



Islam, Women, and Genderization in Professions: The Case of Uzbekistan

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INTRODUCTION

Although women's participation in higher education is increasing, the gender gap in participation in professions or genderization of professions continues to exist in Uzbekistan. Women's participation in higher education in Uzbekistan grew significantly from 31.8% in 2016 to 45% based on the latest data released by the Agency for Statistics of the Republic of Uzbekistan (2022). This is a positive change is facilitated by the opening of approximately 70 new universities in the past six years. There are now over 154 universities and more than 800 thousand students in higher education (The Agency for Statistics of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2022). Again, the genderization of professions continues to exist. In other words, the participation of women in certain "traditional" fields rather than having somewhat balanced participation in all educational domains still holds true.

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Previous studies, such as the United Nations' "Women and Men in Uzbekistan: Differences in Education" (2012), the World Bank's Systematic Country Diagnostic for Uzbekistan (2016), and "the Country Gender Assessment: Update" of the Asian Development Bank (2018) recognize the gender gap in Uzbekistani women's participation in higher education, including the genderization of professions. For example, the World Bank report discusses gendered specializations and shows that 56% of female students enrolled in higher educational institutions (HEIs) are in the fields of education and culture, 40% in healthcare and physical training, 23% in agriculture, 20% in economics and law, and less than 15% in communication, construction, and transportation. This report concludes that gendered specializations can lead to further gender discrimination and lower wages for women (World Bank, 2016).

To understand the genderization of professions in the case of Uzbekistan, the chapter employs a few theories and conceptual frameworks. However, it relies on "the Ambivalent Sexism Theory" by Peter Glick and Susan Fiske (1997) as a main theoretical tool to explain the issue of religious discourses about women's participation in higher education and the genderization of professions. Glick and Fiske state that whenever a woman performs something that is in line with what men think of as agreeable, such a woman receives praise or a *benevolent sexist remark*. When a woman does something that disagrees with men's perception of proper female behavior, she receives harsh criticism or a *hostile sexist remark* (Glick & Fiske, 1997). The four religious figures, namely Tursunoy Sodiqova, Muhammad Sodiq Muhammad Yusuf (Muhammad Yusuf going forward), Odinson Muhammad Sodiq (also referred here as Bintu Sodiq), and Mubashshir Ahmad, whose works the current chapter analyzes, place men at the center of women's all education related activities, including higher education and choosing professions. Furthermore, as the findings of the study show, the four Uzbekistani Muslim religious figures agree that women should do whatever they want within what is legitimate or allowed by Islamic law (*Sharia*), which men usually abuse for their patriarchal interests. If women do not conform to the expectations of men, they become illegitimate in the eyes of society.

This chapter first surveys briefly the studies done in the field of religious discourses and women's participation in higher education as well as the genderization of professions. It also discusses theories and previous works on how one can comprehend and explain the existing gender

gap in participation in different professions and the relevance of religious discourses. The section on the findings of the study will offer more detailed examples of the views of the four religious figures with regard to women's education, higher education, and the genderization of professions. The chapter demonstrates that the Islamic discourses are not necessarily a direct reflection of the state policy, but they are reflections of society. Both the state policies with regard to religion and Islamic discourses produced by these four authors reflect the values of the society and are constructed in a mutually constitutive way.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Scholars with both emic and etic perspectives have written about religion and education in Uzbekistan specifically and in Central Asia from a more general perspective. For instance, Abdugafurova (2018) discusses the existence of indirect Islamic influence in school and university textbooks. Using the term of *adab* or “a discipline of character development in ethics and morals,” and explaining its social implications, Abdugafurova argues that indirect Islamic influences are both implicit and explicit. The author writes: “The Explicitness indicates that Islam is considered part of everyday life and that Uzbek school curriculum includes Islam as part of culture, tradition and history” (p. 232). In relation to the implicit nature of such teachings, the author states, “Implicitness suggests that Islamic values are not the only factor to be considered in moral education in schools but must be combined with secular values” (p. 232). It is possible to interpolate from Abdugafurova's work that the instillation of Islamic morals, ethics, and values is present at the school and university levels in Uzbekistan. Abdugafurova's work is of great value in understanding how Islamic discourses are deeply embedded into the educational system, although the Uzbekistani government claims that its educational curriculum is secular.

