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Taking into Consideration Traditional Gender Norms and Stereotypes in Gender Inequality and Women's Political Participation in Mongolia

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1. Introduction

The modern development process requires the elimination of gender discrimination and the establishment of gender equality between men and women (United Nations, 2001). Gender equality needs to be taken seriously in order to ensure that women are not left behind in development (United Nations, 2001). Thus, the United Nations (UN) had included the goal of achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls as a goal 5 in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (UN, 2015). However, the fact that fewer girls have education, fewer women participate in the labour market, and a large number of women work unpaid are showing that girls and women remain outside of the development process (UN, 2021b). For instance, as of 2019, women spend about 2.5 times as many hours as men on unpaid domestic work and care work, they accounted for nearly 39 percent of the global labour force, and they earn 77 cents for every dollar that men earn (UN, 2021b). On that account, unequal situations still exist across all aspects of society.

According to Lorber (2010), gender inequality takes many different forms, depending on the economic structure, social organization, and culture in a particular group or society. In other words, depending on the country or society, gender inequality takes different forms such as unequal participation of men and women in the labour market, unequal distribution of education between men and women, and unequal distribution of household chores based on gender differences and further traditional gender roles in the culture (Lorber, 2010). Therefore, Mongolia, one of the developing countries in Asia, was chosen as a case in this study to investigate different forms of gender inequality. Gender inequality takes very different forms in education, in the labor market, in politics, and in decision-making in Mongolia. Mongolian women have higher education than men, but the majority of the workforce are men, and women earn less than male workers with the same level of education in the workplace (Ministry of Education and Science, 2021; National Committee on Gender Equality, 2022). There is an inverse situation that women who are educated but unable to participate equally with men in politics and decision-making, whereas men are more likely to be in leadership positions in the workplace and in politics (Burn & Oidov, 2001). In addition, a large proportion of women continue to work unpaid in the informal sector or in their families in Mongolia (National Statistic Organization, 2021). The tendency to assume that the space for

political and leadership positions is only for men and taking care of family and household is only for women remains strong in the country (International Republican Institute, 2021). Therefore, there is a need to take into account gender norms in relation to Mongolian culture and how it affects gender inequality.

The situation of gender inequality in Mongolia raises this thesis research question: *How do gender norms and stereotypes affect gender inequality?* To consider the research question, this thesis will explore *how gender equality links to women's political participation and how gender norms and stereotypes impact women's involvement in politics*. This thesis will begin with an overview of gender inequality in general, as well as how it exists in different areas of society, and why and how to combat gender inequality. In doing so, the thesis will investigate the impact of women's educational, economic, and political empowerment on diminishing gender inequality. The thesis will then review literature that presents the importance of women's participation in politics and how can women's participation be improved, what are the obstacles to women's political participation and what is likely to change as a result of their participation will be discussed. To do this, the country's traditional gender norms and stereotypes will also be addressed as being a major barrier to women's participation in politics. Therefore, the thesis will also investigate the inverse situation linking to the traditional norms and stereotypes and aim to show that women's educational empowerment is not the only link to improved gender equality in the workplace and decision-making in the Mongolian case.

2. Conceptual framework

2.1. Gender inequality

Equality can be initially understood as treating people equally, regardless of their personal or group circumstances (UN, 2001). As defined by the UN (2001), gender equality means that men and women have an equal right to enjoy products, opportunities, resources, and incentives that have certain value in society, in other words, people have equal access to these things, regardless of their gender. This means that men and women are equally valued in society and in their personal lives, and have equal power and participation in decision making. However, gender inequality persists

everywhere, and women and girls are disadvantaged around the world (UN, Lorber, 2010; 2015).

