

Career expectations of young female journalists in Uzbekistan in the context of socio-cultural transition

ABSTRACT

The research aims to explore the career expectations of female students of journalism, and obstacles of female career in journalism in Uzbekistan within the context of sociocultural transition to overcome gender inequality. Therefore the research questions are: what is career expectation of young female journalists in Uzbekistan and what is the obstacles and barriers to achieve the career expected? Mid-twentieth century, in line with UN SDGs goal No. 5, the country's authorities at the republican level of initiated the act of gender equality, because women in Uzbekistan and many other countries continue to face unequal treatment compared to men due to a variety of factors, including socio-cultural norms. Although this may not be reflected in official documents, it remains a reality on the ground. The research used semi-structured interviews to collect the data within the context of Socio-cultural modernization of Uzbekistan with **Hofstede cultural dimension and journalism process and value as references of the study**. Informants recruited are students of journalism departments at leading universities in Uzbekistan **who are also work as young journalists**?. Research result highlights women informant in Uzbekistan have high career growth expectation in the earlier age than men. However, the socio cultural value on family comes first, and all informants stated that they are ready to leave work for the family. It is the strong barrier for women to pursue her career in journalism. Quantitative research on socio cultural value influencing career growth in journalism would be interesting to study in completion of this article.

Keywords: *Young female journalism, Journalism, Gender Equality, Uzbekistan, Socio-cultural transition.*

INTRODUCTION

Uzbekistan has enacted several legislative measures aimed at addressing gender equality. Since achieving independence in 1991, Uzbekistan has made gender equality one of the fundamental principles of its democracy, as enshrined in its Constitution (Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2023). 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. The Women's Committee of Uzbekistan is an important player in advancing gender equality within the country, working to ensure that women have equal access to opportunities and resources. A key document is the presidential decree "On Measures to Further Accelerate the Work on Systemic Support for Families and Women" (Decree the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2022). This decree outlines a comprehensive plan of actions for providing social and economic assistance to women. The issues in line with global initiatives since 1950s, and SDGs No. 5 by the United Nations, which implies achieving gender equality and empower all women and girls. Achieving equality is seen as a way to expand the freedom of choice for women and men, as well as opportunities for personal development.

Gender equality issue in Uzbekh, like in other countries, exists in educational sector, working sector, and health sectors, among others, since social roles and power relations

between men and women still dominant in society. According to the ideas of sociologist R. Inglehart, the main factors influencing values are the level of economic development of a country and the dominant culture within which a person is socialized. Different countries can be grouped into "cultural zones", which are shaped by historically established connections between cultural, religious, and ideological perspectives. Conservative gender stereotypes and patriarchal norms culture prevent full involvement of girls in education, and limit women's employment. They reinforce unequal power relations, specifically male dominance over women, perpetuate high levels of unpaid work burden, impunity of perpetrators, structural inequalities and systematic oppressions. These context relevant with Latypov (2018) research that described Uzbeks mostly (88.6%) support the idea of a patriarchal family within the profess Islam, and 53.3% believe in the importance of religious upbringing, which is closely linked to the significance of religion in Uzbek culture. The research also addresses the issue of students' career motivation and their expectations, even though it is not within the context of gender analysis the study quotes that it is important to understand the context of educational sector that presenting most student are men, the quote is: "Do not forget that most students from Uzbekistan are men," one of the respondents said. Latypov (2018) also described the existence of differences in socio-cultural contexts between Russia and Uzbek which is one of the most important goals in life for Russian students is self-realization (46.3%), while for Uzbek students it is the well-being of the family (40%).