Khalilova (2020) also offers important discussions on the history of education and its interaction with religion throughout the Tsarist, communist, and post-Soviet environments. Khalilova discusses how Islamic ideas, although not taught at schools as a religious subject per se, seep into the school curriculum (pp. 105–109). Additionally, the author examines governmental laws on religion and education and their dynamic nature throughout the history of Central Asia.

The genderization of professions is another important subject previous scholars and practitioners have raised with regard to Uzbekistan. Tabaeva et al. (2021) discuss gender inequality “in the fields of education and employment” and state that “women are predominantly concentrated in low-wage social sectors such as education and health, while men dominate income-generating engineering and business sectors such as industry and communication” (p. 38). Other scholars have also addressed issues related to gender norms, women’s educational activities in Uzbekistan and in the Central Asian region (Peshkova, 2020; Peshkova & Thibault, 2022; Tokhtakhodjaeva, 2008) and demonstrated how gender norms are constructed by male-centered traditional discourses.

Key publications produced by international organizations, such as World Bank (2016), the United Nations (2012), and Asian Development Bank (2018) all recognize the problem of genderization of specializations and attempt to shed some light on it. For example, the United Nations (2012) identifies six reasons that impact women’s participation in higher education and genderization of professions: (1) decision-making for girls by parents in choosing a profession, (2) prioritizing sons over daughters when it comes to paid higher education, (3) social pressure to choose a profession that might be useful for family life for girls, (4) unwillingness of parents to send girls too far away to study, (5) not enough universities in certain regions in the country, and (6) earlier marriages for girls than boys which decrease women’s participation in higher education because of early childbirth.

While these studies focus on some social, economic, and geographical factors, they do not explore religious aspects of the issue. The Asian Development Bank (2018) recognizes that there is a need to conduct further studies to “identify more root causes” for the genderization of professions (p. 73). This chapter focuses on this issue and discusses the genderization of professions in Uzbekistan in relation to Islamic discourses and their construction of women’s participation in higher education. The chapter considers the mutually constitutive nature of the matter at hand. While the study does not claim a direct correlation between existing Islamic discourses about women’s participation in higher education and the genderization of professions, it argues that they are reflective of the Uzbekistani society’s values and dominant gender norms since these two factors are mutually constitutive.

As mentioned earlier, the theory adopted in the chapter is “the Ambivalent Sexism Theory” by Peter Glick and Susan Fiske (1997). Glick and Fiske explain the theory in the following way:

Ambivalent Sexism Theory distinguishes between hostile and “benevolent” sexism (each addresses issues of power, gender differentiation, and sexuality). Benevolent sexism encompasses subjectively positive (for the sexist) attitudes toward women in traditional roles: protective paternalism, idealization of women, and desire for intimate relations. Hostile sexism encompasses the negative equivalents on each dimension: dominative paternalism, derogatory beliefs, and heterosexual hostility. Both forms of sexism serve to justify and maintain patriarchy and traditional gender roles. (p. 119)

The chapter demonstrates through the examples in the findings section, that all four religious figures, including two female authors, express both benevolent and hostile sexist attitudes toward women. This is to say, women who are in the service of men as good mothers and wives receive benevolent sexist remarks while women who take leadership roles in business or other areas are subject to hostile sexist attitudes. Additionally, all the religious figures whose works the chapter analyses here see women’s education within the limits of *Shari’a* or Islamic law, and whenever women function beyond these “Islamic legal” boundaries, they become branded as illegitimate.

Religious statements have a bearing on their time and context, which remain under the influence of existing political systems. Carl Ernst (2003) writes that “every claim about religion needs to be examined critically for its political implications” (p. 8). This is to say, that the tones in the changes of the authors from one presidential period to another reflect political adjustments. Ernst (2003) continues to state:

Religion is not a realm of facts, but a field in which every statement is contested, and all claims are challenged. Religious language in the public sphere is not meant to convey information but to establish authority and legitimacy through assertion and persuasion. (p. 8)

For this reason, this study questions what kind of authoritative “Islamic” messages the four religious figures—Muhammad Yusuf, Tursunoy Sodiqova, Odinaxon Muhammad Sodiq, and Mubshshir Ahmad—are trying to convey, as the hermeneutical influence of such

discourses in the public realm can have political as well as social implications.

