TRANSFORMATION OF WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP AND SOCIAL MOBILITY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE MODERNIZATION OF SOCIETY IN NEW UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract

This article examines the conceptual transformation of women's leadership and the dynamics of women's social mobility in the context of large-scale socioeconomic and sociopolitical reforms in New Uzbekistan. It analyzes institutional mechanisms, legal guarantees, and government programs aimed at empowering women and increasing their representation in public administration, small and medium-sized enterprises, science, and education. Particular attention is devoted to traditional sociocultural stereotypes, Eastern value systems, and the intellectual heritage of prominent Eastern thinkers in establishing a harmonious balance between women's family responsibilities and professional roles. The article identifies the principal factors and barriers influencing women's upward social mobility amid digitalization and the modernization of various spheres of society.

Keywords: women's leadership, social mobility, New Uzbekistan, gender policy, modernization of society, women's rights, public administration, social mobility mechanisms, Eastern philosophy, entrepreneurship.

Introduction

In the context of contemporary globalization and fundamental socioeconomic transformations worldwide, the full realization of women's potential and the promotion of their equal participation in public administration, society, and the economy have become strategic factors in the sustainable development of nations.

In New Uzbekistan, large-scale democratic reforms initiated under the Action Strategy for the Five Priority Areas of Development of the Republic of Uzbekistan and subsequently continued through the Uzbekistan–2030 Strategy have elevated the protection of women's rights and interests, the development of women's leadership, and the promotion of their social mobility to a qualitatively new level of national policy [4].

The transformation of women's leadership represents a complex, multifaceted process involving a reconsideration of women's roles and positions within social relations, the expansion of their agency in making important decisions, and the elimination of institutional and sociocultural barriers.

Traditionally, women's leadership was often confined to relatively narrow areas, particularly social services, education, and healthcare. However, the modernization of society in New Uzbekistan has brought about significant changes, with women increasingly entering senior positions in public administration, politics, high-technology entrepreneurship, academic research, and innovative sectors of the economy [7].

Social mobility, as a sociological concept, refers to changes in the social status of individuals or groups and their movement within systems of social stratification.

Historically, women's social mobility in Uzbekistan has been shaped by the interaction of traditional behavioral patterns, family values, and structural limitations within the labor market. Understanding the nature and direction of contemporary changes in women's social positions therefore requires comprehensive philosophical and sociological analysis [8].

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The Philosophical Foundations of Women's Leadership in Eastern Thought

In Eastern philosophical traditions, the role of women in society and the family has historically been considered through the principles of spiritual and moral values, wisdom, harmony, and the upbringing of younger generations.

Prominent Central Asian thinkers devoted considerable attention to the moral development of individuals, respect for women, and their significant contributions to the spiritual and cultural development of society.

Abu Ali ibn Sina (Avicenna), in his social, philosophical, and ethical reflections, emphasized the exceptional importance of harmonious human development and the family institution as a foundation of social stability [6].

According to the interpretation presented in his philosophical heritage, the family constitutes the primary environment for raising intellectually and morally developed individuals, while women play an essential role in preserving spiritual traditions and promoting education.

Alisher Navoi, in his literary masterpiece Khamsa and other poetic works, portrayed women's intelligence, loyalty, wisdom, and spiritual qualities with profound humanism and respect [3].

Navoi's literary and philosophical ideas emphasize the importance of human dignity, moral excellence, and intellectual development. His humanistic perspectives provide valuable foundations for contemporary discussions concerning the relationship between women's professional achievements and family responsibilities.

Yusuf Khas Hajib, in his renowned work Kutadgu Bilig (Wisdom of Royal Glory), emphasized that intelligence, knowledge, and moral virtues constitute essential foundations for the prosperity of the state and society [2].

These principles of Eastern humanism demonstrate the historical importance of intellectual development and moral responsibility within the cultural traditions of Uzbekistan.

Institutional and Legal Foundations of Women's Leadership Development

At the current stage of modernization in New Uzbekistan, strengthening the institutional and legal framework for protecting women's rights and promoting their social mobility has become one of the central priorities of national reforms.

The revised Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan establishes the principle of equal rights and freedoms for women and men and provides constitutional guarantees for equal opportunities in public and political life.

The adoption of the laws of the Republic of Uzbekistan On Guarantees of Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men and On Protection of Women from Harassment and Violence established an important legal foundation for combating discrimination and creating a safe and supportive environment for women's personal and professional development [7].