Despite the fact that the decree in Uzbek launched provides girls and women access to educational sector for a number of relevant measures that would facilitate the enrollment of as many as possible in higher education, the overall situation remains far from optimal. In 2019 only 38.2 percent of all students at universities in Uzbekistan were women in bachelor degree graduates (Saida, August, 9th, 2022, Diplomat media online). In 2021, the percentage of female students slightly decreased or at 37% of students enrolled in universities are women (Saida, August, 9th, 2022, Diplomat media online). However, according to the data from the Goskomstat, 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 (Goskomstat 2022). Data differences between media coverage and government official statistic agency creates critical thinking on is there any issues tried to be undermined by the government regarding gender equality in educational sector? However, this question is not the focus of this article, but it might become the next research. The focus of this article is from the perspective of socio-cultural transition context and from Lasswell communication elements focused on source/receiver of the educational sector in Uzbek from gender equality context specially in young female journalist career expectation.

In Uzbekistan, only 27 percent of girls who enter universities ultimately complete higher education (Dadozhanova N., 2023). Study on Understanding of Uzbek women motivation to receive higher education, conducted by Cytlak and Mamadaminova (2024), shows that there is 90% of Uzbek women have lack of self-motivation to pursue higher education. While other study mentioned that the main reason for this gender imbalance is not

the reluctance of women to pursue higher education, but rather a lack of funding, high tuition costs and outdated social expectations that young women should take on traditional domestic roles after graduating from high school (.....whose study, year?...). 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 comparable to the achieved level of education.

The context of journalism practices, Barbara Reynolds quoted in Allan (2001) “How can you have a democracy and a free press, when 95 percent of all the decisions made in the media are made by white males?”. Women within gender issue approach not only have to deal with the objective reality, but also with the social cultural construction of reality in many sectors and work field including journalism. In the context Indonesian culture that mostly moslem and patriarchy, that is relevan to the Uzbek socio-cultural context, and from the democratization of gender-based media approach, journalism context and its profession is regarded as a man’s world. The world where there is low gender awareness as well as low gender-sensitive context. The study conducted by Abdul and Tina (2019) where both the above context is in existence, they found that women journalists in Lampung province, adopted patriarchal values at work that brings about women journalists divided into two cluster which are hegemonised women journalists typology, and as actors of resistance typology where women journalists not only have the role as journalists but also host the role as activists who struggles their role as journalist in the man’s world. What about young female journalists in Uzbek?

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 I., 2018). Furthermore, within the context of transition in the socio-culture context, the structure and agency of the society in regard of gender equality might not be in stable. The proposition of the study posted is eventhough the policy give more access and facilitate women to education sector and working field, also women in Uzbek already have high literacy on the importance of education, their attitude still bound with patriarchal norms and stereotype that led them to their previous role as women who always in the second place of breadwinner or men.

LITERATURE REVIEW OR RESEARCH BACKGROUND

a. The period of socio-cultural modernization in Uzbekistan

In Uzbekistan, the period of “reinvention of traditions” accelerated with the collapse of the Soviet Union, which brought about a whole host of socio-economic, cultural, and value transformations. Meanwhile, the nation-building discourse produced by President Karimov, which sought the revival of glorious traditions and history, was rooted in a strict cultural code that involved male dominance over women and the responsibility of “proper women” for the purity of the nation.

The differences in the level of economic activity between women and men in the country can be mainly explained by the views formed on the basis of national traditions, which include the relatively large number of responsibilities women have in the household and family for raising children. This, in turn, leads to the fact that the number of girls admitted to higher education is lower than that of boys, due to long-term quota systems for admission to universities. As a result, girls' competitiveness on the labor market is significantly reduced compared to that of men.

The socio-cultural modernization of the populations in Uzbekistan has its own unique features, characterized by complexity and certain inconsistencies due to the historical context of the region. The region's proximity to Islam and secularism has led to a blending of socio-cultural traditions with external innovations. Despite this, there has been an extremely high level of stability in maintaining national traditions compared to other cultures. This is a common feature of societies with a high and close level of socio-cultural distance. The analysis of visual observations and the results of in-depth interviews revealed that the level of socio-cultural modernization among the population varies significantly depending on the region:

...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).