Gender inequality can be explained by the fact that women are often disadvantaged relative to similarly situated men (Lorber, 2010). "Women suffer from the lack of access to decent work and face occupational segregation and gender wage gaps, [...] and they are under-represented in political and economic decision-making processes" (UN, 2021a). For instance, women are facing inequality in the labour market and the division of labour, the educational sector and access to resources, financial autonomy, and representation in politics (Beneria & Permanyer, 2010). Therefore, SDG5 has created a real need to ensure equal rights and equal opportunities for men and women, to eliminate all forms of discrimination, and to implement the function of ensuring gender equality (UN, 2021a). Empowering women educationally, economically, and politically is a key goal for equal participation in development (Mandal, 2013). Increasing women's educational attainment is the key tool not to leave them out of the development process (Sundaram, Sekar, & Subburaj, 2014). Well-educated women could be able to participate in the labor market equally with men and be able to secure their own economic resources (Mandal, 2013). In addition, women's equal participation in politics contributes positively to the country's economic and social development (Kassa, 2015). Therefore, to ensure equal participation of girls and women and to correct long-standing gender inequalities, empowering girls and women is crucial (Sundaram et al., 2014).

2.2. Women's empowerment

According to Rowland (1997), gender inequality (e.g., no voting rights for women) and gender stereotypes (e.g., men are the head of the household and women are housewives and mothers) have begun to attract attention in the modern development process. SDG5 calls for achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls, but gender inequality exists in all spheres (de Haan, 2017). The idea of empowerment first come up in the gender and development context when Sen and Grown argued that women needed "to develop a collective vision, a set of strategies and new methods for mobilizing political will and empowering women to transform society" (Sen and Grown, 1987:87, cited in Haslam, Schafer, & Beaudet, 2017). Therefore, as women face unequal positions and status in the developing world, women's empowerment is the key concept

and it can be understood as empowering women educationally, economically, and politically by providing equal opportunities (Mandal, 2013).

In recent decades, the goal of women's educational empowerment has received serious attention, and international declarations and Education for All initiatives focused on getting girls into school in equal numbers to boys (Sundaram et al., 2014). Ensuring gender equality in education is a key condition for equal participation of men and women in social development, equal opportunities for development benefits, and increasing the basic capacity of men and women to live well (Sundaram et al., 2014). Mandal (2013) argues that education creates self-confidence, self-esteem, and self-sufficiency for women, and it brings increased social and political consciousness and so on. The researchers such as Sundaram, Sekar, and Subburaj (2014) studied the impact of education on women's empowerment in Madurai, India. They found that overall empowerment and other related empowerment types (economic and political) are also relatively influenced by the respondents' educational qualifications (Sundaram et al., 2014). Women with more education have more access to job options and are better able to secure their own financial resources (Sundaram et al., 2014). However, researchers (Sundaram et al., 2014) argue that women's potential has not been completely realized in this area due to socioeconomic restraints, and they have been pushed down into the social hierarchy. Given the current gender equality (*Global Gender Gap Report, 2021*), this is the case not only in India but also in other parts of the world.

Women's economic empowerment is achieved through equal employment opportunities, equal organizational benefits, equal treatment, and a fair work environment (Mandal, 2013). Labour force participation and wage inequalities are the most commonly-used indicators of women's economic empowerment (de Haan, 2017). By 2019, women accounted for nearly 39 percent of the global labour force but held only 28.3 percent of managerial positions (UN, 2021b). Around the world, women only make 77 cents for every dollar earned by men (UN Women, 2017). Women work fewer hours and are paid less than men can be related to social norms restricting women to work outside the household (de Haan, 2017). Data collected on 90 countries between 2001 and 2019 show that, on an average day, women spend about 2.5 times as many hours as men on unpaid domestic work (UN, 2021b). With these numbers, women's economic

empowerment (as well as women's educational and political empowerment) continues to be a critical concept for achieving SDG5 – gender equality (Haslam et al., 2017).

The term empowerment that can be related to the gender and development context is bringing people who are outside the decision-making process into it and more than that, it includes the processes that drive people to believe they are capable and entitled to make decisions. (Rowlands, 1997). Women's participation in politics and other decision-making organizations is an essential factor for empowerment and for women's advancement, and the foundation of a gender-equal society (Rajput, 2001 cited in Mandal, 2013).

