

FAMILY LEGAL RELATIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF GENDER EQUALITY: LEGAL PROTECTION OF WOMEN AND MEN

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Abstract

Gender equality in family legal relations remains a critically important topic in contemporary legal discourse, as traditional patriarchal models continue to influence judicial practice and social norms, despite legislative progress. In Ukraine and other countries, systemic issues persist: discrimination in child custody cases, unequal distribution of marital property, and insufficient effectiveness of domestic violence protection mechanisms. Research reveals a significant gap between formal equality guarantees and their practical implementation, exacerbated by socio-cultural stereotypes and institutional biases. The study is particularly relevant due to Ukraine's European integration processes and the need to harmonize national legislation with European standards. The article aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of family legal relations with a gender perspective, particularly in marriage, divorce, parenthood, custody, and property relations. The study seeks to identify systemic inequalities in the protection of women's and men's rights, assess the effectiveness of existing legal mechanisms, and develop recommendations for legislative improvement. An important aspect is the analysis of international experience (e.g., Sweden's parental leave system, Estonia's joint custody model, German family courts) to adapt best practices in Ukraine. The study employs a combination of methods: legal analysis of Ukrainian and international legislation (Constitution of Ukraine, Family Code, CEDAW, Istanbul Convention). Comparative legal method to assess EU approaches (Poland, Estonia, Germany, Sweden, Italy). Sociological analysis of statistical data (domestic violence rates, custody case rulings) and social survey results. Systematic and formal-logical methods to interpret legal norms in a socio-cultural context and identify contradictions. Inequality in law enforcement: despite legislative equality guarantees, 68% of real estate is registered under men's names, and in 70% of custody cases, courts award children to mothers. Judicial stereotypes: Only 15% of custody rulings favor fathers, reflecting conservative judicial approaches. Combating domestic violence: Only 8% of domestic violence cases result in convictions, and protective orders are often unenforced. International experience: Sweden (96% of men take parental leave), Estonia (electronic monitoring for aggressors), and Germany (joint custody) offer effective models for Ukraine. The impact of gender quotas in the judiciary on family dispute resolution. Economic incentives for shared parenting (tax benefits, subsidies). Educational programs on gender equality to counter stereotypes. Comparative analysis of post-Soviet countries' family law practices. The study demonstrates the need for systemic changes combining legislative reforms, improved law enforcement, and social awareness to achieve genuine gender equality in family relations.

Keywords: family legal relations; gender equality; discrimination; legal protection; family

1. Introduction

Family legal relations have always been an important subject of scientific research, as the family is the primary social institution that forms the foundation of society. In modern conditions, the issue of gender equality in family law is of particular importance, as traditional patriarchal models of family relations are gradually giving way to new approaches based on the principles of equality between women and men. However, despite significant progress in legislative guarantees of gender equality, both in Ukrainian and foreign legal contexts, problems persist, including gender-based discrimination, unequal distribution of family responsibilities, and insufficient mechanisms for protecting the rights of both genders. The relevance of this study lies in the need to analyze the current state of legal regulation of family relations with regard to the gender aspect, identify gaps in legislation, and develop recommendations for its improvement. The purpose of this article is to provide a comprehensive analysis of family relations in the context of gender equality, particularly examining the legal protection of women and men in matters of marriage, divorce, parenthood, custody, and property relations.

The issue of gender equality in family relations has been explored by scholars in various aspects. For example, in the works of O.M. Ponomarenko (2024) the problem of gender inequality in child custody after divorce is examined, where the author argues that judicial practice often favors mothers, which contradicts the principle of equal parental rights. A.V. Bogdanets, (2024) in their research, focuses on the property aspects of marital agreements, pointing out that women in Ukraine are more likely to find themselves in vulnerable positions due to insufficient awareness of their rights.

In the international context, G. Sobko (Sobko et al., 2024) analyzes the impact of the European Convention on Human Rights on the national legislation of EU countries regarding gender equality in family relations. The researcher concludes that while the legal framework is quite progressive, the practical implementation of these principles is complicated by socio-cultural stereotypes. M. Melnyk (Melnyk et al., 2023) explores the issue of domestic violence and the effectiveness of legal mechanisms for protecting women, emphasizing the need for stronger preventive measures.

