

**Czech University of Life Sciences Prague**

**Faculty of Economics and Management**

**Department of Humanities**



**Master's Thesis**

**Discrimination Towards Women in Workplace and  
Promotion into Managerial Positions in Uzbekistan**

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# DIPLOMA THESIS ASSIGNMENT

Bc. Loretta Petrosyan

Economics and Management

Thesis title

**Discrimination Towards Women in Workplace and Promotion into Managerial Positions in Uzbekistan**

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## Objectives of thesis

The thesis aims to investigate the phenomenon of discrimination against women in the workplace in Uzbekistan, specifically by focusing on the context of promotion into managerial positions. The thesis will investigate the experiences of women across a range of organisations and industries in Uzbekistan. As well as investigating the prevalence of discrimination in these workplaces, it will look at the values, practices, beliefs and expectations that underlie them. Based on this, it will consider strategies for addressing discrimination and improving conditions.

## Methodology

The thesis will use comparative analysis of secondary literature to present contemporary debates on the nature and scope of workplace discrimination against women. It will present and analyse the existing legal and policy framework in Uzbekistan and compare it with international standards and policy debates in other countries. It will investigate attitudes and experiences towards women in the workplace in Uzbekistan through both quantitative and qualitative research. Quantitative research will involve a questionnaire survey of women in managerial positions, focused on their workplace experiences and perceptions of gender stereotypes. This will be complemented by qualitative research in the form of interviews with both male and female managers, allowing for deeper analysis of the values, beliefs and practices underlying these experiences. The thesis will make recommendations for strategies to challenge discrimination based on the data collected.

## The proposed extent of the thesis

40-50 pages

## Keywords

Gender Discrimination, Women, Managers, Glass-Ceiling, Rights, Gender Stereotypes, Equality, Harassment, Workplace, Promotion, Sex-roles, Uzbekistan

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## Recommended information sources

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## **Declaration**

I declare that I have worked on my master's thesis titled "**Discrimination Towards Women in Workplace and Promotion into Managerial Positions in Uzbekistan**" by myself and I have used only the sources mentioned at the end of the thesis. As the author of the master's thesis, I declare that the thesis does not break any copyrights.

In Prague on 31.03.2024

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I would like to thank Daniel Rosenhaft Swain, Ph.D., MA., and my caring parents and family, for their advice and support during my work on this thesis.

# **Discrimination Towards Women in the Managerial Positions and Workplace in Uzbekistan**

## **Abstract**

The given diploma thesis aims to research how often prejudice and various form of discrimination towards women becoming managers occurs in different job environments and how the outcomes of that may affect females' professional development and well-being. To be more specific, the issue is examined and researched in Tashkent, which the capital of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Despite of that, the author focuses on shedding light on potential solutions to mitigate discriminating factors.

To achieve these goals, a thoroughly examined body of literature, empirical research and case studies was implemented. All the work done shows the level of significance of gender equality in the managerial market and workplace and all the negative effects on business, economic and social progress in Uzbekistan.

**Keywords: Gender Discrimination, Women, Managers, Glass-Ceiling, Rights, Gender Stereotypes, Equality, Workplace, Promotion, Sex-roles, Uzbekistan**

# **Diskriminace žen na manažerských pozicích a na pracovišti v Uzbekistánu**

## **Abstrakt**

Daná diplomová práce si klade za cíl zkoumat, jak často se v různých pracovních prostředích vyskytují předsudky a různé formy diskriminace vůči ženám, které se stávají manažerkami, a jak mohou jejich výsledky ovlivnit profesní rozvoj a pohodu žen. Abychom byli konkrétnější, problematika je zkoumána a zkoumána v Taškentu, což je hlavní město Republiky Uzbekistán. Přesto se autor zaměřuje na osvětlování možných řešení ke zmírnění diskriminačních faktorů.

K dosažení těchto cílů byla provedena důkladně prozkoumaná literatura, empirický výzkum a případové studie. Veškerá odvedená práce ukazuje míru významnosti genderové rovnosti na manažerském trhu a na pracovišti a všechny negativní dopady na obchodní, ekonomický a sociální pokrok v Uzbekistánu.

**Klíčová slova: Genderová diskriminace, Ženy, Manažeři, Skleněný strop, Práva, Genderové stereotypy, Rovnost, Obtěžování, Pracoviště, Propagace, Sexuální role, Uzbekistán**

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# 1 Introduction

*“No country can every truly flourish if it stifles the potential of its women and deprives itself of the contribution of half its citizens.”*

*-Michelle Obama*

Gender equality is universally recognized as an essential human right and a main component of advancing social and economic development in contemporary cultures. In the quest for progress and prosperity, gender equality stands as a fundamental pillar, essential for the advancement of social and economic development in contemporary societies. Despite significant strides in various domains, the spectre of discrimination against women continues to loom large, casting a shadow over their aspirations and opportunities, particularly in the workplace.

The question what discrimination is, may be the most fundamental one that any philosophical analysis of the issue may occur. At first glance, it would seem unnecessary to provide an answer to this point, as mostly everyone is familiar with discrimination, however, a few minutes of contemplation shows that it is incorrect. Firstly, the term “discrimination” is frequently used to refer to different things. For example, some people use the word in its most general sense, where discrimination means giving people different attitudes and treat them variously. Discrimination and its understanding may become more essential challenge in the future, as there is a propensity in many societies for seeing more and more obstacles as representing this phenomenon. Apparently, understanding prejudice is crucial for comprehending social inequities and even politics and history of several countries.

The concept of discrimination, while seemingly familiar, warrants a deeper examination to unravel its complexities and implications. Often used in a broad sense, discrimination encompasses not just overt acts of bias but also subtle attitudes and systemic barriers that hinder women's advancement. In the context of Uzbekistan, where cultural norms and societal expectations intersect with institutional structures, understanding discrimination is paramount for addressing the entrenched inequities that impede women's progress.

Thus, the persistent glass-ceiling and other similar occurrences in the employment prevent women from reaching their full potential and encourage persistent stereotypes and unequal power

structures as well. Hence, as delving into the issue of discrimination towards women in the Uzbekistani workplace and their struggle for promotion into managerial roles, it is imperative to examine the nuanced factors at play. Through a deeper exploration of these dynamics, we can uncover the root causes of inequality and chart a course towards meaningful change. Let us embark on this journey with empathy and determination, guided by a commitment to justice and equality for all.

## **2 Objectives and Methodology**

### **2.1 Objectives**

In accordance with the objectives of the thesis, it is significant to emphasize the overarching goal of examining the multifaceted nature of discrimination faced by women across diverse sectors and organizations within the Republic of Uzbekistan, particularly in the bustling capital city of Tashkent. The thesis aims to delve into the intricate web of factors that perpetuate biases and hinder women's advancement into managerial positions, shedding light on the systemic barriers and cultural norms that contribute to inequality in the workplace. By exploring the experiences of women firsthand and amplifying their voices, this study seeks to provide insights on the challenges they encounter and the impact of gender stereotypes on their career trajectories. Moreover, it strives to identify actionable strategies and policies to establish a more inclusive and supportive work environment, where women are empowered to develop and ascend to leadership roles. Overall, the thesis aspires to foster a greater awareness and pave the way for a dialogue around gender equality with the goal of driving positive impacts for all working female individuals in Uzbekistan.

### **2.2 Methodology**

The methodology of this thesis adopts a multifaceted approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative methods to comprehensively address the objectives at hand. The theoretical foundation lays the groundwork by exploring the historical context of gender discrimination in Uzbekistan and elucidating the contemporary challenges faced by women in the workplace, particularly in their pursuit of managerial positions.

In the practical part, a survey will be conducted among working women of various age groups in Uzbekistan to capture their firsthand experiences with discrimination, encompassing issues such as unequal pay, limited opportunities for advancement, gender-based harassment, and biased attitudes. This quantitative research aims to quantify the prevalence and patterns of discrimination against women, providing valuable insights into the frequency and trends of such occurrences.

Complementing the survey data, qualitative research will entail in-depth interviews with both women and men who have encountered discrimination in their professional endeavours, especially while aspiring for leadership roles. By eliciting participants' narratives, perspectives, and

coping mechanisms related to workplace prejudice, this qualitative inquiry seeks to elucidate the nuanced effects of discrimination on women's self-esteem, career aspirations, work-life balance, and overall well-being.

The integrated analysis of quantitative and qualitative data will afford a comprehensive understanding of the complexities surrounding women's discrimination in the workplace and managerial market in Uzbekistan. Through evidence-based insights, the thesis endeavours to propose actionable recommendations for enhancing workplace inclusivity, mitigating gender biases, and fostering equitable opportunities for women in leadership positions. Ultimately, the research aims to contribute to the creation of a more equitable and supportive societal framework, where women can thrive professionally and contribute to economic growth on par with their male counterparts.

### **3 Literature Review**

#### **3.1 Background**

Today's attitudes towards women and employment are formed by decades of cultural and religious beliefs. The perception of working women in the past have had a long-lasting effect on how most people see females in the workplace now. Thus, to understand a sense of development of present attitudes towards working women, it is relevant to examine the problem throughout history (Freedman, 2010).

Historically, Islamic, cultural, societal factors and Soviet Union impact have formed women's roles in Central Asia, including Uzbekistan. The history of women empowerment and their participation in labour force can be divided to different significant periods for the country (Kamp, 2016).

Considering Uzbekistan's pre-Soviet era (before 1924), which was primarily patriarchal with almost no opportunities for women to get formal education or even get engaged in public life in general, where the majority of women were strictly limited to household activities as raising children and had no access employment. Despite of that, some women who positioned themselves as privileged thanks to their financial status were able to get elementary education and participate in cultural events. Men had to take all the responsibility for women and were involved into agriculture, trade and other similar activities outside their homes (Umarova, 2023).

Throughout the Soviet Union's communistic governance in Uzbekistan, its target was to arrange a cultural revolution in Central Asia. This initiative was fulfilled by the Hujum, which was a movement that aimed to encourage women to give up on covering their faces with veils and wearing traditional robes to bring up modernization into the society (Kamp, 2016). The Uzbek Communist Party and the Women's Division of it launched the campaign where the aim was to oppose deeply rooted religious and cultural traditions while introducing newly formed Soviet Union society and providing them access to education and paid jobs and changing the local women's ways of living their lives, dressing, spending their leisure time, structure of their families, religion to the working limitations, accordingly (Müller, 2003). However, the campaign got opposed in the society accompanied by some tragic cases when Uzbek uncovered women were attacked. Nevertheless, leadership of Joseph Stalin saw the Communist Party pushing for radical

initiatives, framing the unveiling program as a conflict between progressing and comprehensive religious obscurity (Kamp, 2016).

Uzbekistan was significantly impacted by the cultural revolution of the late 1920s culturally as well as commercially. The country's economy suffered from a rapid transformation throughout this period accompanied by quick industrialization and agricultural collectivization, which required a thorough reconstruction of the farming industry. Thus, due to collectivization, there were two things that changed. It caused instability by disrupting the traditions of the constantly relocating herding communities. On the other hand, it also had advantages as another parties as Kolkhoz or collective farms got organized which were responsible for agriculture production. However, one noteworthy positive outcome was the rise in both male and female literacy rates by the times of World War II. The system of collective farms contributed to the raise of educational possibilities. However, it is relevant to note that despite of these developments, the gender disparities still remained. In the agrarian sector women were mostly limited to work in the positions requiring less skills reflecting the ongoing difficulties in reaching gender parity (Kamp, 2016).

To summarize, because of Soviet Union influence, social standards of Uzbekistan were exposed to a profound restructuring. Most of country's mosques were closed and religious leaders were detained as an outcome of attempts of delegitimizing religion. The legal validity of traditional Sharia law which had regulated family relationships lost its legacy. The prior customs were replaced by Soviet family regulations, which created new rules for child custody, marriage and divorce. Deeply rooted cultural norms including opposition to divorce and constrained limited opportunities for women to get higher education, remained despite of legislative reforms.

In the period of late 1980s, the more liberal culture was introduced under the leadership of Mikhail Gorbachev, reports of Uzbek women committing to self-immolation attracted national as well as international attention, where the reasons behind this worrying trend were complicating. Some blamed the harsh working conditions in cotton fields where women were working and others connected it with domestic violence. Concerns about the human and cultural consequences of the socialist growth supported by the Soviet Union have been brought to light by the obvious desperation of Central Asian women under Soviet influence (Kamp, 2016).

After gaining independence in 1991, a conservative change in ideas concerning women's roles has come from struggles of Uzbekistan to maintain national traditions and at the same time upholding the Soviet Union legacy of women's equality. The party of President Islam Karimov took a contractionary stand prioritizing national culture and pre-Soviet traditions above women equality. Moreover, the government's relation to Islam was also complicating, as while it was supported as an aspect of the national identity, it was at the same time suppressed when it came to the issue of threatening the legitimacy of the state. Also, after independency, there was a religious Renaissance, however, the authorities' reaction was restrictive and was accompanied with prohibiting religious activities, for instance, wearing religious dresses and covering faces with veils.

In the face of such problems, Uzbekistan has implemented administrative measures to improve women's status and included gender equality in its constitution in response to these concerns. Women's equality before the law is secured under the Family Code and National Women's Committee that was founded by the government with representatives holding positions of authorities. However, effectivity of these committees and impact are reasonably questioned by some, who consider them as only administrative organizations with minimal value added and power to formulate policies. Uzbekistan's post-independence period history is a complex „storyline“ that intertwines political, cultural and religious impacts to influence women's changing roles in the society of the country (Umarova, 2023).

By the 21st century, economic transitions had a tremendous impact on dynamics of families in Uzbekistan. Labour migration, especially by males brought up positive as well as negative outcomes as for instance raised standards of living for some households because of increasing divorce rates and remittances. Afterwards, Uzbek women became a part of the labour migration flow, getting independence, but at the same time triggering concerns about the traditional values collapse. Government's attempts of reinforcing national gender roles urged upon, persisting on women's roles as housewives, mothers and keepers of cultural practices (Kamp, 2016).

