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## Career aspirations of emerging young female journalists in Uzbekistan in light of the sociocultural shift

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**Abstract.** In the context of global efforts to achieve gender equality, enshrined in the UN Sustainable Development Goals, as well as the activities of the government of Uzbekistan aimed at legal consolidation and practical provision of gender equality, the issue of professional education and career development of women is of particular importance. The authors of the article analyze how future journalists (both women and men) perceive the problems and prospects of professional development of women in the media industry. The researchers of this article also focus on the career expectations of bachelors of the "Journalism" program at universities in Uzbekistan in the context of socio-cultural transition. The main research methods used are "snowball" to form a sample of respondents, as well as semi-structured interviews. The findings of the study demonstrate that values inherent to the traditional way of life and gender stereotypes continue to exert an influence on the career expectations of young women who have chosen journalism as their profession, as well as on men's assessments of their professional prospects. At the same time, the study notes a weakening of this influence within the context of ongoing socio-cultural transformation. The study was conducted within the framework of the "Collaborative Research Projects" initiative of the ORBICOM-UNESCO.

**Keywords:** Uzbekistan, Central Asia, Media Career, Media Education, Sociocultural shift, Gender Equality.

### Introduction

Realizing and expanding women's potential, alongside promoting and ensuring equality with men across all spheres, has constituted a significant global agenda since the 1950s. A key manifestation of this effort is the fifth Sustainable Development Goal established by the United

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Nations, which aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Endorsed by numerous countries, this goal is designed to secure gender parity and enhance women's agency. It directly confronts challenges such as both direct and indirect forms of discrimination against women, including the adoption and effective implementation of principles aimed at its eradication. The pursuit of equality is viewed as a mechanism to broaden the freedom of choice for both women and men, as well as to expand opportunities for personal development. In recent years, Uzbekistan has adopted a series of legislative measures intended to address gender inequality. The principle of gender equality is not only enshrined in the Constitution but is also affirmed in a number of other national-level documents.

Key among them include the presidential decree "On measures to further accelerate the work on systemic support for families and women" (Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2022), containing a comprehensive plan of actions for providing social and economic assistance to women, the republican law "On guarantees of equal rights and opportunities for women and men" (The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2019), and Strategy for achieving gender equality in the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030 (Resolution of the Senate of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2021). Moreover, the country has acceded to international human rights treaties and joined several international organizations that promote gender equality and the protection of women's rights.

Notwithstanding the fact that several of the documents cited enumerate a series of pertinent measures aimed at facilitating greater access to higher education for young women, the overall situation remains suboptimal. Although completion rates for primary and secondary education among young women are nearly universal, a gender imbalance in university enrollment endures. In 2019, only 38.2 percent of all students at universities in Uzbekistan were girls. The main reason for this gender imbalance is not a lack of aspiration among young women to obtain higher education, but rather structural barriers: inadequate financial support, expensive tuition, and outdated social expectations that channel young women into domestic roles following secondary education. In 2021, the percentage of female students has not increased — only 37 percent of students enrolled in universities are girls. However, according to the data from the National Statistics Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan, which is a government agency that collects and publishes statistics, the share of women among students in higher educational institutions has increased over the past ten years, from 36 percent in 2012/2013 to 46 percent in 2021/2022 (National Statistics Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2022). Due to the specific circumstances, the data may intentionally be different. In addition, young women are largely excluded from the labor market (UNICEF, 2021). Moreover, one-third of girls stop the educational process after nine years of school. The same pattern of imbalance is observed after graduation from secondary school. Gender inequality increases in proportion to the achieved level of education. In Uzbekistan, only 27 percent of girls who enter universities ultimately complete higher education (Dadozhanova, 2023).

