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THE VOICE OF FEMINISM IN UZBEK JOURNALISM: THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE FEMALE PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

This article analyzes the formation of feminist ideas in the mass media of Uzbekistan and the transformation of the socio-political perspectives of female journalists. The research explores the historical development of female journalism, covering stages from the Jadidism era to the modern digital media age. Furthermore, the transition of the female image in media from stereotypical depictions to an independent, intellectual subject is examined through sociological and discursive analysis methods, alongside existing barriers in gender equality and media policy. The article concludes by presenting scientific and practical recommendations for enhancing the activism of female journalists and ensuring gender balance in the media sphere.

Keywords: Feminism, female journalism, gender equality, stereotype, digital media, media discourse, social responsibility.

Introduction and Hypothesis

In recent years, the social, political, and cultural role of women in Uzbekistan's society has been steadily expanding. In this process, the role of mass media, particularly female journalists, is incomparable. Through media, women are actively working to make their voices heard, draw attention to gender inequality issues, and dismantle female stereotypes. Against the backdrop of these changes,

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the concept of feminism is gradually emerging in its own unique form within the context of Uzbek journalism.

Feminism is not merely about women's rights; it is a socio-philosophical movement that promotes the ideas of humanism, justice, and equal opportunity. In Uzbek journalism, this idea is expressed by maintaining a delicate balance between national values, religion, culture, and modern thought. Today, female journalists are not limited to covering "women's topics"; they are boldly expressing their views on issues such as social injustice, corruption, domestic violence, and political activism.

Particularly in the works of young female journalists and bloggers, a new model of womanhood—the image of an independent, thoughtful, and responsible individual—is taking shape. This, in turn, is creating a unique "Uzbek interpretation" of feminism in the media space. Thus, feminism in contemporary Uzbek journalism is not just an idea, but a new perspective of women toward life, society, and self-awareness.

Sources and Research Methods

In this study, several scientific and methodological approaches were applied to deeply analyze the process of reflecting female journalism, gender equality, and feminist ideas in the media of Uzbekistan. The primary methods are as follows:

- 1. Analytical Method: This method was used to study theoretical and practical sources related to the topic. Specifically, the works of authors such as Beasley (2018), Byerly (2013), Ross (2019), and Tong (2014) were analyzed, and the stages of development of the concept of female journalism were compared. Historical and social processes were studied to determine how gender policy and the image of women in the press have been formed in the case of Uzbekistan journalism.
- 2. Content Analysis Method: Through this method, articles, news, and reports published in Uzbek and international mass media were analyzed. Content analysis was used to examine the stereotypes present in materials about women, and how

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they are reflected in terms of language, imagery, and social status. As an example, the number, language, and style of gender-sensitive materials were analyzed based on sources such as MassMedia.uz (2024), UNFPA Uzbekistan (2024), and Media and Society (2024).

- 3. Comparative Method: The study compared gender issues in Uzbekistan's media with international experiences. Specifically, data from UNESCO (2020, 2021), WACC (2014), and European Union (2024) reports were compared with local practices. This allowed for the assessment of the legal and professional challenges faced by female journalists in our country against the backdrop of global indicators.

Sociological and Empirical Methods

Through the sociological method, existing statistical data regarding the professional activities of female journalists, their status within editorial offices, and the pressures they face in the digital media era—such as online violence, discrimination, and inequality of opportunity—were examined. From an empirical perspective, the results of surveys conducted by international organizations such as UNESCO, UNFPA, and International Media Support (IMS) were analyzed to evaluate their impact on the current situation in Uzbekistan.

Historical-Methodological Approach

The historical stages of the formation of female journalism in Uzbekistan were studied. Based on the works of Turaeva (2021) and Karimova (2022), the process was analyzed from the Jadidism period at the beginning of the 20th century to the modern era of digital media. This approach highlights how female journalism has harmonized with broader social changes.

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Discursive Analysis Method

This method was used to examine linguistic units, rhetorical devices, social symbols, and stereotypical expressions used toward women in media texts. Additionally, attention was paid to the ratio of male and female voices in the coverage of gender issues. Discursive analysis helped identify both hidden and overt manifestations of feminist ideas in the press.

Main Part: Discussion

Feminism is a social movement and theoretical framework that advocates for equality between women and men, women's rights, social activism, and the empowerment of their voices. In the field of journalism, feminism is closely linked not only to the participation of women in mass media but also to how the female image is constructed in media products, which topics take center stage, and the narratives journalists create through media. In Uzbek journalism, the perspective of female journalists is beginning to find its place in the media landscape through a feminist approach.

