



Understanding the Motivation of Uzbek Women to Receive Higher Education

Izabela Cytlak and Nigora Mamadaminova

Abstract

This study attempts to determine the degree of incentive Uzbek women have to pursue higher education in Uzbekistan, as well as the challenges they encounter when trying to apply for tertiary education or complete their university degrees. The survey also assesses the degree of self-motivation and readiness to pursue further education independently, as well as the general influence of parents, relatives, and friends on making the decision to enroll in university. It also emphasizes how Uzbek women view their place in society and their function within families. This study was conducted online among Uzbek women aged 17 to 40 years in different regions of the country through Google documents. According to the study's findings, the majority of Uzbek women still lack the self-motivation to pursue higher education, even though over 90% of respondents said they valued their university education and their parents helped them pay for it. The study's findings can be utilized to create recommendations for promoting female education by setting up campaigns about the role of women and the value of education.

Keywords: motivation, Uzbek women, self-motivation

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Introduction

The importance of women's education is recognized, but in order to inspire and encourage more women to become well educated and leaders in their field, there is a need to understand how motivated women are to study and the challenges women face when applying to or studying at universities. However, according to statistics mentioned in the Unicef.org report of March 7, 2021, only 37% of female students in Uzbekistan receive higher education. We still need to keep in mind the stereotypes that are still present in thinking about women in universities. Universities are often seen as masculinized places, with more difficult access for women both in terms of free access to fields of study and as places for work and career advancement. In order to promote women's education, the causes of the difficulties and the main obstacles should be studied. When the main obstacles are found and removed, the process of women's empowerment will be smoother.

This study used a quantitative method to collect data. The survey included questions that analysed the respondents' personal attitudes, their general opinion about the acquisition of higher education by women in Uzbekistan, some background information about their immediate family, conditions and family support. The study also explored the influence of peers and friends when discussing or considering higher education and helping each other along the way. Respondents were also asked open-ended questions to find out their general views on the role of women in the family and society.

It is expected that the present study will shed light on the issues of Uzbek female students in fulfilling their family responsibilities. It will make an important contribution to the existing sociological and cultural knowledge and research areas of Turkish countries on the topic of women's empowerment through education. It will determine the influence of culture on women's decision to start and continue their studies or whether family members support them sufficiently in these decisions.

Literature Review

Motivation is a state of mind that arouses, directs, and sustains human behavior. It is crucial in the learning process. Students' motivation is a topic of discussion and debate today more than ever. According to research, student motivations have a significant impact on learning engagement, persistence, and achievement, and that positive motivations are associated with deeper learning, critical thinking, prosocial behavior, and improved performance. There are diverse kinds of motivation that can be classified along a spectrum ranging from internal (autonomous) to external (controlled) motivations (Ryan and Deci, 2000). At one end of the spectrum is intrinsic motivation, which is characterized by interest, delight, innate gratification, and personally valuable goals. Amotivation, a situation that happens when learners see no value in the learning process and expect no positive outcomes, lies at the other end of the spectrum. Extrinsic motivation is a state in which initiative and action regulation are inspired by a variety of inputs, ranging from external incentives and penalties (external regulation) to an identification of value in the learning process (identified regulation) (Stolk, Gross and Zastavker, 2021)

When it comes to female motivation and their education, women's accomplishments are critical to the nation's economic productivity and prosperity, as well as to the well-being of women and their families. As Agarwala (2015) shows, the global stereotypes that view men as the breadwinner ensure that organizations remain a male construction. These include the universities typically characterized by a culture that is highly masculinized. In academia, the

