

## Theories and concepts of gender inequality in the distribution of resources

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### Abstract

The purpose of the study is an analytical review of the main theories and the concept of gender inequality in the distribution of resources. Low-wage and short-term wage labour in the economy is often the only option for women (to a greater extent than for men), which leads to poverty in the population, especially in rural areas. The authors revealed that the consequences of Covid-19 and the ongoing geopolitical events, which had a negative impact on socio-economic development, also had a special impact. Thus, the problem of population poverty, especially in rural settlements, is relevant today both at the domestic and global levels. To achieve the goal, a review of the literature on the issues of the research issue, gender approaches in the decision-making process and an overview of the types and factors contributing to the unequal distribution of resources are used. As a result of the literature review, it was revealed that the causes of poverty in rural areas and labour migration are due to spatial inequality, which refers to inequality between urban and rural areas. In addition, there is a gender aspect of the problem between poverty and labour migration, i.e. women mostly accept low-paid work in the informal sector, which does not always mean an improvement in their situation. The reason for the poverty of women in rural areas is associated with their weaker position compared to men. The results of the study can be used to develop strategies and programs to improve the socio-economic situation of the population, especially women.

**Keywords:** labour economics, labour market data, resources distribution, unequal distribution, gender equality.

## Ресурстарды бөлудегі гендерлік теңсіздіктің теориялары мен тұжырымдамалары

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## Түйін

Зерттеудің мақсаты - ресурстарды бөлудегі гендерлік теңсіздіктің негізгі теориялары мен тұжырымдамаларына аналитикалық шолу. Экономикадағы жалақысы төмен және қысқа мерзімді жалдамалы жұмыс көбінесе әйелдер үшін (еркектерге қарағанда), әсіресе ауылдық елді мекендерде кедейлікке әкелетін жалғыз мүмкін нұсқа болып табылады. Сонымен қатар, ковид-19 салдары мен халықтың әлеуметтік-экономикалық жағдайына теріс әсер еткен геосаяси оқиғаларды жоққа шығаруға болмайды. Осылайша, халықтың кедейлік мәселесі, әсіресе ауылдық елді мекендерде, бүгінде ішкі және жаһандық деңгейде өзекті болып отыр. Мақсатқа жету үшін зерттеу мәселесінің сұрағы бойынша әдебиеттерге шолу, шешім қабылдау процесіндегі гендерлік тәсілдер және ресурстардың тең емес бөлінуіне ықпал ететін типтер мен факторларға шолу қолданылады. Әдеби шолу нәтижесінде ауылдық жерлердегі кедейлік пен еңбек көші-қонының себептері қалалық және ауылдық аймақтар арасындағы теңсіздікті білдіретін кеңістіктік теңсіздікке байланысты екендігі анықталды. Сонымен қатар, кедейлік пен еңбек көші-қоны арасында проблеманың гендерлік аспектісі байқалады, яғни әйелдер негізінен бейресми сектордағы жалақысы төмен жұмысқа келіседі. Бірақ бұл әрқашан оның жағдайын жақсартуды білдірмейді. Ауылдық жерлердегі әйелдердің кедейлік себебі олардың еркектерге қарағанда әлсіз жағдайына байланысты. Зерттеу нәтижелерін халықтың, әсіресе әйелдердің әлеуметтік-экономикалық жағдайын дамыту стратегиялары мен бағдарламаларын әзірлеу үшін пайдалануға болады.

**Кілттік сөздер:** еңбек экономикасы, еңбек нарығының деректері, ресурстарды бөлу, біркелкі бөлу, гендерлік теңдік

## Теории и концепции гендерного неравенства при распределении ресурсов

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### Аннотация

Целью исследования является аналитический обзор основных теорий и концепции гендерного неравенства при распределении ресурсов. Низкооплачиваемый и недолговременный наемный труд в экономике часто является единственным возможным вариантом для женщин (в большей степени, чем для мужчин), который приводит к бедности населения, особенно в сельских населенных пунктах. Авторами было выявлено, что особое влияние оказали также