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative in nature, the current research applies thematic source analysis method (Nowell et al., 2017). Not only textual sources but also social media posts, including audio–video materials, serve as primary sources for the current work. The collected data include books, journal, magazine, and newspaper as well as website articles, short treatises, electronic versions of social media such as Telegram, YouTube, Facebook, and other social media outlets. The most prolific writer among the four selected scholars is Muhammad Yusuf, who wrote hundreds of books in his lifetime. The current study employed twelve of this author’s books in addition to his audio, video, and website materials. Fifteen books and treatises in addition to several social media audio and TV programs of Tursunoy Sodiqova were analyzed in the current work. As for the other two current scholars, five books written by Odinaxon Muhammad Sodiq, several articles, and social media posts, three books by Mubshshir Ahmad, and his social media materials were thematically analyzed and applied when relevant.

The study analyzed the collected data based on the select themes that correspond to the central research questions: How do religious discourses construct women’s participation in higher education in Uzbekistan? How such Islamic discourses affect women’s choice of professions? Do such discourses contribute to the genderization of professions?

The study pays particular attention to the two women religious figures’ voices and how they compare to male voices with regard to women’s higher education and the gender gap in women’s participation in various professions. It also compares changes in the two politically different presidential periods in Uzbekistan—the Karimov’s authoritarian rule from 1991 up until 2016, and Mirziyoyev’s relaxation of some rules after 2016 to our present day with respect to religious freedom and practice.

FINDINGS

All four religious figures whose works the current chapter employs depict male’s role as a central factor in determining women’s higher educational and professional decisions. For example, Muhammad Yusuf asks

whether women should work or hold important positions. He writes in his book called *Iymon* [Faith] that “women should first be assistants in their husbands’ work. Only when her family is in need, should she work in a *halal* or pious way” (2010, p. 65). Similarly, Tursunoy Sodiqova (2018) states that women must not attempt to take over male roles and promotes the idea that both in the Islamic law (*Sharia*) and in the laws of the society, men are leaders of families (p. 10). The other two religious figures also present similar views with regard to men’s role in women’s obtaining of higher education or selection of professions. For instance, Odinaxon Muhammad Sodiq argues that women are more adaptable to certain professions, such as teaching, than men are by claiming that men lack patience (Bintu Sodiq, 2022). Mubashshir Ahmad, also argues that men should be responsible for financing women’s education (Ustoz Mubashshir Ahmad, 2023). Although such arguments seem to be “praising” or “protecting” women, they qualify as benevolent sexism as they ultimately contribute to the creation of a male-centered environment.

Below is the individual summary of the views of these four Uzbekistani religious figures with regard to the themes, such as how they perceive women’s education, including higher education and how they view women’s role in society, including women’s professions.

Muhammad Sodiq Muhammad Yusuf

Muhammad Sodiq Muhammad Yusuf, the former mufti of Central Asia and Kazakhstan from 1989 to 1993, known as *shaykh* or a religious guide, agrees that knowledge acquisition is a duty for men and women. He understands *ilm*, which can be translated as science or knowledge, as utilization of human intellect. He states that the Qur’an mentions the word *ilm* [knowledge] more than 50 times. He (2016a) compares the present practices of knowledge acquisition with past experiences and writes in his book called *Ijtimoiy Odoblar* [Social Ethics] the following:

When Muslims followed the teachings of the Qur’an and the Sunnah (the Prophetic Traditions), they spread the light of knowledge to the whole world. Young and old, male, and female, from the cradle to the grave, they lived in search of knowledge. One of the honest western scholars who thoroughly studied that period described the Islamic community as “the community that fully attends the madrasa. (p. 353)

Calling knowledge acquisition as a duty [*farz*] of every Muslim man and woman, Muhammad Yusuf implies his dissatisfaction with the current state of men's and women's educational activities. However, he places the Sharia compliant way of life to be the central factor rather than education itself. Muhammad Yusuf further implies that since Islamic law is not being followed properly, women's education is also not being properly conducted.

Muhammad Yusuf considers the discussion of women or any issue related to women in Islam to be an attack against Islam. He (2010) writes in a book called *Iymon* or Faith, "For various reasons, the issue of women has become one of the main targets of criticism against Islam. Even some Muslim scholars were forced to say that the issue of women is a poisoned dagger stuck in the chest of the Islamic Nation [*Umma*]" (p. 51). By defending Islam, he writes that Islam improved the treatment of women by making them equal to men. He argues that "before Islam, a woman was condemned not only to the violation of her rights, but also to the deprivation of her human status" (p. 52).