The aim of this article is to examine the current state of legal regulation of family relations with regard to the gender aspect, as well as to identify ways to improve legislation to ensure equal rights for women and men. To achieve this goal, the following tasks must be addressed:

- analyze the legislative framework of Ukraine and international instruments on gender equality in family relations;
- examine judicial practice in cases related to gender discrimination in the family;
- identify key issues in ensuring equal rights for women and men in matters of marriage, parenthood, custody, and property relations;
- propose ways to enhance the effectiveness of legislative mechanisms for protecting gender equality in family relations.

The article employs a range of scientific methods, including:

- normative legal analysis – to study legislative acts regulating family relations;
- comparative legal method – to analyze international experience in gender equality;
- sociological method – to assess public opinion and practical aspects of the realization of women's and men's rights.

This study will help identify gaps in the legal protection of women and men in family relations and propose ways to improve legislative mechanisms. The results of the research may be used for further academic studies, as well as for refining family law

norms in line with the principles of gender equality.

2. Literature Review

Family legal relations in the context of gender equality are the subject of research by many scholars who analyze legislative guarantees of equality, socio-cultural factors of influence, and practical problems in the realization of the rights of women and men in family law. The research by T. Syroid (2023) (Kaganovska, & Syroid, 2023) is dedicated to the analysis of international gender equality standards, particularly the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The author argues that Ukrainian family legislation complies with international norms; however, in practice, contradictions persist due to traditional stereotypes regarding the roles of men and women in the family. I. Kovalchuk (2024) focuses on constitutional guarantees of equality (Article 24 of the Constitution of Ukraine (1996) and their impact on family legal relations. The researcher notes that formal equality does not always ensure real protection of rights, especially in matters of child custody after divorce, where preference is often given to the mother. A. Bohdanets (2024) explores the problems of protecting women from domestic violence, particularly in the context of the Law of Ukraine «On Prevention and Combating Domestic Violence» (Law of Ukraine No. 2229-VIII..., 2018). The author emphasizes that despite progressive norms, the effectiveness of protection mechanisms remains low due to women's insufficient awareness of their rights and the inefficiency of law enforcement. Y. Hrytsenko (2024) analyzes gender aspects of spouses' property rights, pointing out that women often find themselves in a vulnerable position due to unregistered joint ownership. The researcher proposes changing the approach to property division after divorce by taking into account women's contributions to household management and child-rearing.

D. Lysenko (2024) explores discriminatory aspects in the exercise of fathers' parental rights. The researcher notes that judicial practice often automatically grants custody of children to mothers, even in the absence of objective reasons to restrict the father's parental rights. L.R. Nalyvaiko and L.V. Martseniuk (2022) analyzes issues related to alimony obligations, particularly the excessive financial demands placed on men after divorce. The author emphasizes the need for a more flexible approach to calculating alimony, taking into account the financial circumstances of both parents. G. Sobko (Sobko et al., 2024), examines the influence of traditional stereotypes on legal practice in her scholarly works. She argues that judges and child welfare authorities often rely on patriarchal notions, which undermines gender equality. V. Sydorenko (2024) analyzes the role of civil society organizations in promoting gender equality, particularly their impact on legislative reforms.

Analysis of scholarly sources indicates that while Ukrainian legislation formally ensures gender equality in family legal relations, significant practical issues persist due to sociocultural stereotypes, ineffective protection mechanisms, and an imbalance in the realization of rights between women and men. Further research should focus on identifying ways to strengthen legal protections for both genders in family law.

3. Materials and Methods

The article examines family legal relations in the context of gender equality, aiming to identify contemporary issues in the legal protection of women and men and to substantiate ways to address them. To achieve this goal, a set of scientific methods was employed, enabling a comprehensive analysis of the legal framework and sociological data. The research is based on the following key materials:

Regulatory and legal acts:

- Constitution of Ukraine (articles 24, 51, 52);
- Family Code of Ukraine;
- Civil Code of Ukraine;

- Law of Ukraine «On Prevention and Combating Domestic Violence»;
- International instruments (CEDAW, Istanbul Convention).

Scientific publications:

- monographs and articles on gender equality in family law;
- sociological survey data on societal attitudes toward the roles of men and women in the family.

Sociological data:

- official statistics from the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine on domestic violence;
- survey results from civil society organizations («La Strada-Ukraine»).

To ensure scientific objectivity and a comprehensive analysis, the following methods were used:

General scientific methods:

- systemic analysis allowed for the examination of family legal relations as a complex system encompassing legal, social, and cultural aspects;
- formal-logical method was applied to interpret legal norms and identify contradictions in legislation;
- comparative legal method enabled a comparison of Ukrainian legislation with international gender equality standards.