последствия Covid-19 и происходящие геополитические события, которые отрицательно сказались на социально-экономическом развитии. Таким образом, проблема бедности населения, особенно в сельских населенных пунктах, актуальна сегодня как на внутреннем, так и на глобальном уровнях. Для достижения цели используется обзор литературы по проблематике вопроса исследования, гендерные подходы в процессе принятия решений и обзор типов и факторов, способствующих неравному распределению ресурсов. В результате литературного обзора выявлено, что причинами бедности в сельской местности и трудовая миграция бывает в связи с пространственным неравенством, которое относится к неравенству между городскими и сельскими районами. Кроме того, между бедностью и трудовой миграцией прослеживается гендерный аспект проблемы, т.е. женщины в основном соглашаются на низкооплачиваемую работу в неформальном секторе, что не всегда означает улучшение ее положения. Причиной бедности женщин в сельской местности связана с их более слабым положением по сравнению с мужчинами. Результаты исследования можно использовать для разработки стратегий и программ улучшения социально-экономического положения населения, особенно женщин.

**Ключевые слова:** экономика труда, данные о рынке труда, распределение ресурсов, неравномерное распределение, гендерное равенство

## Introduction

Over the past decade, Kazakhstan has undergone large-scale transformations related to the impact of global processes and global risks. The economic problems of Kazakhstan are caused by difficult times experienced by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and military-political conflicts actualize the need to rethink the socio-economic development strategy. As a result of falling prices of raw materials and oil, profits are lower, which causes a drop in GDP. The main problem in forecasting the development and assessing the impact of global risks on them using equilibrium models is the determination of the population's income not only in large cities and regions but also in remote rural settlements.

Kazakhstan is one of the few CIS countries in which, during various socio-economic reforms in 2000-2022, labour productivity in many rural settlements decreased. The main reasons for this process are migration of labour resources, underdevelopment of employment in rural areas, underdevelopment of infrastructure facilities, a high degree of depreciation of fixed assets, and insufficient level of development of social assistance. As a result, the country's socio-economic development is hindered, which in turn affects the increase in the poverty level of the population, especially in rural areas. Thus, Kazakhstan is facing a period of sharp reduction in the population's employment and income level. Many EAEU countries have experienced such a period. Moreover, the current state of the infrastructure of many cities and regions of the EAEU can be described as a crisis.

Many EAEU countries are trying to increase the level of socio-economic development of many regions by solving four significant tasks to improve the well-being of the population: (1) poverty eradication and poverty eradication, which as the main

tasks were included in the Millennium Development Goals – the UN MDGs; (2) reducing the degree of differentiation in the income of the population due to faster income growth among low-income groups; (3) ensuring access to quality health and education services; (4) ensuring access to safe drinking water and access to improved sanitation. Therefore, the social problems of the rural population in the modern conditions of the development of society are becoming more relevant.

Many theorists, economists and analysts have been researching the phenomena of inequality, asymmetry and differentiation for many years [1,2]. In turn, these studies rarely have a decisive influence on the theory or concept of inequality. Even though the amount of empirical data has increased significantly, the results of the study are based on theoretical explanations and subjective weighing of scientists' evidence. In addition, some studies differ greatly not only in orientation but also in methods of measuring spatial inequality, which are often incomparable. This problem is most acute in studies of developing countries, where sociological surveys and questionnaires are most often conducted. Many authors single out economic inequality, mainly referring to "income inequality", "monetary inequality" and "inequality in living conditions". Growth issues were primarily the prerogative of many macroeconomic studies, but they did not fully reveal the institutional and social causes of inequalities [3,4]. In later works, special attention was paid to the problems of spatial inequality, manifested primarily in the uneven distribution of income in health care, education and poverty [5,6].

In Kazakhstan, the increase in the unemployment rate and excessive labour migration of labour is associated with greater territorial dispersion of rural settlements, as a rule, large cities and centres are located at a great distance from rural settlements. This problem in social terms has led to increased marginalization of the population of rural areas to the formation of sustainable rural poverty, which is typical for developing countries such as Kazakhstan. In addition, effective solutions and recommendations still need to be developed to eliminate the migration of large labour masses to cities, further creating tension in the domestic labour market.

