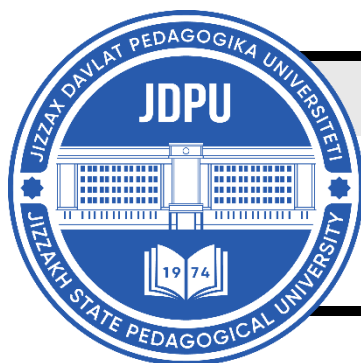


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METHODOLOGICAL JOURNAL<http://mentaljournal-jspu.uz/index.php/mesmj/index>THE ROLE OF THE WORLD WARS OF THE 20TH CENTURY
IN CHANGING GENDER STEREOTYPES IN LABOR ACTIVITY IN LEADING
COUNTRIES OF THE WORLD**Fania Avzalovna Akhmedshina***Doctor of Historical Sciences, Professor**Jizzakh state Pedagogical Unievrsity**E - mail : akhmedshina@mail.ru**Jizzakh, Uzbekistan*

ABOUT ARTICLE

Key words: gender stereotypes, labor activity, world wars, female employment, social change.**Received:** 10.06.25**Accepted:** 12.06.25**Published:** 14.06.25**Abstract:** The world wars of the 20th century became the most important catalysts for changes in gender stereotypes, especially in the context of labor activity. The relevance of the study lies in the need for a comprehensive analysis of women's contribution to maintaining the home front and helping the front during the war, as well as in understanding how these changes affected the social roles and perceptions of women in society. The massive involvement of women in production and military spheres demonstrated their ability to cope with tasks traditionally considered "male", which contributed to the rethinking of gender roles in the labor market. The article examines key aspects of the impact of the world wars on gender stereotypes, including women's participation in labor activity, as well as changes in their political rights and social status. Both positive and negative consequences of these changes are considered, including a return to traditional gender roles in the post-war years

and their impact on modern society. The purpose of the article is to examine the impact of world wars on the transformation of gender stereotypes and the perception of gender roles, to identify the main factors that contributed to these changes, and to analyze their long-term consequences.

Introduction: The relevance of this study is determined by the need to understand how the world wars changed gender roles and stereotypes in the world of work. During the First and Second World Wars, women played a decisive role in supporting the home front and helping the front, which became an important step in changing the public perception of them as workers, patriots and public figures. Researching the historical contribution of women to these events allows us to understand their irreplaceable role in the conditions of war and to identify long-term trends that continue to influence changes in gender stereotypes and social expectations in modern society.

The research methodology is based on a comprehensive approach that includes methods of historical analysis, objectivity and comparative historical research. The use of the problem-chronological method allows us to identify key stages of changes in women's participation in labor activity during the war, while the comparative historical approach makes it possible to analyze women's participation in different countries, identifying general trends and regional characteristics.

Analysis and results of the study.

The First World War (1914–1918) affected vast territories and more than 65 million people from 30 countries. The war claimed the lives of more than 15 million people, and another 20 million were wounded. The Entente countries lost 6 million soldiers and officers, while their opponents lost 4 million. The horrific losses were aggravated by the Spanish flu epidemic, which claimed the lives of another 5 million people, which amounted to a third of all those killed [12]. The Second World War (1939–1945) was the largest military conflict in human history, involving 61 countries, covering more than 80% of the world's population (1.7 billion people). Military action was conducted on the territories of 40 countries and in the

waters of all oceans. It lasted 6 years and affected 110 million military personnel. According to various sources, from 55 to 80 million people died in it [5] .

Both world wars were catalysts for significant social changes, including the mobilization of women's labor, which was made necessary by the mass mobilization of men and labor shortages. This significantly altered the structure of employment.