Since the inauguration of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev in 2016, Uzbekistan has embarked on a transformative journey towards fostering a more inclusive and diversified economic landscape. The government's endeavours have been centred on creating job opportunities, particularly within the realm of small and medium-sized enterprises, while concurrently prioritizing the advancement



of underdeveloped rural and suburban regions. Underpinning these efforts was the unveiling of the Strategy of Actions for the Further Development of Uzbekistan spanning the period from 2017 to 2021. This comprehensive strategy delineated multifaceted reforms aimed at bolstering various sectors of the national economy and social fabric. Emphatically, the strategy aimed at fortifying the public sector, instituting legal reforms to uphold the rule of law, enhancing the judicial system, liberalizing economic policies, fostering societal progress, ensuring security and interethnic cohesion, nurturing religious tolerance, and charting a balanced foreign policy trajectory. These legislative and policy reforms catalysed a palpable shift across Uzbekistan, yielding tangible improvements in the lives of its citizens. Of particular note was the concerted effort to elevate the social and political participation of women, thereby empowering them to assume more prominent roles within governance structures, societal frameworks, and familial domains. In essence, these initiatives represent a concerted endeavour to forge a more equitable and prosperous future for the populace of Uzbekistan, encapsulating the nation's commitment to fostering inclusive development and socioeconomic progress for all its citizens. (Asian Development Bank, 2018).

### **3.1.1 Current Situation and Statistics**

Despite the specific regional differences, the population of Uzbekistan is estimated to have very similar traditional outlook level concerning the roles of males and females and gender-based discrimination (UNDP, 2022).

The most recent research conducted by UNDP on “Negative Impact of Gender Stereotypes and Patriarchal Attitudes on Gender Equality in Uzbekistan,, showed that the gender stereotypes existing in Uzbek society caused by social norms make women to agree to work on less paid jobs and positions in their own country, remaining reliant on remmitances and choosing to reject their direct earning from labor migration (UNDP, 2022).

ILO estimates that in 2022, 60% of working-age individuals participated in the labor market; for males, this number is 71.9%, while for women, it is 46.6%. Women are 1.5% less active than males overall in Uzbekistan (UzDdaily, 2022).

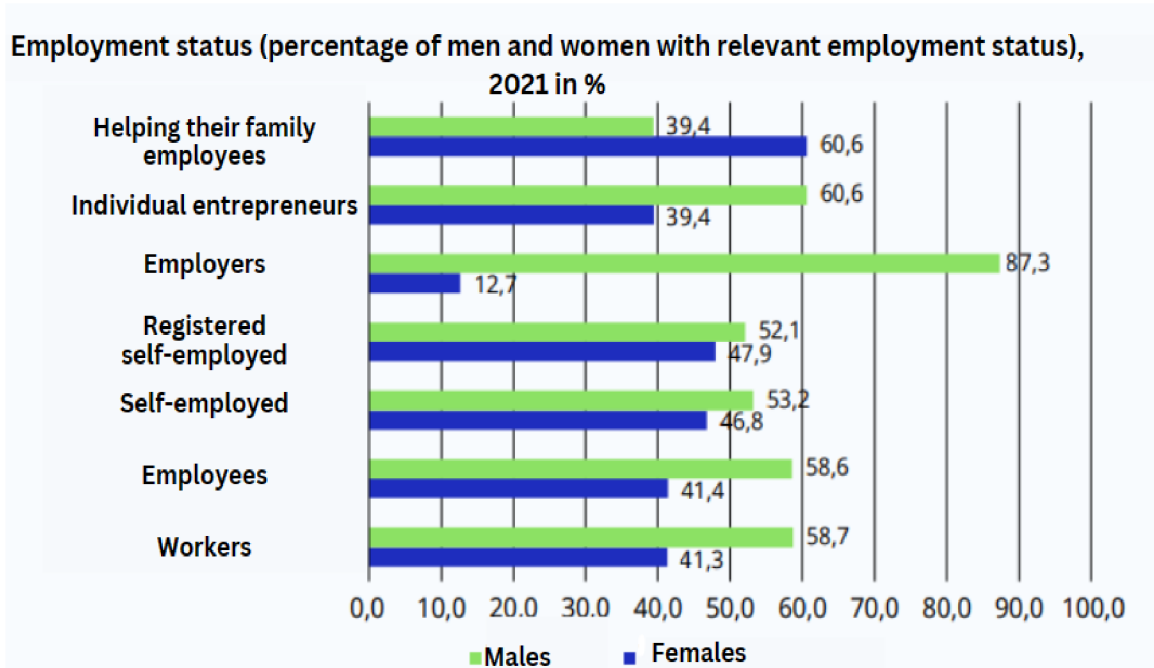


Figure 1 Source: ILO, 2022

Throughout the third quarter of 2022, 68.1 percent of women and men of working age were considered employed aged 52 years. In 2018, most of working women performed unpaid work full-time, while most men were employed. The same picture is observed now, since in 2021 only 49.4 percent of women of working age approximately 15–65 years old were employed in contrast with 70 percent of men, which is equivalent to 58.1 comparing to 75.6 percent using national definition of working age, according to the Figure 1. In 2021, the economic inactivity rate for women nearly doubled that of men, with figures standing at 33.1% for women compared to 18.9% for men.

This disparity suggests that women predominantly undertake unpaid childcare and household responsibilities. Notably, among women aged 25–49 living in families with children over 3 years old or without children, 50.6% are unemployed, a stark contrast to the mere 5.9% of men in similar circumstances. The gender-based division of labor is rooted in the traditional notion that men are the primary "breadwinners." However, overlooking unpaid care work can lead to the misconception that women's potential is underutilized, particularly evident in the employment statistics where 45.7 percent of men were employed in 2021 compared to only 32.6 percent of women. This disparity underscores the undervaluation of care work, which predominantly falls on women worldwide and reflects gender discrimination (ILO, 2023).

Thus, in 2018, 33 percent of women of working age were primarily engaged in unpaid care work, whereas the figure for men was 3 percent. This significant disparity underscores the undervaluation of women's work, which further exacerbates gender inequality in pay for those who are employed in Uzbekistan (ILO, 2023).

### **3.2 Types of Discrimination**

In the context of labor markets, a comprehensive discrimination theory appears valuable in understanding gender-based prejudices. With women getting lower average pay and meeting substantial underrepresentation in elite professions, labor markets manifest gender inequalities.

Workplace gender discrimination may appear in several variations. Basically, there are different types of discrimination women can face, including foundational, instrumental (statistical), direct and indirect (Lippert-Rasmussen, 2017).

Direct discrimination includes examples such as paying one gender more than the other for performing the same job, favoring an individual for promotion based on their marital status instead of considering equally qualified candidates, or terminating the employment of a woman explicitly because she discloses her pregnancy or expresses the possibility of starting a family. To specify, women who got paid less than men counterparts for the same job demonstrates unequal pay, which is a clear example of direct discrimination. Moreover, refusals to hire or promote women because of gender solely, which can lead to tangible disparities in career promotion, financial compensation, etc. Indirect discrimination can manifest in scenarios such as imposition of a minimum height requirement, disproportionately discriminating majority of women. Similarly, an employer's unjustified resistance to hiring part-time workers without a valid reason exemplifies a form of indirect discrimination, that affects a diversity of individuals. To provide a specific example, consider a scenario where a company consistently disagrees to hire women seeking part-time positions, citing reasons such as needing full-time commitment or concerns about productivity. While these reasons may seem valid on the surface, they can disproportionately affect women who need part-time work due to childcare responsibilities, pregnancy, etc. In this case, women who are primary caregivers or are balancing family responsibilities with their careers may find it challenging to secure employment opportunities that accommodate their household schedules. As a

result, they may face barriers to entering or advancing in the workforce, perpetuating gender inequality (Lippert-Rasmussen, 2017).

In the context of discrimination against women in the workplace, foundational discrimination emerges from deeply ingrained biases rooted in societal perceptions of gender norms and distinctions. This form of bias is entrenched in longstanding cultural beliefs about the inherent roles and capabilities of men and women within the professional sphere. Conversely, instrumental discrimination within the workplace operates on a different plane. It is not necessarily grounded in core beliefs about gender but rather propelled by specific objectives or desired outcomes. For instance, decisions such as favoring male candidates for leadership positions may stem from a desire to achieve perceived efficiency or maintain existing power dynamics, rather than from deeply held convictions about gender roles (Lippert-Rasmussen, 2017).

Both foundational and instrumental forms of discrimination significantly contribute to the persistent gender disparities observed in workplace dynamics. They underscore the intricate interplay between deeply rooted societal attitudes, organizational structures, and individual biases that perpetuate inequalities and obstruct the advancement of gender equality within professional realms. (Lippert-Rasmussen, 2017).

In the context of discrimination towards women in the workplace and promotion into managerial positions in Uzbekistan, consider a scenario similar to the findings outlined in Kathleen Hess's investigation of nonverbal discrimination against women in simulated initial job interviews in 2013. Hence, imagine the scenario where a qualified woman is applying for a managerial position in an engineering firm. During the job interview, the male interviewer exhibits clear signs of gender bias and discrimination. As the woman answers questions confidently, the interviewer furrows his brow, shakes his head, and scowls disapprovingly. This non-verbal behavior creates a hostile atmosphere, causing the woman to feel intimidated and hesitant in her responses, sending a message of doubt and contempt. In the job interview where impartiality and professionalism are required, such overt expressions of disapproval based on gender indicate prejudiced views and discriminatory treatment on the side of the interviewer. The female candidate's already unfavorable environment is made worse by the exposure of these facial expressions basing on the feeling of superiority in collaboration with bias from the male interviewer, which increases her emotions of intimidation and hesitation while responding.

In spite of her qualifications and expertise, the interviewer's demeanor signals a bias against women in leadership roles. His skeptical attitude undermines the woman's confidence and contributes to a sense of unwelcome in the workplace. The implicit message conveyed is that women are not suitable for managerial positions, perpetuating gender stereotypes and hindering their career advancement.

In this scenario, the discrimination is evident not only in the interviewer's demeanor but also in the underlying assumptions about women's capabilities and suitability for leadership roles. The woman's experience reflects broader systemic challenges faced by women in Uzbekistan, where gender biases continue to impede their access to managerial positions and professional growth. (Hess, 2013).

Summarizing, the most relevant examples of indirect discrimination reflect cases where females are assessed less favorably in contrast to males having the same qualifications throughout recruiting situations. Therefore, women are expected to perform at higher levels than men in order to get promotion since they are highly likely to receive worse evaluations than males when it comes to promoting. Significantly, these gender assessments using gender as a standard for decisions concerning hiring and advancement within one's company, have an unfavorable impact on stress at workplace, as well as on different psychological consequences, which include low self-esteem, obsessive-compulsive disorder symptoms or depression. (Michael T. Schmitt, 2003).

### **3.3 Types of Management Levels**

In order to answer the key research questions concerning discrimination towards women in managerial positions and grasp the organizational dynamics that influence advancement opportunities for women, it is essential to understand the hierarchical structure of management, delineating between first-line, middle, and top-level managers. The leadership roles that women are not able to achieve due to gender discrimination are respectively described in this chapter.

Managing the tasks including planning, organising, leading and controlling the people working in the organization is referred to as management. It is characterized as innovation, the creation and execution of a management practice, process, structure, or technique that surpasses existing norms and aims to advance organizational objectives. The performer of these tasks and

activities is a manager, person managing people, financial and informational resources, material persuading organizations' interests (Julian Birkinshaw, Hamel , & Mol, 2008).

Figure 2 illustrates the main four managerial levels at which different managers are operating in organizations.



*Figure 2:Source: Hellriegel et. al, 2001*

Figure 2 illustrates the main four managerial levels at which different managers are operating in organizations.

Thus, being more specific about each level, at the apex, top-level managers take on the critical role of coordinating activities, establishing goals and objectives, devising strategies, and formulating major policies that shape the direction and operations of the entire organization. In essence, these managers bear the ultimate responsibility for steering the organization towards its overarching objectives and ensuring its smooth functioning. The top-level managers play a significant role in leveraging the company's strength to capitalize the organizational vision to promote active strategic decision-making policies. Such executive positions are frequently focused on long-term attention to the company's environmental dynamics and anticipation of current and

future trends. Such managers are tasked to shape internal corporate culture, accordingly (Mangaliso, 1995).

As for the middle-level managers, this segment plays a crucial role in ensuring the technical aspects of companies align with the strategies and vision proposed by the top-level managers. The received from the upper level of management policies, which should be converted into specified plans for implementation, which involves vital coordination and integrational approaches. Therefore, the focus of middle-management is inferred to foster better relationships among employees, promoting cooperation, resolving conflicts and organizing departments effectively (Richard L Daft & Parks, 1988).

Considering the lower management level managers, which are also referred to as first-line managers and foremen or supervisors. They serve for the vital connection between operations in departments and the rest of the organization. This level of management encompasses roles such as office managers and leadmen, and their primary objective is to motivate subordinates, provide technical assistance, and ensure the accomplishment of daily objectives of a company. These competencies encompass communication, planning and administration, collaboration and teamwork, strategic policies, deeper awareness, and self-management as well (Robert B. Kaiser & Darren V. Overfield, 2011).

### **3.4 Bias and Prejudice in The Society**

ILO estimates that in 2022, 60% of working-age individuals participated in the labor market; for males, this number is 71.9%, while for women, it is 46.6%. Women are 1.5% less active than males overall in Uzbekistan (UzDdaily, 2022). Referring to these statistics, it is fair to understand why the statistics of women's careers in Uzbekistan are visibly less promising in contrast with men.

The opinion that a man's main role was to work outside the home and make money, while women's mission was taking care of the home and children along with supporting her partner, affected the way how women were seen in the workplace. During the industrial age, the prevalent idea was that jobs, which were employed by women were temporary. Females would quit their jobs to get married and have children, which is frequently considered to be work appropriate for women. For instance, both young men and young women may be employed in department shops as

salesmen, but as soon as a promotion opportunity came up, the young males would be prioritized, as the boss expected the female would eventually leave to marry due to the existing prejudices in societies. Apparently, working for wealthy and middle-class ladies was considered socially unacceptable because it meant that her husband was unable to support her financially, which could affect his reputation. Most likely, if a woman wanted to accomplish something outside her home, she was assigned to get involved into different ways of volunteering (Freedman, 2010).

