become even more crucial in the future as a growing number of nations have a predisposition to view disadvantages as representing prejudice.

As we know, for much of history, the idea of discrimination was rarely discussed in a moral context, and it was only in the first half of the twentieth century that deeper thinking about it began to emerge, recognizing that many of the most serious injustices were of a group nature, that is, group members were often belittled and humiliation from the rest of the group. This historical reality is common knowledge, as is the fact that in the past, discrimination was often justified by social norms and laws that supported and reinforced inequality.

With the development of society and the expansion of human rights, views on discrimination began to change. The recognition that discrimination undermines basic human rights and freedoms has led to the development of international treaties and laws aimed at combating this phenomenon. An example is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the UN in 1948, which proclaims the equality of all people in dignity and rights (United Nations).

There were certainly attempts to highlight discrimination in the second half of the twentieth century, such as Simone de Beauvoir, the French writer and philosopher, whose book *The "Second Sex"* (1949) became one of the founding texts of feminism, or Betty Friedan, the American writer and activist, who helped spark feminist revolution, or the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) was proposed in 1972, which would have guaranteed equal rights for women, but was not ratified (Britannica).

Thus, the task of identifying discrimination has only attracted sustained research attention in the last two decades, which has generated a wealth of new knowledge and it is no exaggeration to say that we are in a much better position to confidently understand and identify discrimination than just a few years ago (Belingheri, 2021).

Taking up the first question of this chapter: "What is discrimination?", it seems that the answer is obvious and unnecessary, because it can be understood by seeing, but this is of course not the case. Often people mean different things when they use the term "discrimination". Some in the most general sense, that is, simply treating people differently and there is no reason to think that discrimination in this sense is any worse than no discrimination. How, for example, a department head who decides who to assign an important project to and selects an employee based on past accomplishments and experience in similar tasks can be considered a discriminator of other employees because he did not select them. And accordingly, there is every reason to believe that when people complain about discrimination, this is not what they mean.

It is important to note that there is no single universally accepted definition of discrimination and different authors use different definitions to emphasise different aspects of this phenomenon, so for instance, the Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics defines discrimination as "disadvantageous differential treatment of two groups that is in some respect caused by the properties that distinguish the groups," which skips over the details of what really qualifies as unfair treatment (Thomsen, 2017). In the meanwhile, a definition of discrimination is provided by Fibbi, Midtboen, and Simon in the chapter "Concepts of Discrimination," which centres on the unfair treatment of similar people in the same circumstance but differ in a few specific areas, such as race, ethnicity, gender, or disabilities, which broadens the scope beyond intentional harm (FIBBI, et al., 2021). Furthermore, Fredman and Khaitan's book *"The Sociology of Discrimination"* offers a

viewpoint that takes institutional and systemic discrimination into account when discussing discrimination in the context of persistent categorical inequalities in societies that ostensibly uphold the norm of equality (FREDMAN, et al., 2015).

Wouter Vandenhole concludes that "[t]here is no universally accepted definition of discrimination" after reviewing the international treaties that forbid discrimination (VANDENHOLE, 2005).

Furthermore, rather than attempting to establish a dominant or unitary definition, it may be more important to acknowledge heterogeneity and shed light on specific debates about discrimination by stating which sense is at issue. This could be because the concepts of discrimination encompass a wide range of disparate cases that cross traditional boundaries in political theory and applied ethics.

Despite these difficulties, discrimination can be understood to have a few features.

Firstly, discrimination is fundamentally the unfair and unequal treatment of people or groups according to arbitrary criteria, characteristics.

Secondly, takes the form of specific behaviours and results, as compared with prejudice, which is defined as preconceived and frequently negative assumptions about a group. In contrast, bias refers to a predisposition towards a specific opinion that may encourage discriminatory conduct. But not every bias result in discrimination.

Thirdly, discrimination requires the power structure that allows biased individuals to disadvantage others.

Lastly, it results in unequal access to opportunities, resources, and rights, as it arises at the intersection of prejudice, bias, and power.

Comprehending these features works well because:

- 1) They recognize that discrimination can manifest itself in a variety of behaviours and outcomes, not limited to overt acts, but also to subtle forms that can be equally damaging.
- 2) By differentiating discrimination from prejudice and bias, we clarify that while the three are interrelated, they are not synonymous. Prejudice is an attitude, bias is a tendency, and discrimination is an action. And while it is true that not all bias leads

to discrimination, it is also important to say that even unconscious biases can contribute to systemic discrimination.

- 3) There is also an emphasis on power dynamics. It highlights the critical role of power structures in discrimination, which is important because without the ability to influence biases and prejudices, the impact of discrimination would not be as profound.
- 4) Impact on equality refers to the consequences of discrimination, such as unequal access to opportunities, resources, and rights, highlighting the seriousness of discriminatory practices in society. These features allow for a detailed discussion of discrimination, considering its causes, manifestations, and consequences, which is vital for a thorough academic study of this topic.

Examples of discrimination include situations where an agent intentionally treats someone unfairly because they belong to a prominent social group, even while the agent's actions are motivated by an undesirable mental state. This also applies to unfair treatment that results from prejudice towards a particular group, even if there is no intentional attempt to treat the group unfairly.

3.2 Types of discrimination and measure

I am going to discuss the concept of discrimination from the viewpoint of the two different types of discrimination—direct and indirect—which are important to understand before talking specifically about gender discrimination.

3.2.1 Direct and indirect discrimination

Direct discrimination, blatant and unapologetic, treats individuals differently based on their gender without legitimate justification. This manifests in unequal pay for equal work, denial of promotions, or explicit harassment. Indirect discrimination, though seemingly objective, ultimately leads to unequal outcomes. Mandatory overtime policies, for instance, may disproportionately disadvantage women with childcare responsibilities, hindering their career advancement.

Direct discrimination is equivalent to the straightforward definition of discrimination (FIBBI, et al., 2021).

Although a paternalistic employer may believe that by hiring women exclusively for specific positions within his organization, he helps them, but he is engaging in direct discrimination if his actions are driven by false beliefs about the skills of women. A discriminator may occasionally implement a policy that, on the surface, makes no specific mention of the group that the policy is intended to disadvantage. Rather, the policy uses a faceless stand-in that, when used, achieves the discriminator's covert goal.

Acts of direct discrimination may be unconscious because the person may not be aware of the discriminatory motives behind them. And even the intention to disadvantage people based on their group membership can be unconscious - a phenomenon in social psychology that relates to implicit biases and systemic structures that perpetuate inequality, often unknowingly on the part of individual members of society (COE).

It can be assumed that in many societies unconscious prejudice is a factor in a significant range of discriminatory behaviour, and a viable understanding of the concept of discrimination must take this possibility into account. In fact, there is growing evidence that unconscious discrimination exists (BROWNSTEIN, et al., 2016; Cameron, 2010; JOST, et al., 2009).

On the other hand, the opposite opinion about it is provided by Frej Klem Thompsen, that only intentional discrimination is direct, cases falling under the broader category of causation may constitute indirect discrimination. Policies or practices that disproportionately negatively impact a group while not directly targeting them are examples of indirect discrimination (Thompsen, 2018). For instance, making all workers full-time may inadvertently discriminate against parents of small children who might require part-time employment in order to meet their childcare obligations.

Intentional discrimination in the workplace can sometimes result from a lack of regard for the rights of particular groups. General indifference to the interests and rights of members belonging to a certain group can create a disadvantage. For example, Lippert-Rasmussen talks about circumstances in which an employer might use hiring procedures that unintentionally disadvantage women. This isn't always because the company chooses convenient criteria without thinking about how it would affect female applicants, rather than because they intend to discriminate (LIPPERT-RASMUSSEN, 2014). These practices

demonstrate the complicated nature of direct discrimination and the demand for a deeper understanding of its causes and expressions.

As Friedman (2011) aptly observes, even seemingly "equal treatment" can mask underlying biases, leading to unequal outcomes (FREDMAN, 2011). The stark example provided by Frej Klem Thompsen (2018) of an upper body strength test for hiring, regardless of its purported neutrality, disproportionately disadvantages women due to biological differences. This is what Frej Klem Thompsen calls the counterfactual aspect of assessing discrimination: we must compare the actual scenario with alternative situations in which the discriminated group receives equal treatment. (Thompsen, 2018)

However, the web of discrimination extends beyond direct and intentional actions. The key difference is that unintentional direct discrimination relates to specific actions or requirements that directly affect a group, even if it was not intended as a discriminatory intent, while indirect discrimination arises from broader policies or practices that are not intended to discriminate but have this effect due to their impact on different groups.