Low-paid and short-term wage labour in the economy is often the only possible option for Kazakh women (to a greater extent than for men). Due to the large number of applicants for a limited number of jobs and professions, as well as due to the lack of assets to start their own businesses, rural women agree to any conditions offered by employers because of their weak positions. At the same time, vulnerability, exclusion, and deprivation can force them to sell their labour far below the level of wages in the labour market. Their weak position is that they are often forced to accept irregular wages, and as a result, rural women receive virtually no additional benefits. The income earned by women in comparison with men can seriously affect the status of their households in terms of the level of poverty, which in turn can affect migration.

Thus, the problem of poverty of the population, especially in rural settlements, is relevant today both at the domestic and global levels. Each country is trying to find approaches to overcome rural poverty, considering its characteristics of socio-economic development. As the results of various scientific studies show, a clearly defined socio-demographic framework on this issue needs to be determined. That is why the relevance of this study is beyond doubt, and specific recommendations are required as a basis for the formation of socio-economic policy of the state in this area.

In this regard, to fill this gap in theoretical analysis, this study aims to conduct a detailed analytical review of the scientific literature. Then it offers a complex theoretical framework explaining the problems of gender inequality and resource allocation.

### **Review of the Literature on the Problems of Research**

Theoretical aspects of inequality, comprehensive analysis and systematisation of theoretical and empirical studies of foreign authors on the problems in the decision-making process and resource allocation. Recently, theories, concepts, and models of inequality problems and their impact on economic development continue to be considered in many scientific papers. In turn, these studies rarely have a decisive influence on the theory or concept of inequality. Even though the amount of empirical data has increased significantly, the study's results depend on the theoretical point of view of the scientist and the subjective weighing of evidence, not only on the systematisation of empirical data. Because theories that have little proven empirical data can reach the institutional level faster. In addition, some studies differ significantly in their focus and the methods of measuring inequality, which often need to be revised. As a result of many studies, it has been established that the level of income differentiation of the population in developed countries is significantly less than in developing countries [1,2,3]. Thus, this problem is most acute in scientific research in developing countries, where sociological surveys and questionnaires are often conducted. This is especially important for a country like Kazakhstan, where the problem of inequality in the distribution of opportunities and resources is still relevant and requires further research.

Thus, A. Smith, considering the emergence of wealth and its distribution in the work "Research on the nature and causes of the wealth of nations", noted the fact that already at the first stages of the formation of social antagonism, a society arises that allows for a significant inequality of states. There is no period in which wealth would give greater power to the one who owns it [1]. In turn, J. Proudhon, in addition to the factors of physical survival, also highlighted the human needs to meet the standards accepted in this society [2]. Proudhon, in his research, divided poverty into two types: absolute poverty and comparative poverty (relative). At the same time, he could not clearly explain the growth of social wealth, as well as the cause of poverty in developed countries. For this reason, T. Malthus, in his work "Essay on the Law of Population" wrote about the natural law of population as the cause of poverty and misery of the people, their unavoidability in the future [3]. According to Malthus, there is an objective factor of the growth of the wealth of individual population segments in an arithmetic progression and the population in a geometric progression. As a result, differences generate an excess population and a food shortage, which causes poverty. Consequently, population growth affects the growth of the poor. Therefore, the scale of poverty is self-regulated through famine and epidemics [3].

According to most egalitarian approaches, inequality in wealth and income can have a detrimental effect on policy decision-making [4,5,6]. The main tools of this approach are the application of government measures aimed at reducing differences in income and opportunities between population groups, such as tax reforms, social protection systems, State education and health programs, and policies to reduce

discrimination and inequality in rights. The egalitarian approach also considers social and cultural differences that can lead to inequality and seeks to create conditions that will allow all members of society to reach their potential without the limitations caused by social and economic inequalities.