Before the First World War, women's role in society was limited to the home, and gender stereotypes rigidly defined the traditional roles of men as breadwinners and protectors, and women as keepers of the hearth. However, labor shortages during the war required the inclusion of women in the workforce, which contributed to a change in the public perception of their role. During the First World War, women began to perform tasks that were previously considered exclusively male, working in factories, in transportation, in medical institutions, and in agriculture. Experts studying this period emphasize that this time saw a significant change in gender roles, norms, and stereotypes, as well as in traditional ideas about masculinity and femininity. As Russian researcher O.V. Bolshakova notes in her article "Problems and Prospects of the Gender History of the First World War": "everyone knows that war is a man's business. Men start wars, make battle plans, fight, and finally make peace, while women stay at home, providing for the rear. This state of affairs had been accepted for centuries as "correct" and was a gender norm. World War I violated this unspoken norm." "Women left home to replace their husbands who had gone to the front in manufacturing and agriculture, to become nurses and even to participate in military operations. They thus became the breadwinners of their families and the protectors of their children, which gave them an important role in society and allowed them to "become visible" to the state" [3]. Between 1914 and 1917, the proportion of women working in industrial enterprises in Russia increased from 26.6% to 43.2% [2]. In her book *They Fought for Their Country: Russian Women Soldiers in World War I and Revolution* (2022), American researcher Laurie Stoff examines in detail the role of women during the tragic and dynamic period of Russian history - during the First World War and the Civil War. She notes that "by 1917, the number of women soldiers probably exceeded six thousand, which was an unprecedented phenomenon. Russia became the first country in modern military history where women began to systematically join military units formed on a gender basis" [8]. Thus, in May 1917, the Women's Battalion was created, the idea of which belonged to a front-line soldier, To

the Knight of St. George M. Bochkareva. In the south of Russia, the Black Sea Military Union of Women was created. The Women's Military-Patriotic Union also launched an active effort to form women's battalions. From August 1 to 5, 1917, the All-Russian Women's Military Congress was held in Petrograd. It was attended by representatives of women's military organizations and military units from Moscow, Kyiv, Saratov and other cities [22]. Stoff emphasizes: "Although the service of women soldiers ran counter to traditional gender notions, thereby threatening the traditional gender system, they were often praised for their patriotism and self-sacrifice. But they also had opponents. Many criticized women soldiers, seeing their actions as a threat to the social order. Such reactions are no less important for understanding the phenomenon of women soldiers" [8]. Women in the Russian army were an absolute minority, and the main efforts of Russian women to provide assistance to the front were concentrated in the rear: in activities to collect donations, work in hospitals, providing assistance to the families of conscripts and refugees.

The First World War of 1914-1918 intensified the processes of women's emancipation, opening up opportunities for women to demonstrate initiative and independence during this crisis period of Russian history [22]. Emphasizing the temporary nature of the existence of women's combat units during the First World War, Stoff interprets them as a reaction to the crisis, with the end of which traditional male and female roles again came to the fore [8].

Women in Great Britain, the United States and other countries took the place of men in areas where they had not been employed before the war: in industry, in the production of weapons, in transport and even in the civil service. As a result, during the period 1914-1918 in Great Britain the number of women employed in construction work increased by 320.2%, in the chemical industry - by 158.9%, in the metallurgical industry - by 249.2%. In particular, in metallurgy, the number of women increased to almost 600,000 people. One of the most difficult and dangerous jobs was in the military industry. As of September 1916, the number of women working in the military industry was 300-400 thousand. In addition to working in military factories, women also worked as conductors and drivers of public transport, in the postal service, the police, etc. Providing the country with food also fell on the shoulders of women [17]. In 1914, there were 3.3 million women working in Britain, and by the end of the war in 1917,

this number had risen to 4.7 million.[7] 80,000 women served in all three branches of the armed forces (army, navy, air force), in units such as the Women's Royal Air Service.[13]