2.3. Women's political participation

SDG 2030 defines its goal 5 – achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls, but women's political representation is still one of the challenges to achieving the goal (UN, 2021b). Politics is typically male-dominated and male-oriented, while female political participation falls short of expectations (Kassa, 2015). As of 1 January 2021, the global average of women in national parliaments was only 25.6 percent, which was far from parity, and it will take more than 40 years to achieve gender parity in national parliaments (UN, 2021b). The parliament, the central legislative institution of the state, is made up of various sections of society, so that the state is recognized as legitimate in society and acquires legitimacy (Kassa, 2015; Kenworthy & Malami, 1999). However, a parliament that does not adequately represent women, the largest group in society, may not be universally accepted (Kenworthy & Malami, 1999). So why is women's political participation important? Researchers such as Atkeson and Carrillo (2007) found that the greater the representation of women in the legislature, the greater the trust and acceptance of citizens, especially women, in government. They compared the US House of Representatives. This is because the proportion of women in the House of Representatives varies from state to state. Researchers (Atkeson & Carrillo, 2007) found that as the proportion of women in the chamber increased, women in the country were more likely to say that the government was open to ordinary people, that the government listened to people like them, and that it cared about them. In other words, the government was likely to be viewed positively. Thus, increasing women's

representation at the political decision-making level has the positive effect of improving the legitimacy of the state (Atkeson & Carrillo, 2007).

According to Lawless (2015), women's participation in politics can lead to a more cooperative style of political leadership. In male-dominated politics, however, leadership style is often based on fierce competition and hierarchy. On the other hand, women tend to be more cooperative and friendly than men, and have a common tendency to engage in political activities through the formation of coalitions (Perez, 2019). Equal participation of women, especially in politics, is a struggle that must bring progress in development at all levels of society. For instance, increased women's participation in political decision-making means that public policy can be even more friendly for women (Perez, 2019). In addition, women parliamentarians are more likely than men to submit law drafts to promote women's rights and gender equality (Wängnerud, 2009). Even more interesting, a comparative study by the World Bank (WB) (Dollar, Fisman, & Gatti, 2001) shows that as the number of women in parliament increases, the overall picture of corruption declines. However, whether this phenomenon is just a coincidence or whether women actually reduce corruption can be debated among researchers (Dollar et al., 2001).

It is the essence of democracy for every citizen, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity or social origin, to participate in politics on an equal footing and to freely choose or be elected (Zungura, Nyemba, Mutasa, & Muronza, 2013). However, women lack the time and resources to run for political office because, all over the world, women do most of the housework, such as babysitting, cooking, and cleaning, so they rarely get involved in politics (Kassa, 2015). Zungura et al., (2013) states that, in a society that discriminates against women and directly or indirectly restricts their right to be elected, democracy cannot be truly realized. Thus, gender norms and social expectations of men and women are one of the main obstacles to equal participation in politics.

2.4. Gender norms and stereotypes

Looking into the barriers to women's participation in politics, researchers show how gender norms negatively affect this gender inequality in politics (Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992). According to Eagly et al., (1992), most people think of political

leadership as determination, self-confidence, and the ability to lead others. People may have a positive view of male politicians that have above-mentioned behaviour, but they may have a negative view of women (Eagly et al., 1992 cited in Heilman, 2012). Heilman concludes that this result shows that women are punished for participating in leadership behaviours that are rewarded by men (Heilman, 2012). Therefore, when examining the issue of gender inequality, it is necessary to consider the underlying drivers, which can be categorized as gender norms and gendered stereotypes (Stewart, Wright, Smith, Roberts, & Russell, 2021). Gender norms is a term that was popularized by feminists as a hindrance to gender equality (Cislaghi & Heise, 2020; Connell & Pearse, 2014). According to Cislaghi and Heise (2020), gender norms are created and reproduced through people's actions and enforced by those who have power. Gender norms steer the expected and accepted behaviour of women and men, and often perpetuating gender stereotypes which inform our assumptions about someone based on their gender (Stewart et al., 2021). Stereotypes often arise intentionally or unintentionally and become more widespread in society. Gender stereotypes are biased and widely accepted concepts based on the characteristics of males and females, for example, masculinity and femininity that are socially constructed beliefs about what it means to be a man or a woman (Dowd, 2010).