Special legal methods:

- normative legal analysis – examining legislative acts for compliance with gender equality principles;
- legal hermeneutics – interpreting legal norms considering sociocultural context.

The research was conducted in several stages:

- theoretical-methodological stage (defining the purpose, objectives, and justifying the methods);
- legislative analysis (studying Ukrainian laws and regulations);
- synthesis of results (formulating conclusions and proposals for legislative improvements).

The comprehensive approach combined legal analysis with sociological data, ensuring more objective results.

The applied methods allowed for an in-depth exploration of gender equality issues in family legal relations and the proposal of solutions. The most effective approaches proved to be the combination of normative legal analysis and sociological research, which provided a deeper understanding of the problem.

3. Results and Discussion

Gender equality in family law is one of the key principles of modern democratic society. It entails equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities for women and men in marital, parental, and property relations. Despite progress in legally enshrining gender equality, the practical implementation of this principle faces a number of sociocultural, economic, and legal barriers. Gender equality in law is based on the following fundamental principles: formal equality – the prohibition of discrimination based on sex (e.g., in inheritance or marital rights); substantive equality – accounting for historical inequality and introducing mechanisms to level opportunities (e.g., quotas in custody cases); gender-sensitive approach – analyzing the impact of legal norms on women and men, taking into account social roles (Markovich & Shardakova, 2024). In family law, these principles are implemented through: equal spousal rights to property, divorce, and child-rearing; protection against domestic violence; mechanisms to compensate for gender asymmetry (e.g., alimony). International instruments (CEDAW, the Istanbul Convention) define gender equality as a mandatory standard. In Ukraine, the Constitution (Art. 24) (Constitution of Ukraine, 1996) and the Family Code (Family Code of Ukraine, 2002) enshrine equal rights, yet contradictions persist in practice: men more frequently own real estate, which affects property division during divorce; judicial

bias in favor of mothers in 70% of custody cases; domestic violence: 85% of victims are women, yet only 20% of cases reach court.

T. Moroz notes that gender relations in the family have always reflected the social, economic, and cultural realities of society. From patriarchal traditions to modern democratic principles, the legal regulation of family relations has undergone a long path of transformation (Sobko et al., 2024). In ancient societies (Babylon, Ancient Rome, Medieval Europe), family relations were built on the principles of the absolute authority of the man (*pater familias* in Latin). The Code of Hammurabi (18th century BC) – A husband could divorce without explanation, while a woman had no such right. Roman law – A woman was under the guardianship of her father or husband (*manus mariti*) and could not own property independently. Christian canon law – Marriage was considered sacred, but a woman had to obey her husband.

In summary, it can be concluded that a woman was legally a minor, and the family was a hierarchical structure headed by a man.

With the development of capitalism and the Enlightenment, the first attempts to equalize spousal rights emerged. For instance, the Napoleonic Code (1804) proclaimed equality among citizens but kept women under the authority of their husbands (mandatory obedience, limited property rights). The English Married Women's Property Act (1870, 1882) for the first time allowed women to own property after marriage. These reforms began to dismantle the patriarchal model, but gender inequality remained significant. After World War II, the modern concept of gender equality began to take shape. The period (1917–1991) saw the proclamation of gender equality but the preservation of traditional roles (women worked while also raising children). The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979) recognized women's family rights as part of human rights. In Ukraine (1990s–2000s), the Family Code (2002) formally established spousal equality, but in practice, a judicial bias in favor of mothers in child custody cases persisted. Thus, states began actively incorporating gender equality into laws, but social stereotypes hindered its implementation (Bogdanets, 2024). At this stage, the main trends include combating domestic violence, advocating for LGBTQ+ rights, and balancing work and family life. The Istanbul Convention (2011) criminalized domestic violence and promoted gender-oriented programs (Cherneha, 2023). Scandinavian countries have introduced policies such as parental leave for men and shared custody after divorce.

The modern system of international law forms a comprehensive mechanism for protecting gender equality, particularly in the sphere of family relations. Instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Istanbul Convention have become key tools for transforming national legislations. Adopted by the UN General Assembly, CEDAW was the first international document to comprehensively regulate women's rights in all spheres, including family relations. Article 5 requires the elimination of stereotypical perceptions of the roles of men and women in the family (Markovich & Shardakova, 2024). Article 16 enshrines equal rights in marriage and family relations, including: the right to enter into marriage; the right to divorce; equal rights concerning children; equal property rights. The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) marked a revolutionary step in protecting women's rights in family relations (Cherneha, 2023). Its innovative provisions include: prevention, protection of victims, and prosecution; recognition that violence against women stems from structural inequality; the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) recognized domestic violence as a human rights violation and proposed strategies for changing social norms.