Consider a dress code rule requiring employees to wear high heels, which might disadvantage women due to anatomical differences and higher risk of foot injuries. Though lacking explicit intent, the policy's discriminatory effect is undeniable.

Thompsen further emphasizes the symmetry of discrimination (Thompsen, 2018). Favouring one group often implies disfavouring another, creating a complex web of interconnected disadvantages. For instance, promoting men to leadership positions solely based on seniority might unintentionally exclude equally qualified women from such opportunities. These promotion policies might seem like a neutral criterion, but if they lead to the systematic exclusion of women from leadership roles, they create an unfair playing field and have disproportionately negative effects on one group at the expense of another. Such practices aren't intended to exclude women directly though could actually have discriminatory effects. Recognizing this interconnectedness is crucial for dismantling systemic biases.

3.2.2 Organizational and Structural discrimination

While acts of discrimination are often attributed to individuals, a significant portion unfolds within the intricate systems and structures that govern our lives. It leads by organizational and structural discrimination.

When certain groups are given preference over others by the norms, regulations, practices, or cultures of a particular organization or workplace, this is known as organizational discrimination. As Jennifer Eberhardt's *Biased* highlights, institutional biases exist in addition to overt policies as forms of organizational discrimination (EBERHARDT, 2019). This necessitates addressing both individual mindsets and structural issues. But concentrating only on big businesses ignores smaller groups that discriminatory practices affect, even when they are less obvious. Organizational obstacles to advancement and well-being include sexist workplace environments, hidden biases in hiring, and insufficient maternity leave regulations.

For instance, misconceptions about women's responsibilities or skills or a lack of mentoring, networking, or training opportunities might be obstacles to women's career advancement in particular professions (MAGEIRA).

Sexual harassment is an additional instance of unwanted or unwelcome sexual behaviour that incites hostility or offensiveness in the workplace. “More than one in five people employed – almost 23 per cent - have experienced violence and harassment in the workplace, whether physical, psychological, or sexual, according to the first ever joint analysis of data worldwide carried out by the UN International Labour Organization” (ILO, 2022).

When social, economic, or political structures or organizations produce or uphold inequality between various groups of people, it is known as structural discrimination. Richard Rothstein *The Colour of Law* (ROTHSTEIN, 2017) contends that structural discrimination permeates society deeply and is represented by past housing regulations. Robin DiAngelo *White Fragility* (DIANGELO, 2018) challenges us to look beyond personal prejudice and consider the cultural backdrop that supports systemic injustices,

especially those that have a gender intersection. For example, disparities in compensation show the ways in which structural economic disadvantages and gender discrimination are intertwined. According to the World Bank (WB), the global gender pay gap is 23%, meaning women on average earn 77% of what men earn (WORLD BANK GROUP, 2019).

Another example is women's access to land, property, and inheritance rights may be restricted in certain nations relative to men's, which may have an adverse effect on their security and economic prospects (NEWMAN, 2023).

Finally, it should be noted that structural and organisational discrimination are entwined strands within a larger, intricate web rather than discrete instances.

This means that they are connected to additional elements and systems that generate and maintain inequality. They are not isolated or divided from one another or from the larger context; that is, they are not discrete occurrences. They are tough to alter and have an impact on many facets of people's lives since they are pervasive and extensive.

Understanding these interrelated strands is essential to tearing down this entrenched system and creating a more just future for everybody, from society as a whole to specific workplaces.

3.3 Why discrimination is wrong?

Discrimination actually goes against the idea of human equality, which holds that all people are created equal and worthy of respect, regardless of their origins or identities. Treating someone differently based only on their non-meritocratic attributes is a blatant neglect for their inherent human worth. Meritocratic attributes, on the other hand, are those that are a reflection of an individual's competence, performance, or effort, such as experience, talent or education, that is, exactly what the assessment of people and attitude towards them should be based on. Nobel laureate economist Amartya Sen made an argument that "development has to be about enabling people to be who they wish to be and do what they have reason to value" (SEN, 1999).

Apart from causing personal agony, prejudice can be perceived as a destructive element in a community. It suppresses creativity, sows discord, and undermines trust. Talented people

are kept from contributing to the fullest extent possible when chances are rejected due to non-merit-based grounds, which impedes advancement and economic growth. On average across countries, long-run GDP per capita would be almost 20 percent higher if gender employment gaps were to be closed (WORLD BANK GROUP, 2022). This is due to the fact that women possess special abilities, wisdom, and experience that may increase innovation, productivity, and the quality of goods and services or if men could also take positions "reserved" for women, bringing new ideas and productivity. Moreover, discrimination develops social unrest and conflict, making it more difficult for nations to function freely, cohesively, without problem. The global civil rights movement is evidence of the group effort to combat these social evils.

These examples are mostly instrumental reasons in opposing discrimination, they show how discrimination harms the well-being and prosperity of individuals and societies. Earlier, when I mentioned equality, dignity, justice, and human rights, I outlined an example of universal values that motivate the fight against discrimination. Both instrumental and universal values are important for countering discrimination because they appeal to different aspects of human nature and morality.

However, simplistic pronouncements that discrimination is always and categorically wrong have the potential to mask intricate social realities and dynamics. Some contend that even while affirmative action laws are intended to address past prejudice, they nonetheless discriminate against groups that are not the intended beneficiaries. This argument, often defended by conservative thinkers such as Charles Murray in his book "Losing Ground," emphasizes the possibility of "unintended consequences" in even the best-intentioned campaigns against discrimination (MURRAY, 1984).

According to a chapter from the Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Communication, prejudice has a negative impact on both individuals and societies, notwithstanding its complexity (Ruscher, 2017). Discriminatory frameworks that hold us behind can be destroyed by advancing education, cultivating empathy, and preserving the values of equality and inclusiveness. Every act of kindness and every embracing of diversity works to offset the forces of prejudice and hatred. As Nelson Mandela said, "No one is born hating another person because of the colour of his skin, or his background, or his religion.

People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite" (MANDELA, 1994).

Because discrimination is impacted by the social, cultural, and institutional environments in which people live, it is not only determined by an individual's intentions or beliefs.

Laws, policies, norms, and practices of a society can all contain discrimination, which can lead to and perpetuate injustice and inequality for groups of people based on their identity or origin.

Racial discrimination, for instance, is evident in the laws and policies of some nations that limit or prohibit people of colour's access to opportunities and rights in areas like voting, healthcare, education, and the legal system (MOORE, 2021).

One example of gender discrimination is the way certain cultures have customs or conventions that restrict the roles and options available to women and girls, such as those related to marriage, family, employment, or education (UNESCO, 2023).

In addition to personal prejudice and hatred, institutional and organizational variables that influence people's views and behaviours also contribute to these types of discrimination.

As a result, addressing discrimination may involve more than just focusing on what is "in people's hearts" because doing so also necessitates altering the organizations and systems that support and encourage it. This entails advocating for the principles of equality, diversity, and human rights for all while opposing and changing the laws, policies, conventions, and practices that discriminate against groups of people. It also entails enabling and teaching others to appreciate and cherish the unique qualities of humanity as well as to identify and oppose discrimination. As Nelson Mandela also said, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world" (Duncan, 2013).

I have tried to provide a general overview of discrimination and its various types by using instances specific to gender, so that in the future it will be simpler to concentrate on my main research question, which is gender discrimination. The overview I've talked about can help create the foundation for understanding discrimination, but there are certain crucial details and aspects which require additional research. And as a result of this goal – pursuing the line to get deeper in gender discrimination, and due to it I've focused on binary groups, primarily men and women, I may have lost sight of the complexity and

multifaceted nature of discrimination within multiple social groups, such as intersectionality, overlapping and interdependent systems of oppression: black women, for example, may face the cumulative effects of gender and racial discrimination, and we shouldn't ignore it since there are just too many instances like this.