Significant changes have occurred in Uzbekistan's gender equality policy in recent years. For instance, the article "Gender Equality in Uzbekistan" emphasizes that empowering women is a vital element of the national development strategy. For media organizations, this represents an opportunity to involve more women, amplify their voices, and encourage gender-sensitive media content.

Theoretically, the perspectives of feminism and female journalism manifest in two directions:

1. A warmer, socially inclusive approach: Female journalists often create a form of journalism that monitors the status of vulnerable groups (women, children, marginalized social strata) and strives to voice the concerns of the oppressed, justice, and human rights. For example, in the "Creating Gender-Sensitive Content" training organized by UNFPA in Uzbekistan, journalists

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learned to approach "violence against women" and "gender stereotypes" through media products—an expression of the proximity of female journalism to a feminist lens.

2. Professional Identity and Implementation: Female journalists' endeavor to realize their professional identity and implement gender equality principles in the media field. Local and global research shows that women are not only participating in covering diverse topics but also leaving their mark on leadership positions and editorial policy. For example, the 2025 article "Opportunities and Challenges Facing Women Journalists in the Media Field" published in Uzbekistan analyzes the struggle for gender equality, leadership opportunities, and safety issues.

Feminist and female journalistic perspectives in the Uzbek media context are also being reinforced by concrete practical measures. For instance, the EU-funded project "EU-Tabassum: Media Skills to Promote Gender Equality and Empower Young Women in Uzbekistan" was implemented. This project involves training young female journalists and bloggers to create gender-equal media content, expanding women's participation in the media space, and breaking gender stereotypes. These initiatives demonstrate that feminism plays a crucial role not just as an academic thought, but in real media policy and journalistic practice.

At the same time, the feminist-based perspectives of female journalism often clash with the cultural and educational context of Uzbek society. For example, women are frequently depicted in the press as housewives or bearers of family responsibilities; this can act as a barrier to the independent, professional model of "female journalism." Studies indicate that in the Uzbek press, women are usually shown in the role of a "housewife," while men are depicted in technical or leadership roles. From a feminist perspective, this reveals which images and themes need work and what obstacles remain.

Consequently, feminism and female journalistic perspectives in Uzbekistan are developing in an interconnected manner: women are striving to strengthen their

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voices in journalism, while media organizations are preparing for practical changes regarding gender sensitivity.

However, this process is incomplete, as cultural stereotypes, professional restrictions, and a lack of gender balance in the media sphere continue to affect the activities of talented female journalists. Therefore, the following sections will further analyze the opportunities and limitations for women in this field.

According to feminist theory, the existing patriarchal structure places women in a socially, politically, and economically restricted position compared to men. Therefore, the goal of female journalism is not merely to deliver information but to promote ideas of gender equality and to make women's voices heard (Beasley, 2018).

Understanding the expression of feminist theory in journalism is paramount. The development of feminism in journalism has occurred in three waves:

- The first wave focused on women's suffrage and social participation.
- The second wave emphasized equality in labor and politics.
- The third wave is related to female identity, culture, and representations in the media (Tong, 2014).

Today, the primary task of female journalism is to reduce stereotypical representations of women in the media. Many studies show that women are often portrayed in "decorative" or "emotional" roles, whereas they should appear as active intellectual subjects in society (Ross, 2019).

Through feminist perspectives, female journalists highlight not only their personal experiences but also broader gender issues in society. Their approach is rooted more deeply in empathy, social justice, and human rights (Carter & Steiner, 2018). In this regard, female journalism is emerging as an alternative idea to the male-dominated information discourse.

Female journalism often places humanity, lived experiences, and social equality at its core. A look at the history of Uzbek journalism reveals that female journalists such as Saida Zunnunova, Zuhra Rahmatova, and Mahbuba

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Eshonqulova were instrumental in covering social issues, women's education, and family values. Their work demonstrated the power of the female perspective in national journalism (Turaeva, 2021).

In today's global journalism landscape, figures like Christiane Amanpour, Maria Ressa, and Orla Guerin are recognized not just as news providers, but as warriors for peace, human rights, and justice. Through the activities of these women, it is evident that feminism has transformed from a mere theory into a practical social movement.

Furthermore, female journalism holds a significant place in the discourse of media language and representation. For instance, female journalists advocate for principles such as portraying women as active participants rather than "victims" and abandoning gender bias in language (Gill, 2007).

Following Uzbekistan's independence, the number of media outlets dedicated to women's issues increased. Publications like "Xotin-qizlar", "Saodat", and "Diydor" have been covering themes of women's rights, education, family life, and social equality. In this process, enhancing the status and professional training of female journalists has become a vital factor (Karimova, 2022).