In demotic discourse, women are seen predominantly as mothers—preferably mothers of sons. In the patriarchal system, men are considered to be a family's main breadwinners. Thus, sons are viewed as desired children for parents as they get older, particularly in a context where elderly people increasingly lack the protection of the state. Accordingly, the main objective of a marriage is to have as many children as possible in order to have a son. The research has confirmed that gender stereotypes and patriarchal norms are the causes behind continuing gender inequality in Uzbekistan (Schmitz, 2023). There are the 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”. As research showed, the prevailing gender norms assign family responsibilities to women, even if they have a full-time job. Unpaid care and household work creates a double burden for women and limits their opportunities for personal development and career growth.

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. Because women spend about the same amount of time on unpaid domestic tasks that go with their

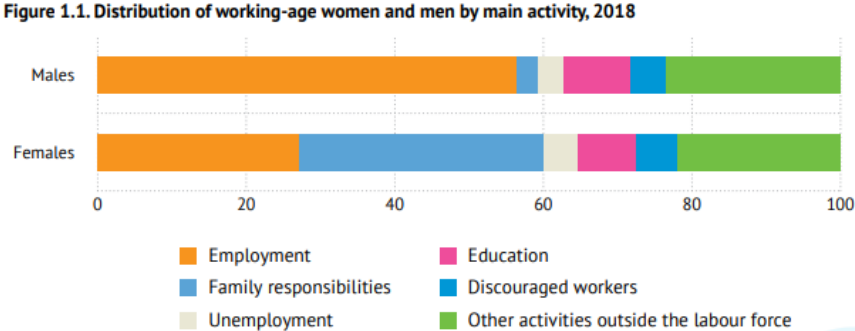
social roles, as men do in productive paid work, women have fewer options to work at formal jobs or at start-up businesses (ADB, 2018).

Social and gender norms limit opportunities for women to attain education and skills, making them less competitive in the labour market. Women continue to face challenges, especially in rural areas where families have more conservative views. Specifically, parents may give preference to educating boys rather than girls, especially at the tertiary level, because of the lack of income opportunities for women, unwillingness to send daughters far from home, or because they believe girls do not require education as they should get married and start a family as soon as possible (ADB, 2018). In addition, girls often choose a field of study based on a desire to obtain a qualification that will be useful in family life (such as those needed to become a health worker, teacher or seamstress), instead of being guided by opportunities for employment and earnings (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. There is no survey-based data on GBV prevalence in Uzbekistan. However, media and NGOs frequently report that women and girls in the country are repeatedly subject to physical and emotional violence, harassment and discrimination.

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 presented with a list of 11 important values, which they were asked to rank in order of significance. The value "family and marriage" was determined based on answers to questions about family structures, reasons for marriage, and the qualities parents want to instill in their children. 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.

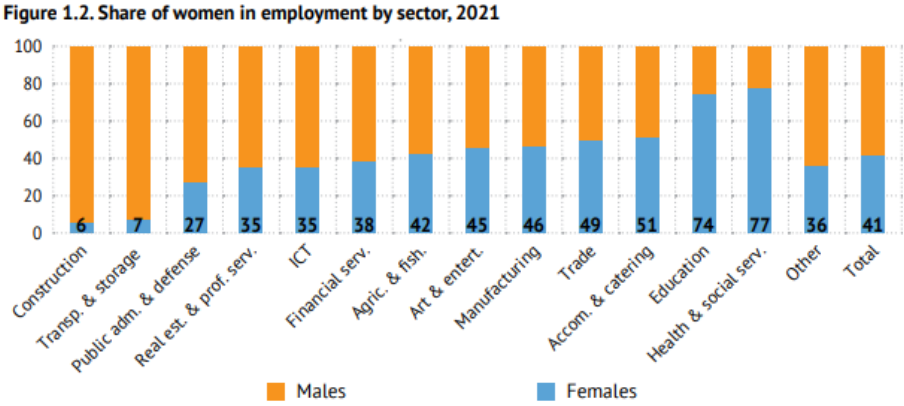
b. The situation of women in Uzbekistan

Evidence shows that a smaller share of women are in employment in Uzbekistan, compared to men. The data in Figure 1.1 shows that 57 per cent of men were employed in 2018, compared to only 28 per cent of women. 1/3 or 33 per cent of working age women were engaged in unpaid care work as their main activity, compared to 3 per cent of men.