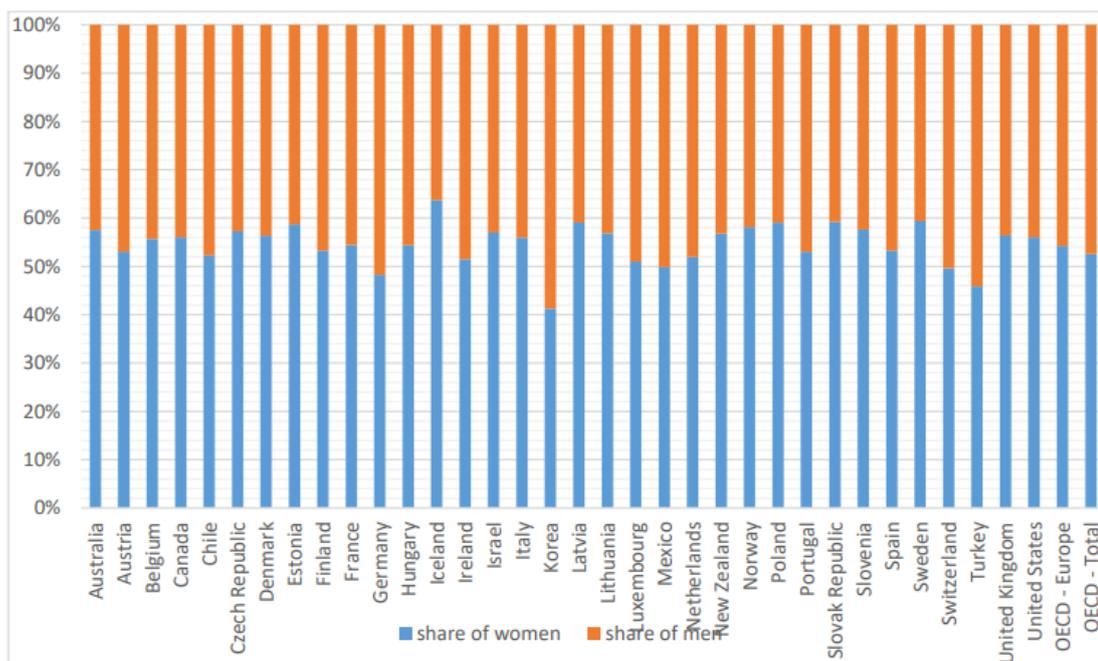
workplace structures and values are traditionally elitist, male biased and patriarchal (Caplan and Caplan, 1994). Over the past few years, the increased access to and achievement by women in higher education has been used to suggest that gender inequality in higher education is no longer an issue. Rather, it is believed that there is a feminization of higher education and that of the culture of academia (Leathwood and Read, 2009). Education and other accomplishments by women are crucial not only for national production, but also for women's mental health and well-being. Higher levels of education, according to research, are connected with and predictive of mental health.

Feminist psychologists highlight the relevance of the situation or context, noticing gender similarities as well as gender differences, and noticing parallels in women's and men's accomplishment goals in particular. Feminist researchers contend that understanding motivation requires an understanding of not only gender, but also race/ethnicity, social class, and disability (Hyde and Kling, 2001).

Students' decisions to seek further education are also expected to be influenced by their career prospects. For most 25-34 year-olds in the OECD and partner countries, a tertiary degree reduces the probability of unemployment much more than an upper secondary education. The increased advantage of a tertiary degree for women is primarily owing to women having much higher unemployment rates than males with upper secondary education. Across the OECD, the unemployment rate for young women with a secondary education is 1.4 times higher than that of similarly educated young males. Women with an upper secondary education are at least twice as likely as males to be unemployed in countries such as Costa Rica, Estonia, Poland, Slovenia, and Turkey. Similarly, for young women, the income advantage of a tertiary degree is greater than for men. Across the OECD, 25-34 year-old tertiary-educated women earn 52% more than those with an upper secondary education (OECD report, 2021).

The following table shows the proportion of women and men in higher education in OECD countries in 2016.

Figure 1: Tertiary education: gender divide
2016. Eurostat figures for OECD countries (ISCED levels 5 to 8)



Source: McNally, 2020

It can be observed that, with the exception of Germany, Korea and Turkey, female students constitute at least half or even a larger proportion of students. However, the participation of women in higher education looked quite different for centuries. Women's enrollment in universities in America and Europe did not begin until the middle of the nineteenth century (Freidenreich, 2002). According to 2003 research, the proportion of women in tertiary education in Korea, Japan, Turkey, Mexico, Switzerland, and Germany was between 35 and 50%. In several other European countries, between 51 and 55 percent of women were enrolled in higher education. Women in university education ranged from 56 to 65 percent in the United Kingdom, the United States, and many Scandinavian countries (cited in McDaniel, 2010). Since 1989, the number of women enrolled in university education in Iran has grown. It reached 60% in 2001 and has continued to rise (Shavarini, 2005). In general, the number of women enrolled in postsecondary education in OECD countries has increased. It has increased from 21% in 1980 to 74% in 2012. (Parvazian, Gill, and Chiera, 2017, pp. 1-2).

