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WOMEN SCHOLARS IN UZBEKISTAN: ACADEMIC CAREERS, SCIENTIFIC CONTRIBUTIONS, AND INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN ANDIJAN REGION (1991–2024)

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Abstract. This thesis examines the changing position of women scholars in Andijan region during Uzbekistan's independence period from 1991 to 2024. Rather than concentrating exclusively on legislative reforms or the numerical growth of women researchers, the study investigates academic career development, institutional continuity, scientific mentorship, and women's contributions to medical education and research. Particular attention is paid to the historical experience of Andijan State Medical Institute, changes in women's participation in higher education, and the relationship between academic qualifications and research employment.
Keywords: women scholars, Andijan region, Uzbekistan, scientific research, academic careers, higher education, medical science, scientific mentorship, gender equality, institutional development, research opportunities.

INTRODUCTION

The development of scientific institutions in independent Uzbekistan has been accompanied by important changes in the position of women within higher education and academic research. Following independence in 1991, universities and research organizations faced the task of preserving established scientific traditions while adapting to new economic circumstances, educational priorities, and institutional requirements. These transformations influenced the careers of both male and female researchers, although women's professional experiences were also shaped by family responsibilities, established social expectations, and unequal access to certain academic opportunities.

Andijan region provides a valuable setting for examining these developments. Its educational and scientific institutions have traditionally played an important role in preparing specialists for the Fergana Valley. The region's academic environment includes universities, medical institutions, technical education establishments, and organizations involved in professional teacher training. Within these institutions,

women have participated in teaching, clinical research, scientific supervision, academic administration, and the preparation of new generations of specialists.

MAIN PART

One of the distinctive characteristics of Andijan's academic development has been the contribution of women to medical education and professional research. Andijan State Medical Institute illustrates how institutional traditions established before independence continued to influence women's academic opportunities during subsequent decades. According to the institute's historical account, the women's organizational council was headed by associate professor L. U. Khojayeva between 1990 and 1996, followed by senior lecturer Mahfuzakhon Qoziboyeva between 1997 and 2001. The document subsequently identifies associate professor M. A. Jorayeva as the council's chair from 2001 onward [1].

These details reveal an important aspect of women's institutional participation. Female academics were involved not only in classroom instruction and research but also in activities concerned with professional coordination, student development, and institutional representation. Although such responsibilities cannot be equated directly with formal scientific leadership, they contributed to the organizational environment in which younger women pursued higher education and academic careers.

The institute's account also identifies several prominent women whose work represented different fields of medical education and research. Professor Toxtakhon Muhitdinova is recognized for her work in obstetrics and gynecology, while Professor Dilorom Asranqulova is described as a recipient of two state research grants. Professor Hamro Xudoyberdiyeva and associate professor J. G. Saidkhojayeva are also included among the institution's distinguished academic staff. The latter is identified in the source as an experienced surgeon associated with the development of lymphology [1]. These examples demonstrate the disciplinary diversity of women's professional contributions. Their academic involvement extended beyond theoretical instruction into clinical knowledge, medical specialization, scientific supervision, and the preparation of healthcare professionals. However, the institutional document does not provide sufficient information to compare these scholars' publication records or measure their individual scientific impact quantitatively. Their significance should therefore be understood primarily within the documented history of professional medical education.

A second important development concerns the expansion of women's access to higher education. During the early independence period, academic institutions operated within a changing economic and administrative environment. By the late 2010s, reforms in

university education had created additional possibilities for women to enter advanced professional training.

Official statistics demonstrate the scale of this transformation. According to the Andijan Regional Statistics Department, women accounted for approximately 23,200 of the region's 47,600 higher education students at the beginning of the 2021/2022 academic year, representing 48.7 percent of total enrolment. The number of female students was approximately three times the corresponding figure for the 2017/2018 academic year [2].

This expansion was significant for the formation of future academic personnel. A larger female student population increased the potential number of candidates for master's programmes, doctoral studies, research assistant positions, and university teaching. Nevertheless, greater access to undergraduate education did not automatically translate into equivalent representation at advanced research levels.

The same statistical publication records approximately 700 women enrolled in master's programmes during 2021/2022, compared with around 22,500 women studying at undergraduate level [2]. These figures describe different educational populations rather than a single cohort progressing through the system. Consequently, they cannot be used to calculate an individual transition rate. They nevertheless illustrate the importance of examining postgraduate education separately when assessing women's opportunities to pursue scientific careers.

By 2023, Andijan had become one of Uzbekistan's major regional centres of scientific employment. National statistics recorded 2,499 research specialists undertaking research and development activities in the region. Of these, 815 were women and 1,684 were men, meaning that women represented approximately 32.6 percent of research personnel [3].

The comparison between female participation in higher education and research employment is instructive. Although women represented nearly half of the university student population in 2021/2022, their share among research specialists in 2023 was considerably lower. These indicators relate to different years and populations, so the difference does not establish a precise rate of career attrition. Nevertheless, it suggests that access to university education and participation in professional scientific research should be treated as separate dimensions of academic development.

The distribution of women across research occupations also deserves attention. Scientific employment includes employees with different qualifications, responsibilities, and levels of professional independence. A junior researcher, university lecturer, scientific project leader, and senior professor may all participate in

research, but their opportunities to determine research priorities and obtain funding differ substantially.

For this reason, measuring women's contribution solely through their numerical representation provides an incomplete account. A more detailed assessment would distinguish academic rank, disciplinary specialization, research leadership, access to laboratories, participation in funded projects, and scientific supervision responsibilities.

CONCLUSION

The experience of women scholars in Andijan between 1991 and 2024 demonstrates that scientific participation developed through the interaction of institutional continuity, educational expansion, professional specialization, and changing research opportunities. The careers of women associated with Andijan State Medical Institute illustrate the importance of established academic traditions, scientific mentorship, and individual contributions to professional education. Meanwhile, the expansion of higher education during the later independence period enlarged the potential pool of future female researchers.

An important distinction emerges between access to education and sustained scientific employment. Regional and national statistics demonstrate that women's participation differed across educational and research categories, while qualitative research draws attention to the personal and organizational conditions influencing academic careers. These findings indicate that numerical representation alone cannot adequately describe the position of women within scientific institutions.

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