Source: ILO (2020)

There is notable gender segregation by sector (Figure 1.2). Women are highly represented in traditionally ‘female’ sectors, including education, health care and social services, which typically offer lower wages. Men dominate in the construction, transportation and storage industries, as well as in real estate and professional services, ICT and financial services, which generally offer higher salaries.



Source: Goskomstat (2021)

Major challenge is the unequal treatment of women in the workforce. Despite having the right to equal pay and equal opportunities, many women in Uzbekistan continue to face discrimination, unequal pay and limited career opportunities. The government is working to address this issue by increasing the availability of childcare and encouraging employers to adopt family-friendly policies. Women are predominantly employed in fields such as education, healthcare, accommodation, and catering, which have lower wages on average. In the education sector, where approximately 80% of the workforce is composed of women, the average monthly salary is approximately 80% of the national average monthly wage across all sectors. For comparison, the average monthly wage in banking, insurance, and lending this year was 195.5% of the national average. A similar pattern was observed in healthcare, where women account for 76.8% of employment, with an average monthly wage of 468,000 soums, or 67.7% of the national average wage (Akramova Sh. G., 2020) .

One of the most pressing challenges is the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions. Despite making up over half of the population (17,4M women, 17,2M men) women hold only a quarter of parliamentary seats and just over a third of senior management positions. 33.3% of seats in national parliament were held by women in 2022 in Uzbekistan. This disparity is not just a matter of fairness, but it also undermines the potential of the entire nation by limiting the diversity of voices and perspectives in decision-making.

Education is another critical area for promoting gender equality in Uzbekistan. Investing in education for girls and women is not only a matter of fairness, but it is also a key driver of economic growth and social development. The government has recognized this and has implemented a range of initiatives including programs to encourage girls to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields, where women are underrepresented. In addition, from the 2022 the state will pay for tuition fees of girls in the master’s degree. To achieve these goals, 200 billion Uzbek soums (about 17,773M USD) will

be allocated. Thus, the state will pay tuition fees for 23,000 female students to improve access to education for girls and women. It also became known that every year 50 girls will be sent to foreign countries to study at foreign universities, 10 – to obtain a master's degree.

Based on global rankings such as the Global Gender Gap Index (GDI) and the Rainbow Europe rating from ILGA-Europe, patriarchal norms and attitudes continue to be prevalent in Eastern countries. The belittled status of women is often seen as "part of the culture" in these countries. Due to Global Gender Gap Report 2023, at 69% parity, Eurasia and Central Asia ranks 4th out of the eight regions on the overall Gender Gap Index. Based on the aggregated scores of the constant sample of countries included since 2006, the parity score since the 2020 edition has stagnated. The difference in parity between the highest and the lowest ranked country is 14.9 percentage points. At the current rate of progress, it will take 167 years for the Eurasia and Central Asia region to reach gender parity.

According to the Global Network of Investigative Journalists (GIJN), several problems exist for women in the field of journalism. Women journalists are still subjected to widespread discrimination and gender inequality (GIJN, 2019). In addition, there is a lack of information and research about women journalists, which highlights the need for change in the current situation.

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 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.