3.4 Gender Discrimination

While I was gathering information from different surveys for the practical part, which will be in the next chapter, I realized that few people understand what gender discrimination is and treat this concept superficially, and some even negatively, as another propaganda of feminism. And based on the above-mentioned review of what discrimination is, with all its consequences, and the ability to distinguish forms of discrimination, realizing that the nature of discrimination is multifaceted, and comes both from ourselves, that we must change our type of thinking, and from various policies, measures, structures, both directly and unconsciously, I can proceed to the consideration of gender discrimination specifically. This will mean the same understanding of discrimination from the last chapter, but the main characteristic on which discrimination will be based will be gender.

3.4.1 General information

Under the broad concept of gender discrimination will certainly be examples such as certain societal expectations that limit women's roles to traditional domestic duties, stereotypes that undermine women's opportunities, and cultural norms that perpetuate gender inequality.

It is not limited to specific sectors, but is pervasive in different areas of society, from educational and health institutions to the whole world and everyday manifestations. In the health sector, it can be problems of access to quality and affordable health services, especially in sexual and reproductive health. According to the WHO, every year about 287,000 women die from complications related to pregnancy and childbirth, and 45% unsafe abortions are performed under conditions that threaten women's lives (World Health Organization, 2021) (World Health Organization, 2023). Women are also at greater risk of contracting HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted infections, and other diseases associated with gender-based violence, poverty, and stigmatization.

Particularly in underdeveloped nations, women and girls have fewer opportunity to obtain a comprehensive education. According to World Bank, 129 million girls 6-17 years old are out of school. Some of the reasons why girls are not educated include early marriage, pregnancy, domestic responsibilities, discrimination in school, lack of safety and sanitation, and lack of female teachers and role models (Bank).

Women and girls experience gender discrimination and violence based on cultural and religious traditions, norms and practices that infringe on their rights and freedoms. For example, female circumcision, forced marriages, polygamy, hereditary widowhood, and other forms of gender inequality and brutality (Ras-Work, 2016). These are just a few of the areas where gender discrimination occurs, but there are many others.

Biased gendered social norms contribute to inequalities in education, income, political representation, and domestic responsibilities, which affect overall quality of life and opportunities for growth, hinder the achievement of sustainable development, and are a prime example of cruelty and animal abnormal primordiality that is sometimes unusual to find in modern society, but also the basis for the development of discrimination, either direct, indirect, or structural, organizational. This is all scarier and more serious than many people realize. It's not just about equal numbers of women and men in leadership positions, it's about freedom, about rights, and much more. Therefore, it is necessary to fight gender discrimination in all its forms and promote gender equality in all spheres of life.

3.4.2 Factors of Gender Discrimination

Numerous elements, including history, culture, and occasionally even religion, can contribute to gender discrimination. In the past, men who have held positions of power in society and politics have used violence, exploitation, and other types of oppression against women. Voting, education, owning property, inheritance, places of employment, health care, and personal freedom have all been denied to women. Even though the fight for women's rights has made great strides in the 20th century, many issues still need to be addressed.

Culture plays a role, in shaping gender roles, norms, values and expectations that impact how men and women are perceived and treated in society, and for this reason it can be considered as part of organizational discrimination. In some societies women are viewed as inferior to men reliant on them frail and not deserving of respect. Within these cultures women encounter limitations on their freedoms and opportunities related to choices in partners, reproductive health decisions, access to education and work opportunities, social engagement and involvement in decision making processes. Additionally certain cultures harbour gender biases, preconceptions and misconceptions that perpetuate treatment and violence against women. For instance, some communities uphold beliefs that discredit women's abilities in reasoning, leadership roles, creativity pursuits and independence.

Religion can exert both positive and negative influences on gender equality dynamics. On one side of the teachings can advocate for dignity, equality, and fairness for all individuals regardless of their gender serving as an inspiration for women to advocate for their rights. On the hand religion can be misused as a tool to validate and gender disparities and bias. Religion is also a component of organizational discrimination when it has a negative impact. Certain religious doctrines, traditions, routines, and establishments may reinforce the dominance of men over women restrain the religious practices enforce stringent regulations on female conduct and attire, subject women to sexual abuse and violate their rights related to reproductive health and family planning.

Economics and politics, as forms of structured discrimination, both impact gender equality. The economic status and wealth of women influence their opportunities and rights, in society. Women living in poverty are more susceptible to discrimination and violence due to their resources, power, and protection. Economic violence can also affect women when they are denied control over their income, spending and property. Moreover, the involvement of women in politics plays a role in shaping their rights and interests within society. Active participation by women in politics enables them to contribute towards formulating policies, laws and initiatives that enhance the position of women and girls while promoting gender equality. However various obstacles hinder women's political engagement including lack of resources, education, experience, networks, support as facing discrimination, violence or intimidation from male dominated political environments.

Consequently, women continue to be underrepresented and marginalized across all levels of the spectrum.

3.4.3 Gender discrimination in the Workplace and Market

Since my topic is gender discrimination in the work sector, I will share with you more examples of gender discrimination in this context, namely from the labour market, workplace. It comes in many forms, hostile work environment, unequal dress code, pregnancy discrimination and among others:

1. Gender discrimination can manifest itself as the division of work activities on the basis of gender, where men and women work in different fields, industries and professions, it is known as gender segregation. This is an example of indirect discrimination and it has a horizontal approach in which men and women work in different fields, such as technical and industrial work for men, social and educational work for women, and vertical in which men and women occupy separate positions in the hierarchy, such as middle and lower management positions for women, and management and leadership positions for men (KOJIOMOELI, 2016). Women and men have unequal distribution of income, resources, opportunities and influence due to gender segregation (Bullough, 2022).
2. In addition, the fact that women only make up approximately 28% of the worldwide managing workforce serves as evidence of the indirect discrimination against them, which is still present in leadership and management roles (United Nations, 2020). This shows that there are misconceptions and biases against women in leadership positions and that, due to a lack of flexible work schedules that accommodate families, women struggle more than men to combine work and family. Opportunities for leadership and professional development are limited, which is related to the "glass ceiling" issue, in which women encounter imperceptible obstacles that keep them from moving up the corporate ladder. The majority of institutional reasons of gender discrimination include sexism in personnel policies and processes as well as decision-making circles. They typically come from a combination of structural, indirect, and direct types of discrimination.

3. An example of direct and organizational discrimination, the gender wage gap depends on various criteria, including education, experience, qualifications, labour productivity, field of activity, job, working hours, marital status, and others. But some of the gender discrimination-related pay gap has not been disclosed. Moreover, women often work in informal, unstable, and low-paid sectors such as domestic work, agriculture, and retail trade. Women's low standard of living, poverty, social marginalization, and financial inequality are all caused by the wage gap. (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2023).
4. Discrimination in the field of work, as an indirect form of discrimination, may be due to existing stereotypes about the abilities, interests and roles of women and men in society, presented as an indirect form, refusal to work or gender-based restriction of workplace choice (Ирсетская, 2022). For instance, some bosses or employers can think that women are less capable, ambitious, trustworthy, or focused on leadership than men, making them unfit for some jobs or responsibilities, also that women who are planning or already have children are less committed to work, less motivated and less suited to their job responsibilities than men or women without children. On the other hand, some managers or employers can feel that males are less qualified than women for positions requiring care, education, creativity, or communication, and as a result, they won't recruit them or provide them these opportunities. It hinders employees' potential and growth as well as businesses' efficacy and inventiveness.
5. Sexual harassment has already been touched upon in my discussion of organizational discrimination, but now I will expand on it more broadly. It represents both direct and indirect discrimination, and is defined by behaviour, which ranges from physical contact to verbal and non-verbal actions and includes quid pro quo harassment which occurs when an employer or boss demands or offers sexual favours in exchange for job advantages or threatens to retaliate against a refusal. When an individual experiences sexual harassment at work from suppliers, customers, colleagues, or anybody else they interact with on the job, it can also be considered a government violation, it is a violation of workers' rights

and dignity that has a detrimental impact on their motivation, productivity, loyalty, and general well-being.

In addition, gender equality in the workplace contributes to the creation of a more just, democratic, and peaceful society that supports the rights and dignity of everyone, regardless of gender, race, country, religion, or sexual orientation.