According to the ideas of sociologist R. Inglehart (1990), the primary determinants of value systems are a nation's level of economic development and the dominant cultural context in which an individual is socialized. Nations can be grouped into "cultural zones" formed by historical links between cultural, religious, and ideological perspectives. Uzbekistan has achieved substantial progress in expanding opportunities for women and girls over recent years, but additional measures are needed to further advance and protect their rights and interests (Latypov, 2018). Among the challenges impeding progress toward gender equality is

the pervasiveness of discriminatory social norms and gender stereotypes that define social roles and power dynamics between men and women, which remain largely predominant in society. It is in existence in many countries, developed, developing, and underdeveloped. Research conducted by Sazali and Basit (Sazali, Basit, 2020) described this phenomenon in the United States and Europe have been increasing the space for women, but the European press culture is still dominated by men. In contrast, female politicians in African and Asian countries are afforded minimal representation. Media coverage tends to emphasize their gender and womanhood rather than their intellectual substance, with women often portrayed as lacking seriousness—described, for instance, as "non-serious police officers". This tendency to undermine women through trivializing discourse is not unique to Asia and Africa; it is equally present in the United States and European countries, notwithstanding their advanced democratic development.

Deeply entrenched conservative gender stereotypes, reinforced by patriarchal norms, impede the full involvement of girls in educational systems and curtail women's professional employment. Research related to the issue conducted by Ashaf and Kartika (Ashaf, Kartika, 2019) described the challenges faced by contemporary women's movements are discrimination in parliament, occupational segregation, restricted public engagement, and sexual violence in public places. The journalism sector described that the condition of women as journalists can be viewed from two perspectives: their participation in media organizations and their conditions after being in media organizations. Also, a significant contribution to this issue is made by the research of Linda Steiner, in which the author notes that "research on gender and journalism can be divided into two categories: gender 'at work' in newsrooms (including opportunities or inequities in jobs, promotions, and salaries, as well as sexism), and representations of women. <....> On both issues, the research shows improvement, but also continuing problems"(Steiner, 2017).

### **Literature review and research background**

The collapse of the Soviet Union triggered a series of profound socio-economic, cultural, and value-based transformations across the former republics, which gained their independence in 1991. Despite the policy of overcoming gender inequality initiated by Shavkat Mirziyoyev, who took office as president in 2016, the gender gap in economic activity that persists in the country today stems from traditional attitudes consolidated during Islam Karimov's presidency. The traditional way of life assigns women a relatively extensive set of domestic and child-rearing responsibilities. The resulting constraints, exacerbated by long-standing university admission quotas favoring male applicants, produce lower female enrollment in higher education. As a consequence, women's competitiveness in the labor market is considerably diminished when compared to that of men.

The modernization of Uzbekistan's population at the socio-cultural level is characterized by distinctive features, namely its complexity and inherent contradictions, which are attributable to the region's historical circumstances. Situated at the intersection of Islamic tradition and secular modernity, Uzbek society exhibits a fusion of indigenous cultural practices with external influences, resulting in a multifaceted and sometimes contradictory modernization process. Despite this, there has been an extremely high level of stability in maintaining national traditions compared to other cultures. This phenomenon is a common feature of societies exhibiting a high and closely connected level of socio-cultural proximity. The analysis of observational data and the results of in-depth interviews demonstrate substantial regional disparities in the degree of socio-cultural modernization attained by the population:

...While the more traditional populations live in the Ferghana Valley and mountainous areas of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the less modernized populations are found in the major cities and regional centers of the country (such as Osh, Samarkand and Bukhara). The most modernized part of the population is in Tashkent, as well as in cities with an industrial focus and a significant Russian-speaking population (Imankulov L. R., Kuksin Ya. K., 2023).

Demotic discourse constructs women primarily in their capacity as mothers, with a pronounced preference for bearing male children. Patriarchal norms position men as primary breadwinners. Consequently, sons are viewed as particularly desirable offspring, offering security to aging parents, especially in a context where state protection for the elderly is increasingly inadequate.