The situation in African countries has been far more complicated. In South Africa, for example, higher learning institutions have experienced a rise in both male and female enrollment since 1994. As the number of universities increased, so did the number of students. The number of women enrolled in undergraduate programs in Ghana has increased. They were 25% in 1999, and then increased to 37% in 2011. (Atuahene and Owusu-Ansah, 2013, p. 5). In Kenya, women made up 30% of students in 1990, increasing to 34.7 percent in 2004. (Sifuna, 2006, p. 97). In 2007, women made up 53% of students at private universities (Odhiambo, 2011, p. 670). In 1987, the proportion of Ethiopian women engaged in postsecondary, or undergraduate, education was roughly 7%. (Charles et.al., 2020).

At this point, we must emphasize that at all stages of society's development, the Uzbek people have a historically distinct mentality in promoting women's social participation. To better understand the determinants of women in Uzbekistan's motivation to pursue higher education, it is useful to address the key factors that influence the decision to study. Traditionally, the commitment of women to their homeland and their family has been elevated to a level of spirituality. Accordingly, the role of women in the national mentality system plays an important role (Crook, 1996; Elverskog, 2010; Pratt, 2015). As Dalibayevna Djuraeva (2019) shows, the importance of women's social activity in shaping the spirituality of society and their involvement in the cultural and educational fields, which has a historical basis, is reflected in the sources. This issue is also reflected in the works of medieval Eastern scholars. Specifically, as Abu Nasr Farabi wrote, a righteous leader will preserve society from ignorance and moral ignorance and lead it to progress and prosperity. Therefore, a leader who possesses these qualities also has a special responsibility to raise the prestige of women in society (Banerjee & Pendyala, 2007; Put-van den Beemt & Smith, 2016). We have to indicate the role of Jadids in promoting the importance of women's involvement in public life, equality with men in society, and the prohibition of juvenile marriage was first and foremost reflected in the action plan of our educators. However, these ideas are not formally stated in any of their special documents. Nevertheless, some documents and memoirs show that Jadids were the first to raise the issue of Muslim women participating in the elections to the authorities. Dalibayevna Djuraeva (2019) analyzed that Jadids "cannot accept women as full-fledged members of society, properly address family issues, nurture the younger generation on the right path, without reforming society, its development, and ultimately the fate of the nation depends on the status of women and their families" and struggled to put the following ideas into practice as increasing women's status in the family by establishing their place in the family, and ensuring equal participation in religious and secular affairs. The next main aim

was to change the negative attitude towards women as the cultural and moral level of any society is determined by their attitude towards women. In the early years of the Soviet government, the role and place of women of Indigenous peoples in society, in cultural and educational processes, was the involvement of Indigenous women in the socio-political, economic and cultural life was illuminated in one-sided, classical ways, and served to promote Soviet policy. After the independence of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the collapse of the former Soviet Union, the revival of historical truth allowed the situation of women in Uzbekistan to be viewed as an important social issue. In the second half of the 1990s and 2000s, in the spirit of new historical thinking, new approaches and methodologies focused on examining the plight of women in almost every field of history and social sciences, such as economics, philosophy and law. It should now be emphasized that currently, Uzbekistan has undergone wide-ranging reforms in the socio-economic, cultural and educational spheres, and in this process, the quality of the changes and the involvement of women in addressing fundamental issues are growing. As Sh.Mirziyoev noted: “At present, women make up 45% of the total number of workers and employees in various fields and industries. In particular, more than 1,400 nurses are working in government and public organizations. Of these, 17 are senators and 16 are members of the Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis, and 1,775 are members of local councils of people's deputies” (Dalibayevna Djurayeva, 2019).