With the outbreak of war, American women went to Europe as volunteers, helping orphans, driving ambulances, and distributing essential supplies. Nearly 24,000 nurses joined the Red Cross, 21,480 joined the Army Nursing Service. The US Navy was the first to recruit women, accepting 11,000 women. Women also replaced men in manufacturing, agriculture, and many other industries [11]. By the end of World War I, the US Army consisted of 4 million men, many of whom left their jobs to go to the front. Women took over these positions, allowing them to earn money on their own and allowing businesses to continue operating. For example, before the war, 98% of railroad workers were men, with the remaining 2% of women providing support for their work, such as cleaning or feeding. With the outbreak of hostilities in Europe, women on the railroad became much more visible. They filled every conceivable position, from guards to machinists.[7] By the end of the war, women made up about 20% of the U.S. manufacturing workforce.[11] More than 21,000 nurses served in the Army and 1,400 in the Navy, and more than 13,000 women were enlisted in the active military with the same ranks, duties, and pay as men. In total, more than 30,000 women served in the U.S. Army, mostly as nurses, in the Signal Corps, and as sailors and Marines.[13]

French researchers pay attention to the study of the problem of women's participation in military actions. In 1986, the monograph "Women during the war of 1914" was published (republished in 1994, 2005 and 2013), which for the first time raised questions about gender representations during the First World War and became the basis for many modern studies on this topic. The study examines the problems of women's participation in military actions: as nurses, spies, participants in the resistance movement in the occupied territories, war journalists and the specifics of women's work in production. Women are recognized as full-fledged participants in the Great War, without whom victory would not have been possible and who remained in the shadow of scientific attention for a long time [6].

One of the features of the Second World War was the mass integration of women into the economy and support of the home front. Thus, in Great Britain, 46% of women were recruited to work in military enterprises. The problem of female labor became especially urgent after the conscription of all men for military service [20]. By the end of 1939, 40 thousand girls

were members of the Women's Auxiliary Service alone. In total, about 100 thousand people participated in the Women's Auxiliary Naval Service during the Second World War. Englishwomen from 18 to 50 years old, who were members of these organizations, performed non-combat tasks: aerial surveillance and warning, control of barrage balloons, work as mechanics, service at airfields and in fire departments, medical care, care for the wounded and victims of German bombing, courier, postal and clerical duties [19]. In December 1941 Unmarried women between the ages of 19 and 30 were compulsorily mobilized for military service. Women were called up to work in industrial workshops, in the so-called Land Army for work in agriculture, in fire brigades, hospitals, in auxiliary military units, etc. During the Blitz - a period of intensive bombing of London and other cities in 1940-1941 - women worked in teams clearing rubble, in ambulances, in hospitals [16]. In 1943, women made up 1/3 of all workers in the military industry in Great Britain [9]. The peak came in September 1943, when more than 7.7 million women were involved in industry (not counting voluntary formations) [20]. By the end of the war, more than 74,000 British women served in anti-aircraft units. Voluntary women's service during World War II helped to eliminate the consequences of Luftwaffe raids, overcome disruptions in transport and supplies, and about 90 thousand women volunteers worked on farms. Their important and responsible work inspired admiration even among the most stubborn opponents. Thus, US Army General D. Eisenhower wrote: "Before my visit to London, I was against the recruitment of women into military service. But what I saw in Great Britain from all sides made a colossal impression on me, including air defense" [19].

Between 1940 and 1945, the number of women in the US economy increased by 56%. And in industries serving military needs, the number of women increased fivefold between 1940 and 1944. For example, before the war, women made up only 1% of the aviation industry; by 1944, they accounted for more than a third of workers. By the end of 1945, almost one in four married women worked outside the home. Women took up traditionally "male" professions – they became drivers, construction workers, and steelworkers [7]. The US Army became the first to accept women into service, creating the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps (WAAC) in May 1942. More than 150,000 women served in its ranks during the war. Thousands of them were sent to the European and Pacific fronts. Women flew B-26 and B-29 bombers and

other heavy aircraft between factories and military bases across the country, testing new and repaired aircraft, and towing targets in the air and on the ground for marksmen to practice shooting with live ammunition.[15]