The research has confirmed that gender stereotypes and patriarchal norms are the causes behind continuing gender inequality in Uzbekistan (Schmitz, 2023). There are statements that "Women should spend more time with family, taking care of the household and children", "Men should earn money and provide family incomes", "A man makes all important family decisions", "Professions in the field of pedagogy and medicine are more suitable for women, and programming and science for men". The findings indicate that dominant gender norms assign domestic duties to women regardless of their full-time employment status. This disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic labor generates a double burden, which in turn restricts women's opportunities for both personal development and career advancement.

Social and gender norms, which are not a part of formal laws or policies, have a significant impact on the attitudes and behaviours of Uzbekistan's citizens. Data collected through the Listening to the Citizens of Uzbekistan 2018 survey showed that about one-third of men and one-quarter of women believed that it was unacceptable for any woman in their family to have a job outside their home (ILO, 2020). However, even if a woman's family tolerates her employment, she is still expected to balance work and family life. Given that women devote approximately the same amount of time to unpaid domestic responsibilities associated with their social roles as men allocate to paid productive labor, women's opportunities to engage in formal employment or establish entrepreneurial ventures remain significantly constrained (ADB, 2018).

Social and gender norms curtail women's access to education and skill development, thereby diminishing their competitiveness in the labor market. These obstacles are especially acute in rural areas with conservative family values. Specifically, parents may give preference to educating boys rather than girls, especially at the tertiary level, because of the perceived lack of income-generating opportunities for women, parental reluctance to send daughters away from home for study, and deeply ingrained beliefs that girls have no genuine need for formal education, as their primary social role is understood to be marriage and childbearing at the earliest possible age (ADB, 2018). Furthermore, young women's educational choices are frequently informed by the perceived utility of particular qualifications within the domestic sphere — exemplified by professions such as health worker, teacher, or seamstress — rather than by careful consideration of labor market opportunities and income-generating capacity (ADB, 2018). Lack of access to tertiary education and limited selection of study areas, therefore, make girls and women disadvantaged in labour market competition, especially in high-paying sectors.

Russian research explores the issues of cultural differences among students from different backgrounds, such as Uzbeks from Uzbekistan, Russians from Uzbekistan, and Russians from Russia (Latypov I., 2018). In one part of the study, participants were asked to rank a set of 11

salient values according to their perceived importance. The construct "family and marriage" was measured through responses to items addressing family configurations, rationales for marital unions, and the attributes that parents consider important to instill in their offspring. 70.2% of Russian respondents believe that spouses should play an equal role in the household, while 88.3% of Uzbeks believe that the man is the head of the family.

However, in recent years, the education sector has become a crucial domain for advancing gender equality in Uzbekistan. Investing in girls' and women's education is not only a matter of fairness, but also a key driver of economic growth and social development. The government has recognized this and implemented a number of initiatives, including programs to encourage girls to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), where women are underrepresented. In addition, the state will pay for girls' master's degrees starting in 2022. 200 billion Uzbek soums will be allocated to achieve these goals.

The socio-cultural impact on the countries of Eurasia and Central Asia has been studied by such researchers as Z.A. Khotkina, O.A. Alexandrova, Yu.V. Burdastova, Yu.S. Nenakhova, K.V. Vinogradova (2020), as well as in the work "Multiple risks": Safety of women journalists in the countries of the eastern neighborhood: Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine, Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan (2021), Karabaeva K.N. (2023). The data presented in the Global Gender Gap Report 2023 (2023) only applies to countries such as Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, and Turkey, where the issue of gender equality is no less pressing. Thus, despite the generally recognized relevance of the problem of gender inequality in Uzbekistan, the republic has not previously been the focus of attention of researchers, including from the point of view of studying the professional activities of women journalists in the country.

According to the Global Gender Gap Report 2023, with a parity of 69%, Eurasia and Central Asia rank 4th out of eight regions in the overall gender gap index. Based on aggregate scores from a continuous sample of countries included since 2006, the parity score has remained the same since the 2020 edition. The difference in parity between the highest and lowest ranked countries is 14.9 percentage points. At the current rate of progress, it will take the Eurasia and Central Asia region 167 years to reach gender parity.