3.4.4 Effects of Gender Discrimination in the Workplace and Market

Women who experience gender discrimination in the workplace face many harmful consequences such as low income, job satisfaction, motivation, and productivity, as well as an increased risk of stress, depression, violence, and illness. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), as well as anxiety and depressive disorders, are more common in women who encounter prejudice in the workplace (Seto, et al., 2020). This is because women often feel inadequate support and protection from their colleagues, managers, and organizations; they also often feel helpless, shame, guilt, and fear. In addition, as a result of gender discrimination in the workplace, a woman's relationships can be damaged, her self-esteem, self-esteem and sense of self-fulfilment can be impaired.

The level of women's participation in the labour force is influenced by various variables, including gender norms, socio-economic restrictions, and individual preferences. Also, after becoming a mother, women frequently see an increase in the gender pay gap, sometimes referred to as the "motherhood penalty," which means shorter work hours, career disruptions, and prejudice toward working moms. Because mothers are sometimes seen as less dedicated, they have less possibilities to succeed in life. Women participate in the labour force at a rate of 47% worldwide, while men account for 72%. This indicates a difference of 25 percent, while in some regions the difference exceeds 50 percent (ILO, 2022). Additionally, according to OECD figures, women worldwide spend 2.5 times as much time as men doing unpaid care and household chores: on average, women put in 4.73 hours per week compared to 1.84 hours per week for men (OECD, 2023).

Lack of or insufficient access to professional and social networks that can help the company grow and support is a network barrier. Lack of time, money, connection, trust, or

recognition are common barriers to communication faced by female entrepreneurs. Also, existing networks that are limited, non-transparent, male-dominated, or inaccessible may discriminate against female entrepreneurs. Due to network barriers, female business owners cannot access and share data, materials, recommendations, support, partnerships, offers, customers, or investors - all of which can be vital for the success and expansion of their business. Women entrepreneurs also have to overcome social and cultural barriers such as lack of support from family and society, low self-confidence, fear of taking risks, as well as negative biases and prejudices. These are some of the obstacles that women entrepreneurs face in different countries and cultures. However, these obstacles are not insurmountable, and many female entrepreneurs find ways to overcome them by using their strength, talents, strategies, and opportunities.

According to the World Economic Forum, only 32% of official SMEs in developing countries are owned by women, and the finance gap is \$ 1.7 trillion (World Economic Forum, 2023). Compared to male-dominated enterprises, enterprises dominated by women generally employ fewer people, work in less profitable industries, and generate less money.

But I would also like to point out that we should not make an effort to ensure that as many women as possible work in the workplace at the expense of fewer men. This contradicts my research and can have a negative impact on the success of companies. People should be treated not on the basis of their gender, but on the basis of their personal qualities, competencies and qualifications. Gender-based discrimination against women in leadership positions unacceptable. It is important to analyse the character, leadership qualities and professional skills of each employee, without excluding the fact that not all women succumb to emotions.

Gender discrimination against women based on perceived excessive emotionality is based on outdated stereotypes that women are considered to be less rational, stable and competent than men because they are more emotional. This negative stereotype can lead to women being deprived of responsible positions, equal career opportunities, fair pay, and respect in the workplace.

3.4.5 Gender discrimination of women due to emotional or reproductive role

Regarding gender discrimination against women due to their perceived emotional or reproductive roles, it should be noted that such practices are not only unfair and illegal, but also ineffective for business and society as a whole. Scientific research confirms that diversity and gender equality in the workplace improve business outcomes, including increasing profits, increasing productivity, promoting innovation, improving product quality, and enhancing reputation. In addition, it contributes to respect for gender equality and protection of women's rights, strengthening democracy, ensuring peace, promoting development, and ensuring justice in society.

There exists a debate about gender equality and women's rights in the workplace. Some critics raise objections based on these three arguments: 1) Men and women are dissimilar by nature, they have different abilities, interests, and preferences, which means diverse positions and roles for them in work, in business and management. 2) It is believed that women cannot be effective, productive leaders or managers because they have less confidence, authority, determination, and logic than men and are more prone to stress, conflict, and emotional outbursts. 3) Women are facing the misleading dilemma of deciding between work and family, which can cause them to feel the need to give up one in interest of the other.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that the arguments in favour of the fact that a woman can't effectively combine work and family responsibilities contain some contradictions. There are some counterarguments that suggest that the distinctions between women and men in work, business and management are not something inherent, but are the factors of culture, history, and society. Gender differences exist, but they should not be an obstacle to equal opportunities and benefits for all. It is important to understand that intellectual, psychological, and social characteristics are not related to gender, and everyone can succeed in any field, regardless of gender stereotypes.

Thus, these stereotypes and prejudices can be combated and eliminated through appropriate education, policies, legislation, and informed decisions. Women have all the skills and qualities required to become successful leaders and managers. They are able to

solve problems, think, analyse, make decisions, communicate effectively, negotiate, motivate and inspire a team. Women also have several advantages in leadership and management over men such as empathy, cooperation, flexibility, creativity, and ethics. In order to be more successful, women have trained themselves to combine two areas of their lives - family and work, especially if they are given equal opportunities and conditions, both at work and in family life. Such as the possibility of remote work, flexible work schedules, fair maternity leave and access to kindergartens, family benefits and other forms of social support. At the same time, it is important for men to take their share of household chores, responsibilities, and family care without shifting it solely to women's shoulders. Work and family should complement each other, interact harmoniously, and enrich the life of each family member. And women's emotional components are not a weakness but a strength that helps customers, partners, employees, and society to better understand, consider and meet their needs and interests.

3.5 Kazakhstan: Gender discrimination in the Workplace and Market

Regarding the situation of gender discrimination in Kazakhstan, it gets better every year, and this is good news. World Economic Forum with Global Gender Gap Index, that is monitored every year, in 2023 year showed that Kazakhstan ranked 62nd among the 146 nations, as opposed to 2021, when the country ranked 80th (World Economic Forum, 2023). The country performs well and is a leader in Central Asia in addressing the causes of gender inequality, but inside the mechanism it always feels different from the statistical data.

For example, there is a well-established opinion among the population that a woman should do household chores and take care of children, and a man should ensure the financial well-being of the family. Even I had such a stereotype throughout my life, because I grew up in Kazakhstan and heard such judgments every day, and it didn't seem like something bad or unusual. This is also proved by Gender Social Norms Index (GSNI) of the UN Development Programme, which measures the extent to which entrenched beliefs in society hinder the development of gender equality in various fields, 96% of Kazakhstanis still have stereotypes about the role of women in society (Berikkhan).

As part of indirect discrimination, as I mentioned in the previous sections, this forces women in Kazakhstan to accept low-paid jobs, unskilled or informal work, combine several types of work, or even give up a career for the sake of a family. There is also a view that women are “displaced” from work because it is believed to be aimed at male workers with housewife wives (Michaels, 2009).

3.5.1 Existing Laws

Another important issue is Kazakhstan's inadequate legal regulation and monitoring of women's rights in the workplace and the labour market, which makes the problem relevant. Of course, there are laws aimed at achieving gender equality in Kazakhstan, such as Law “On State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women”, the Law “On the Prevention of Domestic Violence” and the state "Strategy for Gender Equality of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2006-2016", all of them were approved by the parliament in 2009; additionally, the Republic of Kazakhstan adopted the "Concept of Family and Gender policy until 2030" in 2016; the Law “On Labour”, the Law “On Trade Unions” and others, and they are certainly good, but in practice their effective implementation is still insufficient. Also, as far as I can learn, there is no specialized body in Kazakhstan responsible for monitoring and protecting women's rights in the workplace and the labour market.

There is no specific dissertation in the field of law has been prepared in Kazakhstan throughout its whole existence as an independent state with the intention of studying laws that advance gender equality or removing elements that impede the abolition of gender discrimination (Khamzina, et al., 2020).

A serious problem is the low level of awareness and activities of women to protect their rights and interests at work and in the labour market. Many women do not fully know their rights, do not have the necessary skills to protect them, and do not seek the necessary legal or trade union support in cases of discrimination. In addition, many women do not participate in collective bargaining agreements, do not influence decisions on working conditions, do not pursue professional development and development.

