DIRECTIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract. *This article systematically studies the process of developing women's entrepreneurship in Uzbekistan. The research analyzes the economic and social significance of women's entrepreneurship, the factors affecting its development, and existing challenges. Using a SWOT analysis, the strengths and weaknesses of the sector, as well as opportunities and threats, were identified. Additionally, the study illustrates the growth in the number of women entrepreneurship entities with a graph, presents research hypotheses, and conducts analyses based on economic data. Based on the research findings, practical proposals and recommendations have been developed to further promote women's entrepreneurship. The results enable the formulation of actionable strategies to enhance the development of women entrepreneurs.*

Keywords: *women's entrepreneurship, small business, economic activity, family income, women's employment, private entrepreneurship, gender equality.*

INTRODUCTION

In Uzbekistan, the development of women's entrepreneurship has in recent years become an important component of state policy. Entrepreneurship involving women not only increases economic activity, but also provides a strong impetus for enhancing social stability in society and strengthening the economic well-being of families. Actively engaging women in economic processes contributes to the formation of a modern model of a market economy.

According to Presidential Decree No. PF-50 of March 25, 2025, issued by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, a comprehensive system for the development of women's entrepreneurship is to be introduced. This includes identifying proactive women who lack business skills and providing them with entrepreneurship training, assisting in the preparation of business projects and the establishment of small enterprises, and working individually with the most active and rapidly growing businesswomen to transform them into "champion" entrepreneurs (Fozilova, 2025).

As emphasized by Shavkat Mirziyoyev, the "New Uzbekistan Development Strategy" identifies the creation of decent conditions for women and the support of their initiatives as one of its priority directions. Based on the experience gained during the implementation of this initiative and the results of public discussions, the "Uzbekistan–2030" Strategy was developed. The "Uzbekistan–2030" Strategy outlines measures to support women's entrepreneurship, ensure their legal rights and interests, increase their social, economic, and political participation, and promote gender equality (Kamoldinova, 2024).

Today, the development of women's entrepreneurship in Uzbekistan is considered one of the strategically significant tasks. According to data from the World Bank, the advancement of women's entrepreneurship can lead to an average increase of 3–4 percent in a country's gross domestic product.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The fate of a nation and the assurance of a bright future for a country largely depend on the role of educated and enlightened women. The French writer Honoré de Balzac once emphasized this idea, stating: “The future of a nation is in the hands of mothers.” Contemporary research and family observations indicate that in households where women are wise, refined, fair-minded, and educated, individuals with strong moral and spiritual values are more likely to be raised (Uraimjonova, 2023).

A number of foreign and domestic economists have conducted research on women’s entrepreneurship. Russian economist Alimpiyeva examined the strategic characteristics of women in entrepreneurship and the impact of entrepreneurial activity on family life. In the studies of Semenov and Raymanova, factors negatively affecting the development of women’s entrepreneurship were analyzed. According to another scholar, Semyonova, highly educated middle-aged and older women tend to achieve higher results in entrepreneurial activity. She emphasizes that in establishing and developing their own businesses, such women effectively utilize necessary financial resources and networks, while demonstrating high professional competence, managerial experience, independent creative approaches, and initiative (Burxanova, 2025).

Women’s entrepreneurship is defined as businesses managed by women. This term first appeared in the works of researchers in the United States and Europe in the 1930s. By the late 20th and early 21st centuries, the concept began to be widely used in national academic literature, particularly in mass publications. In the late 1980s and 1990s, scholars such as I.E. Kalabikhina, G.N. Karelova, and Z.A. Khotkina explored the economic perspective that women’s employment and living standards could be improved through small business and entrepreneurship (Kamoldinova, 2024).

The results of the literature review indicate that in Uzbekistan, the development of women’s entrepreneurship has increasingly become a key direction of economic policy in recent years. Analytical data show that over the past five years, the steady growth in the number of enterprises led by women reflects the relative effectiveness of state support measures in this sphere. However, the growth rates are not uniform across regions. In particular, the slower development of women’s entrepreneurship in rural areas highlights the issue of economic imbalance.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study examines the process of developing women’s entrepreneurship in Uzbekistan. The selected methodology made it possible to assess the current state of women’s entrepreneurship, identify existing challenges, and formulate practical conclusions. A comprehensive methodological approach was applied in the research. The multifactorial nature of the research object—namely, the close interconnection of women’s entrepreneurship with financial, social, regional, and institutional aspects—required the use of multiple methods rather than reliance on a single approach.