According to the Global Investigative Journalism Network (GIJN), women in journalism face several challenges. Women journalists continue to face widespread discrimination and gender inequality (GIJN, 2019). In addition, there is a lack of information and research on women journalists, highlighting the need to change the current situation.

## Methodology

The research applied semi-structured interviews with snowball sampling to recruit informants. The study sample comprised 50 students enrolled in journalism faculties, with 50% male and 50% female, from leading universities in Uzbekistan, namely the University of Journalism and Mass Communications of Uzbekistan, the Uzbek State University of World Languages, and the Mirzo Ulugbek National University of Uzbekistan. The areas of communication study in those three leading universities have different names of study areas, which are Journalism, International Journalism, Sports Journalism, TV and Radio Broadcasting, Print Media, Faculty of Military Journalism, and Advertising and Public Relations. The interviews with respondents were conducted online. Depending on the individual wishes of the respondents, the interviewers asked questions and recorded the answers in Russian, English, and Uzbek. Since this is a pilot

study with a small sample size (N=50), the percentages should be interpreted as trends within a specific group, not as national statistics.

The respondents were asked the following questions: "What prompted you to choose journalism as your future profession?" "At what age do you plan to reach the peak of your journalism career?", "What is the level of monthly income that you expect to receive at your first job?", "What do you think is a "comfortable editorial board" in terms of gender composition?", "What are the key factors for you when choosing a job?", "Are you ready to leave your job if it is necessary for the sake of self-realization in the family?", "How easy do you think it is to be a female/male journalist in Uzbekistan? What difficulties can you face because of your gender?", "How many boys and how many girls are in your university group?".

The respondents were informed about the purpose of the study and that their answers would be included in the text of the scientific article. Furthermore, participants were informed beforehand that their responses would be published anonymously – a condition that likely encouraged them to express their opinions openly, without fear of public censure or other adverse consequences. However, some students declined to answer the questions or reiterated their desire to remain anonymous, which will be specifically mentioned in the article.

## Results

The study found that, in 71% of cases, there are more female students in student groups in various journalism faculties compared to male students. 8% indicated that the groups are composed of an equal number of male and female students, and only 21% of respondents noted a predominance of males in the groups.

Women are quite ambitious, with many planning to reach the pinnacle of their careers by the ages of 22–30 (78%), whereas men tend to expect career fulfillment at the age of 30 or later (74%). Respondents' salary expectations are generally high, ranging from \$500 to \$700 per month. However, those who are already employed in journalism note that the actual salary at the beginning typically starts at \$200 and reaches \$500. One of the young journalists responded: *"Now I have been working in one editorial office since February, I write news, I receive \$300, I think it's good to start with, but over time I would like to receive more."*

Most often, there is an element of inspiration from other women, such as mothers or journalists, that motivates women to pursue a career in journalism (55%). For instance, this was the case for Respondent 14, who is a third-year student at the Mirzo Ulugbek National University in Uzbekistan. *"I became interested in journalism when I was in the 4th grade of school. "Yoshlar" TV channel would have an informative program, "Davr". I admired the performances of the journalist named Dilnoza Mamadaliyeva. This woman motivated me to choose journalism."* Another student, Respondent 10, also chose journalism based on the example of a television presenter. *"When I was 10, I had a desire to be a journalist. In our country, the most famous and professional journalist – Dildora Rustamova, prompted me to choose this. Every day after I watched her information tv program I used to want to be like her."* A second-year student of television and radio journalism, Respondent 1 (University of Journalism and Mass Communications of Uzbekistan) acknowledged familial factors exerted influence upon her decision-making: *"My mother works in the field of journalism, so I also went into this field."*

