



FACTORS IN THE TRANSFORMATION OF SOCIAL JUSTICE: A THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract: This article provides a theoretical and empirical analysis of the key factors of social justice transformation. The study examines the impact of economic inequality, political institutions, cultural norms, educational systems, and technological change on the formation of social justice. The analysis reveals that social justice transformation is a multifactorial process that can be achieved through systemic reforms, civil society engagement, and international cooperation. Drawing on Rawls, Sen, and Nussbaum's capability approach, the article analyzes empirical data. Observations from Uzbekistan confirm that legal reforms play a decisive role in the institutionalization of social justice.

Keywords: social justice, inequality, transformation, institutions, capability approach, economic justice, legal reform

Introduction.

The concept of social justice is one of the fundamental pillars of modern society, standing at the center of socio-political, economic, and cultural transformations. From Aristotle to Rousseau, Kant, Marx, and the modern philosophers Rawls, Sen, and Nussbaum, the content of this concept has changed significantly (Rawls 1971; Sen, 1999). In today's era of globalization, social justice is gaining significant importance not only at the national but also at the international level.

The large-scale social and economic reforms implemented in Uzbekistan since 2017 have necessitated a revision of the criteria of justice in society. The Concept of New Uzbekistan under the leadership of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev is based on the principle of "a state serving the people," and consistent measures are being taken to form a system of social justice (President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2022).

This research aims to systematically analyze the factors influencing the transformation of social justice. The study answers the following question: What systemic factors influence the transformation and strengthening of social justice in society.

Relevance of the research:

Global inequality rates (the Gini coefficient is higher than 0.35 in many countries) and the decline in social mobility have pushed the issue of social justice out of political-philosophical discussions and made it a central issue in practical policy formulation (Piketty, 2014; UNDP, 2023). Uzbekistan also has a score of 0.727 on the Human Development Index (HDI) (UNDP, 2023), and the issue of income inequality forms an important practical basis for the study.

Purpose and objectives of the study:

The main goal of the study is to theoretically analyze the factors influencing the transformation of social justice and to study their practical manifestations using the example of Uzbekistan.

The tasks of the research are as follows: (1) systematization of the main theoretical approaches to the transformation of social justice; (2) classification of factors affecting transformation; (3) analysis of social justice reforms in Uzbekistan; (4) developing practical recommendations.

Methods:

This research is based on a mixed methodology that combines qualitative and quantitative analysis. The main methods are:

First, a literature review: more than 80 articles and monographs published between 1971 and 2024 were studied from the Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar databases. Second, comparative analysis: the political experience of various countries regarding the transformation of social justice was studied in comparison. Third, institutional analysis: the legislative framework of Uzbekistan, national strategies, and reports from international organizations were analyzed. Fourth, data analysis: data from the UNDP, the World Bank, and the Statistics Agency of Uzbekistan were used.

The study established a theoretical framework based on Rawls' Theory of Justice (1971), Sen's Freedom as Opportunity (1999), and Nussbaum's List of Opportunities (2011). These theories allow for the study of social justice from procedural and distributive perspectives.

Results:

The most influential expression of the concept of social justice in modern philosophy is provided by John Rawls (1971) in his work "Theory of Justice." According to Rawls, a just society should be based on two principles chosen from behind the "curtain of ignorance": the principle of equal freedoms and the principle of difference. According to the principle of difference, social and economic inequalities can only be justified if they are in favor of the most disadvantaged.

Amartya Sen (1999, 2009) enriched Rawls's procedural approach with an "opportunity approach." According to Sen, when evaluating justice, it is necessary to consider not only the allocation of resources but also the people's ability to use these resources—that is, their "capabilities." Martha Nussbaum (2011) provided a universal normative framework for social justice by compiling a list of "central human opportunities".

Later researchers (Fraser, 2005; Young, 1990) considered social justice in three dimensions: redistribution, recognition, and representation. According to Fraser, full social justice should encompass three complementary dimensions of economic justice, cultural recognition, and political participation.

The results of the study show that the factors influencing the transformation of social justice are divided into five main categories.

