



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

Economic Status Of Women In Uzbekistan After Independence: A Sociological Study

Syed Muzamil Khurshid

Research Scholar

Center Of Central Asian Studies (Ccas)

University Of Kashmir, Hazratbal, Srinagar, J&K-190006, India

Abstract:

Uzbekistan being a patriarchal society wherein cultural bias is an acceptable fact. After its independence it opened a new chapter to bring socio cultural changes in the position of women. Gender equality was inscribed in its constitution. Women have been guaranteed equality of rights by the law but are unable to get equality by male dominated society and family. The objective of this paper is to highlight the economic status of Uzbek women in independent Uzbekistan.

Keywords: Uzbekistan, Women, Economy, Post –Soviet, Employment.

1. Introduction:

Throughout the history women remained oppressed and subjugated by males. She was denied of her due rights, which may be because of patriarchal society, weak physique of females or social and religious bindings. Hence, modern society tried to keep focus on her and to unchain her from old customs and practices. She sacrificed for the noble cause during all the periods of regimes. She occupies the key position in the developmental plans of nation.¹ After soviet union breakup, exemplary work displayed by the women in all disciplines of life surfaced. Her active participation, sacrifices and struggle against all the odds of conserved society gave a shining beacon light of hope. With the process of nation building among the Central Asian countries, female folk were kept away from the political processes. A squeezing employment market as well as low wages became a driving force for the influential educated women to move towards training programs sponsored by international agencies. The major changes took place in the societies of Central Asian countries following the demise of soviet union in 1991 from individual, family to community level, where nation has to face hardship and setbacks to lead a road towards parliamentary form of government and market based economy.² Uzbek rural women got relegated most as she was an important part of collective farms of agriculture. Now, the collective farms are substituted by private farms and joint stock farming companies which require less number of people.³ Hence, she has to stay at home and work for house related activities. Usually her contribution is much in domestic farming where produce is for export purposes. The rural population contributes 49.4 percent (2018)

of total population.⁴ As the prime occupation of people in Uzbekistan is agriculture, women give a substantial contribution. The contribution of women in small and micro-businesses including farms raised from 21.7 percent in 2014 to 22.5 percent in 2016. Besides women has whole burden of household works viz. Cooking, laundry, cleaning, rearing children, caring livestock etc. Which all remains uncounted before the whole family. Women plays an important role in low paid social sectors like education, healthcare, social service, catering and fine arts where she contributes more than her other counterpart. As these places are more expedient for her, she has almost equivalent share in large companies and ngo's which is 49.5 percent in 2016.⁵ Overall women have been found to cater low profile jobs like agriculture, labor, livestock etc. The role of women in the development of community was given least importance. She was considered to have designated role in household activities mainly. Women of Uzbekistan have poor access for health care, education, politics, economy etc. Women is further vulnerable for poverty, domestic violence, unemployment, trafficking etc.

2. Objectives:

The present study is designed to throw light on women in post-independent Uzbekistan, and the changes that were brought to the economy and social fabric as country tried to evolve as an independent state.

3. Methodology:

The primary as well as secondary data was utilized in framing the present study design. The secondary data was collected from research papers, books and other text reports from organizations viz. Asian development bank reports, world bank, world health organisation, united nations development program, and UNICEF. Moreover, data was also acquired and analysed from various government websites and census reports of Uzbekistan.

4. Result and discussion:

The demise of Soviet Union had impact upon the life of Uzbeks. Hence, the common Uzbek people have to feel the brunt after gaining independence. The major blow after the soviet breakup was on the economy of Uzbekistan, as the independent republic had to take now the reins of shattered economy. Many industries both small scale and large scale were shut either because of shortage of raw material or loss of market. The devastated economy engulfed women and affected her badly in all spheres of life. As a result of weak economic structure, her education suffered and job opportunities started to dwindle. The professional and educational opportunities she enjoyed during the soviet period received a serious setback. Her social welfare too got affected with the transition. Job sector, health care and education in general received a major setback. The services in Soviet Uzbekistan, which were earlier free of charge became no longer free after independence and hence further reduced the standard of living.⁶