The motivation of boys is frequently determined by the desire to work in a profession, be in the center of events and bring public benefit (52%), although some notice that being a journalist

can be challenging. Respondent 7, a student of television and radio journalism at the University of Journalism and Mass Communications of Uzbekistan, says: *"It's hard to say. The longer I study, the more I realize how difficult the profession is. Every mistake is very expensive. It's a very stressful job, and I'm even wondering if I should do it. It probably attracts me to be able to influence people's opinions."* Respondent 9 confirms the same idea: *"This is a very versatile profession. It requires a lot of skills that will also be useful in life. On the one hand, with the profession, I want to develop even more as a person. For me, journalism is like a mission. To convey the truth to people, to help them find their place and role in society. It also allows me to explore the world."*

The interest in the profession of the remaining respondents of both genders is also due to the creative side of the journalistic profession (24% of male students and 18% of female students respectively) and the wide range of vacancies on the market (20% of boys and 13% of girls respectively). Some respondents also noted positive changes related to freedom of speech in the republic.

The results of a survey on key factors in choosing a job are presented in the form of a table (Table 1). Respondents were asked to select two of the following options: high salary, prestige of the company, opportunity to spend adequate time with family, prospect of career growth, and friendly team.

Table 1. Key factors in choosing a job for female (FS) and male students (MS)

	High wages	The prestige of the company	The opportunity to spend enough time with family	The prospect of career growth	A friendly team
FS	17%	10%	3%	37%	33%
MS	0%	17%	7%	43%	33%

Therefore, most of the interviewed girls were given priority to the prospect of career growth and a friendly team (37% and 33% respectively). Respondent 4 mentions that for her, "family, career growth prospects, spending enough time with a friendly team" are important. A high salary is only appreciated by 17%. Women exhibit less concern regarding the ability to spend adequate time with family and the reputational standing of their workplace. Only Respondent 10 gave priority to allocating sufficient time to the family. *"I go for these factors: the opportunity to spend enough time with family, the prospect of career growth."* Therefore, despite the fact that sociocultural norms strongly influence young women, it seems that those who have already enrolled in a university and plan to pursue a career do not believe that work will be a barrier to their success.

Interestingly, the analysis of the same factors among men revealed a slightly different picture. Men listed high salary as an important factor influencing their career choice, but none of the male respondents chose this factor as being of primary importance when the choice was limited to only two of the items on the list. 7 says this: *"High wages, the opportunity to spend enough time with family, and a pleasant team are important. But if you pick exactly 2, then I will select a family and a team, and the rest will follow. Money goes away quickly and is spent quickly."* Most of all, men evaluate career prospects – 43% of respondents. Women and men value the team equally highly (33%). The prestige of the company is chosen by men more often than women (17% against 10%). And only 7% pay attention to the opportunity to spend enough time with family. However, for the group of male respondents, this indicator is still higher than for women.

A key consideration within the framework of this study is the impact of socio-cultural values on individuals' career prospects, in particular the topic of whether individuals are willing to leave their current job in order to prioritize family responsibilities (Question: "Are you ready to leave your job if it is necessary for the sake of self-realization in the family?"). According to our survey, 53% of respondents are ready to leave work for the family.

*"Of course, because family comes first. And then work,"* says Respondent 8, a student at the Faculty of Military Journalism at the Uzbek University of Journalism and Mass Communications. *"My family comes first for me,"* emphasizes Respondent 14 (UzJMCU). Some respondents highlighted national characteristics that may have influenced their decision to leave for the benefit of their family. For example, Respondent 3: *"If you know, family is a unique and irreplaceable value for Uzbeks. Therefore, I am ready to leave my job for the sake of self-realization in the family. For me, family and close relationships are very important, and if my work interfered with my family happiness or self-realization, I would not hesitate to make the decision to change jobs or redistribute my time in favor of the family."*

Interestingly, there are some male Uzbek journalists who are willing to give up their careers in order to focus on their families (*"Yes. Of course, I will pay attention to my family and children. After all, these are the people who will be with you for the rest of your life. But still, I will try my best to find a balance between career and family, no matter how difficult it may be,"* claims Respondent 9, 1st year student of television and radio journalism at UzJMCU), although they represent a minority.