Traditionally, organizations have usually been founded and managed by males. Business ethics, communication standards and rational frameworks were deliberately established based on typical men's relations and work patterns. As a result, as soon as women used an interpersonally focused leadership styles in male-dominant areas, they have been found to suffer from high level problems in their mental health and continued to receive pressure from their jobs (Gardiner & Tiggemann, 2010).

Due to the gender stereotypes, women usually confront many difficulties, as negative perception of female's competence and effectiveness in society and workplace may badly affect their goals in career progress. Some people face various challenges while applying to a certain job position, and women might experience that more extensively because of biases and give up on leadership positions without trying (Dickerson & Taylor, 2000). Some jobs are simply classified as masculine, as being more appropriate for men and feminine ones, which are considered to be more suitable for women (Nyirak, 2006). The masculine jobs are usually paid higher and there is an extra possibility of men taking top positions in organizations in contrast with women (Eagly & Sczesny, 2009). Consequently, in accordance with Heilman's (1983) suggestions, it was evident that a perceived gap between the way people consider woman and the way how they see masculine job positions, both might affect employers as well as women interested in employment. Poor match between females and work raises expectations of failure (Heliman, 1983).

Gender discrimination exists within the workplace in Uzbekistan, despite the country's legal framework being grounded in gender equality and alignment with international standards. Social expectations continue to shape gender dynamics in professional settings, reinforcing traditional roles for men and women, despite legal statutes avoiding obvious gender distinctions. Traditional notions concerning motherhood and familial obligations often compel women to combine career aspirations with reproductive duties, particularly in fields such as business and politics.



Consequently, women experience time constraints and diminished opportunities for personal development, competitiveness in employment, and participation in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Gender disparities are further worsened by cultural bias on marriage and family, especially those with limited financial resources, prioritizing the education of male offspring under the assumption that girls will eventually marry and leave. This entrenched bias influences women's career choices and aspirations, contributing to pronounced gender gaps in higher education. (Asian Development Bank, 2018). Thus, a significant factor which affects women throughout their career ladder proves to be the transition into motherhood. Managers frequently pay attention to this crucial factor, which is statistically evident as well. For instance, in the United Kingdom women who have become mothers are six times less likely to be recommended for a certain job position and get competency evaluations that are approximately 10% worse than non-mothers. Statistically, only 13% of females can state that they were promoted for a better job within the first five years of their motherhood period in comparison with 26% of men (Bishop, 2022). There are several surveys conducted in other countries that have shed light on the impact of motherhood on women's careers and their promoting, accordingly.

The fact that women do unpaid reproductive tasks is another factor influencing their work. According to a 2015 ADB-sponsored survey, women in both OECD (which, for example, includes the United Kingdom) and non-OECD nations (which includes Uzbekistan) devote the same amount of time to unpaid conventional reproductive responsibilities as males do to productive, paid labor. The reason why more women work part-time or in the informal sector is probably due to their need to balance employment with responsibilities to their families and households (Asian Development Bank, 2018).

There is another preconceived aspect at the first levels of hiring processes emerging towards women only, which is based on asking questions regarding private life of a person. “Do you have any plans to start a family in the nearest future?”, “How many kids are you planning to have?”, “Are you currently pregnant or are you planning your pregnancy?” – these are some examples of quite frequent and at the same time absurd questions women get while being interviewed. After all, women’s capability of fulfilling a certain job is valued in a number of children she wants to have. Moreover, in relation to the insufficient number of research held in Uzbekistan, there is another example in accordance with research conducted by Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), it turned out that 36% of private sector employers in the United Kingdom state it is

acceptable to inquire women about their plans for having children. In addition, 6 out of 10 employers think it is appropriate to ask women whether they are pregnant during the hiring process (EHRC, 2017). It is also relevant to note, that discrimination towards women in the workplace is more of a global issue, but at the same time is especially common within countries of strong patriarchal traditions, as for example, in East Asia. Even in spite of the fact that females in East Asian region are most likely to work outside their home than in the past as a result of progressive economic growth, workplace gender discrimination still prevails. For instance, this pattern can also be applied to one of the wealthiest countries of East Asia, which is South Korea.

Therefore, it is evident that many developed and developing countries have made some progress through such legal reforms punishing discriminatory practices and Uzbekistan is not an exception in this factor today. In this significant aspect, the government of Uzbekistan has taken a very proactive policy. The Uzbek labor law forbids discrimination in employment practices, and the new national development strategy resolved in 2022 includes several initiatives aimed to redressing gender disparities (Seitz & Murodova, 2022).

### **3.5 Consequences of Workplace Discrimination**

One of the most serious aspects that is significantly impacted by gender discrimination, which lowers the effectiveness, efficiency and standard of care proves to be health. It reportedly has a variety of negative effects on diagnosis as well as therapy. Therefore, workplace gender discrimination towards females is a crucial psychosocial stressing factor, that might have long-term negative effects and consequences on the mental health of women employees due to its unpredictable and uncontrolled essence (Patterson & Walcutt, 2013).

The World Health Organization states that people's health outcomes are not equal for people and vary between and within nations with disparity which is disadvantageous to women throughout their lifespan. Such disparities are a result of the overt social and economic injustices and negatively influence women more frequently, including lower indexes of levels of education and employment, lower salaries for similar roles, lack of activeness in leadership roles and high prevalence of various psychological stressors and issues starting from burden of caregiving for others to intimate partner violence (Simone N., 2020). The WHO also states that depressive disorders make up a significant part of the global burden, affecting 350 million of individuals in the

world, where women are almost twice likely to experience mental disorders in contrast to men (World Health Organization, 2013). This gender inequality in mental health is evident across diversity of geographical regions, populations and societies, which is illustrated in Figure 3 below. It can be observed how the average of depressive disorders for women significantly prevails the men's indexes in the region of Central Asia where Uzbekistan is located.

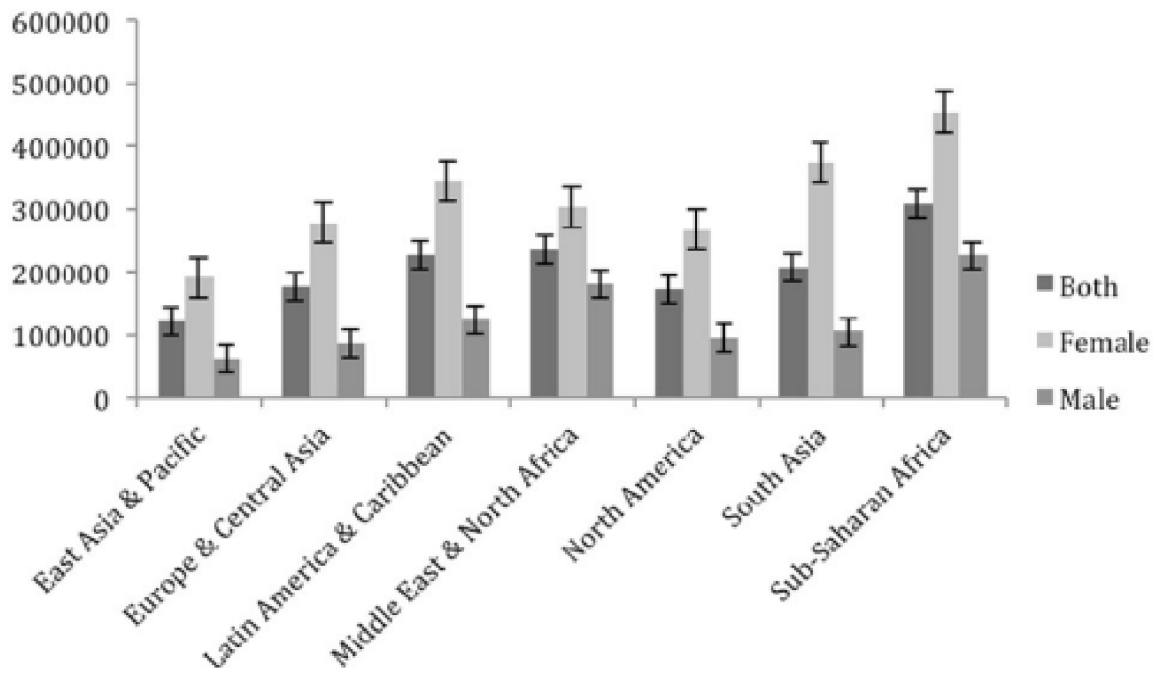


Figure 3: The average depressive disorders for women, men and both genders. Source: Shoukai Yu, 2018

Several studies conducted conclude that gender bias whether overt or subtle can bring additional challenges for women to getting community resources, as mental health care, inevitable for their well-being in general. Regions where common mental health disorders also tend to display higher levels of inequality, which is highlighted in reports of WHO (Yu, 2018).

### 3.5.1 Economical Outcomes

Additionally, to having serious and long-lasting effects for females' discrimination in the market also gives negative consequences affecting society and the economy. The following include the most significant effects, which will be considered separately from the more detailed perspective.

The economic influence of gender inequality on females, countries and communities are crucial. Despite of the fact that the effect of gender disparity on incomes is significant, the cost of gender inequality in the framework of human capital losses is not only referred to earnings losses. Researchers examine how gender inequalities influence progress and have concentrated on annual income measures or its fluctuations. The potential losses in GDP, which is one of the main metrics used to assess country's economic development, as a consequence of women discrimination in the labor market. As country's wealth and economic state is also measured by different types of capital, it was founded that females account only for 38 percent of human capital in comparison to 62 percent of men. Countries with low and middle account females a third part or even less of human capital wealth. As a result, World Bank founded out, that at least 141 countries in the world lost their human capital wealth because of gender discrimination up to \$160.2 trillion, if only women would be assumed to be paid as much as men. Thus, if gender discrimination in earnings were eliminated, there would be an improvement in overall sustainability in wealth of countries in the world. Paying attention to ending gender discrimination, it is significant to invest in females to raise the changing wealth of countries and allow them to proceed in sustainable development, which makes economic sense (World Bank Group, 2018).

Women's underrepresentation in formal employment in Uzbekistan has recorded large economic losses. Concern is equally high about the lack of jobs among both women and men, and overall, the issue is among the most pressing policy priorities facing Uzbekistan. Approximately 1.03 million more women would be active if the female employment rate in Uzbekistan equaled that of the states in the Economic Co-operation and Development Organization. Unemployment in Uzbekistan has disproportionately influenced on women compared to men, indicating that women encounter greater difficulties in securing employment opportunities. In accordance with the State Statistics Committee of Uzbekistan (2019), the official unemployment rate was 9 percent in 2019, with 12.8 percent of women and 6 percent of men being unemployed. Analysis of job seekers registered on the Ministry of Employment and Labor Relations' primary job board in 2019 found out that about 54 percent were women and 46 percent were men, with similar patterns observed in the first quarter of 2020. (World Bank, 2021)

From the economic development perspective, it is obvious that women's oppression prevents economies from advancement. The economy cannot function fully with obstacles for the other half of the world's population. Not only is gender equality a fundamental human right, but

also a crucial economic opportunity. According to the statistics reported, the global economy may grow by nearly 7 percent or 7 trillion dollars, by reducing the pay gap between males and females in the work market (Holland & Ell, 2023).

### **3.6 Leadership Roles and Women**

Gender stereotypes enormously affect the perceiving of women's execution and prevent their progress. Practice shows that gender bias towards women manifested in different organizations and environments impede females learning process underlying becoming a leader, respectively. When leadership and behaviors are equated, which is mostly specific to men, suggests that women were not born to be leaders. Subsequently, in such realities, the acquisition of qualities related to leadership and decision-making becomes extremely complicating for women who must gain trust and credibility in societies, where people are inconsistent about the way they should exercise authority (Khitariashvili, 2016).

There exists a prevalent assumption in managerial context, that men and women should conform to uniform specific behavioral standards, frequently favoring masculine traits as the norm. This expectation can cause formidable obstacles for women striving for success in leadership roles. However, it is imperative to recognize and appreciate the inherent diversity between genders, acknowledging that each of them brings distinct strengths and perspectives to management. Women need not imitate masculine behaviors to excel; rather, they should be afforded the opportunity to demonstrate their competence and leverage their unique contributions.

The criterion for assessing managerial effectiveness should transcend mere statistical representation and instead embrace the varied patterns and styles of contribution inherent in both men's and women's leadership. Some argue that female managers, are prepared to handle their emerging obstacles within organizations better, since they possess unique feminine could be more empathic and exhibit less confrontational tendencies, thereby fostering environments conducive to support communication and participative decision-making.

Hence, establishing an environment that embraces and harnesses these gender-specific differences can bring more inclusive and efficient managerial practices, ultimately contributing to organizational success and employee well-being (Chow, 1992).

Nonetheless, gender stereotypes have significant impact on the way women are perceived in job activities and limit their advancement. According to today’s practice, it shows us that gender stereotypes against women, existing in different forms in companies, prevent women’s abilities to develop and become leaders. It is evident that women are far less likely take leadership roles in comparison with their male counterparts. Recent global research show that despite of the fact that women make up 40% of the global workforce, they still occupy only 23% of CEO positions and just 29% of senior management jobs due to unconscious stereotypes, obvious discriminative attitudes (Bishop, 2022).

It is visible from the Figure 1, that men often mostly take leadership roles. There are only about 18 percent of businesses worldwide which are managed by female. The most obvious difference between organizations managed by men and women is that female managers often tend to have more female employees (Esteban Ortiz-Ospina, 2018).