Representatives of modern views of social and economic processes have expanded their thoughts on the concepts of poverty and migration. Most current studies are devoted to internal migration from rural areas to cities. In addition, the duration of migration can be both short-term and long-term. A certain proportion of internal migrants constantly move between their origin and destination areas, depending on their respective seasonal conditions. These groups are called seasonal and circular internal labor migrants. From the point of view of poverty reduction, seasonal and circular migration of workers may be especially important, since these types of migration are more common among the poor [7,8].

This paper proposed in a systematic way all the above theories and concepts in Table 1.

Table 1 – The main theoretical framework of scientific views

No.	Author(s)	Theoretical framework/ Conceptual framework	Conclusion
1	Theories of the classical school of Political Economy (A. Smith, J. Proudhon, T. Malthus, D. Ricardo, G. Spencer)	The cause of poverty is associated with population growth, the development of society and an increase in the level of consumption.	These theories determine the state of need associated with the existence of humanity.
2	Theories of the egalitarian school (Zh. Rousseau, E. Reclu, K. Marx, F. Engels)	The cause of poverty was associated with the rapid growth of migration processes, especially the processes of mass and uncontrolled migration.	These theories determine the growth of inequality due to the low level of income and consumption of an individual or household.
3	Theories of statistical and sociological sciences (p. Rowntree, C. Booth, F. Hayek, F. Le Pleu)	Poverty is related to the lack of access to quality education.	These theories define the problems of poverty arising due to unequal access to social resources.
4	Theories of the sociological sciences (M. Orshansky, P. Townsend, O. Lewis)	The causes of poverty and migration are related to the unequal distribution of family goods and differences in the composition of family consumption.	These theories revealed the understanding of poverty as a multidimensional and multidimensional problem.
5	Theories of multidisciplinary research (R.Chambers, R. Blanco)	The causes of poverty and migration are associated with a wide range of unfavourable conditions.	These theories revealed that poverty is a multidimensional concept and affects migration flows.

The main conclusions can be summarised based on the above review of the listed theories and concepts.

Firstly, the evolution of poverty and labour migration theory can be distinguished by several key stages, from the formation of ideas about the essence and causes of poverty within the political economy framework, egalitarianism and sociological and multidisciplinary studies.

Secondly, when determining the causes of inequality, poverty and migration, a specific part of the working population is displaced, which contributes to destabilising the social situation and strengthening contradictions in a particular region. In particular, it is possible to highlight Hayek's research, which concluded that the lack of access to quality education affects the migration of the population.

Thirdly, a new impetus to developing the theory of poverty was provided by Lewis' views that the origins of poverty may be related to gender aspects. In other words, poverty is primarily associated with a visible increase in the proportion of families headed by women or a shift in poverty towards families headed by women.

Fourth, representatives of modern views of social and economic processes have significantly expanded their thoughts on the concepts of poverty and migration. In particular, they defined migration as the process of moving people from rural to urban, city to city, and city to rural.

Thus, essential areas requiring further scientific research have been identified. In-depth qualitative and quantitative research is needed to understand the different strategies that poor people use to ensure access to different types of migration. Systematic analysis is also necessary to understand the circumstances under which migration is a way out of poverty.

At the same time, comparative studies are needed, and there are not enough materials devoted to assessing the vulnerability of various categories of migrants (both domestic and international), such as women working in households. This will help to identify how each migration flow helps the poor to get out of poverty. It is necessary to compare the situation of these workers in conditions of poverty before and after migration. Reliable data are needed to compare the impact of different types of migration on household poverty. Research is required to understand the distribution of benefits within the remittance family. From a gender perspective, it is imperative to know whether male and female children receive equal benefits in terms of education and health care and whether older men and women are treated differently. When analyzing how migration affects poor people, it is also necessary to consider emotional components.

### **Gender Approach in Decision-Making**

The gender approach to inequality is based on the understanding that inequality between men and women is one of the main types of social inequality. Gender inequality can manifest itself in all spheres of life, from economic to political and cultural, and it can be associated with an unequal distribution of resources, opportunities and power between men and women.