It should be noted that a number of female respondents, approximately 20%, refused to answer questions regarding gender inequality without providing any explanation for their decision. *"I hope that was enough answer, I didn't want to answer the rest of the questions."* Some female respondents recruited through snowball sampling refused to answer questions once they learned that the questions were about gender inequality.

To the question of what constitutes a "comfortable editorial board" in terms of gender diversity, various answers were provided. Most respondents believed that gender equality is necessary, noting that working in such a team is pleasant. The following are quotes from several respondents.

Respondent 14: *"I think that no matter what kind of media, women and men should be treated equally, that is, women should not be restricted in this regard. If she has a family, she should be supported, her conditions should be studied and her time taken into account so that she can work at home. It would be convenient if the workplace created such opportunities for women."*

Respondent 39, 1st year, Television and Radio Journalism, University of Journalism and Mass Communications of Uzbekistan: *"A comfortable editorial office in terms of gender composition means equal opportunities for women and men, absence of discrimination and stereotypes."*

Respondent 12, 2nd year, UzJMC: *"There should be gender equality, where the professional qualities and competencies of an employee are primarily valued, not their gender. Everyone should be on an equal footing."*

Respondent 17 (Uzbek State University of World Languages, Faculty of Journalism, 1st year): *"In general, editorial offices with female colleagues and a large number of them create comfort in the workplace."*

However, there are also those who feel more comfortable working and interacting with colleagues of the same gender (25%). For example, Respondent 1 notes that the "comfortable editorial office" is for her when there are "more women in the team". Respondent 18, a 4th-

year student at the UzJMC, remarks: *"Of course, it is more comfortable for me to work with a women's team."* Respondent 5, a first-year student at the Faculty of Journalism at UzJMC, spoke as follows: *"It would be more comfortable for me to work in a men's team."*

The main question for our study is "What difficulties can female/male journalists in Uzbekistan face because of gender?", viewed by respondents as broad and impersonal, thereby allowing them to articulate their opinions freely. This allowed the authors to obtain results that were of particular value to the work. While opinions varied, approximately half of the participants believed that there are currently no significant gender barriers for female journalists. One example of this view is expressed by Respondent 15, who stated: *"A few years ago, it was a bit more difficult for girls to become journalists, because fathers and brothers did not want their daughters or sisters to become public figures. But over time, this view began to change. That is, now this issue is much easier. The attitude towards journalists has also changed. In recent years, a lot of attention has been paid to gender equality in our country, so even now, girls can take up this profession without difficulty."*

However, many pointed to the socio-cultural characteristics of Uzbekistan, which are some obstacles to the professional realization of women in journalism. Here are some excerpts from the semi-structured interviews:

Respondent 14: *"All conditions and freedoms are provided for women in our country, especially in journalism. I think the barriers can be in the family environment. The reason is that the mother is mainly responsible for their children's behavior. Therefore, it is not an obstacle; it can stop work for a certain period of time or take it remotely."*

Respondent 2, 2nd year, Sports journalism, UzJMC: *"I think that being a female journalist is not easy; it is difficult in terms of mindset. The bad thoughts of our viewers can hurt us. For example, if I publish videos about sports and football, I think many young men will think that such women will have some troubles in the future when they have a family."*

Respondent 11, 4th year, TV and Radio Journalism: *"It is difficult to be a female journalist in Uzbekistan because family and female stereotypes are embedded in the worldview. Also, difficulties of the profession: Cameras are heavy; it is not safe to travel alone."*

Respondent 10, 3rd year, Mirzo Ulugbek National University of Uzbekistan: *"In our country, it has many difficulties. At first, my family was against my choice of the profession because of my gender. They said that you could not spend your time with your family."*