Gender stereotypes have both descriptive (what women and men are like) and prescriptive (what women and men should be like) properties (Heilman, 2012). According to Heilman (2012), both descriptive and prescriptive gender stereotypes can compromise women's ability to gain acceptance and achieve upper-level positions in the workplace. The stereotype that women suit housework and are good at it is a major reason that women have low participation in the labour market (de Haan, 2017). Women spend more time on unpaid work than men (UN, 2021b). Interestingly, the fact that women do not make their voices heard about this unequal pay could be driven by gender norms and stereotypes once again (Cislaghi & Heise, 2020; Connell & Pearse, 2014).

People follow gender norms that have been created by their culture and society (Cislaghi & Heise, 2020). International opinion polls show that traditional gender norms vary from country to country. For example, 127,358 people from 79 countries surveyed in the

World Values Survey (2016) were asked how much they agreed with the statement that "men can be better political leaders than women". Approximately, 35% agreed or strongly agreed globally. However, 83% of respondents in Egypt, 78% of respondents in Pakistan and 76% of respondents in Nigeria agreed with this statement, while only 5% of respondents in Iceland and Sweden and 8% of respondents in Norway agreed (World Values Survey Association, 2016). The tendency that politics is only for men is still strong globally, especially in developed, poor, and new democracies. Therefore, most scholars agree that traditional gender norms are the main reason that hinders women's participation in politics and changing it is a political process that could lead to equality between women and men (Cislaghi & Heise, 2020).

3. Empirical examples: The case of Mongolia

3.1. The current situation of gender equality in Mongolia

Statistics of gender parity is the one way to explain the situation of gender equality. Thus, to see the overview of the gender equality in Mongolia, some numbers would be needed. According to the Global Gender Gap Report 2021, published by World Economic Forum, Mongolia ranks 69th out of 156 countries with an index of 0.716 (0.00- imparity, 1.00- parity). In 2006, Mongolia was ranked 42nd in this report (when the index was 0.682), however, down to 58th in 2018 and 79th in 2019. In the report of 2021, the country is closer to the parity 0.993, in terms of educational attainment which is the sub-index of Global Gender Gap Report. However, in terms of economic participation and opportunity sub-index, Mongolia is closer to the parity 0.769 (*Global Gender Gap Report, 2021*). Mongolia's worst indicator was in terms of political empowerment sub-index. The country ranks 116th in the world with an index of 0.122, which was far from the parity (*Global Gender Gap Report, 2021*). These indicators show that inadequate representation of women in politics and partly unequal participation in the workforce are the main obstacles to achieving gender equality and achieving the SDGs 2030 in Mongolia.

3.2. Historical events around gender equality and empowering women

To explain gender equality and women's empowerment processes in Mongolia, I would like to explain some socio-economic and political transformations. Historically, Mongolia

found the status of a state after the collapse of the Manchu Qing dynasty in 1911. Afterward, the socio-economic and political change took place under the influence of the Soviet Union, transforming Mongolia from a nomadic pastoral economy to an urbanized industrial state (Burn & Oidov, 2001). Decades later, Mongolia became a party to 29 human rights treaties, including The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), as a result, women have had the right to vote and be elected and the quota system was established in this period (Burn & Oidov, 2001). When the democratic reform process started in 1990, Mongolian women were highly educated but were unassertive "passive" subjects with regard to state policymaking (Doljinsuren & Ganchimeg, 2020). The democratization process and the 1992 Constitution reaffirmed the equal rights of male and female citizens to civil and political activities (Burn & Oidov, 2001). Since then, Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have been active in formulating and evaluating laws guaranteeing civil and political rights and preventing discrimination against women, relying heavily on CEDAW as a framework in crafting new laws and changing old ones (Burn & Oidov, 2001). In 2011, the Parliament passed the Gender Equality Law, which aimed to define and regulate the relations related to the implementation of the legal basis for ensuring gender equality in political, legal, economic, social, cultural, and family relations (The National Legal Institute, 2011). While these processes to empower women may be one step closer to gender equality and may have contributed to the education of Mongolian women, this advantage has not yet been reflected in gender equality in economic participation and political participation.

