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THE ROLE OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS IN DEVELOPING THE POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND CULTURE OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

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Abstract:

This article analyzes the role and significance of non-governmental non-profit organizations (NGOs) in enhancing the political consciousness and culture of persons with disabilities. The study examines the activity directions of NGOs aimed at protecting the interests of persons with disabilities, increasing their legal literacy, and ensuring their inclusive participation in state and society management. Furthermore, the effectiveness of social projects implemented by civil society institutions in shifting persons with disabilities from social passivity to political activism is substantiated. The article concludes with proposals and recommendations for developing the political culture of persons with disabilities by strengthening cooperation between NGOs and state bodies.

Keywords: Persons with disabilities, non-governmental non-profit organizations, political consciousness, political culture, civil society, inclusivity, political participation, legal protection, social partnership, democratic reforms.

Introduction

The essence of the politicization of persons with disabilities is determined by their active participation in the economic and political spheres and their elevation to a new qualitative stage. It should be noted that the content of this process is of a concrete-historical character and is inextricably linked with the formation of

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youth with disabilities as individuals, as well as the specific features of social development. Their politicization is manifested, first and foremost, through their place in the political system of society, their participation in various political movements and processes, their activities in trade unions, parties, and non-governmental organizations, and the expression of their identity. Types of activities related to the politicization of persons with disabilities can be conventionally divided into state-wide, party-collective, and private-individual forms [1].

Today, in order to achieve high levels of progress, raising individuals who are politically mature, enlightened, proud of their national values, and confident in the future is one of the most urgent tasks facing our society. Regarding the liberalization of the political sphere, it is necessary to increase the political activity of the population, especially persons with disabilities, and to form strong mechanisms that ensure a balance of interests in society; in this regard, enhancing their political culture carries strategic importance. The process of democratization of society is directly linked to the development of political institutions, namely parties and public organizations, and the occupation of a worthy place by persons with disabilities within these structures enriches the political, economic, and spiritual life of the country. Accelerating their politicization requires the development of special inclusive programs aimed at strengthening their participation in social processes. This practice unites both society and persons with disabilities toward common goals. After all, the essence of the politicization process is dialectically connected with the formation of a new economic mindset in citizens, and these two factors guarantee that persons with disabilities become an active and creative force in society.

Before conducting a deeper analysis of the issue, it is essential to focus on the essence and significance of the concept of "social movement," as no social system can exist without dynamic motion. Among the forms of social movement that represent changes in society, it is considered the most complex, as it involves not

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only objective laws but also subjective factors—specifically those directly related to the human element—which play a decisive role. From this perspective, the social movement of persons with disabilities possesses a unique systemic character, and its study requires a comprehensive approach encompassing socio-psychological, systemic-functional, and value-normative aspects. Within the philosophical framework, social movement is broadly interpreted as human activity; it is from this position that we analyze the role of persons with disabilities in social life and the issue of their activism. It is well known that an individual's relationship with social existence is reflected in their activity, and it is through practical actions that a person strives to reconstruct the material, natural, and social world surrounding them. At the same time, the human aspiration directed toward the transformation of the external environment serves as the fundamental cornerstone for all types of their activities. In a general sense, an individual's practical movement manifests in the dialectical unity of subject-object and subject-subject relations. The first direction signifies the mastery of the external environment, while the second represents interpersonal communication and cooperation within this process. Social movement can be understood in broad and narrow senses: in the broad sense, it signifies general activity aimed at renewing and improving social reality, while in the narrow sense, it denotes a system of actions by persons with disabilities or specific social groups aimed at adapting to and finding their place within the existing reality. Accordingly, in shaping the political consciousness and culture of persons with disabilities, it is of great importance to view them not merely as subjects adapting to the environment, but as an active force capable of transforming social reality.