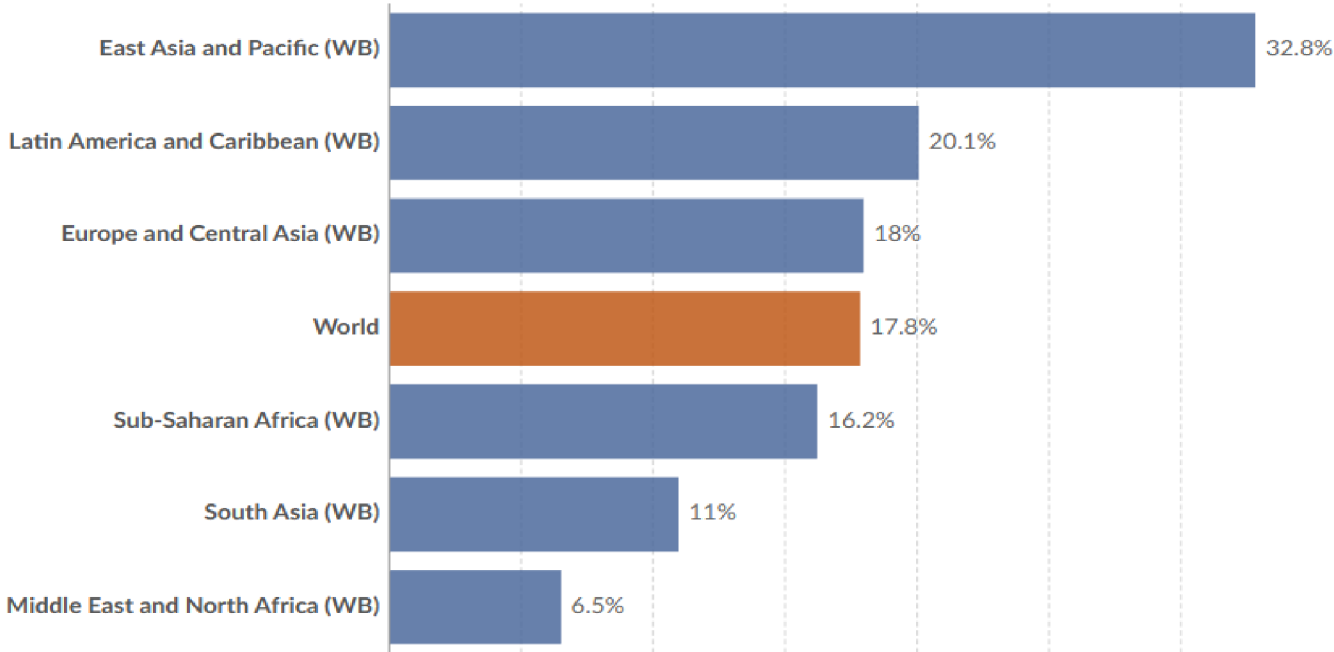


Figure 4: Ratio of firms with women managers. Source: World Bank 2020

As it is illustrated on the Figure 1, over the recent eight years, there has been a steady global rise of 1% every year in the proportion of females hired as leaders. The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 began with a decrease, which was followed by a recovery that matched in, in certain

industries, even surpassed the pre-pandemic trend. Nevertheless, the trend below shows a clear reversal, which returns the 2023 rate back to levels of 2021 (WEF, 2023).

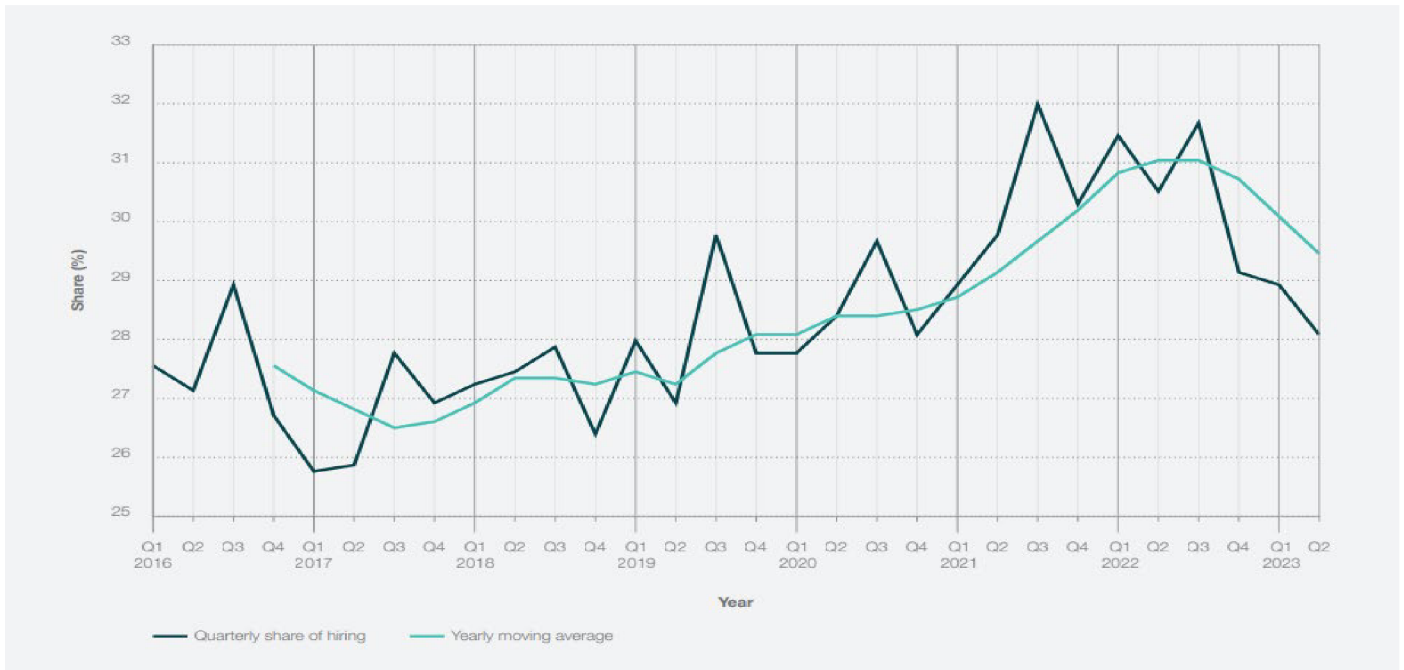


Figure 5: Seasonally adjusted ratio of females in leadership positions (2016-2023). Source: LinkedIn Economic Graph, 2023

Starting from 2016, hiring women into executive roles has not advanced across industries at the same rate. While some industries, as finance, professional services, gas, oil and mining have been developing throughout the past several years, others, like government administration and services of administrative support have been fluctuating, respectively. The given trend illustrated in Figure 1 has also been particularly examined within industries as well. In accordance with the estimates of Figure 2, the percentage of women hired for leadership job vacancies as of May 2023 proves to be lower than what would be expected basing on the trend line of pre-2022 for the majority of industries not including construction, gas, oil, education, agricultural sector, real estate, etc., which proceeds to stay on trend. It is also evident, that the most impacted sectors are professional services and technology, which were 4% points below trend in May 2023 and entertainment suppliers and wholesale with 3% of points below trend (Figure 2) (WEF, 2023).

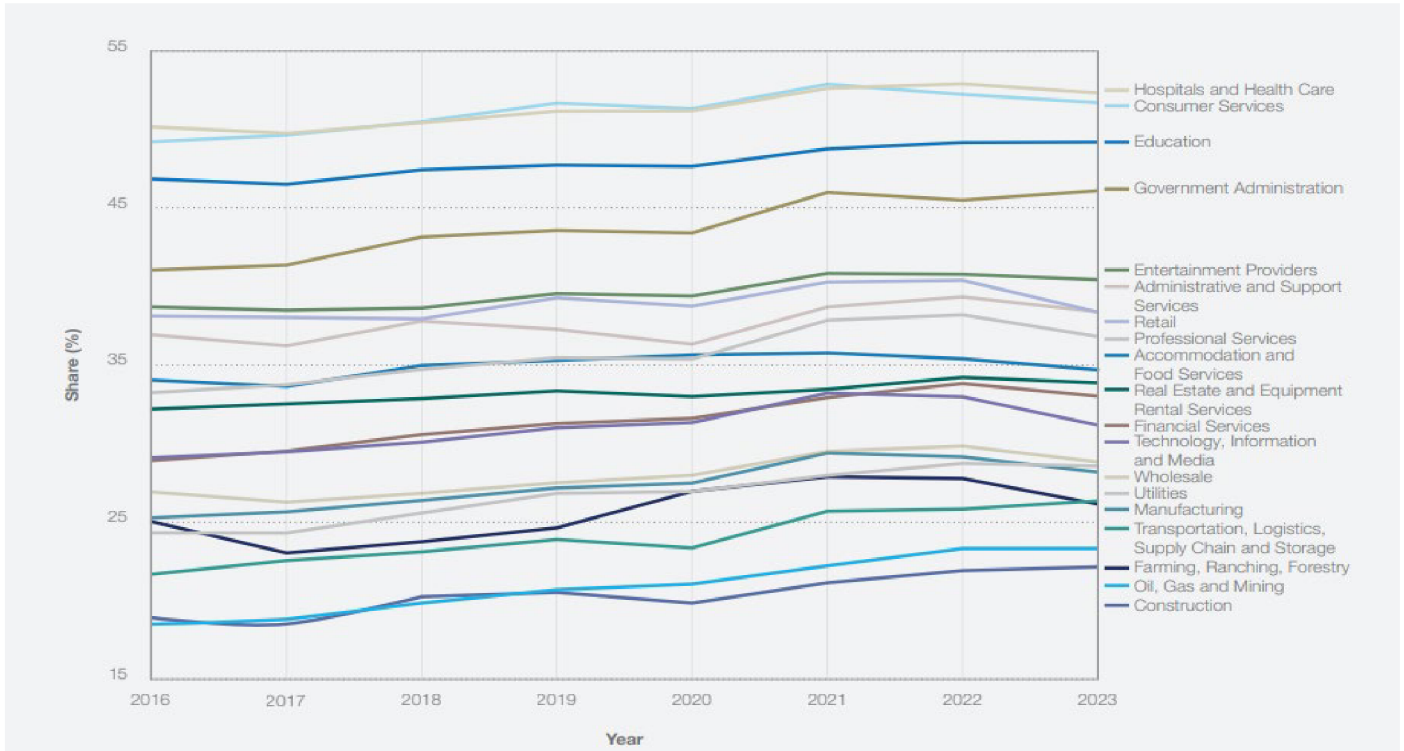


Figure 6: Percentage of females hired into a senior leadership, by sphere (2016- Q1 of 2023). Source: LinkedIn Economic Graph, 2023

### 3.6.1 Work-Life Balance

The ability to effectively manage both the work and family domains is known as “work-life balance”. In accordance with the concept of work-family balance, employment should not interfere with other vital aspects of people’s life, such as spending time with their families, participating in leisure activities, or pursuing personal growth at the same time. Obviously, our physical and mental health is one of the most crucial factors. Research supports the idea of the negative impact of lopsided balance between our personal and work life on our health. The never-ending grind can lead to stress and burnout, which might lead to mental illnesses like depression and anxiety. In essence, supporting a balanced system is essential to protecting our health in general (Chui, 2023).

Work-life balance cannot be reached by equal balancing in these two aspects, nor can it be achieved by allocation of the same number of hours to each position. The perfect balance in one’s life may change depending on the stage of life the person is in, such as before or after marriage, with or without children, when they start their career or whether it is after retirement. There is no universal formula of work-life balance. However, women attempt to organize and balance their family and work responsibilities in order to succeed in both positions, which requires a significant degree of modification and tolerance. Due to significant changes in the workforce over the recent



20 years, such as the rise of the number of women entering the labor market and the prevalence of dual-earner and single-parent families, researchers have become highly concerned about work-family problems (Greenhaus & Foley, 2007).

Work and family have evolved into mutually exclusive spheres that require the same amounts of time and energy and cause conflicts between them. These tensions are grown by the “cultural contradictions of motherhood” since females are intensively encouraged to pursue self-fulfillment in demanding careers and pressures they receive, that persuade an idea of obligation women to sacrifice themselves for their children by giving an “intensive parenting”. Moreover, recalling all the alternatives, while finding appropriate and at the same time accessible child and elderly care at a reasonable price, it is possible to face another issue that employed women deal with (Manimekalai, Geetha, & Poulpunitha, 2017).

According to Figure 5, it gives a detailed overview of family structure and their well-being levels. The nation’s fertility rate is greater than that of Central Asia and Europe regions, and there is a positive correlation between poverty and larger families with more children. Women are far less likely to work for pay rather than men in such households and families.

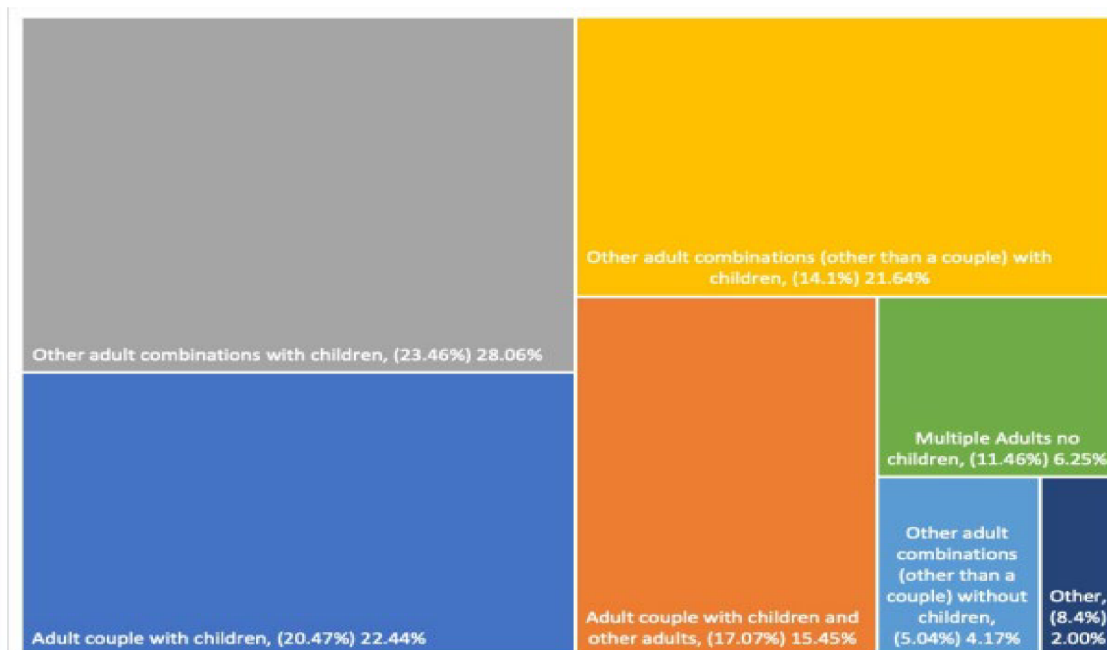


Figure 7: Distribution of families in need by demographic type (\$3.2 per capita in 2011 PPP). Source: OECD Statistics, 2023

### **3.7 Glass Ceiling Effect**

Various metaphors have been applied to reflect obstacles to advancement of women in their careers including glass escalator, sticky floor, glass cliff, maternal wall and apparently glass ceiling (Paul Smith, 2012). However, the glass ceiling is one of the most well-known metaphors used to illustrate women's lack of access to executive positions as meeting invisible obstructions. This metaphor has been resonating in the world since late 80s' and became synonyms with gender pay gap and promotion gap (Broadbridge & Mavin, 2016). Glass ceiling is also recognized as a scenario where an individual wants to make progress and move up the hierarchy of a certain organization, however, end up prevented from doing this due to prejudice mostly based on discriminative action of the external factors. The effect of the glass ceiling is founded on several presumptions, accordingly (Tina C. Elacqua, 2009). First and foremost, discriminating women in management proves to be the essence of glass ceiling. So, it is even stated, that regardless of their educational levels, experiences and talents, women would still be subjects to the glass ceiling (Cotter, 2001).