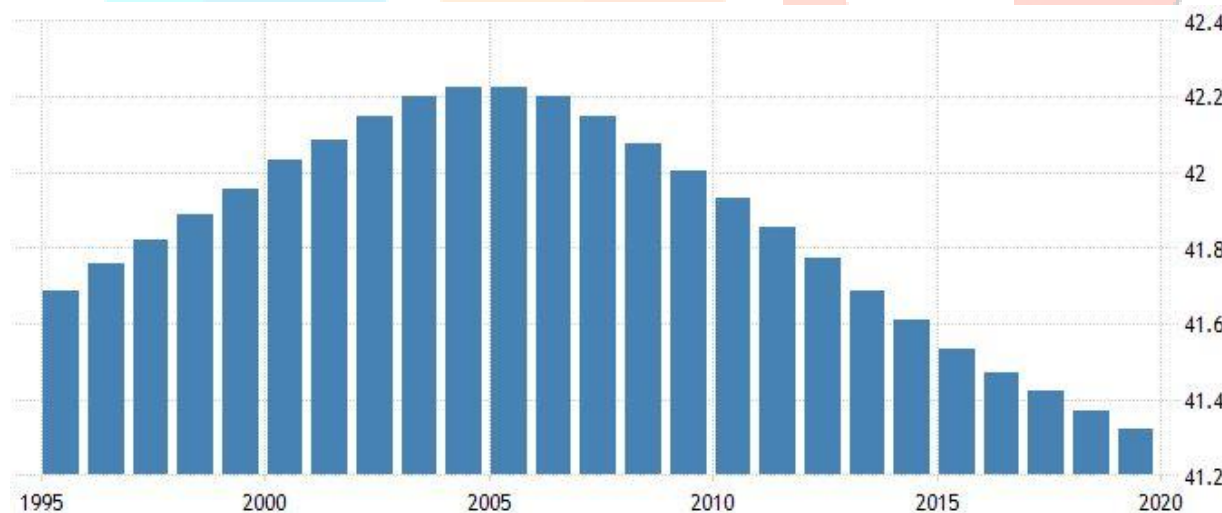
Table 1: percentage of women participation in employment sector from 2007 to 2019

Year	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Women	47.2	46.2	46.3	46.0	45.4	45.4	45.6	45.5	45.6	45.6	45.7	42.7	43.3
Men	52.8	53.8	53.7	54.0	54.6	54.6	54.4	54.5	54.4	54.4	54.3	57.3	56.7

source:<https://gender.stat.uz/en/osnovnye-pokazateli-en/trud-en/aktivnoe-naselenie-en/535-chislenost-ekonomicheski-aktivnogo-naseleniya-en> (as accessed on 01-06-2020).

As a result of dwindled economy accompanied with the transition, employment opportunities showed slant towards downside. Table 1 shows the percentage of women’s participation in employment sector from 2007 to 2019. This affected both gender with much impact over feminine folk. Moreover she was thrown out of labor market immediately following transition. As per 1991-94 statistical data, the major portion (70 percent) of employment reduction in the organizations was constituted by females.⁷ It persisted till 2000, when females constituted 63 percent of total unemployment. While providing jobs among the two sexes, males were given favor as he remains the sole breadwinner of the family.⁸ Figure 1 depicts the percentage of women labor force. It includes persons with ages above fifteen years encompassing the criteria of international labor organization economically active people. In 2018, the share of women labor force out of total was 41.48 according to World Bank collection.⁹

Figure 1: share of women in labor force



source:<https://tradingeconomics.com/uzbekistan/labor-force-female-percent-of-total-labor-force-wb-data.html> (as accessed on 20-07-2020).

As law defends females, it resulted in her inaccessibility to certain jobs. Because the law prohibits the employer to place women at hazardous position and at places which affects her health. Hence, employers choice remains males compared to the females as his availability and placing at any place can be considered with ease.¹⁰ Women without children are given preferences compared to those who have children, additionally pregnant women remains little choice to her employer. Many women argue that despite of legislative advantages, laws are not enacted with spirit and fervor. Moreover, men are forwarded to higher positions with handsome salaries than his female counterpart with similar degree and expertise.¹¹ Most of females work in the non-productive field’s viz. Education, health, art and

culture, insurance etc. Table 2 shows the share of women in different sectors of economy compared to her male counterpart in 2019. The presence of large number of women in the sectors of education and health care has put them at vulnerable position. As these sectors show undulations in the remuneration. Following independence, inflation soared, salaries diminished and poverty increased. This affected women to large extent.