METHODOLOGY

The research applied semi-structured interviews data collection technique with snowball sampling to recruit the informants. Informants criteria set are students of the 1st to 4th year of undergraduates, within communication area of study, in 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 name of study areas, which are Journalism, International Journalism, Sports Journalism, TV and Radio Broadcasting, Print Media, Faculty of Military and Advertising and Public Relations. Purposive sampling also applied in order to fit in the gender equality informant with balanced representation of men and women with total amount of informants arestudents, with each group comprising 50% man and women, means each group consists of

Concept used to collect the data and analyzed the data referred to 6 cultural dimensions described by Geert Hofstede, which are power distance (1), individualism vs collectivism (2), masculinity vs femininity (3), uncertainty avoidance (4), long-term vs short-term orientation (5), and indulgence vs restrained (6). Semi-structured interviews instrument applied questions posted to informants. The questions are as follows:

No.	Hofstede dimension	Questions posted
1		What prompted you to choose journalism as your future profession?
2		What is the level of monthly income that you expect to receive at your first job?
3		What do you think is a comfortable editorial board?
4		
5		
6		

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of informants are

1st year student		

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, whereas men tend to expect career fulfillment at the age of 30 or later. "If I continue, I think I will be at the peak of my profession at the age of 22," said Dilfuza Karimova, a 2nd year student at the University of Journalism and Mass Communications of Uzbekistan (UzJMCU). Sabrina Turanova, a 1st year student at the Faculty of Journalism of the Uzbek State University of World Languages, believes that she will be able to "reach the peak and perfection in her career by the age of 25", while Aziz Temurov, a 3rd-year student of the Faculty of Journalism at the University of Journalism and Mass Communications of Uzbekistan, expects to enter the profession before 35: "For some reason it seems to me that it is after this age that a certain decline in terms of productivity in activity begins."

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 starts typically at \$200 and reaches \$500. One of the young journalist 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. This was the case for Samadova Maftuna, 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, Gulshoda Murtazayeva, 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. Everyday after I watched her information tv programme I used to want to be like her." A second-year student of television and radio journalism Alieva Aisha (University of Journalism and Mass Communications of Uzbekistan) noted the family influence on 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, although some notice that being a journalist can be challenging. Maxim Khan, 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." Abdulaziz Kholmurodov 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 is also determined by the creative aspect of the journalistic profession and a wide range of vacancies on the market. A number of respondents 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 below in the form of a table. 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 women.