Institutional mechanisms supporting women's leadership and social mobility in Uzbekistan include:

1. The activities of the Committee for Family and Women, which coordinates government policy concerning women's rights, family welfare, and gender equality.
2. The establishment and development of the Women Leaders' Club, intended to strengthen women's leadership potential and develop a pool of qualified female candidates for managerial positions.
3. The introduction of the Women's Register (Ayollar daftari) as a targeted social assistance mechanism designed to support women experiencing difficult socioeconomic circumstances, protect their rights, and facilitate employment opportunities.

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4. The development of specialized grants, preferential loans, and financial assistance programs for women entrepreneurs through institutions responsible for neighborhood-based economic development and entrepreneurship.

Statistical indicators cited in the original study suggest positive developments in women's social mobility in Uzbekistan.

According to these figures, women's representation in public administration has increased to 33%, while their representation in the Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis and local councils has approached 32%.

These developments are presented as indicators of expanding opportunities for women to participate in political decision-making and public administration.

Criteria and Indicators of Women's Social Mobility

To systematize the criteria and indicators of women's social mobility under the conditions of societal modernization, four fundamental and interconnected dimensions are identified [7, 8].

Sociopolitical Criterion

This criterion reflects the degree of women's involvement in decision-making processes at national and local levels, including their representation in legislative and executive institutions, political parties, and civil society organizations.

The principal indicators include:

- The proportion of women occupying leadership positions in government institutions.
- Women's participation in elections and political parties.
- Women's engagement in nongovernmental nonprofit organizations and mahalla institutions.
- The existence of effective mechanisms for developing a qualified pool of female leaders.

Economic and Entrepreneurial Criterion

This dimension reflects women's financial independence, participation in economic activities, access to financial resources, employment opportunities, and property ownership.

The main indicators include:

- Women's employment and self-employment rates.
- The proportion of small and medium-sized enterprises managed by women, which the original study reports as exceeding 40% in Uzbekistan.
- The gender wage gap and the professional qualifications of employed women.
- Access to preferential loans, subsidies, and microfinance opportunities for women entrepreneurs.

Economic independence is an essential component of social mobility because it expands women's opportunities to make independent decisions, invest in education, and participate actively in economic and social development.

Educational and Professional Qualification Criterion

This criterion is associated with the accumulation of institutionalized cultural capital, as conceptualized by Pierre Bourdieu, through professional education, the acquisition of advanced digital skills, academic degrees, and professional qualifications [8].

Its main indicators include:

- Women's participation in higher and vocational education. According to the original article, the proportion of female students in Uzbekistan's higher education institutions has exceeded 50%, supported by government grants and educational opportunities for women from economically disadvantaged families.

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- The proportion of women among doctoral students, professors, and scientific researchers, reported in the original study as approximately 40%.
- Proficiency in digital technologies and foreign languages.
- Participation in lifelong learning and continuing professional development programs.

Educational attainment serves as an important mechanism of upward social mobility because it enhances human capital, increases employment opportunities, and strengthens women's competitiveness in the labor market.

Sociocultural and Axiological Criterion

This criterion examines women's internal motivation, readiness for personal and professional development, and the extent to which stereotypical attitudes are being overcome within society.

Its principal indicators include:

- High levels of social engagement and self-confidence.
- A harmonious balance between family responsibilities and professional careers.
- Support for women's social activities from families and mahalla communities.
- The development of humanistic values, civic responsibility, and leadership qualities.

The sociocultural dimension is particularly important because formal legal equality does not automatically eliminate traditional expectations or social barriers that may restrict women's professional opportunities.

The Role of Higher Education in Promoting Women's Social Mobility

The educational environment of higher education institutions functions as a powerful mechanism of upward social mobility, encouraging young women's professional development and strengthening their leadership capabilities.

Universities serve not only as centers for acquiring professional knowledge but also as environments in which young women develop their social identities and gain initial experience in research, management, and public engagement [4].

Abu Rayhan Beruni, in his scientific and philosophical works, emphasized the importance of knowledge and reason as fundamental forces driving human progress [5].

His intellectual legacy highlights the value of scientific inquiry, rational thinking, and the pursuit of truth.

In the context of contemporary education, these principles reinforce the importance of supporting research activities, scientific innovation, and academic development among female students and young women researchers.