Considering the good news, the percentage of women in management today is at an all-time high. Almost 4.5 million new managerial jobs created since 1980, where women got the majority of them. However, a significant increase in the occupational gender segregation of managers has been accompanied by the rise on women's representation in management generally. Not a single management position in 80s' had a majority female workforce. However, as of today, although certain professions are dominated by men, others are taken by women. Males are concentrated in professions dealing with production-centered skills, when females are concentrated in areas emphasizing people-centered caring abilities. By 2010, the industries with the highest concentrations of women managers in the world had the biggest gender salary gaps as well (Scarborough, 2018).

Secondly, the culture of networking, which is formed and used to promote contacts exchange, recommendations and relevant strategic information related to career building in a company frequently gives positions with reduced visibility for women, which restricts their ability to make connections with high-ranking workers. Apart from that, female workers not always receive the same treatment as men in organizations where senior males succeed in development of informal social network because of mentioned limitations. Lack of access to such a network would

decrease opportunities for women's promotions, and, subsequently, create the perception of glass ceiling (Tina C. Elacqua, 2009).

And lastly, relationships with decision-makers of an organization prove to be the third significant aspect of interpersonal relationships. People frequently prefer making connections with other individuals of the same gender who have gained similar experiences. There is an extra challenge for female managers called the "queen bee syndrome". The syndrome explains the perception that some successful female managers felt they had to work harder to get their dream job. They believe that other women had to work as hard as them to reach their level (Keeton, 1996).

In Uzbekistan, the question is quite corrupted. As it is estimated about managerial positions taken by women by the survey UzDaily resource conducted, in Uzbekistan the average age when women come to managerial roles in companies was close to 40 years old. Unfortunately, 46.5% of women state that managerial qualities help them to get leadership roles and 40% believe that only persistency and hard work can help to become a leader. Others are convinced that it is enough to have good acquaintances to be promoted as a manager. As a result, in approximately 3.5% of companies there are no female managers at all (UzDdaily, 2022).

### **3.8 Gender Pay Gap**

The difference between the median wages of males and females in comparison to the median earnings of males is known as the gender pay gap (OECD, 2023). The gender pay gap is a complicated topic that is influenced by different factors such as age, discrimination, working hours, motherhood, the need for flexible job, educational levels, types of employment held by men and women. Because of obligations besides work, women are also more likely to work regular hours, which limits their ability to take on extra shifts. The standard procedure of women quitting their jobs throughout their childbearing years contribute to a lack of consistency in working experience, which negatively affects women's pay (Forbes, 2023).

The International Labor Organization reports, that while individual factors like education, occupational skills, experience, etc. may contribute to the gender pay gap, however, the largest part of that is caused by discrimination based on individual's gender. Thus, there exists an Equal Pay Day, which is a result of the commitment against all types of discrimination, including those against females and symbolizes upcoming efforts to establish equal pay for equal labor a reality

secured by the United Nations. Also, at the International Equal Pay Day in 2022, ILO claimed, that females are paid approximately 23 percent less than males (UN, 2022). Therefore, in the entire world, women only get 77 cents for every one dollar that men can have. Consequently, males and females have an ongoing income gap and the percentage of women who end up retiring in poverty rise up.

Recently, governmental representatives and organizational landscape employees took part in the negotiation concerning ILO Gender Pay Gap Assessment and its outcomes. Where the speakers also raised a topic about the Equal Pay International Coalition (EPIC), organized by the cooperation of UN Women, OECD and ILO to accelerate closure of gender pay gap globally.

Basing on national data, according to estimates by the ILO, Uzbekistan's "raw" gender pay gap stands relatively high compared to the global average, at 35 percent in contrast with 20 percent in 2022. While factors like education level, economic sector, and age can partly explain this gap, there are also "unexplained" factors to consider, such as the feminization in particular fields, occupational gender segregation, unequal distribution of household responsibilities and caregiving duties, discrimination, and underrepresentation of women in managerial and leadership roles. The analysis indicates that the gender pay gap is more pronounced among younger workers across most sectors, lower for those with higher education, and particularly high in the health and social security sector. Understanding these hidden factors is essential for crafting effective policies aimed at eliminating the gender pay gap and advancing equal opportunities for both women and men. The given Gender Pay Gap Assessment was conducted under the part of the ILO Project titled "Supporting Development of Gender Responsive Policies and Programs on Care Economy and Decent Work for Care Workers in Uzbekistan", accordingly (ILO, 2024).

Women in Uzbekistan are more likely to work in the public sector, which tends to offer more stable jobs and favorable conditions. The sectoral structure of female employment is characterized by the fact that women mainly work in areas with low wages and shorter working hours. These are such sectors as education, healthcare and, in general, the social sphere. This is the reason for the gap between the wages of men and women (UzDdaily, 2022).

Some people might think that having higher education levels means getting higher wages. However, when it comes to the gender pay gap, this could not be true for females. With higher education, the wage disparity between males and females just gets higher. Women who have

associate degrees get similar amounts of payments to men with bachelor. This pay gap exists even among year-round full-time employees, that persists at any educational levels (Forbes, 2023). It simply means that women are not able to close the pay gap by getting more education. This fact probably refers to the labor market policies that promote equitable results for employees who are at the bottom end of their pay scale. It could also be influenced by several issues that include earning penalties for time spent out of the labor force, extra work hours, domestic gender roles and promotion discrimination, which, subsequently, can negatively impact females' potential to get employed at the top income distribution (Gould, Schieder, & Geier, 2016).

Therefore, research on time spent in paid and unpaid labor by gender from 2022 found out, that females work longer hours than males when taking into account paid as well as unpaid total hours worked. Women spend approximately 26.8 minutes more than men logged into their working systems every day on average. Almost all OECD nations are affected by this, however, the following areas have the biggest gender gaps in total working hours for 2022 that includes Italy, Greece, Spain, Estonia and Hungary. In the listed countries, when it comes to overall work made, women in these nations also work longer hours than males. Therefore, it is paradoxical why women are engaged in unpaid labor than men. In contrast with women, males work more hours in paid employment. And as soon as it comes to paid employment, males log over an hour and forty minutes longer every day (OECD, 2023).

The World Bank has also recently reported that discrimination has maintained the gender pay gap, as gender stereotypes and inequalities that have put females in low-paid jobs, such as differences in jobs and hours worked, as well as females' incommensurate responsibilities in caregiving, which is a reason of wage gap issue. The report says that 119 economies all over the world have the opportunity to strengthen their legislative frameworks in order to narrow the gender pay gap. Thus, the existence of the income inequality between males and females poorly affects the development of economies of countries, accordingly. Despite of that, World Bank adds that laws requiring equal wages are absent in about half of the economies over the world (The World Bank, 2023).

### **3.9 Policies, Measures and Legal Interventions**

Programs for diversity training alone cannot eliminate any prejudice whether unconscious or conscious. Nevertheless, they can raise awareness and encourage thoughts about more efficient methods to improve organizational structures and procedures that cause bias (Gino, 2014).

Under the leadership of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, Uzbekistan has embarked on a comprehensive domestic and foreign policy overhaul in recent years. The country's steadfast commitment to protecting rights of women, ensuring their active participation in socio-political spheres, promoting gender equality, and prioritizing reproductive health has garnered significant acclaim from the international community, particularly such bodies as the UN, ILO, UNICEF, and the WHO. These positive strides are rooted in the dedicated efforts to afford women a dignified role in society and enhance their social standing.

Uzbekistan has devised an Action Plan for its presidency in 2021, outlining collaborative initiatives aimed at fostering women's extensive involvement in social and decision-making processes, guided by principles of equality and respect for women's rights, freedoms, and interests. In the realm of international cooperation, the evolving interstate relations between Uzbekistan and Poland merit attention. There is a common belief that promoting gender equality issues, including advancing women's entrepreneurship, can serve as a crucial platform for fostering interaction and collaboration. Uzbekistan recently started more actively aligning with positive global trends, which, in turn, augments the nation's standing on the global stage (SOBAŃSKA-CWALINA, 2021).

In addition, the Academy of Public Administration under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan provides three primary academic curricula including master's degree and doctorate programs, continuing professional training and retraining. The Academy is also dealing with the establishment of a specialized curriculum to train female leaders in the public services sector and enhancing awareness among women and society as a whole about these initiatives (UNDP, 2022).

In such fields where females make up most of the workforce, as in the garment sector, as an example, there are more than 35 million of females working in Asia and the Pacific, which is equal to 80 percent of the workforce. A major part of garment employees in Brazil, Cambodia and Indonesia claimed to have experienced gender-based violence at work (Care, 2022). There are certain categories of females, who are highly exposed to discrimination. As a result, over 140

nations have adopted resolutions addressing these problems in recent years, but more actions need to be taken to enforce laws, hold violators accountable, and prevent violence occurrences before they start (ILO, 2022).

Various forums and interventions have committed to combatting and eliminating gender-based discrimination in the workplace by creating strategies, initiatives and policies in line with worldwide standards. These commitments were implemented through the Generation Equality Forum and multi-stakeholder sponsorship organized by UN Women, accordingly (UN Women, 2023).

Currently, donor investments in employment, commerce, infrastructure, access of women to agricultural advances like adaptive technologies and seeds and other sectors have scope to increase in order to achieve gender equality in the workplace. As a result, throughout 2007 and 2008, members of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) provided financial aid on average of USD 4.6 billion to the productive and economic areas with a focus in gender equality, which makes up one-fifth of all help supplied to the industries named earlier. The main objective of only a small portion of the overall amount (2 percent) was gender equality. The aid focused on gender also went to a range of sectors, as public financial management, banking, business and urban as well as rural and agricultural developments receiving the largest amount of donations (42 percent), which is described in detail in the Figure 5 (OECD, 2011).

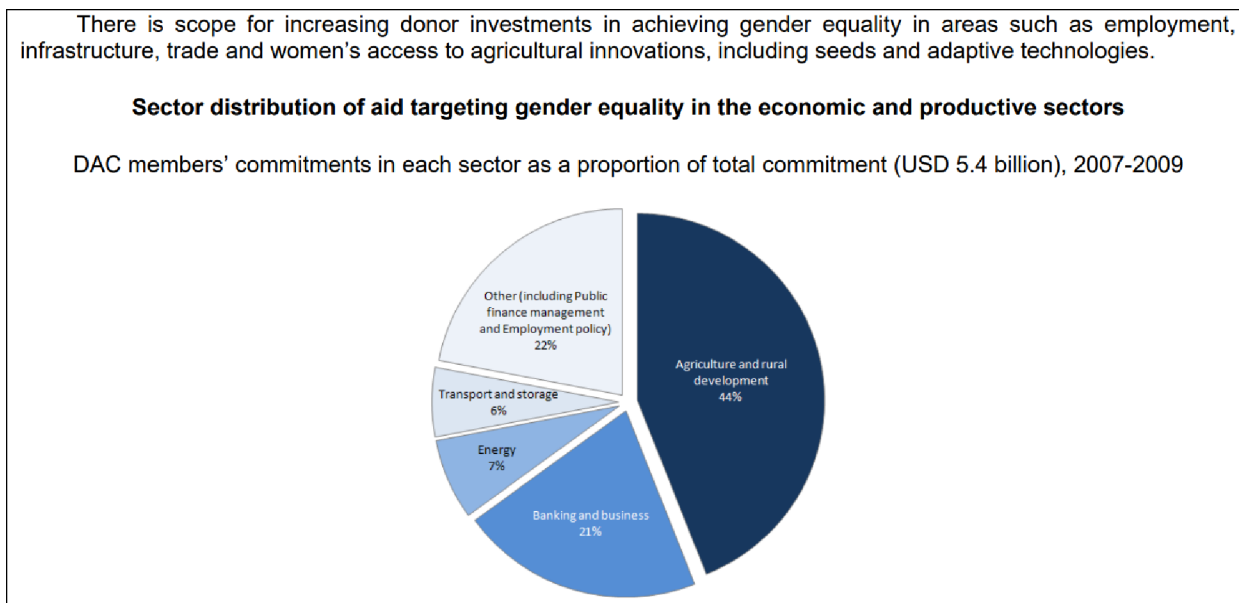


Figure 8 Source: OECD, 2011

Society and policymakers understand the general significance of care work and address discriminating societal norms to change the perception that put the main care responsibility on females of different ages. Due to the fact, cultural norms are hardly shifted, this is a long-term objective. In the short-term run, however, investing money in physical infrastructure, including roads, schools, clinics, hospitals, bridges, social services as well as upgrading of community social infrastructure, upgrading access to new information and technologies will decrease the amount of time that females spend on giving unpaid care to their families and committing to and from work. Thus, it will help to eliminate barriers preventing women from accessing labor markets. Women are less able to make incomes or get formal education when they carry more of the care responsibility burden. Likewise, women's competitive potential is limited even though they receive support in this work (OECD, 2011).