During the research process, the most dynamically developing sectors of women’s entrepreneurship were identified, along with the age-related activity patterns of women entrepreneurs. In these areas, women entrepreneurs demonstrated strong adaptability to market demand and a high level of initiative as key competitive advantages. Based on a regional analysis, disparities in the development of women’s entrepreneurship were identified, and these differences were interpreted in relation to the effectiveness of regional policies and support mechanisms.

The study also revealed that sustainability in entrepreneurial activity is more closely associated with knowledge, experience, and institutional support than with the mere volume of financial resources. As a result, it is substantiated that, alongside financial assistance, expanding educational programs, advisory services, and mentorship mechanisms is essential for the sustainable development of women's entrepreneurship.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Scientific studies and statistical data collected in Uzbekistan clearly demonstrate the socio-economic significance of women's entrepreneurship. As of January 1, 2025, the number of small enterprises and microfirms headed by women reached 43,860, reflecting growth compared to 2024. The majority of women-led businesses operate in the service and trade sectors, and their total revenues have increased substantially. According to a recent report by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in 2024 the number of women actively engaged in entrepreneurship in Uzbekistan reached 2.1 million, which is seven times higher than in 2020. The report emphasizes that state policies, financial programs, and social support systems have played a crucial role in achieving this growth.

Various factors influence the development of women's entrepreneurship. Limited access to financial resources, insufficient business knowledge and skills, family responsibilities, and persistent gender stereotypes are identified as major barriers. At the same time, the expansion of digital technologies and educational programs has become a significant supportive factor for women's businesses. Women's entrepreneurship is important not only for economic growth but also for strengthening social stability. Businesses established by women contribute to increased employment and improved household welfare, thereby generating broader socio-economic benefits.

SWOT ANALYSIS

Analyzing the current state of women's entrepreneurship development in Uzbekistan, the following strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats can be identified.

Strengths: Women's entrepreneurship demonstrates several positive features. In particular, women's diligence, responsibility, and initiative constitute significant competitive advantages. Moreover, state-supported microloans, preferential grants, and specialized business training programs designed for women contribute to the establishment and expansion of entrepreneurial activities. These support mechanisms play an important role in enabling women to start and manage their own businesses successfully.

Weaknesses: Despite these advantages, certain weaknesses persist. Many women have limited access to sufficient financial resources, which constrains business expansion. In addition, low levels of digital literacy and a lack of entrepreneurial experience create obstacles for many women. These factors limit the sustainability and long-term growth potential of their enterprises.

Opportunities: There are considerable opportunities for further development. Through the expansion of the digital economy and online platforms, women can broaden the scope of their businesses and access wider markets. Furthermore, foreign investments, international grant programs, and ongoing state support policies create favorable conditions for launching and scaling women-led enterprises.

Threats: However, several threats remain. Increasing market competition, persistent gender stereotypes, and social constraints may hinder women's entrepreneurial activities. Additionally, complexities within the legal and tax systems can create further challenges in business development and formalization.

Table 1.

Key Economic Indicators of Women's Entrepreneurship in Uzbekistan

Years	**Women's Entrepreneurship Entities**	**Allocated Credits (billion soums)**	**Employment (thousands of people)**
2019	215	4 800	680
2020	228	5 600	710
2021	245	7 200	760
2022	268	9 500	820
2023	295	12 300	890

Source: *Compiled based on official statistical data of the Uzbekistan.*

The data in Table 1 indicate that during 2019–2023, the number of women-led business entities in Uzbekistan showed a steady upward trend. Specifically, this figure increased from 215,000 in 2019 to 295,000 in 2023, demonstrating the effectiveness of government support measures. If we represent this economic example visually in the form of a chart based on these numbers, it would appear as follows:

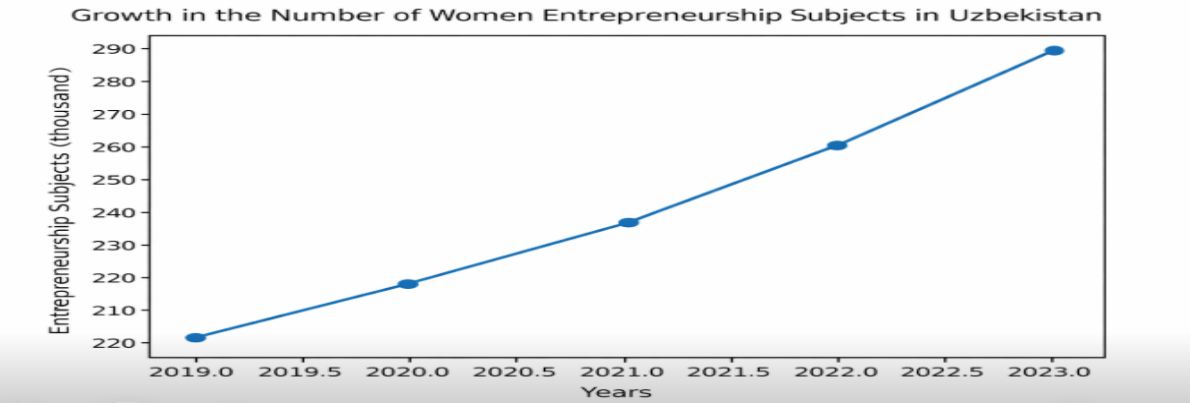


Figure 1. Growth dynamics of the number of women-led business entities in Uzbekistan during 2019–2023.

Source: *Based on data from the Statistics Agency of the Republic of Uzbekistan.*

The data presented in the figure indicate that during 2019–2023, the number of women-led business entities in Uzbekistan followed a steady upward trend. In particular, this indicator increased from 215,000 units in 2019 to 295,000 units in 2023. This trend demonstrates the effectiveness of institutional and financial mechanisms aimed at supporting women's entrepreneurship and reflects the growing economic activity within this sector.

At the same time, statistical data show that although women's entrepreneurship is expanding, a gender gap still persists. For example, in the field of information and communication technologies (ICT), only about 10.6% of enterprises are managed by women, and female participation in innovative sectors remains comparatively low. From a theoretical perspective, women's entrepreneurship contributes not only to economic growth but also to gender equality, social stability, and employment generation. This is supported not only by the theory of micro and small business development, but also by state policy frameworks and gender economics concepts. Businesses established by women increase household incomes, create new jobs, and strengthen gender equality in society.

In 2022, more than 95,000 women who expressed the desire to start entrepreneurial activities were officially registered as entrepreneurs, and to date, these women have created nearly

184,000 new jobs. Over the past five years, the number of businesswomen in Uzbekistan has doubled, with more than 205,000 women successfully launching their own enterprises. In 2023, over 13 trillion soums in credit were allocated to more than 279,000 entrepreneurial projects, and nearly 300 billion soums in subsidies were provided to approximately 57,000 women. In addition, around 200,000 women received vocational and entrepreneurship training. Most importantly, more than 400,000 women were provided with employment opportunities (Saidova, 2025).

Research Hypotheses

1. If support mechanisms for women's entrepreneurship are implemented effectively, women's economic activity will increase significantly.
2. Improved access to financial resources has a positive impact on the sustainable development of women's entrepreneurship.
3. The use of digital technologies and online platforms facilitates the establishment and management of businesses in women's entrepreneurship.
4. State programs aimed at developing women's entrepreneurship contribute to increased employment and higher household incomes in Uzbekistan.
5. Expanding education, advisory, and information services enhances the competitiveness of women's entrepreneurship.

CONCLUSION

This article systematically examined the current state of women's entrepreneurship development in Uzbekistan, its economic significance, and existing challenges. The key factors affecting the sustainability of women's entrepreneurial activity were identified, and their impact on both short- and long-term outcomes was evaluated. In particular, the study scientifically highlighted the differences between challenges encountered at the business startup stage and obstacles arising during business development, emphasizing the critical role of knowledge and skills in women's entrepreneurial activities.

The research results indicate that women's entrepreneurship is a vital component of the country's economy and social stability. Women-led business entities primarily operate in the service and trade sectors and play an important role in increasing employment and household incomes. Although there are significant positive trends in the development of women's entrepreneurship in Uzbekistan, several challenges persist. Limited access to financial resources, insufficient business knowledge and experience, and social and institutional barriers remain key factors that reduce the effectiveness of women's entrepreneurial activity.

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