The President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Sh.M. Mirziyoyev, has also emphasized the necessity of viewing women as active subjects in society through media, stating that "the voice of women is becoming a primary force for social renewal" (Mirziyoyev, 2023). This sentiment further elevates the social responsibility of female journalism.

Moreover, in the digital media era, women have emerged as new voices in blogging, podcasting, and internet journalism. This process is characterized as the "democratization of female journalism" (Shomurodova, 2024).

Over the last few decades, the role of women in the media industry has continued to grow. There has been a noticeable increase in the number of women in leadership positions, roles that define editorial policy, and analytical journalism.

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This process allows women to express their views freely and make bold statements on social issues (North, 2016).

Digital media and social networks have provided a new stage for women. Through blogging, podcasts, and online journalism, women have gained the opportunity to make their voices heard more widely. In Uzbekistan, for example, the number of bloggers among female journalists covering gender issues, domestic violence, education, and human rights is on the rise (Shomurodova, 2024).

On a global scale, journalists like Maria Ressa (Philippines) and Christiane Amanpour (UK) are internationally renowned for defending human rights, political justice, and women's right to free expression. Their activities serve as a new motivation and model for female journalists (Posetti, 2021).

In the context of Uzbekistan, the state is implementing several programs to support women's media activities. Notably, projects such as the "Women's Media School" and "Women's Voice" are aimed at training female journalists and enhancing their qualifications (Karimova, 2022).

Despite this, several systemic and cultural barriers persist in the activities of female journalists. The most prominent among these are gender stereotypes, wage inequality, discrimination within editorial offices, and the struggle to balance work and family responsibilities (Byerly, 2013).

Many female journalists still face difficulties in making their voices heard in male-dominated environments. In some cases, their materials are labeled as "soft" or "women's topics," and they are excluded from analytical or political assignments (Ross & Carter, 2011).

Particularly with the development of internet journalism, cyber-violence and online threats against female journalists have increased. According to UNESCO, more than 70% of female journalists have faced online harassment or pressure (UNESCO, 2020). This hinders their ability to express opinions freely. In Uzbekistan, cultural stereotypes, social perceptions, and sometimes family

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pressure also impede the active participation of female journalists. However, the increased attention to gender issues in state policy in recent years is gradually reducing these limitations (Mirziyoyev, 2023).

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has provided a deep analysis of the interconnectedness of feminism and female journalism, their formation process within the media system of Uzbekistan, and contemporary trends. It has become clear that feminism manifests not only as a theoretical concept or an ideological movement but as a powerful social factor shaping the professional identity of female journalists.

Looking at the history of Uzbek journalism, it is evident that the activities of female journalists have always been rooted in ideas of social justice, human rights, and equality. Significant changes have occurred since the years of independence: women have become more active in the media, secured leadership roles, and begun to openly cover gender-sensitivity issues. Especially with the emergence of digital media and social networks, women have entered a new information space, gaining the opportunity to amplify their voices.

From the perspective of feminist theory, the strengthening of the female gaze in journalism not only ensures gender equality but also enhances the social responsibility of the media. This is because female journalists promote principles of humanity, justice, empathy, and the pursuit of social change through media content. This, in turn, makes the information space more civilized, socially sensitive, and justice-oriented.

Research results indicate that female journalists are frequently active in covering the issues of vulnerable groups in society—women, children, people with disabilities, and low-income families. Their materials are imbued with an emotional approach, empathy, and a spirit of social justice. In this regard, it can be argued that feminism is strengthening the principles of humanism and social responsibility within Uzbekistan's journalism.

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Despite this, several obstacles persist in the professional activities of female journalists. Factors such as cultural stereotypes, gender bias, wage inequality, and discrimination in editorial policies hinder them from realizing their full potential. Notably, with the advancement of internet journalism, the increasing cases of cyber-violence against female journalists are viewed as a serious challenge.

Nevertheless, state programs, international organizational initiatives, and training sessions aimed at supporting female journalists in Uzbekistan today are yielding positive results. Projects such as "Women's Voice," "Media Skills to Promote Gender Equality," and "Gender-Sensitive Journalism" are strengthening women's professional preparedness, critical thinking, and analytical approaches.

In conclusion, feminism in Uzbekistan's journalism has evolved into a concept that promotes not only women's issues but also the principles of social responsibility, justice, and humanism in journalism as a whole. Female journalism, in turn, is shaping a new cultural paradigm in the media space—an information culture based on the values of empathy, integrity, and equality.

In the future, supporting the activism of female journalists, expanding their leadership potential, overcoming gender stereotypes, and deepening the principles of equality in media policy will be crucial factors—not only for the development of feminism but also for the overall progress of journalism in Uzbekistan.

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