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

Key factors for women

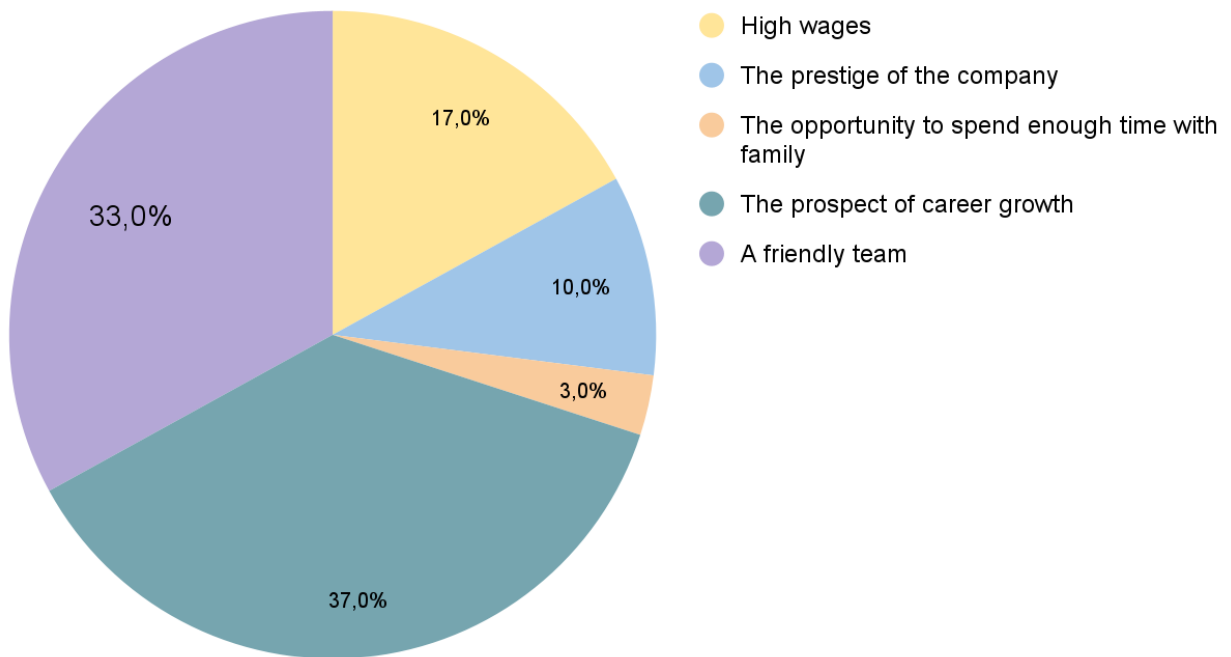


Figure 2. Key factors in choosing a job for women

Therefore, most of the interviewed girls were given priority to the prospect of career growth and a friendly team (37% and 33% respectively). Dilfuza Karimova mention 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 are least concerned about the opportunity to spend enough time with family and the prestige of the company. Only Gulshoda Murtazayeva gave priority to allocating sufficient time to the family. “I go for these factors that 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:

Table 2. Key factors in choosing a job for men

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

Key factors for men

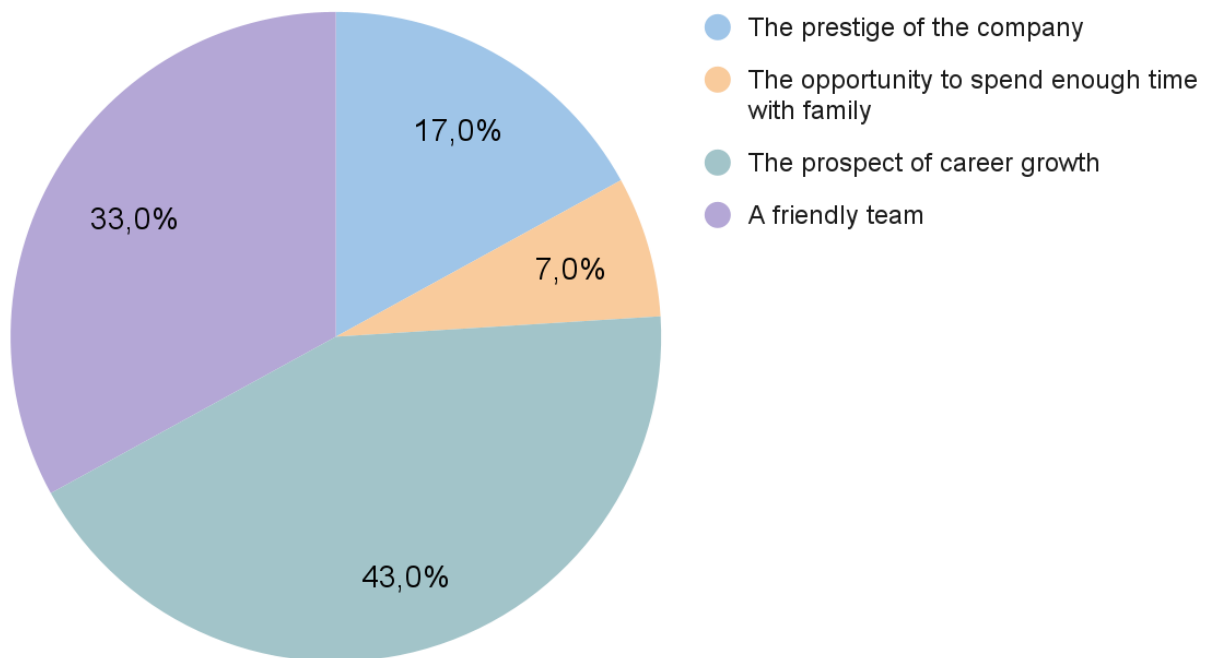


Figure 3. Key factors in choosing a job for men

None of the respondents chose a high salary. Maxim Khan 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. “Most likely, I will choose: 1) the opportunity to spend enough time with your family; 2) a pleasant team.” — considers Abdulaziz Kholmurodov.