Muhammad Yusuf (2016b) is not against women obtaining knowledge, including higher education. He writes: "Raising daughters, their education, and culture, and everything necessary for their livelihood and growth are responsibilities of the father" (p. 53). He further adds that parents who assist their daughters to get knowledge receive more rewards from God than helping their sons to get education. He also emphasizes the importance of knowledge acquisition as a responsibility of women as well. He writes: "Women's rights do not only include education, knowledge acquisition, listening to religious sermons but also have the obligations to teach, impart knowledge, and be busy with other scientific works" (2010, p. 54).

He discusses how women played important roles in the past by writing that "the Muslim woman has always had her share in the fields of society, politics, and Sharia. The right opinion and voice of the Muslim woman were heard by caliphs, the Prophet, may God bless him and grant him peace, and by the Almighty himself (2010, p. 64)." As for the women's participation in different fields, Muhammad Yusuf writes, "now let us talk about the work of a woman in different fields. It should be noted that in Islam, women are not forbidden to work, but this issue is regulated based on the interests of the woman, her family, and the society" (2010, p. 55). This is to say, not only women's own interests, but their family as

well as societal interests determine whether women should be in different professions or not.

It is safe to say that Muhammad Yusuf places women's educational activities, including women's higher education, exclusively in the male domain. He constructs women's knowledge acquisition around men's needs. He (2010) writes that "Islam gave a woman the right to education, raising her cultural level and made men responsible for this work" (p. 53). He states that husbands have complete control over wives if such control conforms to Islamic law. He (2010) further writes:

It is permissible for a woman to help her husband in his work, to work honestly (through halal means) when her family needs her. That is, she can work if she wants to, otherwise someone cannot force her. Some of our scholars said: "work is sometimes recommended for women who have good character and are of great benefit to society. (p. 65)

It is reasonable to conclude that Muhammad Yusuf perceives women's education from an Islamic legal or *Sharia* perspective. Not only Muslim men and women should obey Islamic laws with regard to women's education, but women should come under male control in such activities. Muhammad Yusuf creates a situation where men control women's educational and professional activities in the name of Islamic law. If women follow such an Islamic way of life, as Glick and Fiske describe in their Ambivalent Sexism Theory, they receive praise. However, breaching Islamic legal norms will result in the illegitimacy of such activities. For this reason, it is possible to state that Muhammad Yusuf's views on women's education and professional work add to the perpetuation of the genderization of professions in Uzbekistani society and beyond.

Tursunoy Sodiqova

Tursunoy Sodiqova is a prolific writer and a well-known figure in the Uzbekistani society. Originally from the Andijan province, she later moved to Tashkent, the capital city of Uzbekistan and graduated from the philology faculty from Uzbek National University (former Tashkent State University) in 1966. With an oratory skill and a life skill, Sodiqova combines her Islamic knowledge and becomes a public speaker, an ethics and etiquette teacher for the general Uzbekistani public, specifically for Uzbekistani women.

In a telegram channel dedicated to Tursunoy Sodiqova, and run by her fans, Sodiqova talks about the value of reading for girls in the video clip titled “Mother is a Great Teacher”:

Let us encourage our daughters to become book lovers from their childhood; books inspire their dreams, enhance their thinking, and introduce them to human morality. Through reading, a person learns how to interact with others. Books reveal the world to them and fill them with wonder. They learn how to build happiness and overcome sorrow. (Tursunoy Sodiqova, 2019, 3:11)

In her book called *Today's Men [Bugungi Erkaklar]*, Sodiqova (2018) seems to imply that women should have goals other than raising children. In fact, she highly recommends parents to pay more attention to daughters' education than sons' education since daughters are at the center of the family's success. “Since being born, and living as a human being, I have had goals other than raising children. I was able to know the world and people, I struggled, and achieved, and still wonder whether I made my mark or not” (2018, p. 13). However, one can see the elements of benevolent sexism as well as hostile sexism in the examples from her other works. For example, she talks about how women are the greatest beings since they are mothers. This is an example of benevolent sexism. In other instances, she criticizes women who are in business or who fight to take care of their families. As an example of hostile sexism, Sodiqova (2018) states that such cases where women attempt to take over male roles are unacceptable. She promotes the idea that both in the Islamic law and in the laws of the society, men are leaders of families (p. 10).