In our view, the movement of youth with disabilities and their social activism today differ radically from previous periods. These movements are characterized by a critical-analytical approach toward traditional management methods, independence in expressing their political views, an aspiration for broader freedom, and a diversity of activity methods. In the current conditions, by

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establishing new democratic institutions and participating directly in socio-cultural processes, youth with disabilities are gaining the opportunity to bring society into the inclusive and just form they envision. While the political participation of persons with disabilities in Western countries occurs in a relatively stable environment, those in societies undergoing transition face responsible tasks such as building an entirely new socio-economic structure and civil society. Naturally, certain difficulties may arise during such a complex activity process; however, these obstacles do not imply the alienation of youth with disabilities from society. On the contrary, favorable conditions are being created today in various sectors of our state and in political arenas for representatives of this group to demonstrate their abilities. Currently, persons with disabilities have become an important force in shaping civil institutions and mass social movements. Their participation in the political sphere is measured through various forms, particularly the level of active participation in elections and referendums. Participation in electoral processes is the most fundamental of democratic movements, serving as a crucial factor that demonstrates not only an individual's political culture but also the existence of a future where equal opportunities are created for all members of society. Thus, engaging persons with disabilities in electoral processes by elevating their political consciousness and culture serves as the most effective means of ensuring the sustainability of democratic reforms in our country.

The active participation of persons with disabilities in the processes of electing deputies to central and local representative bodies is of strategic importance due to the following factors:

Firstly, it is natural for the political and social interests of persons with disabilities to differ from the perspectives of the older generation. Therefore, the reflection of these specific alternative interests in the political arena establishes the principles of justice within society.

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Secondly, although social hierarchy is felt in daily life, in the electoral process, being a person with disabilities or having physical differences becomes a secondary issue. In electoral legislation, every citizen, regardless of their state of health, possesses equal opportunities and the right to a single vote; it is precisely this single vote that can determine the overall election results and the future direction of the state.

Thirdly, the process of arriving at a specific political decision encourages persons with disabilities to comprehend the essence of urgent problems within society. Their activism in electoral campaigns serves to further strengthen democratic institutions in the future [2].

In the stage of building a civil society, the participation of persons with disabilities in social movements, non-governmental organizations, and cultural and sports associations holds an important place. Such structures embrace individuals with limited opportunities, uniting them to collectively resolve the issues troubling them and to protect their interests. In countries undergoing a transition period, these forms of inclusive participation are defining new, qualitative stages of the relationship between the state and civil society.

Comprehensive support for the social activism of persons with disabilities is of strategic importance for the development of our society. In Uzbekistan, practical actions in this regard have risen to a new level, and organizing persons with limited opportunities while strengthening their socio-political position has become one of the priority directions of state policy. To this end, large and wide-ranging public associations, such as the Uzbekistan Society of the Disabled, have effectively established their activities in our country. During the years of independence, this society has organized its branches and primary organizations in every region, district, and city, becoming one of the most influential social movements on a national scale. According to statistical data, the number of activists joined in the ranks of the society is increasing year by year, which indicates a rising level of integration of persons with disabilities into the life of

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society. The main goal of the society's activity is to unite persons with disabilities toward a common goal, to protect their rights and interests before the state and society, and to assist in creating decent living conditions. The organization has set the task of creating the necessary platform for the full realization of the intellectual potential, professional skills, and creative abilities of citizens with limited opportunities. In particular, the transformation of persons with disabilities into a pillar of the state through increasing legal literacy and active participation in democratic reforms is of particular significance.

Within the framework of this movement, where the human factor is central, measures are being taken to combat social indifference, legal illiteracy, and various alien ideologies, alongside the promotion of a healthy lifestyle. For persons with disabilities, the opportunity to contribute to the strengthening of social stability and interethnic harmony is interpreted not only as a right but as a high civic duty. The Uzbekistan Society of the Disabled also leads in the implementation of comprehensive social projects. In particular, a system has been established to support students with disabilities, providing material and moral assistance for their education and vocational training. Furthermore, it has become a tradition for the society to regularly visit students with limited opportunities in special boarding schools and orphanages (Mehribonlik uylari), and to provide financial assistance to low-income families and families with disabilities. For instance, charitable events conducted in cooperation with various social skill centers and associations of disabled entrepreneurs, the encouragement of youth with disabilities participating in sports competitions, and social protection efforts for children in need of medical rehabilitation serve as important indicators of the society's strength. Such a systematic approach acts as a vital tool in shaping the political consciousness and culture of persons with disabilities, serving to transform them from passive members of society into active and enterprising citizens.