Women are usually more involved in executive decision-making. In addition, the impact of relative income on executive decision-making varies depending on the household's financial activity system. The difference in income between men and women in households does not depend on who earns more and how they combine their finances and does not affect the gender gap in households with one earner, or households with two earners using an independent system. However, in households with two earners using the complete pooling system, a higher income of women can reduce the gender gap, whereas in partial and full dictatorial systems, it can increase the gap between genders. Concerning rare decisions, the management system does not affect the gender gap since women's higher income compared to men always reduces the gender gap [9].

According to a study by Barcena-Martin, Blasquez and Moro-Egido, there is a correlation between a decrease in the level of deprivation and family structures where women are more involved in decision-making, regardless of the presence or absence of joint financial activities. On the other hand, family arrangements where partners keep individual incomes and make decisions together are usually associated with a higher level of deprivation. Strengthening the position of women in the negotiation process within the family can be a practical approach to mitigating material deprivation in households [10].

A gender-based approach can reduce gender inequality by providing equal opportunities and preventing gender discrimination. Individual decision-making directly affects the level of inequality in society, determined by the sphere of activity, level of education, social status and income. The level of savings and savings depends on the level of education received by individuals. The gender approach also involves considering individuals' interests and needs when making decisions.

Thus, decision-making to reduce inequality may be political, individual, and may also depend on gender and territorial differences. Policies and institutions significantly impact the scale and nature of inequality in society. If the government, firms, trade unions, consumer organizations and individuals take specific steps to reduce inequality, the growth of inequality will stop. The choice of a particular approach depends on the situation since the above guidelines have advantages and limitations.

Further, we propose to consider the classification of scientific views of scientists who have studied the characteristic features, form and content of the concept of inequality in the decision-making process and resource allocation (see Table 2).

Table 2 - Scientific approaches and views on the concept of resource allocation

No.	Author	Idea research	Conclusion
<i>Resources allocation and social justice</i>			
1	Rawls (1971)	Resource allocation should be equal.	The Rawlsian approach is based on a fair distribution of resources and benefits.
2	Sen (1992)	Uneven distribution of abilities and opportunities in society.	A utilitarian approach to the distribution of resources and the provision of social guarantees to the population to eliminate poverty and inequality.



3	Piketty (2015)	Capital income is growing faster than economic growth and labour income.	The market approach believes that government intervention in market relations can be harmful and lead to distortions in the economy.
<i>Resource distribution and economic inequality</i>			
1	Kuznets (1955)	Income inequality first increases during economic development and then declines as it approaches a certain income level.	The cyclicity of social change suggests that inequality is a consequence of any particular cyclicity in economic development.
2	Hirschman (1958)	Economic growth is cyclical in different sectors of the economy.	The concept of "unbalanced growth" can be characterized by periods of cyclical growth in some sectors or regions while others lag behind.
3	Becker (1964)	The population's income depends on the education level and health status.	The multidimensionality of social change suggests that inequality depends on the level of skills and education.
Note: compiled by authors by sources [11,12,13,14,15,16]			

### **An Overview of the Types and Factors that Contribute to the Unequal Distribution of Resources**

It is necessary to highlight the types of rural poverty and the factors contributing to poverty and show ways to alleviate this situation. According to the sustainable livelihood approach (SLA), this is an effective way to better understand poor households' living conditions [17]. In addition, there is a new approach to the definition of poverty types for assessing multidimensional rural poverty following the SLA method. Comparing this indicator of poor households with others, differences were identified between the current poverty classification in developing countries and the multidimensional poverty classification according to the SLA method [18]. Thus, a set of six fundamental principles were identified that are best practices in any intervention, namely: (1) focus on human resources, (2) integrity in strategy design, (3) dynamism, (4) focus on strengths, (5) macro-micro linkage; and (6) sustainability. In turn, another approach to providing sustainable livelihoods includes the following set of indicators: (1) human capital, (2) natural capital, (3) physical capital, (4) financial capital and (5) social capital. Thus, the structure of each approach shows how the structural system emerges from resources in different contexts. At the same time, poverty is a multidimensional socio-economic phenomenon, so its dynamics are determined not only by a set of national trends but also by considering the gender aspect. Sustainable livelihoods require infrastructure components such as affordable, secure housing, transportation, adequate water and sanitation, communications, and affordable electricity. As a result, the SLA focuses on developing appropriate infrastructure to overcome poverty. Finally, sources of funds, revenues, policies and processes are sustainable when all aspects that have the potential to increase opportunities for sustainable poverty reduction are controlled.

