

Obstacles Based on VUCA World Characteristics on the Path to Gender Equality

Zishan Gong

Guangdong Country Garden School, Guangzhou, 510000, China

Abstract:

The world today is experiencing fast and radical changes in geopolitical structure and technology with the VUCA environment. These changes generate inequality in access to resources and chances for social advancement. Therefore, new problems for further development of gender equality are emerging.

Keywords: VUCA World; Gender Equality; Economic Security; Complexity in Policy

1. Introduction

The concept of uncertainty in a VUCA world relates to the inability to use past and projected data to predict the future. For instance, crises such as wars and deadly diseases bring about uncertainties that disrupt the continuity of support services for women. Legal frameworks, regulations, and organizations that support gender equality can quickly stagnate or change. The closure or redirection of educational facilities, healthcare facilities, and centers of community life can affect the progress of programs intended to improve the welfare of women and girls.

In crises, it is typical to observe the process of transferring resources to meet new challenges, which may lead to the termination of gender equality programs. This change in funding impacts local NGOs and grassroots organizations in terms of funding because, due to mobility restrictions, they are unable to provide services. Therefore, the safety net for many women is less effective.

The stress arising from conditions of uncertainty can intensify social antagonisms and intergroup strife, which in turn contributes to heightened violence and oppression of women. When some groups experience unemployment or low wages due to economic challenges, they may become hostile towards other groups, increasing social tensions. Women are significantly affected by gender-based violence and inequality, and when the economic situation is weak, women are at a higher risk of being violated. In addition, women must face additional financial pressure and family care in the household, which can lead to the risk of domestic violence and oppression.^[1] For instance, during the Bosnian War, rape and sexual assault were deliberately employed to destabilize and terrorize communities as weapons of war. The war led to increased economic pres-

sure that compelled women to work to survive or offer sexual services to men. During the COVID-19 pandemic, women were at 1.23 times the risk of reporting an increase in gender-based violence. It affects both the public and private domains, with a recent UN Women study revealing that nearly half of the surveyed women experienced violence during the pandemic.

The significance of uncertainty underlines the need to provide more attention and safety to women during crises. New preventive measures to help women better manage uncertainty stress are also necessary.

2. Women's Fragile Job Stability and Economic Security in Volatile Times

In a VUCA world, 'volatility' entails rapid and unpredictable shifts that may challenge existing structures and processes. Volatility in the economy, enhanced political uncertainty, and technological changes make it difficult to predict future events, thus limiting people's ability to prepare for the future. This volatility makes it difficult to establish gender equality.

2.1 Restrictions on employment opportunities for women

Stereotypes concerning family responsibilities limit women's employment opportunities to part-time, marginal, and low-skill positions. These jobs, as opposed to those more commonly associated with men, are susceptible to economic changes since the positions offer low wages and high risks of unemployment, including when women can balance work and family. Hence, women suffer most during economic doldrums as they are the first to be laid off when the economy is down. In different industries, women are often placed in worse jobs and receive lower

pay than men. For instance, in sectors such as services and retail, women form a large part of the workforce. They are more likely to be employed on contracts or part-time basis, thus making them more vulnerable to economic shocks as these sectors tend to shed their casual, part-time, and women employees first during adverse economic conditions. Furthermore, women are often responsible for taking care of the family, which means that they are more vulnerable to family-related problems. Turbulence in family life during crises only adds to women's issues in their work and family life.^[2]

2.2 The impact of gender pay inequality on women's welfare

Women may be active in the workforce, but they are likely to save less for themselves, given that more men are the sole breadwinners in higher-paying positions. This is compounded by gender pay inequality, which hurts women because they receive fewer pension benefits as compared to their male counterparts, thus limiting their financial stability during economic shocks. It can also lead to marital breakdown, undermining the economic stability that stable families have been known to offer. Women are not usually involved in the management of family finances and have minimal control over the family's assets, making them prone to suffering in the event of a divorce since they are not equipped with financial support. Lack of economic independence for women may expose them to domestic violence, limit their autonomy and ability to chart their lives and careers, and they may be compelled to return to unhealthy family situations. These circumstances not only have adverse effects on women's health but also reduce their power and leadership in families and societies. Also, being financially dependent on a spouse exposes women to domination and subjugation that limits their ability to exercise self-determination in decision-making concerning their lives and future.^[3]

Women are in a worse situation during periods of high volatility because they are more likely to be employed in precarious jobs, have lower savings, and do not participate in financial decision-making as much as men. It is crucial to increase women's coping capacity by providing them with more opportunities for development through economic support, protection at work, and legal aid.

3. The impact of complexity in policy and other decisions on women's rights

Complexity is a concept that refers to a system that is fragmented, diffuse, and composed of many factors that are not easily separable and interdependent in ways that are not always clear. This results in a tightly coupled component that offers high levels of complexity implemen-

tation, which is why obtaining effective management is subtle and sensitive. The strategies and the actions that are made to handle VUCA end up engaging negative impacts that not only magnify the gap between men and women but also trigger further issues.