As for today, in Uzbekistan, employment rights are strictly upheld, prohibiting discrimination based on various factors such as age, gender, race, religion, or political preference. Qualifications alone determine employment eligibility, with laws ensuring equal treatment for women, minors, and individuals with disabilities, who receive additional social protections. Any instances of discrimination can be legally addressed, with compensation available for any harm experienced. Forced labor is strictly prohibited, except in cases mandated by law such as military service or emergency assistance. The constitution guarantees the right to work, fair working conditions, and protection against unemployment. Workers are entitled to fair compensation, safe working conditions, professional training, representation through labor unions, social security benefits, and legal protection (Team, 2021).

Existing legislation falls short in ensuring equal pay for equal work and effectively protecting women from discrimination, particularly regarding assumptions about family responsibilities. To address these shortcomings and ensure gender-neutral laws, revisions are necessary, exemplified by the adoption of Law No. 562 of September 2, 2019, in Uzbekistan. However, there are risks associated with job creation and social protection, particularly affecting women, as responsibility shifts from the state to employers and individuals. Self-employment, particularly among the poor and rural population, lacks transformative potential and places a disproportionate burden on women. Moreover, the current maternity protection system discourages employers from hiring women within reproductive age and incentivizes extended leave, potentially



leading to deskilling. Migration and recruitment frameworks leave workers vulnerable, with private employment agencies lacking effective regulation. Recent legislative amendments, such as prohibiting agencies from charging job seekers for placement abroad, represent positive steps towards addressing these challenges (ILO, 2023).

## **4 Practical Part**

Gender discrimination in general is an issue influencing women all over the world to different extents, where Uzbekistani women are not an exception as well. Apparently, there are many factors that affect levels of discrimination towards women in the workplace, which is why, for instance, democratic and more progressive governments as in the United States or the United Kingdom deal with the issue and raise awareness the way more actively and concerned. Thus, throughout the life experience of the author spent in Uzbekistan, it is fair to presumably claim that gender discrimination was faced by every working woman in this country. If so, what is it about women who want to promote their careers? This practical part makes research about the attitudes, perception and understanding of discrimination in the workforce of women of Uzbekistan who want to get top positions in corporate environment to define and propose some relevant recommendations which will help to raise the awareness to the problem and take effective measures.

### **4.1 Research Methodology**

The practical part consists of quantitative and qualitative research considering men's attitudes towards women becoming managers as well as women's experienced at work in Uzbekistan, Tashkent. The quantitative approach takes place in the practical part of the thesis, which helps to support the results obtained from the empirical survey, consisting of two parts. Dealing with qualitative analysis, which consists of the most relevant questions concerning women discrimination at work leading to intervention in their career growth according to men's opinion help to provide males' biases and insights about women promotion at work to discover its main factors.

## **4.2 Questionnaire**

The questionnaire underwent thorough preliminary examination before distribution to respondents. It was determined to be appropriate for achieving the research objectives and facilitating analysis based on the information received from participants.

The questionnaire utilized in the survey was designed with simplicity and brevity in mind, comprising two sections. Part 1 comprised thirty-one statements utilizing a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." Part 2 captured biographical information about the respondents. All participants were required to complete both sections of the questionnaire.

Private businesses in Tashkent, Uzbekistan were chosen for the study. The sampling method employed was based on random selection. Female respondents of various ages, educational backgrounds, and years of work experience were included. This sampling approach aimed to directly gather women's perspectives on factors influencing their lack of promotion compared to men and to identify common issues within certain companies.

The author put an effort to avoid asking personal or offensive questions. Respondents completed the questionnaire anonymously, and their responses were treated with confidentiality. They were given the choice to complete the questionnaire at their own pace, without any pressure, influence, or assistance from external parties.

### **4.2.1 Statistical Data Analysis**

For getting well-structured results from the questionnaire, the author used Microsoft Excel and elementary descriptive statistics for the analysis. Using Excel, all the data from Section A was organized into tables, and basic descriptive statistics were used to analyze some data for cross-correlation.

### **4.2.2 Limitations with the Questionnaire**

Apparently, challenges arose during the distribution of the questionnaire. Initially, some respondents delayed completing the questionnaire, requiring follow-up and encouragement due to workload pressures in their work environments. Additionally, in certain companies, respondents

were hesitant to complete the questionnaire due to uncertainty about the confidentiality of their responses and concerns about potential impacts on the work environment.

#### 4.2.3 Statistical Method Used

As already mentioned before, descriptive statistics method was chosen. The female respondents were chosen, and their profiles of their biographical data were outlined in accordance with Age, Level of Education, and Management level variables, accordingly.

Variable		Percentages
<b>Age:</b>		
20-30		17
30-35		53
36-40		14
41-45		6
46-50		8
51-55		2
<b>Education</b>		
High School		19
Technical		4
High Education (University)		77
<b>Management</b>		
Middle		45
Lower		55

*Table 1: Demographic Data of Participants. Source: Own Processing*

According to Table 1, most respondents fell within the 30-35 age bracket and possessed tertiary qualifications. The 77 percent figure for higher education suggests that women possess the requisite educational background for advancement to top managerial roles. In terms of management representation, they are evenly distributed, comprising forty-five and fifty-five percent respectively.

#### 4.2.4 Summary

The primary aim of the questionnaire was to assess the perspectives of women in lower and middle management. This chapter outlines the sampling method and data collection approach utilized. An 85 percent response rate was deemed satisfactory for the study. The inclusion of

females was not intended to bias the findings but rather to allow them to voice their opinions on advancing to top management positions and potentially offer valuable suggestions for the future in Uzbekistan. The evolving business landscape in Uzbekistan presents challenges for women aspiring to reach leadership positions. Subsequently, there will be provided a thorough analysis of the responses and presents the findings in tabular format.

### **4.3 Interpretation and Analysis of the Questionnaire**

In general, the questionnaire was sent to eighty-five working females among six corporations of different sizes in the capital of Uzbekistan. The survey was distributed in late November 2023. There were only 54 of them filled out via Google Forms and received by the author, which is resulting in approximately sixty-four percent response rate and is accordingly appropriate for the analysis.

From the paragraphs below it is evident that descriptive statistics were used to explain the responses of female participants. Examining Part 1 based on different responses on questions in the range starting from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” and illustrates a pie chart with the distribution of responses on this scale. The statistical findings related to the comprehensive analysis of this section are summarized in Table 2, which clearly illustrates the total response for each question.

Questions	Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree	No Vote	
1. Your organization provides equal training opportunities for both genders.	35	12	3	1	3	0	54
2. Your department provides equal development opportunities regardless of gender, such as training.	32	8	4	4	6	0	54
3. There is a higher concentration of men in top managerial positions compared to women within your organization.	0	3	15	5	31		54
4. Promotions in your organization are based solely on merit and qualifications, without regard to	11	9	17	5	8	4	54
5. In your organization, women have equal opportunities for advancement as men.	12	4	18	8	12	0	54
6. Women receive sufficient encouragement and support for advancement within your organization.	6	13	17	10	8	0	54
7. Men tend to perform better in managerial positions compared to women.	42	2	0	3	4	3	54
8. In management positions, men are often described as self-confident, committed, and authoritative.	13	6	22	3	6	4	54
9. Women are perceived to have fewer managerial skills compared to men, such as leadership qualities.	45	4	2	1	1	1	54
10. Female managers excel in executing management tasks better than their male counterparts, including responsibilities like planning and controlling.	6	12	18	4	14	0	54

Questions	Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree	No Vote	
11. Effective communication, decision-making, and fostering high morale are fundamental qualities of women managers.	0	7	19	12	14	2	54
12. Female managers are perceived as being less efficient and effective compared to their male counterparts.	14	0	18	10	12	0	54
13. Women are often viewed as submissive and less ambitious in comparison to men.	45	5	1	2	1	0	54
14. Male managers are commonly regarded as more intelligent, competent, and hardworking compared to their female counterparts.	41	8	4	0	0	1	54
15. Female managers are noted to have a longer attention span compared to their male counterparts.	7	10	14	8	11	4	54
16. Female managers are characterized as being gentle, less rigid, and more flexible and adaptive	7	2	27	8	10	0	54
17. Male managers are often perceived as being more talented and better educated than their female counterparts.	34	9	3	1	3	4	54
18. Women are typically seen as less autocratic and less aggressive compared to men.	13	7	12	8	10	4	54
19. Women who pursue careers are sometimes unfairly characterized as selfish and unfeminine in your society.	6	5	28	15	0	0	54
20. Women managers tend to expect fewer responsibilities allocated to them compared to their male counterparts.	6	6	17	17	3	5	54

Questions	Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree	No Vote	
20. Women managers tend to expect fewer responsibilities allocated to them compared to their male counterparts.	6	6	17	17	3	5	54
21. Women are often perceived as being more dependent and showing less initiative than men in management roles.	2	4	20	15	13	0	54
22. Male managers typically have a broader professional network compared to female managers.	14	6	19	15	0	0	54
23. There are three prejudices and stereotypes present within your organization regarding the advancement of women.	5	11	25	4	9	0	54
24. Gender-based discrimination impacts women when it comes to promotions to top managerial	5	6	16	9	14	2	52
25. The multitude of roles that women often have can impact their promotion into managerial positions.	0	3	45	1	5	0	54
26. Women may lack knowledge of organizational and business politics.	11	15	2	14	1	11	54
27. Both male and female managers in your organization receive guidance and mentoring.	12	5	16	9	7	5	54
28. The organization follows selection and appointment criteria for both male and female managers.	14	14	7	8	10	1	54
29. In your organization, women have enhanced opportunities for promotion.	7	19	5	5	12	5	53
30. Within the upcoming five years, women are expected to hold senior positions within your organization.	12	9	12	10	10	1	54
<b>TOTAL</b>	457	224	426	215	238	57	1617
<b>PERCENTAGE</b>	28	14	26	13	15	4	100

Table 2: Results Total. Souce: Own Processing

According to the Part 1 responses of fifty-seven per cent strongly agree that there is a higher concentration of men in top managerial positions than women and thirty-five agreed and approximately twenty-eight percent slightly agreed that male managers typically have a broader professional network compared to female managers. It is also relevant to note that almost forty-one percent reckon that in management positions, men are often described as self-confident, committed, and authoritative.

In comparison to the statement written above, closer to sixty-three per cent strongly disagree with the question where it is stated that male managers are often perceived as being more talented and better educated than their female counterparts and seventy-six percent also strongly disagreed that Male managers are commonly regarded as more intelligent, competent, and hardworking compared to their female counterparts. Moreover, eighty-three per cent of questionnaire participants strongly disagreed that women are perceived to have fewer managerial skills compared to men, such as leadership qualities and also fifty-two percent of women unfortunately agreed and twenty-eight slightly agreed that women who pursue careers are sometimes unfairly characterized as selfish and unfeminine in Uzbek society, accordingly.

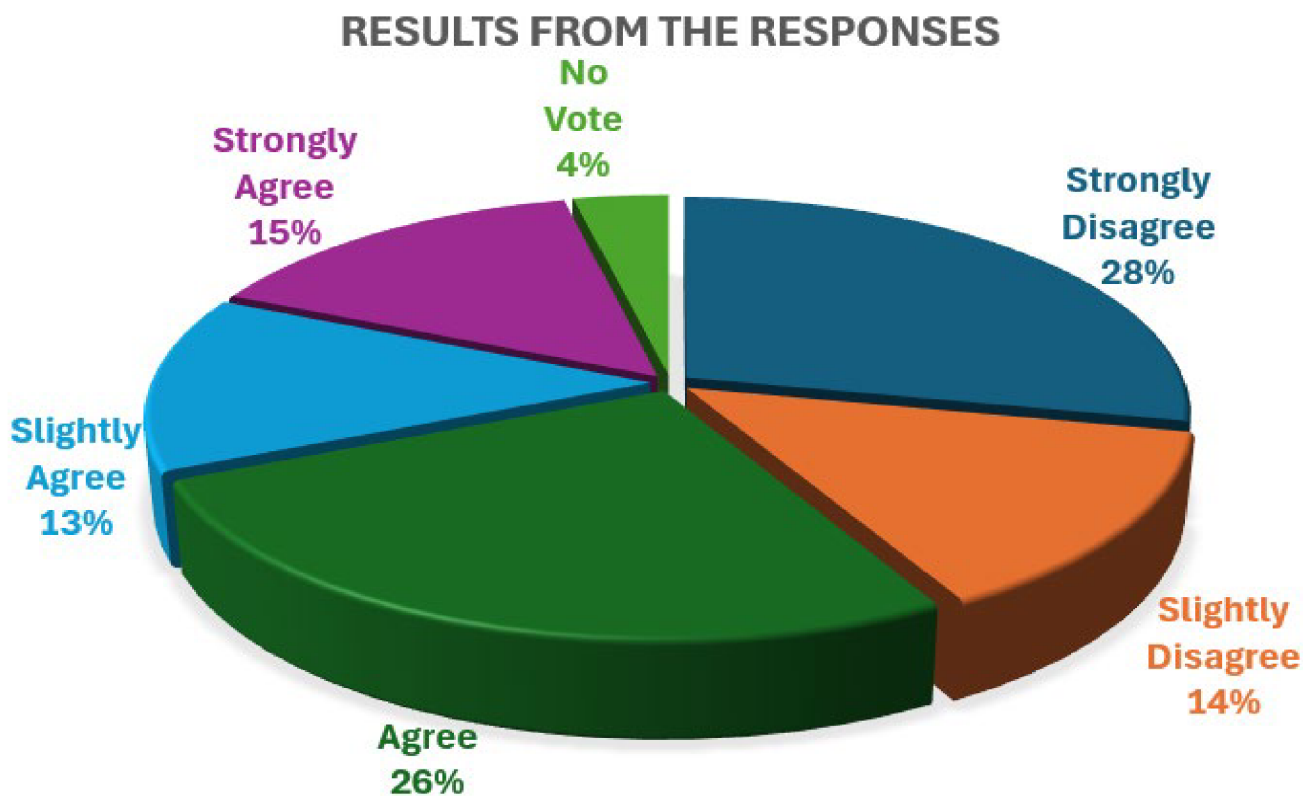
As for the statement where women are often viewed as submissive and less ambitious in comparison to men, eighty-three per cent of respondents strongly disagreed about that, when thirty-seven percent agreed and almost twenty-eight slightly agreed that women are often perceived as being more dependent and showing less initiative than men in management roles.