3.5.2 Wage gap and unequal employment in Kazakhstan

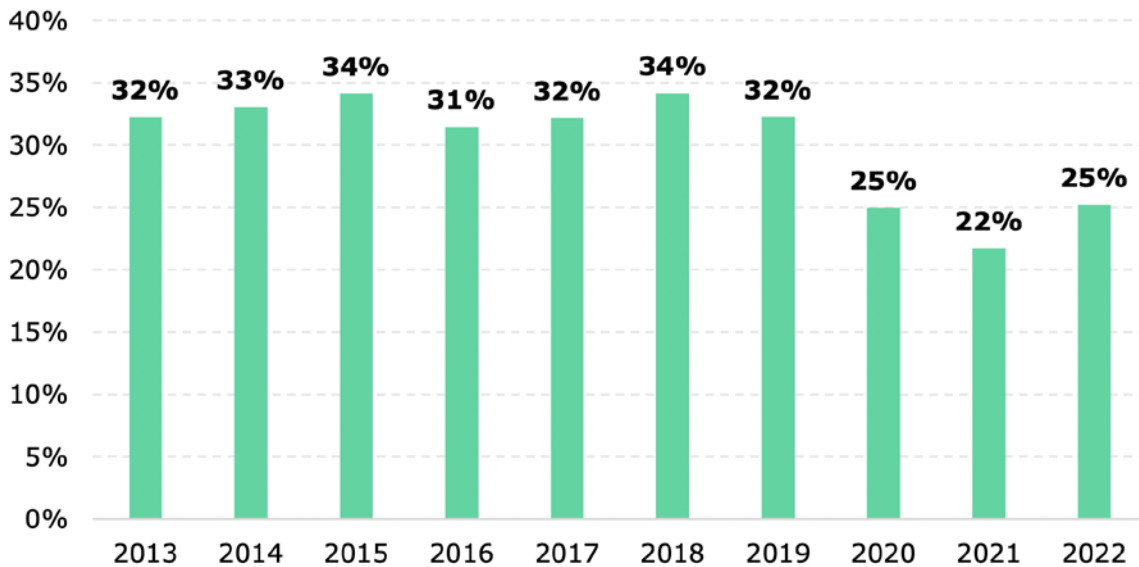
According to another research made by UNDP Kazakhstan is showing progress in narrowing the gender pay gap, reducing it to 21.7% in 2021 from 34.2% in 2018, see Figure 1 and Figure 2. The first figure shows Gender Pay Gap from 2000 till 2021, where the blue line represents average monthly salary of men, purple line shows average monthly wages of women and the green one - percentage ratio of them. On the second figure shows almost the same thing, only the values are rounded, and the information is from 2013 to 2022. And in 2022, the gap has risen again to 25.2%, indicating that more efforts need to be made to address the problem (UNDP Казахстан, 2023). According to the Halyk Research, women earn less than men in 2022 in almost all economic areas and occupations with very few exceptions (HALYK Research, 2023).

Figure 1: Gender Pay Gap in Kazakhstan 2000-2021



Source: (БНС РК, 2021)

Figure 2: Gender Pay Gap in Kazakhstan 2013-2022



Source: (HALYK Research, 2023)

According to World Bank data from 2018, women in Kazakhstan spent an average of 4.56 hours (compared to 1.44 hours) on unpaid domestic work, which is 3.2 times more than that of men (UNDP, 2023)

In Kazakhstan, unequal representation in positions of authority and administration is still a serious issue. According to Halyk Finance Research, with the exception of the education sector, in which women earn on average 5% more than men, the gender gap is observed in all economic sectors, as shown in Figure 3. Also, on this figure can be seen the sectors with the highest average income in Kazakhstan are finance and insurance, and it is observed that they have the largest gender income gap. Considering that the average salary in these sectors is 80% higher than in others, men earn 37% more than women in these areas. This may reflect men's preference for higher-paying jobs that require higher returns, but since it is known that women in Kazakhstan have a higher level of education than men, i.e., 53.7 percent, this choice may also depend on other variables, rather than intelligence or educational level. (HALYK Research, 2023)

Figure 3: Gender gap by economic sector at the end of 2022



Source: (HALYK Research, 2023)

Men and women are still not equally represented in politics, though. Women make up just 20% of MPs in the Senate and 18% of the deputies in the Majilis, the elected lower chamber of Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan, which makeup was decided by extraordinary elections on March 19, 2023. There aren't many deputies, even among them, who have the ability to advance women's rights in society. According to experts, women were chosen for the parliament "so that they could sit in silence, for statistics' sake" (AKAЕBA, 2023)

One of the factors contributing to the low level of women's political participation is the lack of large quotas to encourage women to actively participate in elections and run for public office.

3.5.3 Harassment in Kazakhstan

Sexual harassment and violence, as mixed form of gender discrimination, compromise women's safety, health, and dignity also exist in Kazakhstan. UN WOMEN created a project in which they interviewed the female half of the population of Kazakhstan on the topic of sexual harassment and more than half of the women who reported harassment said that, firstly, 57.6% of women had repeated cases, and secondly, 12% of the surveyed employers said they had heard about similar incidents in other firms or had received such

appeals directly from women, which confirms this in third places, where women were most often harassed in the workplace (41%), during business meetings (38%) and during business trips (12%) (United Nations, 2023).

A large number of affected women, fearing negative consequences for their reputation, career or family, did not talk about these situations. Many of them also had no idea how to protect their rights and where to turn for help. This once again indicates a lack of knowledge and insufficient legal support.

3.5.4 Fighting Gender Discrimination in Kazakhstan

Several steps to develop and enhance legislation, education, health care, and the economy are already being taken in order to combat gender discrimination in the Kazakhstan's labour market. And the country shows evidence of some progress and activity in spite of all the obstacles, issues, and challenges that it faces today.

Kazakhstan is carrying out a range of initiatives and plans with the goal of enhancing the status of both men and women in the community, getting rid of barriers and stereotypes, raising gender awareness and collaboration, emancipating women, and stopping violence against them.

The United Nations Development Program, or UNDP, has a comprehensive program that aims to end violence against women in Kazakhstan, increase women's rights and opportunities, and promote gender equality. The UNDP moreover advocates for the creation and execution of national gender policies and laws, in addition to fortifying institutional frameworks that assist gender parity. UNDP programmes include regional initiative funded by the European Union, Spotlight Initiative seeks to increase women's participation in the social and economic advancement of Central Asia and Afghanistan. Supporting women who are victims of gender-based violence, including in the workplace, is one of the program's main goals. It does this by giving them social, psychological, and legal support in addition to boosting their economic independence and decision-making ability (UNDP Kazakhstan).

And UN Women, an organization dedicated to eradicating violence against women, promoting women's economic empowerment, and promoting women's involvement in

decision-making at all levels, has been operating in Kazakhstan since 2015. UN Women also collaborates with the government, business, civil society, and other partners to carry out Kazakhstan's international obligations pertaining to gender equality. Also, it supports various projects and programs in Kazakhstan aimed at strengthening women's leadership and economic opportunities, improving women's access to education, healthcare, and justice (United Nations).

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, or OECD, examined Kazakhstan's gender policies in 2017 and offered suggestions for enhancing their influence there. In addition, the OECD offers technical assistance and guidance on gender analysis, gender statistics, and gender budgeting (OECD, 2017).

The European Institute of Asian Studies (EIAS) examined several aspects of Kazakh women's involvement in the economic, social, and political life of the nation and created a policy paper on gender equality and women's liberation in Kazakhstan in 2020. Additionally, EIAS emphasizes the function of gender policy in the framework of the EU's Central Asian strategy as well as in bilateral relations with Kazakhstan (EIAS, 2020).

Human Rights Watch (HRW) is a global human rights organization that keeps an eye out for, and records abuses of people's rights in Kazakhstan, particularly those pertaining to violence against women and gender equality. In addition, HRW urges the government of Kazakhstan to uphold its international obligations on gender equality and promotes and advocates for the protection of women's and girls' rights in the country (HRW, 2022).

The efficacy and applicability of these organizations and programs vary based on particular objectives, available resources, partners, and circumstances. In general, their contributions aid in increasing consciousness, fortifying the legislative structure, enhancing accessibility to resources and prospects, and bolstering collaboration and synchronization among diverse actors concerning gender parity matters in Kazakhstan. But there are also difficulties and barriers, like inadequate financing, low levels of female involvement in decision-making, pervasive gender stereotypes, and inadequate tracking and reporting of gender indicators. Enhancing gender budgeting, gender expertise, gender education, and

gender discourse at all levels and across all sectors is crucial for improving the efficacy and execution of gender policies in Kazakhstan.