Respondent 3, 1st year, international journalism, UzJMC: *"To be honest, I do not know the specific answer, but the difficulties in working as a journalist in Uzbekistan may be related to family obligations. In a traditional society, women may have additional responsibilities for family care, which makes their career growth difficult. Also, access to information may be limited and obtaining reliable data can be difficult."*

Respondent 12: *"Being a female journalist in Uzbekistan is more difficult because of gender stereotypes and prejudices. Women may face difficulties in accessing certain sources of information and professional advancement. Men, in turn, emphasize their dominance."*

It is worth observing, however, that male respondents likewise perceive gender inequality in relation to their female counterparts:

Respondent 7: *"I sincerely believe that girls have a very difficult time. In our country, there is still a concept that a man should earn money, and a woman is a housewife. And there are other requirements for women than a career and journalism. We have a lot of professional women, and they are highly respected. But there are personal and biological problems that interfere with*

*professional growth (a girl can get pregnant). I think that in this profession, there is no concept of "woman", "man", but there is a "professional". Now, women have all the opportunities for growth, they are no longer constrained as before, she can spread her wings and fly on her way. Somewhere in the families, they say that a career is needed, somewhere that you need to get married early and have children, but in general, everything is for the girl to get an education."*

Respondent 34: *"I believe that Uzbekistan has both advantages and difficulties for journalists of both genders. On the one hand, the country is experiencing the growth of the media industry and increasing freedom of speech, which opens up new opportunities. On the other hand, in some areas, unfortunately, there may be discrimination based on gender. For example, it may be slightly more difficult for women to access certain sources, or their opinions may not be taken as seriously as those of men. And we need to fight against such obstacles and create a fair environment for everyone in society."*

Respondent 35: *"I know both male and female journalists. Difficulties are possible due to family traditions. Since Uzbekistan is a fairly conservative country, where parents do not consider the possibility of career growth, but give preference to development within the family (for girls)."*

## **Conclusion and discussion**

Research on the expectations of young female journalists in Uzbekistan on their future courses in the context of socio-cultural shifts demonstrates how social and cultural factors impact women's professional intentions and aspirations. The results demonstrate that young female journalists in Uzbekistan still contend with discrimination and professional challenges – observations confirmed by both male and female participants in the study – they also possess a strong sense of purpose and determination. Based on a review of the key factors impacting hiring decisions, it was found that both men and women place equal importance on the potential for career growth and having a supportive team. However, for women, salary is more essential than for men.

The respondents stated that the socio-cultural milieu in Uzbekistan influences the career opportunities of female journalists; nevertheless, the ability to manage work and family responsibilities did not play a major role in their hiring process. The fact that young women who have decided to attend college and seek a career seem unconcerned about the possibility of employment impeding their success suggests that the process of socio-cultural change has already begun. Men and women alike still place a high importance on family and its welfare. In order to prioritize their families, over half of the respondents said they would be willing to quit their careers.

While biases and socio-cultural expectations may limit young women's professional development, gender equality in the workplace is still a problem because women are not always able to claim that they have the same opportunities for career progress and prospects as men. Certain female participants actually declined to respond to inquiries concerning gender disparity. In order to achieve equal possibilities in contemporary Uzbek society, the research underscores the critical importance of advancing gender equality and promoting women's participation in the workforce.

Despite the government-initiated socio-cultural shift that has been taking place in Uzbekistan since 2016, women are still not entirely confident that they have the same career prospects and opportunities as men. Men share a similar opinion, which is especially clearly confirmed by the

respondents' answers to the last question of the survey. Thus, gender equality in the workplace remains a problem. It is significant that 10% of female respondents actually refused to answer questions related to gender inequality. Therefore, in future research, it would be prudent to organize focus group discussions involving respondents who refrained from answering questions related to gender inequality in the workplace. It is assumed that this will reveal the influence of socio-cultural traditions on the most vulnerable groups of the population, which include women in whose families patriarchal traditions and norms characteristic of a traditional society continue to prevail.