There are prejudices and stereotypes present within respondents' organizations regarding the advancement of women, as forty-six percent of them agreed to this statement, which means that biases towards females' career advancement are quite concerning to considerable percentage of respondents, respectively. There are approximately sixty-five percent of women respondents who strongly disagreed on the proposal that their organizations provide equal training opportunities for both genders. Sadly, only thirteen percent of females confirmed that their organizations follow selection and appointment criteria for both male and female managers. Also, the percentage of women who slightly disagreed that in their organizations, women have enhanced opportunities for promotion turned out to be quite high, which equals to thirty-five.



The pie chart illustrates the total response of the questionnaire, with twenty-eight percent strongly disagreeing, fourteen percent slightly disagreeing, twenty-six percent agreeing, thirteen percent slightly agreeing, and fifteen percent strongly agreeing with the statements provided.

Additionally, four percent did not respond to certain questions, which is indicated in Table 3 below.



*Table 3: Own Processing*

Despite the debatable assertions obtained from the survey, several arguments support the need to promote women into top managerial positions. Firstly, as evidenced by the statistics in Table 2, women possess the requisite education and skills acquired through their studies. Secondly, respondents perceive women as talented, intelligent, competent, and hardworking compared to men. Thirdly, women are seen as non-submissive, ambitious, independent, and proactive in the workplace in accordance with the survey outcomes. Fourthly, some respondents also noted that women still face limited opportunities for promotion in organizations in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

Continuing the analysis, it is relevant to consider Part 2 of the empirical study to make conclusions in accordance with biographical questionnaire information. Thus, Table 4 below is the illustration of the age distribution of its respondents. It is evident that the majority of respondents, accounting for fifty-three percent, fell within the 30-35 age diapason, while only two percent were aged between 51-55 years.

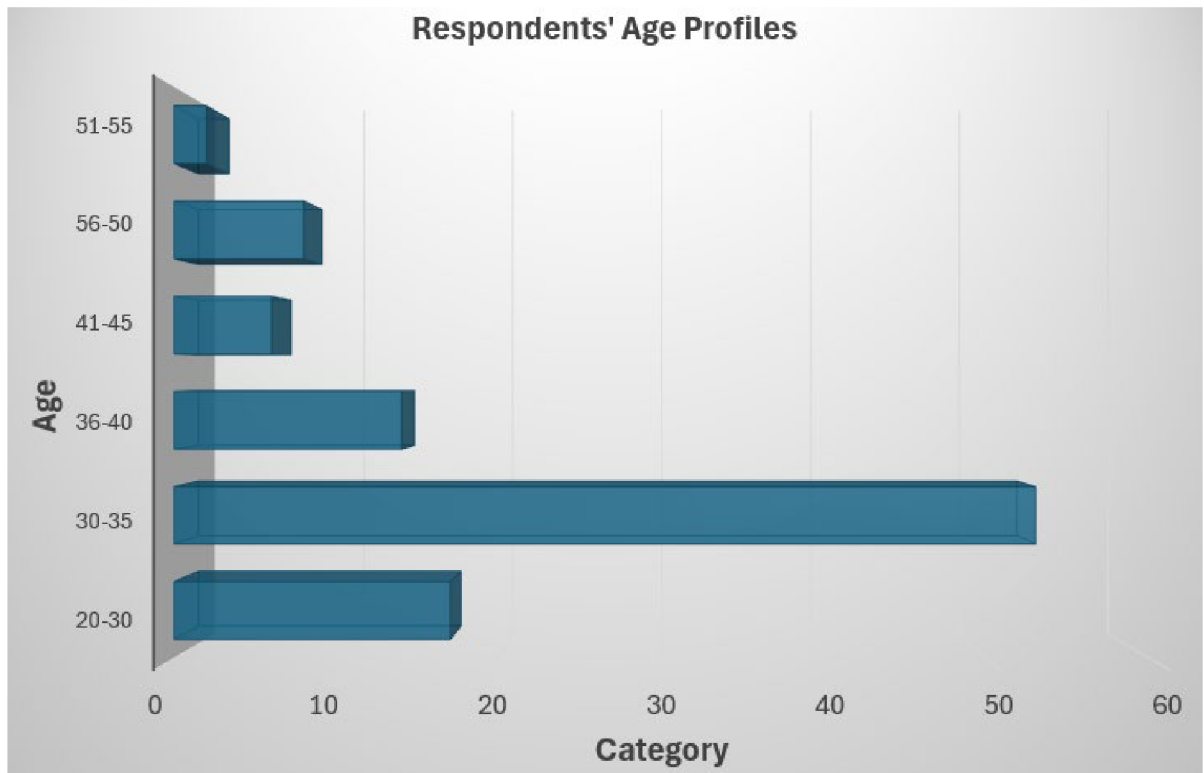


Table 4: Age Profiles of Respondents. Source: Own Processing

Table 5 below illustrates a graphical comparison between the age distribution of respondents and their respective management levels in the workplace. Among those in supervisory roles, the vast majority of women were within the 30-35 age category, with additional representation in the 36-40 and 46-50 age groups. Similarly, in middle management, the highest concentration of women was observed in the 30-35 age range, followed by the 20-30 and 36-40 age diapasons. It can be inferred that a significant number of women with the requisite qualifications were retained at the supervisory level, despite their age. Additionally, some newly qualified women in the 20-30 age group were into middle management roles by certain companies, despite being relatively new to their managerial positions.

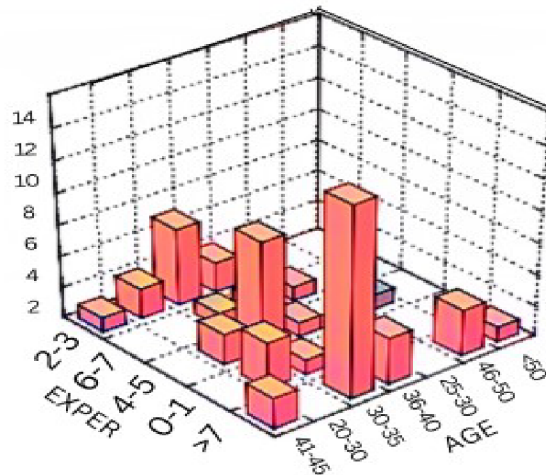


Table 5: 3D Histogram of Age and Expertise Comparison of Respondents. Source: Own Processing in Corel Draw

The next Table 6 at the same time provides graphical comparison of the years of expertise of female respondents and their management levels, respectively. The majority of women in supervisory positions have been hired by their companies for more than seven years but still have not progressed up to higher management levels. This might suggest that certain corporations are still reluctant and slow in promoting women to managerial positions, accordingly. In middle management, a balanced representation is seen with more women having worked in their companies between 2-3 and up to 4-5 years at the given level.

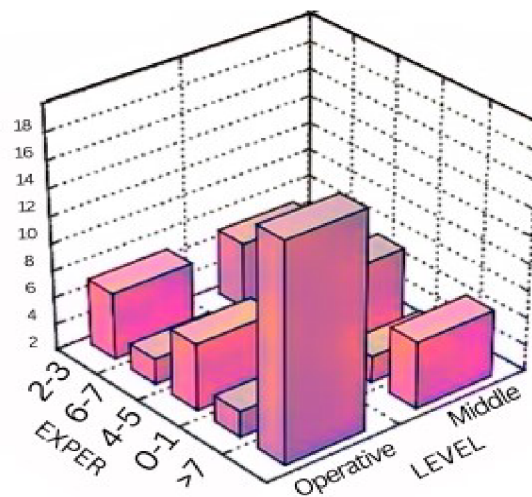


Table 6: : 3D Histogram of Expertise and Management Level Comparison of Respondents. Source: Own Processing in Corel Draw

## **4.4 Questionnaire Outcomes Summary**

The results of the survey offer valuable insights into the impact of discrimination on women's career advancement in top management positions, but they cannot provide a complete picture due to the varying business policies and practices within organizations. The dynamic nature of the promotion process and the evolving attitudes towards women in the workplace also contribute to the complexity of the issue. It got evident that education is not a significant barrier for women in this context, as most of respondents have post-secondary skills of their educational background. Acknowledging the limited representation of women in top managerial positions and addressing any prejudices or stereotypes that may influence decision-making is crucial for promoting gender equality. At the same time, along with the mentality of Uzbekistan, it is important not to overshadow the value of roles women play being mothers and wives. The findings of this study provide a snapshot of the current state of women in managerial positions within certain Tashkent-based companies, highlighting the need for continued discussion and action towards gender equality.

## **4.5 Interviews**

Referring to the study conducted by the World Bank in 2021 (Muradova, S., & Seitz, W. H., 2021), it is given that there was a survey, which examined the in-demand occupations advertised on four major job boards in Uzbekistan during early 2020, specifically, the survey provided the most popular occupations, which turned out to be accountants, administrative personnel (such as secretaries), IT professionals, call center operators and engineers. These occupations were selected based on their relevance to the Uzbek job market and their potential for growth. Thus, accountant, secretary, and call center operator were deemed female-dominated professions, while IT specialist and engineer were more common for males. Basing on these findings as a diapason for search of interview participants, it was decided to divide part of interviews on two parts as well – by the Part A and Part B. The concept of this lies in asking women who work in top management positions of the given female-dominated occupations area specific questions about their experiences in management, whereas the Part B is focused on men, where males in male-dominated professions are asked some general questions about their opinion concerning the issue of women's promotion in top management and to get the full picture and understand biases upcoming from male side.

Moreover, by the implementation of in-depth interview approach, it is possible to identify clearer to what extent gender discrimination towards women in the city center of Uzbekistan is a crucial phenomenon preventing women from equality and promotion in workplace and generally obtain sufficient answers relying on gathering of interview transcript. People's daily lives and personal life stories are important. Participants were interviewed in a semi-structured manner to get intimate life tales. Qualitative research is mostly conducted in the subject of anthropology using this approach. This technique can depict delicate female experiences, such as instances of workplace gender discrimination towards women's career growth, in an effort to contextualize their experiences and relate them to society's larger historical narrative.

Generally, with the implementation of this approach, it became clear that gender discrimination in Tashkent, Uzbekistan is a real-time issue existing in workplace. Notwithstanding differences in age and specific experiences, common themes emerged, emphasizing the need for greater awareness, accountability, and proactive measures to address discrimination in the workplace in Tashkent in general. The findings underscore the ongoing challenges women face in navigating discriminatory practices and biased treatment while getting leadership roles, highlighting the importance of fostering environments where women of all ages can thrive professionally and personally.

It was possible to interview 8 women that are citizens in the Republic of Uzbekistan, to be more specific, in its capital Tashkent. Their ages varied so the youngest respondent was 27 years old and the oldest was 56 years old, which is implemented like this to demonstrate the diversity of opinions and experiences related to discrimination. According to the representation of participants by their age groups, it was decided to divide them into at least three of them, consisting of 20-29 years of age, 30-39, 40-49 and 50-59, respectively. It means that 2 female managers out of every age group were chosen for the interview procedure. Referring to the second Part B interviews it has only proved possible to interview 3 men managers of middle age working in the listed above male-dominated positions to complement and reinforce the full picture of the issue from the males' perspectives and opinions as well.

As for the limitations, interviews were implemented online by relatively short video calls via Microsoft Teams platform due to the distance. All the video calls were recorded with the consent of participants, well-formulated and implemented as quotations to provide it as point of views.

## 4.6 Interview Questions

### 4.6.1 5.3.1 Part A

Apparently, the questions for the interview prepared by the author help to reflect about women's awareness of their legal rights at working environment and to gather information concerning the frequency of discrimination from superior parties at work in any forms. Moreover, it is significant to emphasize women's thoughts about the issue of discrimination towards women in the workplace and collect their proposals to transformational processes in this issue.

#### **Thereas, there are 3 questions provided:**

1. Can you share your overall experience working in your current or past workplaces as a manager?
2. Have you observed or experienced any disparities in opportunities, promotions, or salary based on gender?
3. What changes or improvements do you think could make the workplace more inclusive and equitable for every female manager in Tashkent?

Referring to the introductory question number one, which required women to talk about their general feelings and experiences whilst working on their current or past managerial jobs to truly understand the entire perspective of participants' impression concerning their corporate leadership lives. Thus, several women did express negative experiences, including memories of discrimination based on their gender and age in collaboration. For instance, two of participants from the first and youngest age group started thinking of difficulties. They may recount being passed over for promotions, receiving unequal pay compared to male colleagues, or facing obvious bias in the workplace.

Aziza (28 years old, call center operator) said: *“Overall there is a mix of challenges and opportunities at the same time as have found fulfillment in my role as a manager, where I have been able to demonstrate my leadership abilities, contribute to team success, and pursue my passion for driving positive change within the organization. However, I have also encountered instances which are not so pleasant for me to remember. I am still struggling to be taken seriously*

*but I think my female identity as well is a factor which questions my decision-making abilities, and which often could put me in a worse position especially in front of most of our Uzbek patriarchic men and it still frustrates me.”*

Maftuna (27 years old, accountant): *“Looking back at my path I am grateful for all the people who ever tried to drag me down or to create obstacles in achieving my goal of becoming a manager as it made me stronger, more confident and mature because for us, for women it is hard as you might know for sure. Now I am a big contributor to the success of the company I have been working for 5 years and I am grateful for all these challenges that I have received from different sides including my family, as my father used to be against me working. And now I am making everyone proud, so I glad I made the right decision and never gave up.”*

It is obvious that in both scenario despite of the fact that the younger manager could achieve their goals in leadership positions, these women stated that they faced some obstacles. Whereas Aziza did not specify from which side she felt discriminated, she was assured of the fact that it happened due to her gender identity. Comparing it with Maftuna’s answer, there is no evident statement about discrimination due to her gender, it is relevant to note how she imperceptibly referred to restrictions and restraints from her male closest relative who presumably opposed her career leadership promotion.