An important issue is the influence of socio-cultural values on 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 Sevinch Kholikov, a student at the Faculty of Military Journalism at the Uzbek University of Journalism and Mass Communicationsю “My family comes first for me,” emphasizes Mashura Samadova(UzJMCU). Some respondents highlighted national characteristics that may have influenced their decision to leave for the benefit of their family. For example, Mashkhura Ergasheva: “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 Abdulaziz Kholmurodov, 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.**” One young woman chose to remain anonymous. Some covered respondents refused to be interviewed at all.

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.

Maftun Samadova: “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.”

Artur Khachiyants, 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.”

Angelina Pshenichnikova (note: a Russian girl who was born in Uzbekistan and has lived there all her life), 1st year, international Journalism, UzJMCU: “A comfortable editorial office in terms of gender composition is a place with equal representation of all genders, equal opportunities for career growth, without discrimination.”

Asia Nabieva, 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.”

Sabrina Turanova (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 are who feel more comfortable working and interacting with colleagues of the same gender. For example, Aisha Aliyeva notes that the “comfortable editorial office” is for her when there are “more women in the team”. Guzal, a 4th year student at the UzJMC, remarks: “Of course, it is more comfortable for me to work

with a women's team." **Alisher Karimov**, 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 journalist in Uzbekistan face because of gender?". 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 Mubina Sotvoldieva, 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 obstacle to the professional realization of women in journalism. Here are some excerpts from the semi-structured interviews:

Maftun Samadova: "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."

Munisa Abdukarimova, 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 women will have some troubles in the future when they have a family."

Holida Musurmonova, 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 world view. Also, difficulties of the profession: Cameras are heavy; it is not safe to travel alone."

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

Mashkhura Ergasheva, 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, it may be limited access to information and obtaining reliable data can be difficult."

Asia Nabieva: "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**."

However, it should be noted that men also notice gender inequality in relation to women:

Maxim Khan: "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", 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.”

Abdulaziz Kholmurodov: “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.”

Alisher Karimov: “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).”

The research on the career expectations of young female journalists in Uzbekistan within the context of socio-cultural transformations provides valuable insights into the impact of social and cultural factors on the career plans and aspirations of women. The results indicate that young female journalists in Uzbekistan face limitations and stereotypes, but at the same time demonstrate a strong level of motivation and ambition. An analysis of the selection of key factors influencing the choice of a job revealed that both men and women prioritize the prospects for career growth and the presence of a supportive team. Women place greater emphasis on salary than men. Despite the fact that, according to respondents, the socio-cultural environment affects prospects of female journalists in Uzbekistan, the opportunity to balance work and family life was not a significant consideration in their job selection process. It appears that young women who have signed up for university and aim to pursue a professional path are not worried that work will impede their success, which demonstrates that the process of socio-cultural transition has already been launched. Family and its well-being continue to be important values for both men and women. More than half of the respondents indicated that they would be willing to leave their jobs in order to focus on their families. However, gender equality in the workplace remains to be an issue, as women are not always able to state that they have equal opportunities for career growth and prospects as men, since stereotypes and socio-cultural norms may limit the opportunities of young women in professional self-realization. As a fact, some female respondents refused to answer questions related to gender inequality. The research underscores the significance of promoting gender equality and providing support for women in the professional sphere in order to achieve equal opportunities in modern Uzbek society.

CONCLUSION

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