However, we must note that we still men are seen as the main breadwinners, and they did not in general take on an equal share of household responsibilities. Women were given primary responsibility for nurturing the family. As a result, women performed paid work in the labour market, and did long hours of unpaid work at home. The fact that the predominant share of unpaid work was taken on by women, and the fact that women had to combine employment with child care responsibilities, contributed to the labour market segregation described above (ADB report, 2005, p. 5). Discrimination against women in employment is also frequent outside the agricultural sector, and has an impact on the kinds of work, careers and career advancement that women can expect. The gap between participation rates of women and men has narrowed slightly in the last twenty years but remains considerable (UN report, 2010, p. 27). Labour supply means the total amount of labour, characterized by size and composition (gender, age, education, occupation, qualifications, etc.). The education level influences labour supply and labour price. Nurdinova (2014) says that according to the constitution of Uzbekistan and the law for Education, primary and secondary educations are free. Every citizen must graduate with twelve years of education: school and academic lyceum/professional college. But an “enrollment in higher education” point shows that girls and women are disadvantaged in this level of education and the situation has hardly improved in the last years. That is worth mentioning as individual development as well as getting a job or social enforcement and its growing cultural problems, are resulting in investment over educational systems. Therefore, based upon the human development factor which can be based for measurement of human abilities, designs of educational skillfulness in complementary educations must be considered. At least, government must pay attention to girls in higher education system for enhancing its economical section (Yousefy, Baratali, 2011), as gender parity index in tertiary level enrolment is decreasing year by year. Consequently, a majority of the female students got married during study period (OBWE...) It is worth noting that the previously mentioned factors determined the motivation and decision-making of young Uzbek women in higher education. More on inequality in social roles between men and women will be discussed in the empirical section.

Methodology

After the theoretical part of the topic was studied, the socio-historical view of main problem was analyzed in the field. The main research problem was formulated as follows:

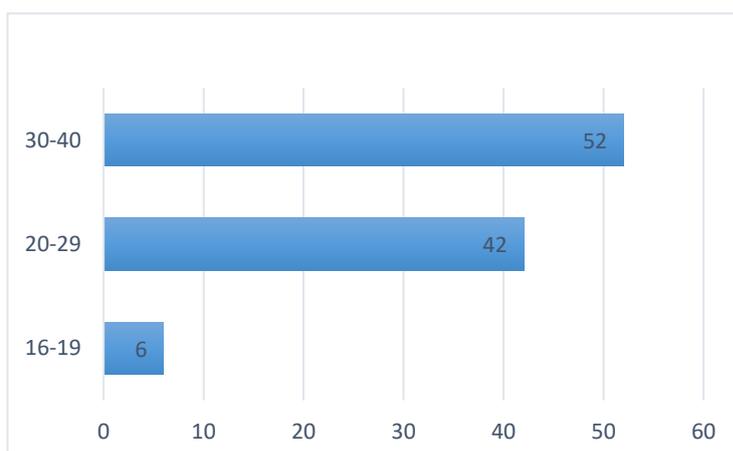
Which influence is greater on women's motivation to acquire higher education in Uzbekistan?

1. Do Uzbek female students have enough moral and financial support from their parents or other family members?
2. What influence do relatives or friends have on Uzbek women's decision to apply for higher education?
3. How motivated are Uzbek women applicants or students to improve their knowledge on their own?
4. What role do Uzbek women think they play in the family and society?

Research subproblems, which are an extension of the research topic and at the same time constitute independent research issues, remain in this research in mutual relations and constitute the structure of research issues. A situation analysis was conducted among Uzbek women in different regions to understand their motivation for studying in higher educational institutions. To understand the circumstances from the womens' perspective and take further steps of system development based on the results. Online tool – Google forms was used to conduct the current survey, as it is safer and accessible to more participants during the time of pandemic. The proper examination was preceded by a pilot study (research) and consultations with competent judges. Due to the possible situation of exerting pressure on women participating in the survey and in order to ensure fully credible answers, it was decided to disseminate the survey through independent student organizations. This survey was conducted from July 21, 2021 to December 1, 2021.

Women from different regions were invited to complete the online questionnaire. A total of 102 responses were collected, one of which was excluded due to incorrect completion of the questionnaire. Thus, 101 responses were evaluated and discussed further.

Chart 1: Age Range of Survey Respondents



The survey included mainly women at the age of thirty to forty as indicated in the graph.