Table 2: share of women and men in different sectors of economy in 2019:

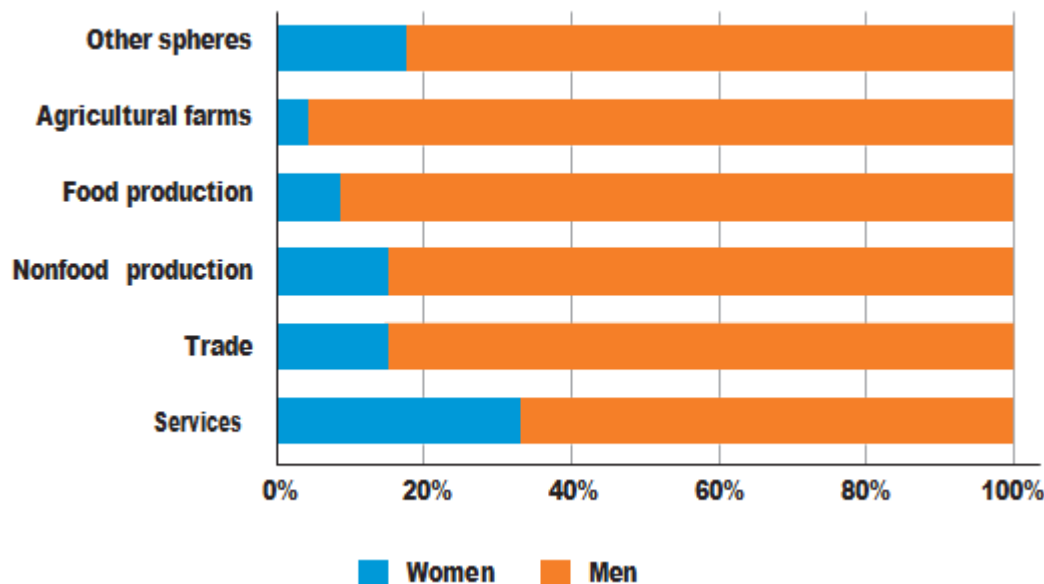
Sector(%)	Health	Education	Agriculture	Industry	Finance	Art
Women	8.4%	15.3%	27.3%	14.3%	0.5%	0.5%
Men	1.8%	3.5%	25.4%	12.9%	0.6%	0.5%

Source: <https://gender.stat.uz/en/osnovnye-pokazateli-en/trud-en/zanyatost-naseleniya-en/1457-employed-persons-by-gender-and-economic-activity-in-2019>. (as accessed on 6th sep.2020)

Despite of government orders to proscribe discrimination against women, still it exists in Uzbekistan. Here, well skilled and professional women are low salaried which is even less than the average wages. Uzbekistan had developed privatization after achieving independence, which brought latest machinery, industries and new resources of job opportunities. This favored males mostly and women got affected badly. Moreover, women were given remuneration 20-30 percent less compared to males with similar qualification. The important reason for this disparity was un-skilled life, lack of commercialization and commodification of skill abilities and growth of sex industry. It all went against her interests. With the privatization process, women got severely affected as various programs of IMF and world bank severed her social outlays to large extent.¹² Age old traditions have set some expectations over females, where she is ascribed for household works viz. Cooking, rearing children, house cleaning, garden works, livestock rearing etc. She had been inured by the society to do works which will be beneficial for family. Hence, was pushed for pursuing education, health care works and seamstress. The infiltration of families into the personnel life of females in patriarchal society distanced her from labor market and hence she lost her interest in jobs. The demand of female labor force in farms increased following independence due to movement of males towards central business locations. Despite her full involvement in the agriculture, she has little been involved in modern machinery and has not been skilled well. she constitutes 3 percent of skilled workers in agriculture machinery and 97 percent in state farms as laborers. Her extensive and tiresome work in the field farms and at home remains unpaid, which gets neglected mostly.¹³ Following the soviet demise in 1991, market economy took the precedence in Uzbekistan. Women felt the brunt of the economic transition after independence and faced unemployment, economic insecurity and an erosion of dignified life overall. In the market based economy, Uzbek women entrepreneurs aroused to stabilize the shattered economic living standard of women. Among the newly entrepreneurs, 11 business women with like mindedness formed the business women association in 1991 under the registration of *tadbirkor ayol*.¹⁴ Its main aim was to uplift women entrepreneurs, providing economic security to females, supporting and training enthusiastic entrepreneurs, educating women regarding business and their rights, women empowerment and overall to give impetus to the dwindled economy of the state.¹⁵ It worked with missionary zeal in creating a congenial environment for women, supporting women for participating in entrepreneurship and lobbying to facilitate her business smoothly. business women association sustained and remained alive as trustworthy ngo because of its faithfulness, convincing and credible activities after 2005, whereas most of the other ngo's were purged by 2007.¹⁶ Living standard of women got further affected by the revival of traditionalism, customs, cultures and rituals, as they were not supportive and favorable for women