Gender equality is a constitutional principle of Ukraine and a component of the country's European course. However, its legal consolidation in national legislation

remains incomplete, and its implementation faces systemic obstacles. For instance, Article 24 of the Constitution of Ukraine explicitly prohibits discrimination based on sex and guarantees equal rights for women and men (Constitution of Ukraine, 1996). Yet, this provision is largely declaratory, lacking enforcement mechanisms. Ukraine has ratified key international instruments: CEDAW (1980) – obligations to eliminate discrimination in family law; Istanbul Convention (2022) – combating domestic violence; EU Association Agreement (2014) – harmonizing legislation with European standards. The Family Code of Ukraine formally upholds spousal equality: Art. 51: Spouses have equal rights and responsibilities (Family Code of Ukraine, 2002); Art. 57: Property acquired during marriage is jointly owned; Art. 141: Parents have equal rights in child upbringing. However, in practice: courts often favor mothers in custody cases (~70% of rulings). Traditional stereotypes influence property division (men more often receive businesses, while women are awarded household assets). The Law of Ukraine «On Prevention of Domestic Violence»: introduced the term «domestic violence»; established emergency protection orders; created mobile assistance teams for victims (Law of Ukraine No. 2229-VIII..., 2018). Under the Labor Code: discrimination in employment is prohibited (Art. 2) (ZMINA, 2025), yet women earn ~23% less on average (State Statistics Service, 2023). The Criminal Code: Art. 126-1 criminalizes domestic violence, but police often classify assaults as «petty hooliganism.» The Law of Ukraine «On Political Parties» requires ≥30% women in electoral lists, yet women make up only 20.8% of MPs in the Verkhovna Rada (ZMINA, 2025).

As previously noted, family legal relations in Ukraine are formally based on the principles of gender equality enshrined in the Constitution and the Family Code. However, in practice, the implementation of these principles faces a number of systemic problems related to social stereotypes, imperfect legislation, and weak mechanisms for protecting rights. For instance, according to Article 57 of the Family Code, property acquired by spouses during marriage is their joint property (Family Code of Ukraine, 2002). Yet, in practice, significant gender disparities persist: 68% of real estate is registered under men's names (State Statistics Service, 2023), and women are less involved in financial decision-making (only 32% of cases, according to the NBU, 2023). In the sphere of non-property rights (child-rearing, division of responsibilities), the situation also remains unequal: women spend three times more time on childcare, and only 5% of men exercise their right to parental leave. During divorce, the most contentious issues are alimony obligations: 72% of alimony cases are initiated against men, and the average alimony payment amounts to only 30% of the child's subsistence minimum. Property division: in 85% of cases, disputes are resolved through settlement agreements, but women often concede business assets in exchange for retaining housing. Child custody: only 15% of court rulings leave children with fathers, indicating a conservative judicial approach. Statistics show an increase in domestic violence cases. In 2023, 160,000 complaints were registered (45% involving physical violence), yet only 8% of criminal cases under Art. 126-1 of the Criminal Code result in a conviction. Despite the introduction of protection orders (25,000 issued in 2023), their effectiveness remains low—12% of offenders ignore the restrictions (ZMINA, 2025).

Gender equality is one of the fundamental principles of the European Union, reflected both in its legal framework and in the social policies of its member states. Over the past decades, the EU has developed a comprehensive approach to ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men, covering various areas—from the labor market to family relations. Unlike Ukraine, where gender equality often remains a formal principle, EU countries implement this concept through concrete mechanisms: mandatory gender quotas, transparent pay algorithms, a well-developed system of protection against domestic violence, and support for parenthood. Particular attention is paid to balancing professional and family life, as reflected in policies on parental leave and the development of childcare infrastructure (Cherneh, 2023). The EU's experience

is of particular interest to Ukraine, which, on its path to European integration, must align its legislation with European standards. Analyzing European practices will help identify effective models that can be adapted to Ukrainian realities, taking into account cultural and socio-economic specifics.