“The Women in Business” project in Kazakhstan is supported by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), which offers funding, guidance, and training to female entrepreneurs. The gender issues of business and the economy in Kazakhstan are also the subject of research and analysis by the EBRD (Usov, 2023).

A non-profit organization Almaty-based Women Entrepreneurship Development Centre, which is sponsored by Asian Development Bank (ADB) offers women business owners in Kazakhstan all-encompassing assistance. The Centre offers advocacy, networking opportunities, mentoring, training, and consultancy on gender equality in business (STAFF REPORT , 2023).

While these programs and groups operate in various ways, they aim to eliminate gender discrimination in the workplace and labour market and advance women's economic empowerment in Kazakhstan. They advertise their projects through a variety of platforms and channels, including magazines, websites, social media, mainstream media, and public events. Additionally, they gauge the success of their initiatives using a range of metrics, including the volume and calibre of services obtained, employment and income levels, and participant and partner satisfaction and engagement.

The She Matters: Women in Kazakhstan Corporate Leadership initiative, which was introduced by the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and the National Chamber of Entrepreneurs (NCE) in 2022, is one instance of integrating these groups into businesses to educate and train employees on equality in Kazakhstan. The initiative's goals were to show how gender equality improves a company's financial and non-financial performance and to enhance the representation of women on boards and in senior management positions within Kazakhstani businesses. In addition to organizing trainings, seminars, roundtables, and other events for leaders of the business community, government agencies, academia, and the media on gender equality in corporate governance, the program featured a survey that included 77% of all joint stock businesses in Kazakhstan (IFC, 2022).

A network of international, non-governmental, and governmental organizations, the Central Asian Alliance to End Gender Violence works to prevent and combat gender-based violence in the region. The Alliance supports victims and witnesses of abuse by doing research, exchanging experiences, offering training, launching awareness campaigns, and advocating against gender-based violence, especially in the workplace (NAKISPEKOVA, 2023).

They are a part of an international effort by the EU and UN to stop violence against women and girls and seek to improve laws, institutional frameworks, cross-sectoral collaboration, and civil society's ability to stop and address gender-based violence throughout Kazakhstan and the Central Asian area. To increase public participation and understanding of the issue, they also carry out campaigns, training, research, and other initiatives.

In April 2022, the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan approved the Concept of Family and Gender Policy by 2030 with an appropriate action plan. This policy document represents a comprehensive approach to integrating the principle of equality between women and men in various fields and at all levels of decision-making. In addition, the National Commission for Women Affairs and Family and Demographic Policy, as an advisory body to the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, is responsible for the implementation of this concept, the secretariat of which is under the supervision of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Kazakhstan also drew attention to the abolition of the list of prohibited professions for women in 2021 in line with the legislative changes, which are one of the important achievements of the country.

3.6 Czech Republic: Gender discrimination in the Workplace and Market

If we look at the overall interaction with gender discrimination of the Czech Republic, we can see a very negative indicator in which the Czech Republic is lowered in the list of countries with gender gap. According to the World Economic Forum's annual study on the

gender gap (the Global Gender Gap index), Czech Republic is ranked 101st out of 146 nations in terms of the gender wage difference. In contrast, the nation ranked 78th in 2021 (World Economic Forum, 2023).

McKinsey estimates that by 2030, the Czech Republic's GDP would grow by up to €20 billion as a result of reducing the gender gap—a 7.8% increase over the case of business as usual. This demonstrates the financial advantages of attaining workplace gender balance (Iszkowska, et al., 2021).

3.6.1 Existing laws

The situation with gender discrimination in the Czech Republic is ambiguous. It would seem that the country is part of the European Union, that is, the EU Directives have certainly influenced the legislation of the Czech Republic to combat gender discrimination, but despite legislative efforts and social development, gender discrimination in the Czech workplace and labour market remains a constant problem and a more complex reality arises when applying these rules in practice.

According to EU law, protection from gender discrimination is a key aspect of social policy, which has long been considered a fundamental right. This direction is being developed in order to eliminate competitive distortions in the market and contribute to social progress, improvement of living and working conditions. Gender equality is recognized as a fundamental value and a fundamental goal of the European Union in accordance with its legislation. (European Court of Human Rights, 2018)

There is a basic law in the legislation of the Czech Republic, issued in 2009, this is the Anti-Discrimination Law, which prohibits discrimination on a variety of grounds, including gender. This law is effective because 1) it covers all spheres of public life, including employment, education and access to goods and services; 2) it prohibits sexual harassment both everywhere and especially in the workplace; 3) it provides for equal pay for equal work. EU directives have played an important role in the creation of this legislation, making gender equality not only a national concern, but also a European commitment.

Also, another advantage is that the Czech Labour Code provides special measures to protect against discrimination in employment. It defines the rights and obligations of companies and employees and guarantees equal treatment of all employees, regardless of gender.

As for civil servants, the Law on Civil Service of 2002 provides the legal basis for their working conditions. It contains provisions prohibiting discrimination in the public sector and promoting gender equality.

Enshrining the principles of equal treatment and offering people remedies against discrimination is the Equal Treatment and Remedies against Discrimination Act, often known as the Equal Treatment Act. In addition, he is creating the Public Protection of Rights, a separate organization that helps ensure compliance with anti-discrimination legislation.

In addition, the Czech Government has approved a gender equality strategy, which emphasizes its commitment to promoting gender equality. The plan calls for action to end gender-based violence, increase women's representation in leadership positions and reduce the gender pay gap.

It is also worth noting that the gender attribute interpreted in EU legislation currently protects gender identity only in a narrow sense, not including people of different orientations (European Court of Human Rights, 2018), but I have not covered such a topic before, so I will not focus on it.

There are enough laws and in them, as in politics, tracked the Czech Republic's attempts to create a more just society. Another advantage in the fight against gender discrimination is that the Czech Republic is a democratic country, and the voice of the people can be heard to take additional measures.

But the problem is that public awareness of their rights and compliance with the laws determine exactly how effective they are. Continuous efforts are needed to ensure that the

legal framework leads to true equality and protection of both sexes in the workplace and beyond.

3.6.2 Wage gap and unequal employment in Czech Republic

In the Czech Republic the gender pay disparity is approximately 22.1%, it is greater than the average gender pay gap in the EU of 16.3% and is the biggest among the countries in the region (Jobspin, 2016).

In 2021, due to the gender pay gap women earned 19,5% less than men in private work sector and 12,2% in public work sector (Naylor, 2023). This discrepancy is a result of gender segregation in vertical approach, where women are less likely to hold high-paying managerial or in horizontal approach, where women work less in technical professions.

The kinds of work that women pursue and their presence in higher-paying industries are influenced by traditional gender norms and prejudices. Men predominate in higher-paying technical and management roles, whereas women are typically concentrated in lower-paid industries like education and healthcare. Czech women struggle to strike a balance between their work and personal lives, which frequently leads to underemployment or career pauses that reduce their earning potential. Women's incomes are significantly impacted by motherhood. Women who take time off work for childrearing or maternity leave frequently return to the workforce with lower incomes and less opportunities for advancement (OECD, 2023).

Another area of concern is the representation of women in leadership roles. Despite an improvement, the proportion of women on corporate boards and in politics is still low when compared to men. This underrepresentation, which reflects the larger socioeconomic issue of gender bias, also affects governmental and administrative agencies.

Women hold only 27% of management jobs, compared to 37% in the Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) region, while making up 63% of college graduates (Iszkowska, et al., 2021).

The situation also requires unconditional attention, because Czech women are still underrepresented in the political decision-making process and make up just under 20% of the national legislature, where the gender imbalance in the political decision-making process is caused by political parties deliberately putting women in a loss situation the

position on the candidate lists and the parties at the same time do not provide the means to support or promote female politicians (EIGE, 2014-2015).

However, even though in the Czech Republic 45% of the workforce is female, at the same time women have the lowest contribution to GDP, only 43 percent (Iszkowska, et al., 2021).

Through legislation and policy, the Czech government has taken action to close the gender wage gap. But putting these policies into action and bringing about the necessary cultural change to enable them are continuous processes.

In order to reduce the Gender Pay Gap in the Czech Republic, efforts must take into account both the structural issues that influence women's wages and the societal norms that support gender disparity.