The category of rural poverty is closely related to the concept of vulnerability of the population, the cause or effect of which is limited access to various resources. At the

same time, the concepts of poverty and vulnerability should be distinguished, noting that the vulnerable include population groups that experience restrictions in access to resources such as income, education, benefits, housing and health care. At the same time, people experiencing poverty include those groups with limited income access. Thus, the poverty of the rural population is a reduction or loss of the ability to meet basic needs, i.e. deprivation. Deprivation increases the risk of poverty in the people, which may be one of its causes.

Further, in the scientific literature, the concept of rural poverty is often associated with relative poverty or social exclusion (social exclusion - relative deprivation). At the same time, social exclusion is understood as a reduction in quality of life, not only economic characteristics associated with income and benefits. The study of social exclusion can be carried out at three levels [18]:

1. The micro-level of the study of social exclusion involves an appeal to the analysis of social ties.

2. The Meso-level of the study of social exclusion means considering the processes of exclusion of social groups and establishing barriers.

3. The macro-level study of social exclusion contains works on a comparative analysis of concepts, the identification of cultural and social characteristics of social exclusion, and an analysis of social policy and its effectiveness.

A transitive approach is also applicable to studying the processes of formation and causes of poverty in the rural population. Rural poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon; various vectors and multifaceted factors (strategies, policies, procedures) form it. As noted earlier, Townsend revealed an understanding of poverty as a multifaceted and multidimensional problem. Researchers Deshingkar, Farrington and Srivastava defined migration as the process of people moving from rural to urban, from city to megacity, and from a megacity to the countryside. Thus, the poor population of rural areas can change over a long period as a natural process.

Causes of deprivation in rural areas and labour migration:

- low-income and part-time work due to the lack of business and opportunities for the local population in rural areas;
- Lack of access to services (e.g., health care, education and training) as fewer people living in rural areas could support these services.
- low level of transport infrastructure and high transport costs;
- the local population is employed in low-paid seasonal jobs in agriculture, and they hardly manage to pay their bills;
- low level of access to the Internet, which leads to isolation and deprivation in rural areas.

## Conclusion

In summary, in scientific research, rural poverty and labour migration are often discussed in connection with spatial inequality, which refers to the inequality between urban and rural areas. Two processes, rural poverty and labour migration, are multidimensional phenomena, but, like rural poverty in general, the level of labour migration in developing countries is higher than in developed countries. Reducing

poverty in rural areas through effective policies and economic growth remains challenging for the scientific community. Poverty in rural areas is discussed in the context of social inequality, resulting from underdeveloped infrastructure that leads to mobility or labour migration.

Based on the above review of theoretical theories and concepts related to rural poverty and labour migration, it is possible to identify the specifics of the gender aspect of the problem. The relationship between rural poverty, labour migration and gender inequality is multifaceted and requires an understanding how household development dynamics and labour market processes interact. At the same time, the relationship between poverty and female employment is two-sided theories and concepts related to rural poverty and labour migration. Deprivation can lead the female population to look for any job, but often women need more paid work in the informal sector.

Thus, if a woman gets a job, it only sometimes means an improvement in her situation since the income received may not meet expectations, and very often, there will need to be more funds to support the household. Special attention should also be paid to highlighting the influence of each gender on the maintenance of the family, which may be different due to the uneven distribution of rights, resources and time. In most developing countries, rural women are exposed to risks and the situation of women in the household and in the labour market should also be taken into account in terms of the ability to assert their rights. The paradox is that rural poverty among women is associated with their weaker position than men.

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