Source: own research results

The respondents were from eight different regions of Uzbekistan, namely Tashkent (10%), Kharezm (15%), Surkhandaryo (3%), Kashkadaryo (1%), Samarkand (5%), Ferghana (4%), Andijon (4%) regions and Tashkent city (58%). However, it should be noted that majority of respondents were teenagers of sixteen and seventeen. They represented mainly 70 married, 20 single, 8 divorced/widowed and 3 engaged Uzbek women. It was important to know the status of the respondents since the responsibilities in the household for married women could interfere the duties of a student. 52.5% of respondents were the graduates of Bachelor's degree, while 15.8% received Master's degree as well. 20% of them finished vocational colleges, which give them right to work, and 6% were the school graduates. Since the educational level of parents and the fact that participants attended pre-school institutions highly influence their further studies and their decision to continue education at university, it was learned that 70% of participants had parents with higher education and 84% of them attended kindergartens.

The participants of the survey were asked to give their opinion about the importance of higher education for women, the conditions prepared for them to acquire knowledge at home, or pursue knowledge even after graduation at university, the importance of learning foreign languages, what skills should Uzbek women possess and others. Besides, we wanted to know how parents, relatives or peers motivate their decision to study at higher levels of education. Of course, they were asked questions to understand their self-motivation too. Hence, the questions covered three different areas of motivation.

Findings

Table 1: Percentage and Mean of Parents' Influence

Statements	Responses in percentage			Mean
	No	Neutral	Yes	
My parents support my education at university.	2%	6%	92%	2.9
The financial condition of my family allow(ed) me to attend university.	15%	33%	52%	2.38
I have/had necessary facilities, such as personal computer/laptop, internet connection, a separate room to study.	20%	24%	56%	2.36
I can/could spare enough time to study. (For ex., 2-3 hours per day)	5%	22%	73%	2.68
Chores at home did not interrupt my studies.	8%	36%	56%	2.48
				2.56

Overall mean = 2.56; minimum = 2.38; maximum = 2.9; average result = 2.56

Table II: Percentage and Mean of Peers', Relatives' Influence

Statements	Responses in percentage			Mean
	No	Neutral	Yes	
We discuss(ed) our further plans about receiving higher education with my friends and classmates.	13%	48%	39%	2.27
My friends/classmates think/thought that getting high education degree is/was important.	9%	32%	59%	2.50
My friends, classmates help/ed me with my studies.	29%	35.5%	35.5%	2.07
I have many relatives with higher education degree.	6%	24%	70%	2.64

Overall mean = 2.37; minimum = 2.07; maximum = 2.64; average result = 2.37

Table III: Percentage and Mean of Self-motivation

Statements	Responses in percentage			Mean
	No	Neutral	Yes	
It is important for women to be highly educated.	9%	1%	90%	2.81
University degree is not enough; one must constantly develop himself/herself and increase knowledge.	14%	1%	85%	2.71
I like reading different books to increase my knowledge and I spare time for that.	10%	50.5%	39.5%	2.30
In order to increase my knowledge, I follow various video tutorials and online conferences outside of class.	28%	34%	38%	2.11
I attend online courses to increase my knowledge.	61%	0%	39%	1.77
				2.34

Overall mean = 2.34; minimum = 2.11; maximum = 2.81; average result = 2.34 High

The answers to the questions were coded as '1' if the respondents answered 'No', '2' if they answered 'Neutral' and '3' if they gave the response 'Yes' to calculate 'mean' for each question.

Discussion

The results show that Uzbek women are most motivated by their parents ($m=2.56$). The responses indicate that 92% of female survey participants feel supported by their parents to study at university. When it comes to financial and material support from parents, we find that almost half of Uzbek women had financial problems due to high tuition fees at higher educational institutions in Uzbekistan. Moreover, only 56% of the students agreed that housework did not keep them from studying. As Gulmovna (2020) wrote old stereotypes such as educated women will dominate over the man significantly contribute to the prevalence of this phenomenon. Nepotism and managing households are widely encouraged in the nurture of future bride (kelin). Even in the selection of secondary institution parents consider less time-consuming jobs for girls because women, according to the culture, belong to the family than the work. Therefore, 75% of girls' enrolment for the secondary and tertiary education happens by the wish of their parent (ADB, 2005; ADB, 2014; Mee, 2001; UNDP, 2007-2008; Saima, 2013).