The introduction of modern educational technologies, business accelerators, discussion clubs, mentoring programs based on the ustoz-shogird tradition, and scientific internships at Uzbekistan's higher education institutions contributes to the transformation of students' values and professional aspirations.

Such initiatives can strengthen self-confidence, encourage independent decision-making, and develop competitive leadership competencies among young women.

Furthermore, participation in international academic programs, professional networks, and interdisciplinary research projects provides additional opportunities for developing communication skills, intercultural competencies, and professional adaptability.

These educational mechanisms may contribute to the formation of a new generation of women leaders capable of participating effectively in public administration, scientific research, entrepreneurship, and technological innovation.

Challenges and Barriers to Women's Leadership and Social Mobility

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Despite significant institutional reforms, the development of women's leadership and the achievement of sustainable upward social mobility in Uzbekistan continue to face several objective and subjective challenges.

First, traditional sociocultural stereotypes remain influential in certain regions and family environments.

Such attitudes may prioritize women's domestic responsibilities and childcare duties while limiting the perceived importance of their education, professional development, and career advancement.

These stereotypes can restrict women's access to leadership opportunities and reinforce unequal expectations regarding family and professional responsibilities.

Second, the problem of the double burden, often described as the second shift, continues to affect women's professional opportunities.

This phenomenon occurs when women combine full-time employment with primary responsibility for unpaid domestic work, childcare, and care for other family members.

The unequal distribution of unpaid care responsibilities may reduce the time available for professional training, career advancement, scientific research, and participation in public life.

Third, occupational segregation remains a significant structural challenge.

Women are often concentrated in relatively lower-paid sectors of the economy, including social services and primary education, while their representation in high-value-added industries such as information technology, engineering, energy, and heavy industry remains comparatively limited.

Such occupational patterns may contribute to income disparities and restrict access to senior managerial positions.

Strategic Measures for Overcoming Existing Barriers

Overcoming the identified challenges requires comprehensive and coordinated measures involving government institutions, educational organizations, employers, civil society, and local communities.

One important priority is the further development of childcare and social care infrastructure.

Expanding access to preschool educational institutions, nurseries, and extended-day programs in schools can reduce the time burden associated with childcare and create additional opportunities for women's professional self-realization.

Another essential direction involves developing retraining and professional development programs for women during and after parental leave.

Such programs can help prevent the depreciation of human capital, maintain professional qualifications, and facilitate women's reintegration into the labor market.

Particular attention should also be given to promoting the achievements of successful women leaders in business, science, public administration, and high-technology industries.

Mass media and social networks can contribute to the formation of positive role models by presenting examples of women's professional accomplishments, innovative initiatives, and leadership experiences.

Furthermore, the expansion of remote employment, flexible working arrangements, and digital platform-based employment can create additional opportunities for combining professional activities with family responsibilities.

Digitalization offers new possibilities for entrepreneurship, online education, professional networking, and access to international labor markets.

However, the effectiveness of these opportunities depends on equitable access to digital infrastructure, appropriate professional training, and the development of digital competencies.

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Therefore, digital transformation policies should incorporate gender-sensitive approaches that address existing inequalities in technological access and professional opportunities.

Conclusion

The transformation of women's leadership and social mobility in the context of the modernization of society in New Uzbekistan represents an important indicator of democratization, social development, and the humanization of public life.

The combination of the rich spiritual and moral heritage of Eastern philosophy, the intellectual contributions of prominent thinkers such as Ibn Sina, Alisher Navoi, Abu Rayhan Beruni, and Yusuf Khas Hajib, and contemporary international principles of gender equality provides a conceptual foundation for understanding women's changing roles in society.

The government policies of New Uzbekistan, aimed at supporting women and expanding their educational, economic, and political opportunities, contribute to the development of institutional mechanisms that facilitate upward social mobility.

At the same time, the effectiveness of these mechanisms depends on overcoming persistent sociocultural stereotypes, reducing occupational segregation, improving access to education and financial resources, and promoting a more equitable distribution of family responsibilities.

Higher education institutions, digital technologies, entrepreneurship programs, and professional development initiatives play particularly important roles in strengthening women's leadership potential.

The realization of women's creative, intellectual, and productive capabilities constitutes an essential prerequisite for sustainable development, social prosperity, and the establishment of a competitive state in the twenty-first century.

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