3.3. Women's educational and economic empowerment

As mentioned in the conceptual framework of this paper, women's educational and economic empowerment are key tools to achieving gender equality. According to Ministry of Education and Science (MEDS) (2021), the gender ratio of all boys and girls attending secondary school by day is equal (50:50) in 2019. However, there is a tendency for the number of boys to decrease as the class progresses (MEDS, 2021). For example, 48.9 percent of all primary school students, 49.5 percent of middle school students and 54.7 percent of high school students are girls (MEDS, 2021). Although enrollment in secondary schools is equal, the downward trend in the number of boys as the grade progresses may have an inverse effect on the equality of enrollment in higher

education. In Mongolia, the gender imbalance of university students is a bad gender indicator. The proportion of women who are studying for master's degrees is the highest among women in all levels of education (66.2 percent) while 55 percent of doctoral students and 60 percent of bachelor's students are women (MEDS, 2021). According to the 1963 census, the share of women in the population with higher education was 22.6 percent, but according to the 2020 census, it has increased to 61.1 percent (Data from NSO, 2021).

Previous data has shown that Mongolian women are more educated than men. Since women's education is higher, their salaries could also be higher than men's. It is expected of anyone that the salary will increase as the degree increases. However, the situation is not fair in Mongolian society – women have higher education but are paid less than men in Mongolia (NSO, 2020). Mongolian women's educational attainment is higher than in other parts of the world in Global Gender Gap Report, but it is not able to take advantage of this opportunity to actively participate in the labour market (Burn & Oidov, 2001). While women are more educated and retrained in their careers, men are more likely to be in leadership positions in the workplace and in politics (Burn & Oidov, 2001).

On the other hand, the average salary of women employees is 16.3 percent lower than that of men. In similar jobs, women are paid less than men, and gender-based wage gaps remain. For example, data from National Statistic Organization (NSO) (2020) has shown that women earn 22 percent less than men with the same level of education (NSO, 2020). In addition to employment and salary, women spend three times more than men on household works and caring for family members (Begzsuren & Magee, 2020). In the study of Begzsuren & Magee (2020), the majority of unpaid work is performed by women - 75.9%. They concluded that eliminating gender inequality in households and the workplace could increase Mongolian women's participation in the labour force to 63.2%, increasing GDP by 16.1% within 30 years (Begzsuren & Magee, 2020).

3.4. Women's political participation

According to the Global Gender Gap Report, Mongolia was ranked 101st in 2006, 124th in 2010, and 103rd in 2014. There is still a lack of women's representation in political

decision-making, particularly in parliament. After the democratization process, the 50-member *State Baga Khural* (Legislative sub-body of the government until 1992) elected from 430 deputies of the *People's Great Khural of Mongolia* (Legislative body of the government until 1992), had only two women members in 1990-1992. Subsequently, when the new Constitution of Mongolia was adopted and the transition to a parliamentary system took place, 293 candidates were nominated in the first parliamentary elections in 1992, of the 76 members elected, only four were women. Afterward, within last two decades, the National Gender Committee, NGOs, and international organizations have been working to change gender imbalance of women's participation in politics. As a result, the Law on Parliamentary Elections of Mongolia sets a minimum number of women (20.0 percent) to be nominated by parties and coalitions (Jamie Shabalina et al., 2019). In 2020, 13 women were elected to the *State Great Khural* (The current legislative body of the government), which is the same number as the previous election year of 2016, and the number of women candidates increased from 129 in 2016 to 151 in 2020, an increase of 18% (General Election Committee, 2020). Quantitatively, an increase from 4 seats to 13 seats seems to be an improvement, but the results of almost 30 years (from 1992 to 2020) show that it is small. When the government was formed after the election of 2020, 23% of the ministers were women (4 women), and only 1 female deputy minister (7% of deputy ministers) (NSO, 2021).