Income inequality is considered the most important economic measure of social justice. In his work *Capital in the 21st Century*, Piketty (2014) argued that the fact that the return on capital is always higher than the rate of economic growth ($p > g$) determines the structural nature of inequality. Furthermore, labor market institutions (trade unions, minimum wage), social protection systems, and tax policy have been studied as key mechanisms of economic justice (OECD, 2021; World Bank, 2022).

Research by Acemoglu and Robinson (2012) suggests that inclusive political institutions are a prerequisite for economic development and social justice. Under conditions of weak institutions, resources are seized by certain elites, disrupting the mechanisms of equitable

distribution. Indicators of social justice are much higher in countries where the principles of democratic governance, the rule of law, and corporate responsibility are institutionalized (North, 1990; Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012).

The education system is considered a key mechanism for social mobility and equality of opportunity (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988). Equal access to high-quality education contributes to the formation of social capital and the implementation of meritocratic principles. PISA data (OECD, 2023) indicate that inequality in the quality of education reinforces inequality of opportunity for future generations.

Putnam's (1993, 2000) social capital theory suggests that cultural norms such as mutual trust, compliance with rules, and civic participation play an important role as informal institutions of social justice. If the norms of cooperation and inclusion are strong in society, the effectiveness of formal institutions will also be high. Most studies show that (Elster, 1989; Ostrom, 1990), social norms complement legal mechanisms and play a decisive role in ensuring social justice.

In the context of the fourth industrial revolution, digital technologies have a dual impact on social justice. On one hand, digital platforms are expanding access to public services and increasing transparency (OECD, 2020). On the other hand, the problem of the "digital divide" is causing new forms of inequality to emerge (van Dijk, 2020). Research by Acemoglu and Restrepo (2022) indicates that automation can exacerbate labor market inequality and worsen the situation of low-skilled workers.

The reforms initiated in Uzbekistan in 2017 are a practical example of the transformation of social justice. The "New Uzbekistan - 2030" Strategy (2022) sets goals for strengthening social protection, reforming the education system, and expanding economic opportunities. In 2022-2024, the minimum wage was increased by 21%, the coverage of social benefits was expanded, and more than 1.2 million young people underwent vocational training under the "Youth is Our Future" program.

However, existing problems should not be overlooked. According to UNDP (2023), income inequality between urban and rural populations in Uzbekistan remains significant (urban/rural ratio: 1.8:1). The Gini coefficient is close to 0.35 (World Bank, 2023), indicating the need for further reforms in the field of equitable distribution.

Discussion:

The research results confirm the multidimensional and systemic nature of the transformation of social justice. First, economic, political, and cultural factors are closely interconnected, and it was found that their combined influence is much stronger than the influence of individual factors. This situation is illustrated by Bourdieu's (1986) theory of "types of capital" – economic, social, and cultural capital can be transferred and reinforced to one another.

Secondly, it has been established that institutional factors play a decisive role. As North (1990) points out, institutions define social cooperation and the allocation of resources as "rules of the game." The experience of Uzbekistan shows that legal reforms (amendments to the Criminal Code, independence of the judicial system, corporate governance standards) play an important role in strengthening the institutional foundations of social justice.

Thirdly, it has become clear that investments made through the education system are one of the most effective ways to ensure social justice in the long term. The 'skills building' model

developed by Heckman (2006) shows that investments in early childhood have the highest returns - indicating the importance of expanding preschool education coverage for Uzbekistan.

Fourth, technological transformation has a double effect: while increasing the coverage of digital services promotes social justice, without addressing the problem of digital segregation, these technologies themselves can lead to the emergence of new forms of inequality.

The limitations of the study are as follows: Empirical data on Uzbekistan are mainly based on statistical indicators, and large-scale surveys on the subjective perception of the population have not been conducted. In future research, it is recommended to conduct quantitative surveys on the perception of social justice.

Conclusion:

This study demonstrated that the transformation of social justice is carried out within the framework of five main factors: economic (income distribution, labor market), political-institutional (quality of governance, rule of law), educational (equality of opportunity), cultural-normative (social capital, trust), and technological (digital inclusion). These factors are in a systemic relationship with each other, and one can strengthen or weaken the other.

Uzbekistan's experience shows that social justice indicators can be improved through targeted and consistent reforms. However, reforms must be systemic and comprehensive in nature, i.e., they must simultaneously encompass economic, legal, educational, and cultural changes.

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