entrepreneurship. During post-soviet period, more women took the business as profession. As soviet period endorsed restrictions over informal economic activities like small scale trade, which was associated and categorized along wrong terms. They were given a name of *spekulyant*, which implies negative denotations. In the later part of soviet period where regime saw *perestroika* as its main agenda. Women entrepreneurs took sigh of relief and got involved in informal business activities.¹⁷ Figure 4 mentions the involvement of women in different sectors of the economy in 2017. It shows involvement of women led business in various sectors with 34 percent in services, 16 percent in trade, 16 percent in non-food production, 9 percent in food production, 5 percent in agriculture, others 21 percent.¹⁸

figure 4: distribution of women in various business sectors



source: united nations development program, Japan international cooperation agency, chamber of commerce and industry, and the bwa, 2017. *The portrait of business women of Uzbekistan survey conducted under the business forum of Uzbekistan project. Phase 2.* (As accessed on 28th November 2020).

Uzbekistan passed through different periods from traditional and conservative society to more modern and open society of soviets, followed by an era after independence with revival of traditionalism laced with modernity. Hence, Uzbek women of this region are more experienced in voyaging through contrast cultures.

5. Conclusion:

After soviet dissolution economy of Uzbekistan crumbled altogether. The effect of which struck women more than her other counterpart. Post-independence, the factories and other business establishments started to purge their staff and women were the first to lose the job. While recruiting people, women were the last option before the employer because maternity leaves as well as other benefits under labor code. Most of the unemployed women are unskilled from rural areas working in agriculture at low wages. Moreover women working in female sector of government service like education and healthcare are receiving low remuneration.

References:

1. Nantes,y.c. 2005. *Lost voices: central asian women confronting transition*. London: zed books. P.4.
2. Chenoy, a. 2002. *A making of new russia*. New delhi: har-anand publications, pp. 233-36.
3. Bloch, P.C. 2002. *Agrarian reform in Uzbekistan and other Central Asian countries*. Working paper, No.49. Madison: Land tenure center University of Wisconsin, p.7.
4. Gender statistics of Uzbekistan, 2018. Available online at <https://gender.stat.uz/en/osnovnye-pokazatli-en/demografia-en/naselenie-en>. (accessed on 22 Aug. 2019.)
5. Uzbekistan Country Gender Assessment Update, *Asian Development Bank*, 2018. p.11.
6. Buckley, M. 1997. p. 271
7. Tokhtakhodjaeva, M. 1995. *Between the slogans of communism and the laws of Islam; the women in Uzbekistan*. Lahore, Pakistan. p. 245.
8. Buckley, M. 1997. p. 288.
9. Available online at <https://tradingeconomics.com/uzbekistan/labor-force-female-percent-of-total-labor-force-wb-data.html>. (as accessed on 6th sep.2020)
10. Giorgetta, A et al., 2002. Uzbekistan: Violence, repression and denial of economic, social and cultural rights. *Report prepared by world organization against torture(OMCT) and the legal aid society(LAS) to the united nations committee against torture*. p.9.
11. *Uzbekistan: Violence, repression and denial of economic, social and cultural rights*. 2002.p.13
12. Available online at <https://gender.stat.uz/ru>. (as accessed on 7th sep.2020).
13. Alimdjanova, D. 2009. Gender aspects of agricultural and rural employment: Application for Uzbekistan. Paper presented at *FAO-IFAD-ILO, Rome*. p. 3.
14. Shodiyev . 1999. *Strengthening economic opportunities for rural women in Uzbekistan*. Uzbekistan: Tashkent state university. p. 10.12..
15. Millier, K. and Jo- bellamy, P. 2014. The business women association of Uzbekistan: A qualitative study of the emergence and potential influence of women's leadership in central Asia. *Journal of Eastern European and Central Asian Research*; 1(1): 2.
16. Esplen. E. and Brody, A. 2007. *Putting gender back in the picture: Rethinking women's economic empowerment*. *Institute of Development Studies* Brighton: University of Sussex: p. 3.
17. NGOsustainability. (2007). The 2007 NGO sustainability index.
18. Turaeva. R. 2017. *Gender and changing women's role in Uzbekistan: From Soviet workers. to post- Soviet entrepreneurs. Constructing the Uzbek state: Narratives of post-Soviet years*. Chapter15, pp. 303-319
19. Country Gender Assessment, *Asian Development Bank*, 2018. p. 35.