The situation is almost the same locally. The NSO's survey shows that the decision-making level, especially in the supreme legislative body and *aimag* (administrative division within the country) and capital city *Citizen's Representative Khural* (Local committee), is still below the quotas set out in the Gender Equality Law ("*10.1.1. representation of any gender among the appointed state political officials shall be not less than 15 percent in the government, aimag and the capital city, ..., 25 percent in soum...*") (Gender Equality Law, 2011). In the 2020 local elections, 18.9 percent of *aimag, soum*, the capital city, and district *Citizens' Representative Khurals*, 18.5 percent of presidium members, and 1 percent of chairpersons were elected are women (General Election Committee, 2020). Surprisingly, these figures are lower than in 2016 (based on data from Jamie Shabalina et al., 2019). However, there are no women who have served as *aimag* or capital city governor, and women only serve as deputy governor with a proportion of 19% in 2020 (NSO, 2021).

Legislated gender quotas are an effective way to increase the number of female representatives in governments (Berevoescu & Ballington, 2021). Even though the introduction of gender quotas in the election law has led to some progress in women's political participation, in practice, the minimum requirement or threshold of at least 20% is not a "threshold" for women politicians and candidates in political parties (Burn & Oidov, 2001). For instance, in the election years of 2012 and 2016, quotas were reduced before the election and restored after the election due to an insufficient number of women candidates (Jamie Shabalina et al., 2019). Some women politicians said that the reluctance of political parties to promote women's participation in politics has cast doubt on gender equality organizations and on women candidates (Burn & Oidov, 2001). The lessons of previous elections have shown that quotas can become symbolic if this provision is not implemented and the accountability mechanism is not clearly defined (Jamie Shabalina et al., 2019). Additionally, the quota system for women's representation was abandoned, and it turned out to be the highest possible ceiling, and political parties do not exceed this minimum requirement to nominate women members (Burn & Oidov, 2001). Based on this, the question may arise as to whether the quota system can play its primary role.

Women, who make up 51% of the population, hold only 17% of the seats in parliament (NSO, 2021). But the world average is over 25% (UN, 2021b). Studies referred to in the conceptual framework point out that many factors, such as the electoral system, gender insensitivity of political parties, and social stereotypes, hinder women's political leadership. In addition, women lack the time, resources, and financial resources to run for office. All over the world, women do most of the housework, such as babysitting, cooking, and cleaning, so they rarely get involved in politics (UN, 2021b). When asked why the number of women running for office was low, 75% of respondents to the International Republican Institute's (IRI) survey in Mongolia said that "women are overwhelmed with household chores and childcare" (IRI, 2021).

3.5. Historical background of societal mindsets of gender

Gender stereotypes and norms that are based on the characteristics of males and females, such as girls and women should have a responsibility to do the housework and

take care of their families, are widespread in Mongolian society, which is the same as around the world. In Mongolia's history and nomadic culture, individuals are expected to take on roles and duties based on their gender from birth. From childhood, Mongolian women are taught how to act and speak, and what she ought to wear and eat, all based on society's expectation of femininity (National Committee on Gender Equality, 2022). The social value placed on women's position in the family and motherhood among herder households was rooted in the character of nomadic pastoral-hunting societies (Burn & Oidov, 2001).