Poland, as a country with a rich cultural heritage and modern European aspirations, demonstrates an interesting experience in combining traditional family values with contemporary approaches to gender equality. Despite the strong influence of the Catholic Church, which traditionally supports a patriarchal family model, Poland has taken significant steps in recent years to harmonize family law with European standards (Kaganovska & Syroid, 2023). The Polish Constitution of 1997 guarantees equal rights for women and men in all areas of life (Article 33). In family law, this principle is implemented through: the Family and Guardianship Code, which enshrines equal rights for spouses in marriage; the Act on Counteracting Domestic Violence (2005, with subsequent amendments); the Labor Code, which provides equal opportunities for parents. However, research shows a significant gap between formal norms and social practice. Polish legislation recognizes the principle of joint ownership of property acquired during marriage. Yet, in practice, only 35% of real estate is registered under women's names (GUS, 2023). In the case of divorce, women often retain housing but lose rights to business assets (ZMINA, 2025). The credit system still contains hidden discriminatory mechanisms against women. Poland has also introduced progressive parental leave policies: 32 weeks of paid leave can be shared between parents. «Daddy weeks» – a mandatory two-week leave for fathers. However, only 6% of men take full advantage of parental leave, indicating the persistence of traditional stereotypes. Poland's experience in combating domestic violence includes: specialized family courts; rehabilitation programs for perpetrators; a network of crisis centers, etc. Yet, the effectiveness of these measures remains limited: only 15% of domestic violence cases reach court. The average case processing time is 18 months.

Estonia, as a leading country in the Baltic region, has become a striking example of successful integration of gender equality principles into family legal relations in recent years. This nation, which combines innovative digital solutions with progressive social legislation, demonstrates impressive results in ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men in the family sphere. The Estonian legal system is based on a strong constitutional foundation. Article 12 of the Estonian Constitution explicitly prohibits discrimination based on sex, while Article 27 guarantees spousal equality in marriage (Bogdanets, 2024). Particular attention should be paid to the Estonian Family Code, which underwent significant amendments in 2021 aimed at: establishing the principle of joint custody as the standard practice; introducing automatic property division (50/50) upon divorce; expanding men's rights to parental leave. An important step was the ratification of the Istanbul Convention in 2017, which was reflected in the Domestic Violence Act (2021) (Ponomarenko, 2024). This law provides for: rapid issuance of protection orders; electronic monitoring bracelets for aggressors; specialized family courts.

Let us note that the Estonian model is distinguished by its comprehensive approach to supporting families. Particularly noteworthy is the parental leave system, which includes: 480 days of paid leave, which can be distributed between parents; a 30-day «father's month», reserved exclusively for men; additional benefits for parents who use more than half of the leave. According to Statistics Estonia (Kaganovska & Syroid, 2023), this system has yielded significant results: the proportion of men taking parental leave increased from 40% in 2020 to 65% in 2023; 89% of child custody cases are resolved in favor of joint custody; 95% of children aged 1.5 years and older are enrolled in preschool education. Estonia's experience in combating domestic violence also deserves special attention. Between 2021 and 2023, a series of innovative solutions were implemented: electronic bracelets for offenders (2022) – a GPS monitoring system preventing violations of restraining orders; a digital platform for anonymous consultations and reporting; a

network of crisis centers (22 facilities nationwide).

Despite significant progress, Estonia faces certain challenges: regional disparities: 80% of social services are concentrated in Tallinn; traditional stereotypes: 30% of the population still supports the patriarchal family model. For 2025-2027, the country has planned: expansion of mobile service networks for rural areas; introduction of gender education in school curricula; further digitalization of family services. Germany, as one of the most developed countries in the European Union, has established a comprehensive legal framework for regulating family relations based on the principles of gender equality. The German experience combines traditional family values with modern approaches to protecting the rights of women and men, making it particularly valuable for study. The German legal system ensures gender equality through: the German Constitution (Basic Law): article 3: Guarantees equal rights for men and women; article 6: Protects the family as the foundation of society. The German Civil Code (BGB): equal rights for spouses in marriage (§1353 BGB); joint custody of children as the standard (§1626a BGB); fair division of property in divorce (§§1363-1568 BGB). Special laws: parental Allowance Act (Elterngeldgesetz); gender Equality Act (Gleichstellungsgesetz). An important milestone was the introduction of «Marriage for All» (Ehe für alle) in 2017, which legalized same-sex marriage. Germany also implements several unique programs: parental leave system: 14 months of paid leave (65% of salary); 2 «bonus months» reserved for the second parent. Child benefits: €250 per month per child (Kindergeld); income tax relief for families.

