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THE IMPACT OF SCIENCE AND INNOVATION ON ENHANCING THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN NEW UZBEKISTAN: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FACTORS AND PROSPECTS

Saidjonova Sabo Khayitboy qizi
2nd-year Master's student in Sociology,
Fergana State University
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Enhancing the socio-economic status of women entrepreneurs in New Uzbekistan is an issue that intersects economic growth, employment, and social equality. Women's participation in entrepreneurship is not measured solely by the number of enterprises or revenue volume; their access to productive resources, financing, knowledge and technology, market information, and decision-making processes is equally vital. When these opportunities are constrained, entrepreneurship may serve as a source of economic independence for women, yet it can also reinforce informal employment, low productivity, and income instability. Therefore, applying science and innovation to support women's entrepreneurship should be evaluated not merely by technological modernization, but also by how accessible economic opportunities are made for all.

At the theoretical core of the problem, the human capital, innovative development, and inclusive economy approaches are viewed as complementary concepts. The human capital approach interprets knowledge, professional skills, and experience as factors that increase labor productivity and income. However, knowledge alone does not guarantee economic outcomes: utilizing it requires financial resources, infrastructure, market linkages, and decision-making authority. Meanwhile, the innovative development approach highlights the role of new products, services, production methods, and organizational solutions in generating economic value. From the perspective of an inclusive economy, the impact of innovation is not limited to its contribution to total output; it is also determined by its ability to empower diverse social groups and pave the way for decent employment and sustainable income.

When these approaches are applied in combination, the interconnectedness among the factors influencing the empowerment of women entrepreneurs becomes evident. Scientific knowledge and practical skills help entrepreneurs calculate costs, analyze demand, improve product quality, and manage operational risks. Digital tools can expand customer reach, streamline sales processes, and reduce certain intermediary costs. However, utilizing technology requires internet connectivity, suitable devices, digital literacy, and access to secure payment systems. Because these conditions vary across regions and depend on the economic capacities of entrepreneurs, the benefits of innovation may not be distributed equitably. Therefore, alongside implementing technological solutions, it is essential to identify and mitigate barriers to their adoption.

Attributing the constraints faced by female entrepreneurs solely to a lack of individual skills overlooks the institutional dimensions of the issue. Financing terms, collateral requirements, the geographic accessibility of business services, access to professional networks, and caregiving and domestic responsibilities can all shape entrepreneurial decisions. When such factors compound one another, a woman's capacity to adopt new technologies or expand her business is curtailed. Therefore, analyzing this issue requires examining not only personal competencies, but also resource allocation and the practical ways institutions operate. The mere existence of a support program does not automatically ensure that it is accessible and effective for all entrepreneurs in practice.

A sustainable development approach brings long-term criteria to this issue. The economic sustainability of women-led enterprises depends on sustained income, labor productivity, adaptability to market changes, and the ability to operate formally. Social sustainability, meanwhile, is reflected in decent working conditions, professional development, and participation in economic decision-making. For innovation to support these outcomes, it must be viewed not merely as a short-term technical upgrade, but as a process that connects knowledge, finance, infrastructure, and market linkages. Otherwise, instead of narrowing existing disparities, new technologies may widen the gap between enterprises that

have access to them and those that do not.

From this perspective, the central research problem lies in determining the conditions through which science and innovation influence the economic performance of women entrepreneurs. In an analytical approach, it is advisable to view education and skills, digital literacy, access to financial services, access to advisory and business networks, as well as regional infrastructure, as interrelated factors. Furthermore, entrepreneurial outcomes should be evaluated not merely by business creation or launch, but by business viability, productivity, income stability, and the capacity to absorb innovation. Such criteria help distinguish the outreach of support policies from their actual economic impact.

Theoretically, science and innovation can transform the status of female entrepreneurs both directly and indirectly. The direct impact is seen in increased productivity through the application of new knowledge and technologies to the production process, whereas the indirect impact manifests through the expansion of skills, access to information, and professional networks. Because the magnitude of these impacts depends on an entrepreneur's initial resources and the institutional environment, a one-size-fits-all solution will not yield the same outcomes across all regions and sectors. Therefore, policy approaches should focus not only on expanding innovative opportunities but also on reducing the financial, digital, and organizational barriers to accessing them. This perspective moves female entrepreneurship beyond the confines of targeted social assistance, reframing it as a catalyst for advancing the country's knowledge-based and inclusive economic development.

In this study, it is appropriate to analyze the impact of science and innovation on the socio-economic status of female entrepreneurs not merely through the lens of individual business success, but as an interconnected system of economic opportunities, institutional conditions, and social relations. Such an approach prevents entrepreneurial outcomes from being evaluated solely by revenue or business size; it also incorporates decision-making autonomy, job creation, the application of professional expertise, market access, and standing within family and community life into the analysis. While science serves in this process as a

tool for identifying problems, distinguishing their root causes, and substantiating effective solutions, innovation extends beyond new products or technologies to encompass novel practices in management, financing, collaboration, and service delivery.

The theoretical foundation of the study builds upon the complementary aspects of sustainable development, human capital, and inclusive economic growth approaches. From a human capital perspective, education, vocational training, and digital literacy expand an entrepreneur's capabilities; however, knowledge alone does not yield sufficient results, as applying it to production and market activities requires financial resources, infrastructure, information, and reliable partnerships. Meanwhile, the inclusive growth approach makes it possible to examine the extent to which the benefits of innovation reach various social groups. For this reason, the gap between the availability of opportunities created for women and their actual utilization is analyzed separately. The sustainable development criterion requires evaluating economic efficiency alongside social justice and the rational use of resources.

Methodologically, institutional analysis, a comparative approach, and methods for interpreting causal relationships are combined. Institutional analysis examines how legislation and support mechanisms translate into practice, as well as the alignment among financial services, consulting, education, and market infrastructure. The comparative approach serves to identify differences in conditions across regions, sectors of activity, and stages of enterprise development; here, these differences should be explained by the distribution of resources and opportunities rather than attributed to the personal characteristics of women. In causal analysis, the relationship between the use of innovative tools and entrepreneurial outcomes is examined, though a concurrent change is not automatically interpreted as a direct effect. For instance, using digital sales channels may expand market reach, but this outcome also depends on product quality, logistics, payment options, and customer trust.

Official statistics, current regulatory legal acts, publicly available information from government and financial institutions, academic literature, and materials related to entrepreneurship support programs are intended to serve as data sources. These sources help

describe areas such as women's employment, the activities of business entities, education, and access to financial services. However, available indicators may not equally capture the full spectrum of female entrepreneurs' experiences: informal activities, unpaid labor, caregiving responsibilities, and decision-making authority within an enterprise might not be fully reflected in statistical accounts. Therefore, quantitative data is supplemented with document content analysis and a qualitative interpretation of barriers in the business environment. If interview or observational materials are utilized, participant consent, personal data protection, and the requirement to impartially represent diverse experiences must be ensured.

The first area of analysis focuses on determining the impact of scientific knowledge and innovative solutions on opportunities to enter entrepreneurship and expand business operations. It evaluates how vocational education, practical consulting, and technological skills help improve products, manage costs, and analyze customer needs. In this regard, the key criterion is not merely the availability of a training curriculum, but the alignment of its content with entrepreneurial needs and the conditions for applying acquired knowledge in practice. The second area examines the potential of digital technologies, e-commerce, and remote services to reduce market entry costs, facilitate access to information, and expand the customer base.

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