Gender stereotypes depend heavily on culture and history. In Mongolia, which has been transitioning to a democratic society for only 30 years, there are many traditions that are not friendly to human rights, especially for women. Mongolian words like "Even a bad man is better than a woman," and "A woman's hair is long, but her mind is short" are perfect witnesses to the historical mindset of gender and direct indication of the gender disparities in the past. This is mainly due to the patriarchal view of gender and nomadic lifestyle that women had no power to make decisions in the household, they had to be aware only of caring duties and needed to care for their beauty, not a mind. Moreover, words such as "Women and gazelles have no homeland" clearly indicate that women had no control in their life, which is due to the Mongolian old tradition of forced marriage – if a man chooses his wife, a woman is stolen by this man without knowing who he was. Although these old traditions have changed, the resulting expressions still limit women's ability to participate in society. These expressions are particularly strong in rural areas, where the common misconception that women are capable of handling small household chores and are good performers but incapable of making decisions still exists. These gender-insensitive expressions, which have long been used in Mongolian society, continue to hinder gender equality.

Traditional gender norms and stereotypes are large barriers to empowering women and gender equality in Mongolia. For example, in the Asian Barometer Survey (2018), 34% of Mongolians agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that "Women should not be involved in politics on an equal footing with men". This shows that the traditional gender norm is strong in the country. In another survey, stereotypes about the roles of men and women and social expectations reduce women's political participation (IRI,

2021). Due to cultural specificity, although Mongolian women are relatively independent, highly educated, and active participants in civil society, there is still a perception that traditional women should be more responsible for household chores and childcare (IRI, 2021). This perception creates certain expectations for women, and prevents them from pursuing political careers (IRI, 2021).

4. Discussion

Mongolia has taken several steps to ensure gender equality in its modern development, with some success in empowering girls and women, however, not yet close to achieving gender equality. Some of the success could be the higher education of Mongolian women. Women are more likely to be educated than men in Mongolia, and they make up 61 percent of the population with higher education (NSO, 2020). The idea that the more educated women are, the more competitive they will be in the workplace is mentioned earlier (Sundaram et al., 2014). Similarly, women's potential has not been completely realized in this, and they have been pushed down into the social hierarchy has been addressed before (Sundaram et al., 2014). An example of this is the fact that Mongolian women with higher education are not as competitive as men in the workplace and in politics. Their participation in the workplace is still unequal and politics is still very low, and their higher education does not determine their average salary. Women are paid less than men and work more in the household work without paying (Begzsuren & Magee, 2020; NSO, 2020).

After looking at the causes of gender inequality, the main reasons for these gender disparities in education, the labor market, and politics have crossed together at the same end – gender norms, stereotypes, and misconceptions in society hinder all forms of gender inequality (Cislighi & Heise, 2020). While the goal of empowering women educationally has been achieved, on the contrary, it seems to be starting to exclude boys from education. The reasons for Mongolian girls and women having a higher level of education than boys and men are often attributed to traditional thinking. This situation is exacerbated by the attitude of Mongolians that “boys will find a way somehow, but it will be difficult if girls not educated”. Furthermore, the traditional approach is focused on educating girls, resulting in a gender imbalance in higher education. This is a positive step forward in terms of empowering women; however, in terms of the gender

imbalance, this is a bad indicator. Besides, a suspicion arose that the attitudes of men with less education than women may have exacerbated gender norms and stereotypes. Problems caused by gender stereotypes may in turn create another gender stereotype. Therefore, treating boys and girls the same is the simplest step we can take against stereotypes. The more girls clean the house and take care of their younger siblings, and the more it seems normal for boys not to be educated, the greater the gender gap between them.

In addition, even though women have potential and are educated well, they are pushed down into the social hierarchy when they come to the workplace. There is a need to combat stereotypes in the workplace, such as avoiding important responsibilities for female employees and paying them less than male employees with similar responsibilities. The fact that women earn less than men and have less time to participate in social life may be the reason for their inability to increase political participation. It is important to refrain from underestimating or privileging men and women based on their gender (Stewart et al., 2021). Gender stereotypes in society seem to be a fundamental factor limiting women's political participation from the voter's side. The voters are more believed in that men should be in politics (Hu Fu Center for East Asia Democratic Studies, 2018). On the other hand, the biggest obstacles for women politicians are maintaining family responsibilities and work-life balance (IRI, 2021). The perception that women must do all the housework and take care of their children draws women away from political participation. The situation has returned to the cause that I addressed before, which is gender norms and stereotypes. It shows that the barriers to gender equality in all areas ultimately come together in one place again – gender norms and stereotypes.