With the legislation of abortion laws, even if they were aimed at some moral and demographical goals in the United States, several harmful effects on women are observed. These laws also continue to undermine women's control over their bodies, therefore confining them in making decisions on their bodies and health-virtually over issues resulting in high mental problems. Unintended pregnancies can lead to women losing their employment due to financial pressures, which widen wage differential and perpetuate inequalities. Such legislation contributes to the development of a culture that negates women's constitutional rights and personal freedoms, reinforces gender norms and expectations, and obstructs the progress of women's rights in society. Pregnancy is one of the most common states that can be encountered by women, which may affect the psychological or even physical aspect of a woman's body negatively. For example, a woman who is pregnant will have mood swings, anxiety, and restlessness resulting from the physical and hormonal changes that occur in her body. These are the psychological stressors that can intensify the family and social pressure that may force women into undesirable relationships. It results in unhealthy relationships, stress, and conflict of interest between family members. Also, women may have a burden of gender stereotyping by their families and community, which enhances their psychological pressure. Sometimes, women may be compelled to seek risky and clandestine abortions since legal abortion services may be limited or available only in specific ways. This, in turn, not only affects the health of the concerned person but also leads to psychological harassment and social isolation of the person. However, there are situations where a woman can become a single parent, and this means that she must take care of the child alone without any help from the child's father and face financial challenges. These barriers lead to many risks and challenges that affect their future as well as the well-being of their children.^[4]

One such example is the changes that China made to its family planning policies in the recent past. For instance, China has had legal measures that regulate family size, and these measures have resulted in high cases of gender-based abortions due to the preference of the male child in the Chinese culture. Furthermore, the uneven share of care work connected with contraception and abortion has also been placed on women's shoulders. New policies supporting the new childbearing policies have revived the expectations of women to be the primary caregivers of the

children. This could result in women being more economically dependent on males and the reinforcement of traditional gender roles.

When such policies are formulated, they need to account for the complex interconnected structure of social systems and the negative impacts that vulnerable populations may suffer. This means that one policy can only be implemented without affecting other policies because the social systems, which are the various policy domains, are interconnected. Applying parochial and limited policy approaches with less appreciation of the interconnectedness of policies may result in policies that specially exclude, ignore, or even oppress certain vulnerable groups during the implementation of the policies. Those groups of people who are poor or have fewer resources to cope with policy changes are significantly affected. The lack of understanding of these policymakers of the unique needs and difficulties of these social groups makes them vulnerable to unfavorable policy impacts that may further enhance their marginalization. Thus, a coherent and comprehensive policy approach to social systems is necessary to achieve fairness, participation, and development. Hence, gender analysis is essential in all policy-making processes.^[5]

4. It is hazardous for women to find opportunities for better self-development without information.

The concept of ambiguity refers to the problem people face when perceiving reality. This element of the decision-making process involves recognizing the situation and the measures that must be taken to tackle problems. Some population groups may face restrictions in obtaining necessary information to help them progress during uncertainty. The concealed opportunities and information due to unfamiliarity prevent individuals from conquering challenges and recognizing the right path for self-improvement.

The limited participation of women in fields associated with cutting-edge technological and policy advancements, such as finance, artificial intelligence, and medicine, has a profound impact on their exposure to the latest social developments. The lack of women in leadership positions is one of the reasons that women face information biases in the workplace. This limited women's participation in decision-making by denying them information that is crucial in the decision-making processes. Furthermore, women are likely to face gender stereotyping and biases that undermine their contributions and productivity, thus denying them leadership positions. Therefore, these factors add to the information barriers that women face. It is also true that traditional gender roles and stereotyping also play a

significant role in maintaining such information barriers. Due to gender socialization, women are usually supposed to attend to other people's needs and not be involved in activities that include acquiring information or leadership positions, which are crucial in decision-making. Moreover, women on the job face informational constraints, which provide them with important information required in their careers. It is only portrayed in public life as submissive and caring like women, as has been the tradition. Failure to meet these expectations and an act of confidence accompanied by assertiveness leads to aggression and resistance from other people, as women are portrayed to be subordinates and supporters of the opposite gender. Therefore, women appear bossy, and this is worse if they are aggressive, thereby fueling the unsustainable tradition of emasculating women. This position of feminism forbids women in the employment sector and restricts their pull energy for advancement. Hence, women continue to encounter challenges in receiving information that is core to their operation and ability to adapt to new workplace environments.

The following are negative impacts of gender stereotyping in education: This gender stereotyping in education leads to the female gender acquiring mastery of mathematics and science. *Stéréotypes peuvent donc affecter les choix et les intérêts des femmes, puisque les rôles assignés aux femmes dans la société, ainsi que les préjugés à leur égard, font en sorte que les domaines scientifiques et mathématiques ne sont pas perçus comme appropriés pour elles.* This perceived mismatch leads women to seek other fields like language, literature, and art, among other related courses; hence, they do not get the chance to build on their knowledge and expertise in mathematics and science-related fields. This selective approach is reasonably detrimental to women in terms of promotion. It can stifle women's progress and growth, thereby leading to poor skills of women as compared to their male counterparts. The above-stated factors might also demoralize women and lower their self-confidence and self-esteem. Stereotypes can raise questions and doubts about women or their capability, competency, and efficacy in matters such as math and science and even their abilities. This feeling of incompetence may keep women from ever even trying new tasks and acquiring new skills and knowledge, which, in turn, stalls their growth and accomplishments. Also, the perception process may affect the environment within which women learn and the resources that they are given. This is because sexist stereotype limits girls from attaining the proper education and or material in mathematics and science, not because their brains cannot do it, but because teachers and parents think that girls are not capable in those areas. Hence, there is another reason that

women are not likely to be endowed with adequate skills and knowledge in mathematics and science as compared to men. ^[6]

5. Summary

In the VUCA world, which might amplify social injustice, the need to improve protective and risk factors and protect vulnerable individuals is paramount. Gender concerns must be considered when formulating policies on economic independence, education, and women's participation in technology and policymaking.

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