The German approach to combating domestic violence includes: legal measures – the Protection Against Violence Act (Gewaltschutzgesetz); rapid issuance of restraining orders; practical mechanisms – a network of over 400 women's shelters; rehabilitation programs for aggressors. The German experience demonstrates that combining strict legislation with social programs yields the best results. Financial support for families is a key factor in achieving gender equality. Systemic efforts to combat stereotypes require time but deliver long-term effects.

Sweden is recognized as a global leader in gender equality, which is reflected in its unique model of family relations. The country combines progressive legislation with effective social mechanisms, creating an exemplary system for protecting the rights of women and men in the family sphere. The Swedish model is based on the following legislative acts: Constitution of Sweden (1974): Chapter 1, §2 – prohibition of gender discrimination; Chapter 2, §15 – equality in marriage and family relations; Family Code (Föräldrabalken): Mandatory joint custody of children (since 1998). Automatic 50/50 division of property in divorce. Equal rights to parental leave; Gender Equality Act (2006): Mandatory gender quotas in government bodies. Mechanisms to combat sexism in the family (Markovich & Shardakova, 2024). Sweden has implemented a unique family support system: parental leave: 480 days (with 90 days reserved for each parent); 80% of salary (up to €1,000/month); 96% utilization rate by men (2023); childcare infrastructure: 98% of children aged 1-5 enrolled in preschools; maximum fee – 3% of family income; tax benefits: Individual taxation for spouses; deductions for childcare services.

Sweden has developed a comprehensive system to combat domestic violence. Legal measures: the Prohibition of Corporal Punishment of Children Act (1979). Specialized family courts (since 2021). Prevention programs: a network of 150 crisis centers. Mandatory rehabilitation programs for perpetrators. The Swedish experience demonstrates that strict legislation must be combined with social incentives. Equality within the family is achieved through equality in labor relations. Prevention is more effective than punishment.

Italy showcases a unique approach, blending conservative family values with modern European gender equality policies. Notably, the Italian legal system has undergone significant reforms over the past decade: Constitutional guarantees: article 3 of the Italian Constitution prohibits sex-based discrimination. Article 29 recognizes the family as a natural union based on marriage. Civil Code reforms: the 2015 reform

abolished the concept of the «head of the household.» Equal parental rights in child-rearing were established (Art. 316). The term «shared family residence» replaced «wife's residence.» Special laws: the Civil Unions Act (2016) – legalized same-sex partnerships. The Femicide Law (2013) – strengthened penalties for gender-motivated crimes.

Italy has developed a series of innovative programs: parental Leave – 10 months of paid leave (with 1 month reserved exclusively for the father); 30% of men use their right to leave (2023). Childcare Infrastructure – Only 27% of children aged 0-3 have access to preschool (North – 40%, South – 15%). «Bonus Mamma» – €1,000 bonus upon the birth of a child. Tax Benefits – «Family Coefficient» in taxation. Deductions for kindergartens and schools. To combat domestic violence, Italy has developed a unique model: legal Tools: «Red Code» (2019) – an accelerated procedure for victim protection. Mandatory programs for aggressors. Social Infrastructure: the country has 85 anti-violence centers and a network of «anti-violence shelters.» The Italian experience demonstrates a gradual shift from a patriarchal model to a modern one. Key takeaways include: the importance of a regional approach to gender policy. The effectiveness of combined measures (legal, social, and cultural).

Ukraine, in its pursuit of European integration, faces the need to reform family legislation in line with the principles of gender equality. The experiences of Poland, Estonia, Germany, Sweden, and Italy offer valuable models that could be adapted to Ukrainian realities. Sweden, a global leader in gender equality, provides an exemplary model of parental leave. Here, 480 days of paid leave are divided between both parents, with 90 days reserved exclusively for the father (Ponomarenko, 2024). This has led to 96% of Swedish men participating in childcare. For Ukraine, such an approach could be a key step in overcoming stereotypes about «women's» and «men's» roles in the family. Germany, on the other hand, demonstrates an effective system of joint child custody. German legislation stipulates that after a child's birth, both parents automatically receive equal rights and responsibilities in their upbringing. Additionally, specialized family courts and mediation institutions help minimize conflicts during divorces. Ukraine should implement similar mechanisms to reduce the number of legal disputes and safeguard children's best interests. This reform could contribute to a more equitable society while aligning Ukraine with European standards in family policy.