Traditionally, Uzbek women have a lot of responsibilities at home and this gets worse when they get married. Since they marry in their early 20s, women have to manage household and studies at the same time. This becomes clear when one evaluates the answers according to where they live. Women living in the regions have fewer material conditions (50%) and less time (62%) to study their university subjects than respondents living in the capital (61% and 81% respectively). The questions on material and financial support were included in the same table because parents in Uzbekistan usually create the conditions for their children to get an education, even if they are 18 or older. In most families, children do not try to earn money themselves to pay for school fees. At the same time, it is observed that parents looking for prospective brides for their son do pay attention to whether the girl has a university degree or not, but the sad side of the story is that they are not willing to pay the tuition fees. Usually, the bride's parents continue to pay the university tuition fees even if their daughter gets married.

The next table shows that women usually do not discuss much about their future plans related to their studies and only 59% of them think that acquiring knowledge at universities is important for their future. Gulyamova (2020) indicates that Uzbek girls get married in early age at 18 or 17 (in some regions at 16) and in their 21st they become mothers when the responsibility is exacerbated and falls only on them. This "mannism" behaviour impact on women's ESD (ABD, 2008). The selection of profession mainly depends on parents' wishes who seek successful marriage to their daughters. As healthcare and pedagogy (professions like nursing, teaching) are less time consuming. Traditional Uzbek man usually seeks a girl to marry who works in those professions, because she can devote most of her time to the household.

Table No. 3 shows the results related to self-motivation of Uzbek women. Although they think that a university degree is important and they (85%) understand that it is not enough and one should constantly improve one's knowledge, it can be observed that in practice they are not motivated enough to improve their general knowledge. Only just under 40% of the respondents try to use the internet to learn more and read books. An analysis by age group shows that women aged 30-40 (44%) are more likely to try to acquire knowledge online than women aged 20-29 (33%). At the same time, women in both age groups (38% -38%) are equally interested in broad-

ening their horizons by reading books. In addition, the survey participants were also asked about their opinion on learning a foreign language. 92% of them answered that it is important to know a foreign language, and we wanted to know which foreign languages are most commonly spoken among the participants. Russian (69%), English (54%) and Turkish (21%) were the most popular languages, and 17% of the participants said they did not know any foreign languages. As mentioned earlier, because of the high expectations of women in the family, we were also interested in respondents' opinions about their role in the family and society and wanted to know what skills and abilities Uzbek women should have. In their opinion, sewing, cooking and nursing are the most important, followed by a teaching profession. Very few respondents also mentioned knowing a foreign language and using PC. Uzbek women's roles in the family are first to raise well-behaved and decent children, and then to do housework. When it comes to the role of women in society, most respondents were hesitant to answer or gave very general answers such as "women play a big role in society" or "they have the same rights as men". Views such as "They prepare smart children for society" were also frequently expressed. There were also a few views like: "They are in control of their job", "They respect themselves".

Conclusion

As Djurbayeva (2019) indicated in modern society, the process of self-identification of women is changing and their social status, culture and education are growing. In particular, the recognition of the issue of women as a global phenomenon and the consistent efforts to overcome the problem of women, and their wider participation in higher education, public life, enhance the role of women in society and provide them with a wide range of activities.

The current study has shown that parents have the greatest influence on the motivation of Uzbek women to pursue higher education. Unfortunately, they are not self-motivated to develop professionally and find their place in society. They see themselves mainly as housewives and mothers. Although family traditions and culture seem to strongly influence the prospects of Uzbek women, they could have benefited from studying at universities, as they are sufficiently supported by their parents. The recent problems in education are being solved step by step through the implementation of various reforms by the government. Hopefully, as the standard of living of the population rises and tuition fees become more affordable, more female applicants will be accepted at higher educational institutions in Uzbekistan. At the moment, it is important to further research the field to understand the challenges Uzbek women face when studying at university and the other motivating factors that influence their final decision to apply to university.

Agrawala (2015) postulated that the organizations need to use the full pool of available talent (Burke, 2006) that increasingly includes women. Morley and Crossouard (2015) in their report submitted to the British Council recommend that gender should be mainstreamed into higher education policy. It is important for universities to track gender disaggregated statistics with the objective of developing informed policies. It is hoped that the findings of researches of the kind presented in this issue will draw the attention of policymakers and encourage universities to frame policies on gender equality, gender balancing and gender mainstreaming, accompanied with strategic action plans, resource allocation and reporting mechanisms. Currently, in a clash of civilizations and an omnipresent crisis, the issues of further developing the role and place of women in higher education, which are important to solve, cannot be achieved without the participation of women in the future.

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