As society has evolved, gender stereotypes have changed outward, but they have not lost their character. The role of gender, which should change with the development of society, is still the same as it was in the Stone Age. Humanity has lived in a chaotic society for centuries, but today we live in a civilized world. We are a new generation. Stereotypes and misconceptions, which are not clear when or who created them for what purpose, continue to affect our lives today (Heilman, 2012). In our daily lives, so-called “inherently so” or “traditional” expressions contain ideas that limit a person's

opportunities by gender and define their role. These misconceptions should be seen as remnants of a chaotic society, not a culture. It is important to call only the precious and important traditions as traditions. Therefore, we need to distinguish between the pros and cons of tradition and stereotypes among people in order to live in modern society and keep pace with the times. Taking these stereotypes seriously could bring many positive changes to our lives.

In sum, what can be changed by taking into consideration gender stereotypes and empowering women, especially in politics? The main reason for emphasizing gender equality in politics is that it contributes significantly to the development of a given country and development of the world (Mandal, 2013). Increasing women's political participation is the greatest opportunity for the country's development. Every country that develops good governance is working together to increase women's political and decision-making participation and to listen to their voices (Dollar et al., 2001). One of the implications of equal rights for political participation is that women's issues and interests are not included in the political agenda (Berevoescu & Ballington, 2021). Increasing women's political participation can reduce poverty, reduce violence, address outdated social issues, and create equal opportunities for children and women (Wängnerud, 2009). However, in order to give a realistic picture of women's participation in decision-making, it is important to train and develop the next generation of female leaders through reducing stereotypes and treating all genders fairly, rather than counting the few women at the highest political levels.

5. Conclusion

The level of education or women's educational empowerment is not directly linked to the equal participation of men and women in the labor force and politics in Mongolia. Although girls are better educated than boys, women are less valued in the workplace and decision-making than men. Women's educational empowerment, a key tool for women's employment and political participation, is not working in Mongolia. The main reason for this is that there is strong gender-specific perceptions of the roles and rights of men and women in political, economic, social, cultural, and family relations in the country (Burn & Oidov, 2001). Unequal participation, due to the perception that women

should look after their children and take care of the household, while men are more likely to be in leadership positions and in politics, is hindering gender inequality in general. However, the equal participation of women and men is needed to address the country's gender inequality.

Equal political participation of women can systematically contribute to gender equality. The main point of equal participation in politics is women are needed in equal numbers as men in making gender-responsive laws, policies, and budgets to build a better society that treats men and women equally (Lawless, 2015; Wängnerud, 2009). Without enough numbers of women in decision-making, half of the population is at risk of being left out of the development process (Burn & Oidov, 2001; UN, 2015). Even though women continue to keep pace with global development and create their own space in new areas of society, their participation in politics is needed in the development and evaluation of social, political, and economic policies and programs. This would help to ensure that men and women are equally participating in development, have equal access to social resources and that “no one left behind”.

The thesis concludes that gender inequality, such as women's participation in the labor market, politics, and unequal opportunities in all areas of society, is primarily due to gender norms and stereotypes in a given society. Although much progress has been made in promoting gender equality in Mongolia over the past decades, gender norms and stereotypes that discriminate between men and women are still worsening gender inequality. It continues to limit women's participation and opportunities in politics and exacerbates gender inequality in this area. Thus, taking stereotypes into account in decision-making can help reduce gender inequality in other areas of society as well. Focusing on women's empowerment alone may not be enough to increase women's participation, and it may be necessary to consider how much it is influenced by gender norms and stereotypes.

6. References

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