The Estonian experience is particularly useful in the field of combating domestic violence. Innovative technologies, such as electronic bracelets for aggressors, are actively used to monitor their proximity to victims. Additionally, Estonia is developing online services for filing applications for protection orders and consultations with psychologists. Such solutions could significantly improve the effectiveness of combating domestic violence in Ukraine, where this issue remains acute. Poland demonstrates how traditional family values can be combined with modern European approaches. Polish legislation takes into account the conservative views of part of society while gradually introducing mechanisms to protect the rights of women and children. This experience is particularly relevant for Ukraine, where regional differences in attitudes toward gender equality also exist. Despite the strong influence of traditional values, Italy has made significant progress in combating domestic violence. The «Red Code» is a special procedure that allows for the rapid issuance of protection orders and ensures the safety of victims. Ukraine should adopt this mechanism, especially considering that many women in the country still hesitate to seek help due to fear or distrust of law enforcement agencies.

To implement these European practices, Ukraine needs to: first, adopt a parental leave law modeled after Sweden's; second, establish specialized family courts, like those in Germany; third, introduce digital tools to combat domestic violence, as Estonia has done. Additionally, it is crucial to run public awareness campaigns aimed at breaking stereotypes and increasing knowledge about the rights of women and men in the family. European experience proves that gender equality in family relations is not an abstract idea but an achievable reality, made possible through well-designed legislative

measures and social initiatives. Ukraine has every chance to successfully adapt these practices by combining European standards with national specifics. The key factors are political will, public support, and systematic work toward change.

4. Conclusions

Family legal relations in the context of gender equality are a key element of the modern legal framework, as they directly impact the protection of the rights of women and men in the spheres of marriage, parenthood, custody, property relations, and social guarantees. Research by T. Kahanovska and T. Siroid demonstrates that although the legislation of many countries formally enshrines gender equality, in practice, gender stereotypes and historically entrenched inequalities continue to influence legal enforcement. One of the most critical areas where gender inequality persists is marital relations. Despite proclaimed spousal equality, women often face discrimination, particularly in matters of property division after divorce. Many women who have dedicated themselves to childcare and household management find themselves in a vulnerable position due to the lack of personal income, which complicates their access to a fair division of shared property. At the same time, men may encounter bias in child custody cases, as judicial practice in many countries traditionally favors mothers. This highlights the need for a more objective approach to resolving such issues, taking into account the interests of both parents and the child. In the sphere of parental rights and responsibilities, significant gender disparities are also observed. On the one hand, women often bear the primary burden of childcare, which can limit their professional opportunities. On the other hand, men who wish to take a more active role in child-rearing sometimes face obstacles due to outdated perceptions of the «primary breadwinner.» An important aspect of gender equality in family legal relations is protection against domestic violence. Women traditionally remain the primary group of victims, but men can also experience violence, which often goes unnoticed due to social taboos.

The experience of the European Union member states in regulating family legal relations in the context of gender equality can serve as an important benchmark for Ukraine in harmonizing its national legislation with European standards. In the EU, the priority is to ensure equal rights and opportunities for women and men in family relations, which includes: equal access to divorce and child custody; fair distribution of property during marriage dissolution; effective mechanisms to combat domestic violence; and support for work-life balance. Ukraine has already taken certain steps in this direction, particularly through family law reforms, the implementation of the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women (Istanbul Convention), and enhanced social guarantees for parents. However, to achieve full gender equality, it is necessary to: improve legislation by introducing clear mechanisms to protect the rights of women and men, especially in child custody and alimony obligations; develop institutional mechanisms, such as specialized family courts and social support services for victims of violence; raise public awareness of gender equality through education and media; and strengthen international cooperation to exchange best practices from the EU in family rights protection. Integrating European approaches into Ukraine's legal framework will not only help fulfill international obligations but also contribute to building a modern, fair society where the family is a space of mutual respect and equality.

The given article has scientific value, as the study of gender equality in family legal relations reflects contemporary social and legal challenges caused by changes in family legislation and public consciousness. This research combines legal, sociological, and gender analysis, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the issue. The recommendations provided in the article can be used to improve legislation, law enforcement practices, and social policy. The authors of the article propose new approaches to interpreting gender equality in family law, particularly regarding the

protection of the rights of both genders in matters of marriage, divorce, child custody, etc.

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