Another participant of the survey in the group of interviewees (30-39 years old) Dildora (36 years old, secretary) and her general experiences seemed to be more straightforward, highlighting supportive colleagues, opportunities for development, and inclusive workplace cultures. However, in spite of her positive outcomes, she still did refer to difficulties as *“of course there are and there will be sideshowes in society, but I do not care.”*

Overall, women aged 36, 38, 45, 47 years old were generally neutrally and even positively speaking of their expertise, however all of them mentioned complications in getting leadership position due to the complexity of coming along with their family lives accompanied by imperatives and their career promotions. Thus, either by a coincidence or not, general experiences of women in the age group 30-39 are not as positive. Most of them refer to their managerial experience as a complex period with underrated salaries and lack of appreciation, which brought emotional burnouts. For instance, manager Zarina (38 years old, call-center operator) shared that she even

tried to avoid the process of becoming a manager as her former management tried to intervene in it and dissuade her from taking a leadership role by imperceptible passive ways of exerting pressure. Kamila (45 years old, secretary), for example, mostly referred to her emotional state and stated that it is hard to be a good wife which is essential in Uzbek mentality and to be a leader at work at the same time. As for Sitora (47 years old, call-center operator), she highlights her achievement of being a mother of four children but at the same time managing it with her managerial position and admits that she copes well not mentioning any discriminatory acts.

Moving forward to the oldest group of the interview participants, in accordance with their answers, it is possible to summarize that there were also some of refers to unpleasant part of becoming a manager in Uzbekistan, however it is honor to hear the triumph of women of different ages in getting their dream job top positions, as for example Kamola (55 years old, secretary) shared: “*Generally, I have seen difficulties and I know what is it like. Dealing with stereotypes on work and family life—it is like walking a tightrope! But I am proud of the impact I've made and of everything I have. Yes, it has been tough, sure, but incredibly rewarding.*”. The oldest group’s participant Sabohat (57 years old, accountant) also gave quite positive comments on their general experience, saying: “*It has been a long story and for now I am already tired of everything to be honest, but I would not trade it for anything. Women can do everything, and I am a nice example I think (laughed).*”

According to the second question, most of the women in accordance with their answers strongly agreed about the fact that they have seen more opportunities for men to promote and disparities in their wages. For instance, Sabohat (57, accountant) confidently claimed - “*...it has always been like that, men are always ahead of us women at work...*”. Aziza (28, call center operator) sarcastically said: “*women are always paid less or left behind and you know I am a part of it and there were couple of cases with my salary and promotion, I think not only the fact I am a woman but also my age was a problem for our ‘men’s’ world*”.

Zarina (38, call center operator) and Kamila (45, secretary) also had quite similar answers where they agreed about the inequalities in promotion to higher positions even though the jobs, they are working in are considered as female-dominated in Uzbekistan, respectively. Other participants stated that they have also observed disparities in wages, as for example Dildora (36,



accountant) did not hide the fact that she noticed how her male colleagues were encouraged to work with higher salaries and faster promotions which was quite uncovered in her working environment.

Lastly, referring to the third question, which was aimed to help the author to propose some solutions to the issue of discrimination in promotion to the top management positions in Tashkent in Uzbekistan. Thus, reasonably highlighting the main concepts and ideas suggested by interviewed women, it is significant to note, that most of the participants noted education as a key component to the success. It was noticed that younger participants at most alluded that trainings and educational programs are valid in assistance for the society in Tashkent to normalize women's promotions to the top position and surpassing opposite gender in leadership roles in defiance of mentality, traditional thinking and biases of Uzbek custom norms.

At the same time older participants claimed that perception comes from home and it is considered quite challenging to redeem population to think differently except for bringing the situation under control of regulations and policies apart from the existing ones from the government of Uzbekistan. Nevertheless, some of the women interviewed are assured of the fact that changes are possible in case of the willingness of women themselves. As an example, Sabohat said: *“We women should never give up and show our power to do anything we are claiming to do even if there are obstacles, because if you will it, it is no dream, no matter of what anyone tries to say or do to you and this is how we can overcome this cult of bias and discrimination from patriarchal sides and I know that only capable and dedicated girls can change it”*.

#### **4.6.2 Part B**

As of the second part of the interviews, there were prepared only two other questions provided below, that were differing from the ones provided to females.

1. Do you think women have the necessary skills and competencies to perform in managerial positions?
2. Would you want your sister/wife/daughter to build her career and become a manager?

The interviews with male managers came out to be more straightforward and shorter, as all of them were consimilar with each other in their opinions in some of the questions at most.

Thus, Timur (38, IT) stated: *“I believe that women have it all to grow in managerial positions for sure, they can also contribute very well”*. At the same time Farkhod (42, mechanical engineer) and Zafar (47, engineer technologist) turned out to be more uncertain about this question, as Farkhod (42, mechanical engineer) said: *“Women can get these important skills to become managers, yes, but not every woman and it is only minority, I suppose...”*, when Zafar (47, engineer technologist) shared, that there is no necessity in it, as men would do it for women instead, respectively. The last two answers clearly reflect patriarchal and deeply traditional outlooks and obviously call into question women’s capability in promotion to managerial positions and achieving higher results in their career paths.

Following the answers to the second question, it became even more evident that men participating in the interview series are highly skeptical towards the concept of women aiming to get managerial positions or even working women in general. This was found as all of the three interviewed men negatively answered the second question. Even though, Timur (38, IT) tried to be more delicate, saying: *“I would not generally mind it that much, but I wish they would rather stay at home and mind their part of household responsibilities caring about their family”*, which meant limited thinking and presence of prejudices of what women are obliged to do and to deal with throughout their lives. As for Farkhod (42, mechanical engineer) and Zafar (47, engineer technologist), they both seemed to me clearer and stricter in their statements, as Farkhod said: *“If they want to work, they should just do it for themselves only and there is no need to become managers or leaders or promote further, they can limit themselves to work on lower-level positions”*, when as Zafar (47, engineer technologist) similarly said: *“No, they do not need to become managers if they want to work, because if so, they lose their feminine nature, there will be no difference between men and women then”*, which is obviously reckoned to be emphatic.

## 5 Results and Discussion

The exploration of gender discrimination and women's experiences in the workplace, as evidenced by the research conducted in Tashkent, Uzbekistan by the author, gives some reasonable insights concerning this issue and simultaneously resonates with the scholarly contributions of several authors who have delved into similar themes.

First of all, through a holistic examination of these perspectives, it becomes evident that gender discrimination transcends geographical boundaries, manifesting in various forms across diverse cultural contexts. While the specific manifestations may differ, the underlying challenges confronted by women in the workplace remain consistent. Thus, it is significant to highlight the fact that Uzbekistan has its own distinctive cultural, traditional and societal expectations that can reflect its gender dynamics within the workforce of the country. Its patriarchal attitudes and traditional gender roles are ingrained into the society of the country directly affecting the attitudes of men and women themselves towards their opportunities for advancement in their careers (Umarova, 2023). These traditional attitudes formulated within years after gaining independence started coexisting with aspirations for women's empowerment and gender equality in general (Müller, 2003). Referring to the survey in collaboration with interviews, it becomes even clearer that it is possible to balance between these two extremes. Therefore, it is necessary to support the tendency of women who want promotion to dismantle systematic barriers and foster equitable workplaces for women to thrive but at the same time to keep recognition of women's roles as mothers and wives in the cultural context.

Particularly, according to the results of interpersonal interviews, it becomes clear that most of the female managers mentioned mentality and traditions of Uzbekistan, referring to balancing between having household activities, admitting pressure within the society's strict rhythms. Interviewed men also demonstrated prejudiced opinions concerning working women and to some extent unambiguous demonstration of superiority, which is another sign of patriarchal environment.

Susan E. Jackson's research on diversity and inclusion in organizational settings underscores the significance of acknowledging and remedying systemic biases that impede women's career advancement opportunities (Jackson, 2003). In parallel, the quantitative analysis revealed an evident reality: the prevalence of stereotypes and prejudices against women in managerial

positions. This highlights the urgent need for proactive measures to dismantle entrenched gender disparities and foster a more equitable professional environment, respectively. Echoing Jackson's sentiments, Sheryl Sandberg's advocacy for women's agency in navigating workplace challenges emphasizes the importance of self-advocacy and covering opportunities for career growth. Indeed, the narratives shared by female managers in Tashkent underscore their resilience and determination in confronting gender discrimination and pursuing their professional aspirations despite never ending obstacles. Sandberg's insights thus find resonance in the lived experiences of women striving for advancement in corporate environments marked by systemic biases (Sandberg, 2013).

Considering these insights, the analysis of the findings provided underscores the imperative for concerted efforts to redress systemic barriers, challenge ingrained stereotypes, and promote gender parity in professional spheres. The recommendations coming from the study, such as providing mentoring and guidance initiatives to women prospecting for promotion by companies may advocate for the implementation of policies and initiatives aimed at fostering gender diversity, providing equitable opportunities for professional development, and combatting discriminatory practices. Moreover, sustained dialogue and collaboration among diverse stakeholders are essential to effectuating broader societal transformation and dismantling traditional gender norms. Incorporating insights from various disciplines and studies, including those focusing on work-life balance (Manimekalai, Geetha, & Poulpunitha, 2017) and the effects of gender discrimination on health (Kendra Kubala, 2021), provides a comprehensive view of the multifaceted nature of gender discrimination. This approach emphasizes the interconnectedness of workplace experiences, societal norms, and individual wellbeing.

While gender discrimination remains a complex and entrenched issue, the findings gleaned from the study may become relevant to shed the light on the situation of gender discrimination towards women aiming to promote their careers. By recognizing these challenges and implementing proactive measures to address them, organizations can cultivate more inclusive and equitable environments conducive to women's professional growth and advancement. Thus, through collective action and collaborative endeavors, a future characterized by equitable opportunities and inclusive environments can be achieved, where in every women, irrespective of gender, is empowered to realize their full potential and contribute meaningfully to societal progress of Uzbekistan.

## 6 Conclusion

Addressing gender discrimination in managerial positions in Uzbekistan requires a strategy that tackles cultural norms as well as institutional practices. It is crucial to summarize the undertaken work by providing vital findings that author shares as relevant recommendations after thoroughly analyzing the given topic and conducting series of research, respectively.

It is apparent that countries that have advanced in the questions of women's empowerment more have also been going through challenges and obstacles based on discriminative attitudes and traditional thinking of cultures. However, their progress in protection of women's rights and the empowerment is a brilliant example for Uzbekistan to dismantle and change the existing systems in the country, which frequently make women remember of their promotion experience or work on leadership positions in a bad light, according to many cases of conducted interviews. As already mentioned, there are existing programs and trainings proposed by Uzbek government and his party which offers advanced academic programs including master's degree, various professional trainings, etc. However, it would be even more efficient to cooperate with worldwide organizations, such as ILO, for instance, and heed the counsels provided by them in their broad research accompanied by reasonable recommendations, which gives more opportunities for advancement of Uzbekistani women. It is also significant to work on setting additional quotas for females, trainings solely focused on training women to become leaders and learn how to promote, correspondingly.

It is crucial to note that as Uzbek society is patriarchal, the impact of men on their women is tremendous. Men primary play roles of so-called "decision-makers" in lives of their females and shape the opportunities and outcomes available to women. Such dynamic underscores the significance of involving men in the fight for women's empowerment. To create more supportive society of men, it is inevitable to educate them about the value of gender diversity culture, fostering greater solidarity between genders. As the issue is quite entrenched, the author reckons that the problem must be eliminated from its roots. Thus, it would be problematic to provide education to adults directly, therefore it can be done by indirect ways of promotion, as social media promotions with the assistance of influencers and advertisements, cash incentives or by simple appreciative ways.

This entails strengthening the already legislative actions to criminalization of any discriminative actions in any forms towards women, monitoring and improving national policies, laws and establishing cooperation with civil society. This can assist in developing confidential and trustful connections between women and Uzbekistan's security forces to facilitate women not to be afraid to take steps in reporting on any illegal actions which infringe their rights. By providing a sense of security to victims and eliminating culture of impunity, victims will be encouraged to speak out and to understand their rights.

In turn, to accustom women to defend their rights, educational initiatives should be introduced to challenge gender stereotypes and promote gender equality from an early age. This can involve integrating gender equality education into school curricula and organizing workshops and seminars to raise awareness among students, parents, and educators. Additionally, workplaces need to implement policies that promote gender diversity and inclusion. For instance, companies can establish gender-neutral recruitment processes, ensure equal pay for equal work, and provide mentorship and leadership development programs specifically tailored to women. Government intervention is essential in enforcing existing anti-discrimination laws and introducing new legislation to address gaps in protection for women in the workplace. Moreover, creating support networks and communities for women in managerial positions can provide them with the resources and encouragement needed to navigate male-dominated industries and overcome barriers to advancement. By fostering a culture of inclusivity and empowerment, Uzbekistan can create a more equitable and prosperous society where women have equal opportunities to succeed in leadership roles.

Lastly, supporting women excelled or in the active process of excelling in the respective areas, starting from science or business and ending with politics might be essential for females' leadership advancements and at the same time attracting males in such kind of initiatives. Currently social media platforms can be adapted as a tool to promote campaigns targeting wider audiences and taking place not only in the capital of Uzbekistan, but in other regions inclusively. This, subsequently, will help to raise awareness among women and the general social landscape of Uzbekistan.

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### 8.3 List of abbreviations

ILO - International Labour Organization

OECD - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

EPIC - Equal Pay International Coalition

UN – United Nations

UNICEF - United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

WHO – World Health Organization