In addition, the issue of perception and acceptance by the urban population, as well as residents of rural areas, of legislative initiatives and practical measures introduced by the government of Uzbekistan aimed at eliminating gender imbalance in society is of particular importance in the context of this study.

It also seems appropriate to organize and conduct a study devoted to the assessment by male journalists currently employed in the editorial offices of national media of the republic, the prospects for changing the staffing of editorial offices in the context of increasing the presence of women in them.

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### **Карьерные устремления молодых журналисток в Узбекистане в контексте социокультурной трансформации**

**Аннотация.** В контексте глобальных усилий по достижению гендерного равенства, закрепленных в Целях устойчивого развития ООН, а также деятельности правительства Узбекистана, направленной на юридическое закрепление и практическое обеспечение гендерного равенства, вопросы профессионального образования и карьерного развития женщин приобретают особую значимость. Авторы статьи анализируют, как будущие журналисты (как женщины, так и мужчины) воспринимают проблемы и перспективы профессионального развития женщин в медиаиндустрии. Исследователи также фокусируются на карьерных ожиданиях бакалавров программы «Журналистика» в университетах Узбекистана в контексте социокультурного перехода. В качестве основных методов исследования использован метод «снежного кома» для формирования выборки респондентов, а также полуструктурированные интервью. Результаты исследования демонстрируют, что ценности, присущие традиционному укладу жизни, и гендерные стереотипы продолжают оказывать влияние на карьерные ожидания молодых женщин, выбравших журналистику своей профессией, а также на оценку их профессиональных перспектив мужчинами. В то же время исследование фиксирует ослабление этого влияния в контексте текущей социокультурной трансформации. Исследование проведено в рамках инициативы «Совместные исследовательские проекты» ORBICOM–ЮНЕСКО.

**Ключевые слова:** Узбекистан, Центральная Азия, карьера в медиа, медиаобразование, социокультурный сдвиг, гендерное равенство.

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### **Әлеуметтік-мәдени трансформация жағдайындағы Өзбекстанның журналист қыздарының мансаптық ұмтылыстары**

**Андатпа.** БҰҰ-ның тұрақты даму мақсаттарында бекітілген гендерлік теңдікке қол жеткізу жөніндегі жаһандық күш-жігер, сондай-ақ Өзбекстан үкіметінің гендерлік теңдікті заңнамалық

тұрғыдан бекітуге және іс жүзінде қамтамасыз етуге бағытталған қызметі аясында әйелдердің кәсіби білім алуы және мансаптық дамуы мәселесі ерекше маңызға ие. Мақала авторлары болашақ журналистердің (әйелдер де, ерлер де) медиа саласындағы әйелдердің кәсіби даму проблемалары мен перспективаларын қалай қабылдайтынын талдайды. Зерттеушілер сондай-ақ Өзбекстан университеттеріндегі «Журналистика» бағдарламасының бакалаврларының әлеуметтік-мәдени ауысу жағдайындағы мансаптық күтулеріне назар аударады. Негізгі зерттеу әдістері ретінде респонденттердің іріктемесін қалыптастыру үшін «қарлы кесек» әдісі, сондай-ақ жартылай құрылымдалған сұхбаттар қолданылды. Зерттеу нәтижелері дәстүрлі өмір салтына тән құндылықтар мен гендерлік стереотиптер журналистиканы өз кәсіби ретінде таңдаған жас әйелдердің мансаптық күтулеріне, сондай-ақ ерлердің олардың кәсіби болашағын бағалауына әсер етуін жалғастырып жатқанын көрсетеді. Сонымен бірге, зерттеу жалғасып жатқан әлеуметтік-мәдени трансформация контекстінде бұл әсердің әлсірегенін атап өтеді. Зерттеу ORBICOM–ЮНЕСКО-ның «Бірлескен зерттеу жобалары» бастамасы аясында жүргізілді.

**Түйін сөздер:** Өзбекстан, Орталық Азия, медиамансап, медиабілім, әлеуметтік-мәдени өзгеріс, гендерлік теңдік.

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