Stereotypes and cultural norms are major contributors to the persistence of gender discrimination. Career decisions are frequently influenced by traditional gender roles: women are overrepresented in low-paying industries like education and healthcare and underrepresented in STEM fields.

3.6.3 Harassment in Czech Republic

When amendments to Czech legislation on sexual harassment came out in 2004, an article was published on the Radio Prague International website revealing the unpleasant news of those times, and the idea of how important such an amendment was, for example, it said: "legislation is especially necessary here given that a rather chauvinist culture still prevails in the Czech Republic, which can be partly blamed on the country's communist past" and other ideas (O'Connor, 2004). I am leading this to the fact that it is important to understand the country's past, to realize that problems have existed and exist, it is only important whether the rates of sexual harassment are decreasing or not.

The Czech Republic remains to have a low reporting rate for sexual harassment and workplace violence. There are legal definitions accessible, but there is a lack of awareness

and enforcement. Due to fear, disbelief or concerns about their reputation, women who have experienced abuse frequently fail to disclose instances.

Women's rights activists believe that the Czech Republic's laws do not provide a sufficient level of protection, unlike the legal systems of other European countries, and that the country is not doing enough to address the problem, as it is believed that more than half of the female population has experienced sexual harassment (Expats.cz Staff, 2021).

3.6.4 Fighting Gender Discrimination in Czech Republic

To improve the situation of gender discrimination in the Czech Republic there are various programs and organizations that help to improve the situation.

One of these programs is the Forum 50% program, it was created to increase women's participation in Czech politics and is conducted by exchanging experiences between countries where women already represent a significant level in politics. The program transfers experience from mentors, mostly women from Denmark and Norway, based on personal motivations, interests, skills rather than party views and the success of this program is precisely in the good planning of the relationship between mentors and mentees and the exchange of knowledge and experience that takes place between them. The program is part of a larger project called Equilibrium between Women and Men (EIGE, 2014-2015).

In 2010, an organization appeared in the Czech Republic to support women's economic independence, human rights activities, and the advancement of women at work and in society, taking into account the importance of changing the corporate culture that reflects the needs of every employee equally. As part of the IFJPWF, working in more than 100 countries around the world, they conduct a year-round campaign #equalreward like other projects - Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs), Equal Pay Day (EPD) - Academy for Women Entrepreneurs (AWE) (Business & Professional Women CR z.s.).

The Czech Women's Lobby (CWL), has been part of the European Women's Lobby since 2005 and operates in the Czech Republic in order to improve the position of the female part in society, thereby ensuring a better life for women, protect women's rights, raise them

to the political level and help with their problems regardless of other indicators of women, like abilities, religion, ethnicity, race, etc. They have already achieved great results in achieving this goal (CWL).

Gender Studies - the Educational, consulting and Information Centre on the relationship between women and men, which was established in 1991 and is a member of the Government Council for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, trains employers to provide equal opportunities to employees regardless of gender, motivates men and women to resist gender discrimination, conducts gender audits in companies, organizations and institutions (Gender Studies).

Today, Asociace pro mezinárodní otázky, or Association for International Affairs (AMO) is a unique open platform where politicians, scientists, businessmen, diplomats, media representatives and NGOs can interact in an open and unbiased environment, it organizes educational projects with expert seminars, round tables, and public debates (AMO).

4 Practical Part

4.1 Introduction

Research on gender discrimination in the workplace and labour market is important for understanding how gender stereotypes and prejudices affect people's careers and lives, and to contextualize the above theory on gender discrimination in the workplace and labour market, I conducted interviews among people holding different positions in completely different companies in the two countries I reviewed - the Czech Republic, namely in the capital city of Prague, and in Kazakhstan, in my hometown of Almaty, which is the country's largest city and former capital city.

The interviews were conducted in the form of semi-structured interviews with men, women, employers, HR managers and ordinary employees. Questions focused on personal experiences of discrimination, perceptions of gender roles, company policies and anti-discrimination measures to identify specific examples of gender discrimination.

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of this exploratory research. The study is based on the experiences of a small number of people which provide insight into specific issues, they may not be representative of the wider population. Nevertheless, they are useful case studies that might guide further studies and studies on similar topics.

4.2 Interview Results and Analysis

During the interviews, more people were satisfied with their situation, denied gender discrimination throughout their work, and never faced it, both in different companies in Kazakhstan and in the Czech Republic. But by asking more specific questions, I was able to learn that some survey participants did experience gender discrimination in the workplace to some extent.

4.2.1 Gender Discrimination in payment or employment

Regarding wages and employment of women in Kazakhstan, people with more than 30 years of work experience could only say that the work was paid as stated in the contracts, but it was not possible to compare whether there were differences in pay, as this is confidential information and cannot be disclosed, which could create a potential environment for injustice and hidden discrimination.

It was also suggested that in Kazakhstan, as a post-Soviet country, there are still traces of Soviet Union propaganda about equality of labour regardless of gender, with the principles laid down since then that men and women should work equally and contribute equally to social production. But this was challenged and tested by me in practice: for several months I was employed in one travel agency with several branches in Kazakhstan and conducted a survey among several accountants and travel agent-colleagues. I heard and experienced the phenomenon that in this company female employees made up about 80% of the workforce only because a man would not accept these positions due to low pay. And this phenomenon is not only in this company but is quite common. Since some of the employees have been working in this company for 20 years, they have tracked a trend and gain a lot of beliefs that most of positions are retained or accepted by female employees, justifying their decisions to work there in order to work somewhere despite the disadvantage of low wages. This confirms the statistical data that almost the entire population of Kazakhstan has stereotypes about female and male roles in society. That is, based on these stereotypes, a woman does not need to earn a lot in Kazakhstan, because the financial leader and provider in the family is a man. Therefore, women have to accept low-paid positions with high workload and other disadvantages.

At first in the Czech Republic, I did not find such a situation, i.e., the teams were always equally composed of women and men, with the same hourly wages. But just because of the same wages, I was able to identify through a survey a complaint or even a debate among my colleagues. The thing is that several of my male colleagues from a designer clothing store in Prague did not like to earn the same

wage as the female half of the staff, because they - men, performed a greater amount of work and all the physical burdens associated with the position of sales assistant, while women, in their opinion, were exempted from it because of their natural disinclination to lift heavy things and other things. "If I were to hire staff, it would be predominantly men to increase productivity as women do less." - quote from a male sales assistant of the designer clothing store. The complaint about the excessive physical workload and lack of female help is one I have heard repeatedly on behalf of men, both in the Czech Republic and in Kazakhstan, and that this is what men consider discrimination against them. In response to this view, my female colleague from that store said: "Men most often perceive physical abilities and predispositions as discrimination against men, not taking into account the fact that the female body is equipped with childbearing functions and in order to continue humanity, at the expense of women's health it is worth discounting certain female "privileges", and for natural reasons it is easier for men to perform heavier and more physically demanding work". Truth be told, this is a complex issue, and there is something right and wrong with every opinion.

But in further research, I have come across quite negative feedback. People interviewed in the Czech Republic spoke more often about someone who had experienced gender discrimination. For example, a friend of mine working for one international brewing corporation in Prague said: "I can't say that there was a moment that I saw, but I heard it. For example, while working on one project, I heard conversations that there were 2 managers, a woman, and a man, both cool and hardworking, but the man became a partner, and the woman did not, and I heard that this is because he is a man and supposedly the woman will be distracted by the children and household chores". As this example with managers shows, stereotypes about gender roles and impact on employment and career development continue to exist even in the Czech Republic.

4.2.2 Gender Discrimination in Work Environment

Most of the interviewees claim that their relations with colleagues, regardless of gender, were always competent and satisfactory, both in the Czech Republic and in Kazakhstan. But at the same time, there were cases when women heard

inappropriate language or jokes about gender and competence, daily comments about appearance from their male colleagues, as well as grosser offenses that were clear gender discrimination, based on stereotypes. Here are a few reports from the interviewees about that:

In the Czech Republic, Souvenir-shop, manager, female: “To be honest, I haven’t heard about gender inequality or experienced it, specifically at work, except only manifestations of banter, jabs or under-pickups...from older male colleagues”

In Kazakhstan, National Bank, Trader, male: “I’m working in Kazakh company, and I can say that, while the overall atmosphere in our company is professional, I can address occasional occurrences where comments or actions, often presented as jokes, can unintentionally record cases of harassment or inequality towards women”.