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The Red Crescent Society, which has been operating since 1925, holds a special place in establishing humanitarian principles in Uzbekistan. While this organization once operated within the structure of the former Soviet Union, it ascended to a new stage following the Presidential Decree adopted in 1992 after our country achieved independence. Today, this humanitarian movement covers the Republic of Karakalpakstan, all regions, and the city of Tashkent, including large network systems, providing assistance to persons with disabilities through more than 200 branches that unite over 10,000 primary units locally [3]. In its strategy, the Red Crescent Society pays special attention to youth with disabilities, considering it a priority task to explain the objectives of international humanitarian law, raise sanitary-hygienic culture, and develop first-aid skills among them. Youth clubs and centers established under the special charter adopted in 2000 serve as important methodological tools in shaping the socio-political consciousness and culture of youth with limited opportunities. Additionally, a number of charitable foundations are operating effectively in our republic with the aim of socially protecting the needy layers of the population, particularly people with disabilities [4].

Among these, the International Charitable Foundation "Sog'lom Avlod Uchun" (For a Healthy Generation), established by Presidential Decree in 1993, has been implementing large-scale programs to protect the legal and social interests of persons with disabilities and to provide them with medical-humanitarian and financial aid. A series of resolutions adopted by our state provide the mechanisms for these foundations to work with persons with disabilities, creating the necessary material and moral foundation for them to secure their place in society and for the elevation of their political culture.

Foundations are systematically supplying medical institutions and vulnerable segments of the population with medicines, special dietary foods, rehabilitation equipment, and clothing, funded by their own assets and humanitarian aid provided by international partners. Furthermore, providing essential financial

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support for children with complex diagnoses to receive treatment in foreign clinics constitutes a vital part of these organizations' activities. As a result of the rapid development of modern technologies, virtual communities and communication platforms protecting the interests of persons with disabilities are expanding on the internet today. In particular, the practice of discussing issues related to the country's economic, political, and cultural-educational life, as well as promoting urgent social projects through various electronic resources and social platforms, is being established. The primary objective of such digital communication forms is to form a layer of educated and active intellectuals capable of contributing to societal progress and to ensure that youth with disabilities have a voice in the modern information space. Undoubtedly, efforts in this direction are yielding positive results. Most importantly, the participation of society members, particularly citizens with limited opportunities, in such integration processes strengthens their sense of socio-political belonging. This, in turn, serves as an important factor in collectively solving systemic problems arising in various aspects of social life and in establishing an inclusive political culture.

The process of shaping the political consciousness and culture of persons with disabilities and transforming them into equal and active members of society is manifested through several fundamental factors. Firstly, the most crucial factor in this process is legal literacy and access to information. Persons with limited opportunities must have full and comprehensible information regarding their constitutional rights, electoral legislation, and mechanisms for participating in state administration. Providing information in Braille, sign language translation, or accessible digital formats enhances their political decision-making capacity. The second important factor is the existence of an inclusive socio-political environment, which is reflected not only in the absence of physical barriers (ramps, adapted polling stations) but also in society's readiness to accept representatives of this group as political leaders. The allocation of quotas for

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persons with disabilities within political parties and public movements, or the establishment of special units representing their interests, is a practical manifestation of political culture. Thirdly, social solidarity and the role of public organizations serve as the primary driving force. The collective association of individuals through the Society of the Disabled, the Red Crescent Society, and similar humanitarian structures awakens a sense of self-confidence and eliminates social indifference. Fourthly, systematic state support and the allocation of targeted grants help mobilize the intellectual potential of youth with disabilities for the prosperity of the motherland. Fifthly, modern information technologies and digital communication platforms allow persons with disabilities to participate in the discussion of state programs, submit proposals, and engage in political debates without leaving their homes. This complex of factors forms an active civic position in persons with disabilities, where they act not merely as recipients of social aid but as individuals who take responsibility for determining the country's political future. Ultimately, the level of political consciousness finds its clear expression in the percentage of these individuals voting in elections, their initiatives in law-making, and their deputy activities in local representative bodies.

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