During the Second World War in the USSR, women in the rear occupied important positions in the main sectors of the national economy. By the end of 1942, women made up from 1/3 to 60% of workers in key sectors of the defense industry [1] . From 1940 to 1943, the proportion of women among workers and employees of the USSR industry increased from 41.0 to 53.0%, and young people under 25 years old - from 30.0 to 60.0%. In a number of industries (aircraft, ammunition, mortar weapons, medium engineering, etc.), young men and women by 1943 exceeded half of the contingent of workers. From 1941 to 1945, 16.7 million people were drawn into the working class through the industrial training system. More than 80% of them were women and young people who did not have industrial specialties before the war. From the beginning of 1941 to the end of 1942, the proportion of women among stokers in the USSR increased from 6 to 27%, turners from 16 to 33%, welders from 17 to 31%, molders from 29 to 39%, blacksmiths and stampers from 11 to 50%, and loaders from 17 to 40% [14]. By 1945, the proportion of women's labor among blue-collar and white-collar workers increased to 56% [1]. Women's participation in agriculture was even more noticeable. By the middle of the war, women made up 62.5% of the tractor drivers trained in the country, and 47% of the combine operators. In total, about one and a half million machine operators were trained from among young people during the war. The total number of young men and women among machine operators reached 70% [18].

The Soviet Army was the first to include women's combat units on a regular basis. In total, about 800,000 women took part in combat operations on the side of the USSR, which was approximately 8% of the total number of personnel in the Red Army [10] . Women also worked in military medical institutions: as nannies, orderlies, medical instructors, nurses and doctors. The increased role of women in various sectors of labor activity became an important factor in the effective functioning of the military economy and largely determined further gender relations in the post-war period, when women could no longer be "returned" to their usual spheres.

The role of the world wars of the 20th century in transforming gender stereotypes associated with work in leading countries is an important aspect in the analysis of social change. The First and Second World Wars became catalysts for significant shifts in the role of women in the labor market, destroying many established ideas about "male" and "female" professions.

During the war, the need for labor led to the mass recruitment of women into manufacturing and other industries previously considered exclusively male, which radically changed the public perception of their labor potential. This became the basis for the gradual destruction of stereotypes that had consolidated women in the role of housewives and mothers. However, after the wars ended, many women were forced to return to traditional roles, which highlights the complexity and contradictions of the change process. At the same time, the era of world wars demonstrated that women were capable of working successfully in various fields, which became an important step in the fight for gender equality in the labor market.

Conclusions.

The history of the two world wars of the 20th century highlights the importance of the active participation of not only men but also women in military operations and in new labor markets, which led to significant changes in social and gender roles. The world wars played a decisive role in the transformation of gender stereotypes and norms in the world of work, demonstrating the ability of women to cope with complex and responsible tasks that were previously considered exclusively for men. These changes affected not only the period of military operations, but also continued to influence post-war society, leading to significant shifts in the perception of women's roles in the economy and the labor sphere. However, in the post-war period, a certain rollback is observed. Heavy losses, demographic crisis and the need to rebuild the population contributed to the introduction of pronatal policies that limit women's reproductive rights and return them to traditional roles as housewives.

Despite this setback, women's participation in warfare and new labor markets contributed to their growing self-awareness and changed public perceptions of their role in society. These changes laid the foundation for subsequent struggles for equality in the spheres of work, education, and political activity. Women gradually began to gain access to new professions, breaking down centuries-old gender barriers. Unlike after World War I, after World War II women did not return to the traditional role of housewife, and a number of

countries passed laws aimed at improving their position in society and the labour market. The women's movements of the 1960s and 1970s, building on the achievements of the war years, continued the fight for equal rights, demanding the elimination of discrimination based on gender. These efforts led to legislative changes aimed at eliminating gender discrimination and opening up opportunities for women in professions previously considered exclusively "male".

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