My female friend from Kazakhstan said about her experience after different workplaces: “I noticed obvious signs of gender inequality, daily comments like “you are beautiful, you are smart, you need to get married.” I won’t say that it was unpleasant for me, I am neutral about such things, but sometimes it causes discomfort. I have not experienced harassment, and my experience with gender inequality is more “positive”. There were cases when I was treated better than my male colleagues, and for example, I might not have been scolded for some work mistakes, unlike them”.

In the Czech Republic, a female sales assistant in the electronics store said that she had encountered situations when customers did not trust her opinion and knowledge in the field of technology, saying that a girl could not know about such things and asking her male colleague for more information.

4.2.3 Sexual Harassment

As I have already mentioned in the theoretical part, it is difficult to identify cases of gender discrimination in the form of sexual harassment, because few people want to talk about it, fearing for their position and reputation. But nevertheless, I managed to learn about at least two cases.

One person from Prague told me that he had heard about a case of sexual harassment of a female subordinate by a superior at his work. Which is proof that

there are indeed problems with gender discrimination in the Czech Republic, just as in Kazakhstan and quite serious.

Another example is from female-bartender, worked in Prague popular bar. She said: “For an extended period of time, I held a bartending position in a bar where I was the only female and the youngest employee. My perception from co-workers was often dismissive, as if I needed constant help, and my opinion in technical matters was never taken into account. I was treated like a child or an infirm individual, doubting my abilities even in everyday tasks such as lifting a garbage bag. Later, married co-workers began to exhibit inappropriate behaviour, and when I asked for a professional environment, my workplace situation became even worse. They ignored me, responded rudely to my requests, etc. After discussion with management, I was told that they did not feel it was necessary to address such issues, refusing to take my concerns into consideration. As a result of this conversation, I made the decision to resign. Also, among all my colleagues, I had the lowest salary”. This reveals very vividly not only the problem of the sexual harassment, but also “glass ceiling”, stereotypes, the wage gap, and it is really unique example, in my opinion, to meet all of them from one workplace.

4.2.4 Progress in Fighting Gender Discrimination

Some participants suggested that gender discrimination is part of a broader cultural and social problem that requires changes not only at the legislative level, but also in public attitudes and corporate culture. I also noted that some companies recognize the importance of creating a fair working environment and are implementing appropriate measures such as training and inclusion policies. This indicates a gradual change in attitudes towards gender equality in the working environment in both Kazakhstan and the Czech Republic. Only in Kazakhstan it has only recently come to Kazakhstan, while in the Czech Republic it is already familiar.

Designer clothing store's regional manager in Prague emphasizes that sexual harassment and incompetent language are strictly prohibited in their company. They provide training and create a safe environment for all employees. She also points out that the glass ceiling is a real problem that they are actively combating.

They work to prevent bias and provide equal opportunity for all employees. The company has equal opportunities for women to get leadership positions, and they value the qualities and competencies of every employee, regardless of gender. But for all that, I have highlighted the views of my colleagues earlier which shows that apparently not everyone is following anti-discrimination policies.

I heard the following from an employee of one of the Big Four accounting firms, located in Almaty: “We have a very developed corporate culture towards equality. When new employees arrive, they undergo mandatory training on gender equality and harassment at work, where they explain to us what to do if we encounter such behaviour from colleagues. We can anonymously report such cases both in relation to ourselves and if we notice such attitude towards other colleagues. I feel comfortable in the office and don't see any "special" or different treatment towards colleagues of different genders; I can even note the tendency that many managers are women, although almost all partners are men (about 70%).”

Supply Network Planner at international brewing corporation in Prague said that their company is co-sponsoring Equal Pay Day (EPD), which is an important event for their company. It's a global educational campaign organized by Business & Professional Women International, with events happening all over the world. It's aimed at raising awareness about the gender wage gap and advocating for equal pay for equal work.

Another male-friend of mine employed in Atyrau city said: “I have not seen any signs of gender inequality. We have always had equal opportunities and fair treatment for both men and women. At this company, respect for every employee, regardless of gender, has always been an important aspect of our corporate culture. Everyone's skills and qualities are valued, and opportunities for career advancement have been open to all without any restrictions based on gender. During my time at previous companies and my current work, I have seen many women successfully attain senior positions in both administrative and professional roles. Equal opportunities for professional development and growth have been and are being provided everywhere. Overall, I believe there has been no gender inequality in my

professional experience, and I am proud to have worked and to work in an environment where everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed.”

There are even cases with some "positive discrimination" from female employees in Kazakhstan working for another Big Four accounting firm, when they receive better treatment compared to men: "In fact, we also have modern concepts about equality, since this is an international company, the people are all educated and they will not be biased towards you just because you are a woman, but on the contrary, men respect us very much. Here I noticed that men, on the contrary, understand that women are more hardworking, and they do their job well, are more attentive, etc.". However, this can lead to unreasonable expectations and additional pressure.

In Kazakhstan, interviewees pointed to the lack of specific laws and mechanisms that would effectively protect against gender discrimination. Despite the fact that the country's Constitution guarantees equal rights, as I announced earlier, in practice the implementation of these laws remains insufficient and is not always followed. The problem is compounded by the lack of specific mechanisms that guarantee protection against discrimination in the workplace. This leads to the fact that despite the legislative framework, women and men continue to face inequalities in the professional sphere. It should also be noted that democracy in Kazakhstan is not very developed, so it becomes much more difficult to correct the situation - the opinions of the population are not listened to. "Kazakhstan's index in the ranking of countries with economies in transition fell from last year's 1.36 points to 1.32 points this year. In all categories, the country's democracy index is close to the lowest" (АЗАТТЫК, 2023).

The Czech Republic said that as part of the European Union, they are in a favourable position with effective laws to protect workers' rights against gender discrimination, as well as a large number of different activities and organizations to combat discrimination in companies. But according to the results of the surveys, it can be concluded that the situation is far from ideal.

5 Results and Discussion

My research has shown that gender discrimination is still a serious problem in both the Czech Republic and Kazakhstan and is faced by both countries regardless of their different cultures, economic and political context. Combating gender discrimination requires a multifaceted strategy that includes changes in business culture, strengthening the legislative framework and ensuring its consistent application, strengthening campaigns, trade unions and public organizations to inform and raise public awareness, monitor compliance with women's rights and monitor the current situation. It is equally important to promote equal treatment between employees, as well as to form a favourable image of women in various professions and roles, to enable women to seek help and inform about adverse incidents and receive follow-up assistance without fear for their future and reputation.

Achieving gender equality in the workplace mainly depends on the development of policies that promote the reconciliation of work and family responsibilities. Examples of such policies include flexible working hours, remote work, paid maternity leave, and kindergarten accessibility. The elimination of gender discrimination is not only important, but also gives a chance for the development of countries.

Education is also an important factor, as one of the elements for achieving gender equality and empowering women. Education increases self-esteem, self-confidence, skills and competencies of women and girls, expanding their views on life choices, and also helps to combat gender stereotypes and prejudices.

It should be noted that the results of the study emphasize the importance of ongoing discussions and research in the field of gender equality, as well as the need for active participation of all segments of society in removing gender barriers so that everyone has equal opportunities for professional and personal growth, regardless of gender identity.

The pursuit of equality is an ongoing process that requires relentless effort and dedication from individuals, groups, and Government.

6 Conclusion

The main purpose of this thesis was to explore jobs and the labour market in two countries - Kazakhstan and the Czech Republic, which have different cultures, economic and political backgrounds, in order to identify gender discrimination and compare the two countries with each other.

The literature review was conducted to understand and delve into the topic of discrimination, especially on the basis of gender, and its expression in the two countries under review. The study also clarified the key causes of gender discrimination in both countries and how they deal with it. It is becoming increasingly clear that regardless of culture, politics or legislation, gender discrimination permeates both countries, and campaigns to eliminate it are underdeveloped and need to be strengthened.

In addition, some recommendations were formulated to improve the situation of gender discrimination in the workplace and the labour market, which are relevant to both countries.

In conclusion, the research topic of this dissertation is multifaceted and extensive, and there is still a lot of work to be done in this area and many nuances should be touched upon. Nevertheless, in this dissertation, I tried to cover and show as much of the sector of interest as possible to me.

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