Furthermore, Sodiqova seems to overwhelm women with familial responsibilities more so than men (Tursunoy Sodiqova, 2021). She states that a wife is obligated not only to change her husband's character for the better but is also responsible for the success or failure of the marriage, including the husband's relationship with his own family members, his career and the like. In general, the well-being of the family is the women's responsibility. She seems to leave little interest in women's own development (Zo'r TV, 2021). She also seems to be critical of women who do not conform to what men see as acceptable and agreeable and promotes the idea that women should conform to societal and patriarchal norms. For instance, she perceives women's foremost role as a housewife. In other words, some of Sodiqova's teachings reflect a male-centered approach to

gender relations as she places the husband at the center of a wife's world (Otinoyilar, 2021, 4:20).

Odinaxon Muhammad Sodiq (Bintu Sodiq)

Odinaxon Muhammad Sodiq is a famed notable religious figure in today's Uzbekistan. She is also known as Bintu Sodiq, referring to the fact that she is the daughter of Muhammad Sodiq Muhammad Yusuf, the former mufti of Central Asia and Kazakhstan mentioned earlier. Bintu Sodiq is popular not only through the print but also on social media outlets. She is frequently invited to television shows, and all types of educational institutions to give talks, and heads several print and online outlets.

Much like the previous female religious figure Tursunoy Sodiqova, Bintu Sodiq's views regarding women's education and choices of professions align with and reflect the society of Uzbekistan. Additionally, like her father, Muhammad Yusuf, she positions men at the center of the society. She writes in her book called *Remedy for Illiteracy (Bilimsizlik Shifosi)*:

In fact, a man should work and provide for the family, and a woman should take care of her family and children. If the workplace conditions are in accordance with Sharia, a woman can work and support her husband when the family is in a difficult financial situation. Also, if a woman's specialty is desired by the society, she can work. Every person, whether male or female, is encouraged to do good deeds. (Muhammad Sodiq, 2021, Volume 1, p. 116)

In the quotation above, Bintu Sodiq places men as responsible for the financial well-being of the household. At the same time, she does not deny that women should work. However, her condition is that the workplace be *sharia* compliant. Furthermore, she says that women can work when her "specialty is desired by the society" (Muhammad Sodiq, 2021, Volume 1, p. 116). By making this statement, Bintu Sodiq seems to imply that women's specialties may not always be desired by society. Like her father, Bintu Sodiq also reiterates that women may work when the family needs her financial support (Muhammad Sodiq, 2021). All these statements demonstrate, firstly, her agreement with the patriarchal rule, and secondly, her apparent neglect of women's continuous and important role

in society. In other words, contrary to her position, women professionals are always needed in society, not occasionally.

In the example below, Bintu Sodiq further adds to her conviction that what women do should always be *Sharia* compliant.

The teacher and doctor, Abdulfattoh Oshur, an Al-Azhar scholar, said: “A woman, if, by adhering to the sharia of Allah, has made a useful invention from her home, and there is no harm in her driving a car. We used to consider it as a man’s responsibility, but now we see that women are equal to men in learning and working in various positions, and there is no harm in them driving a car. (Muhammad Sodiq, 2021, Volume 1, p. 133)

In the above excerpt, Bintu Sodiq demonstrates her agreement with the fact that just like women’s driving, participation in professional and educational activities, as long as they are sharia compliant, will not bring harm. This statement seems to imply that there were some people who thought that women who drive, work and study would bring harm, but in fact there is no harm.

It is important to note that the analysis of Bintu Sodiq’s social media posts presented her support for women’s participation in a variety of fields. For example, she emphasizes that “Whether religious or secular, women need to obtain knowledge” (Bintu Sodiq, 2022). She further adds that “No matter what field women choose as a profession and want to obtain knowledge, they must learn the fundamentals of that field well” (Bintu Sodiq, 2022). She also supports women getting secular education and not only religious knowledge. She says that “If our girls only want to study the Qur’an and Prophetic traditions and everyone switches to this field, and if we need doctors, or economists, or if we need to obtain some information that is in English, then what will happen? Our society needs people who are specialists in all fields” (Bintu Sodiq, 2022). This statement by Bintu Sodiq (2022) shows her support for women’s education and specialization in all fields. She further adds:

When women and girls choose a profession, they should first of all need to consider their ability. Their parents or other relatives must not oppose if women choose their own professions. Every girl becomes passionate about her chosen profession and contributes to the development of that profession. Just simply going to college, and obtaining higher education, and letting the rest of the matter slide is a wrong approach. Women should make progress in their chosen professions. Additionally, some professions

fit women better, particularly in professions that demand patience. In teaching, and where delicate actions are required, women fair better. (Bintu Sodiq, 2022, 27:20)

Although Bintu Sodiq (2022) seems to be supportive of women's freedom to choose the kind of profession they want, she reverts to her earlier opinion that women fit certain professions better than others. She sees women's patience to be a crucial matter in teaching, for example. However, the fact that she stresses that girls should be able to choose their own professions seems like a change of heart for Bintu Sodiq.

Mubashshir Ahmad

Mubashshir Ahmad owns a brand name Azon, popular in Uzbekistan and beyond. His Azon brand includes a TV channel, Azon.uz website, and a press company called Azon Kitoblari, bookstore form cafes, etc. He completed a translation of Arabic books on Islamic jurisprudential projects and published a 47-volume encyclopedia. The presentation of the work was conducted with much fanfare and Bintu Sodiq also presented at the event, talking about the value of the project as well as the kind of work Mubashshir Ahmad is doing. Ahmad is quite famous and vociferous in social media and offers controversial views at times. His book, *Olim, Odam va Olam* [Scholar, Human, and World] is one of the top ten books most purchased in Uzbekistan (Telegram Store, 2023). According to Playboard statistics, he has more than 80 thousand subscribers on his YouTube channel with close to 9 million views. He has over 110 thousand Instagram followers, and on his Telegram channel, he has over 73 thousand followers with over 1000 video posts. His Azon.tv on the YouTube platform, which is called *Ustoz Mubashshir Ahmad*, has over one million subscribers.

Ahmad agrees with the other three scholars regarding his support for women's education. He mentions that it is an Islamic duty for women as much as for men to seek knowledge (Ustoz Mubashshir Ahmad, 2021, 38). He also mentions his own daughters, one of whom wants to become a surgeon and the second daughter who wants to become a psychologist. Ahmad further adds that it is not women's responsibility to pay for their education. In fact, "women should be able to obtain whatever they want, including knowledge, with the support of and by depending on men" (Ustoz Mubashshir Ahmad, 2021, 2:05). This way, he argues, women

will not face problems in their work since they are not responsible for any financial matters. He adds that if a woman does not have financial problems at home, and if their husbands take care of such matters, such professional women will not seek bribes or other means to make money (Ustoz Mubashshir Ahmad, 2023, 11:28).

Although Ahmad seems to support women's education, including higher education and women's ability to able to choose their own professions, he seems to make them dependent on men. In his YouTube video called "How a Woman Can Organize Work, Education, and Household Chores," he states that women's most important work is raising children (Ustoz Mubashshir Ahmad, 2023, 0:30). He explains that Islamic legal rulings are usually general but can sometimes be exceptional. Discussing women's participation in different roles, such as leadership roles as well as being presidents, Ahmad states that such cases are exceptional and do not qualify as general rulings (Ustoz Mubashshir Ahmad, 2023). The relevance of this notion to women's work, education, and household chores, according to Ahmad, is the nature of the woman—a delicate being that cannot handle certain professional responsibilities other than in exceptional cases. Gender equality, he argues, does not reach over 10 or 15% even in most democratic countries. Because of the delicate nature of their being, women should therefore be involved in their own fields (Ustoz Mubashshir Ahmad, 2023, 9:30).

Mubashshir Ahmad, speaking about women's work in general, states that the Uzbek proverb—husband and wife are both responsible for the family's financial well-being—is wrong. He states that only men are responsible for the family's financial well-being, and if women want to work from home and earn income, the money earned will belong to women and not to the family or husband (Ustoz Mubashshir Ahmad, 2021, 0:10).

CONCLUSIONS

All four religious voices the current chapter has discussed call for women's knowledge acquisition but when it comes to women's participation in higher education and profession choice, the views of these four authors presented some differences. All these four figures, who produce publications, social media, and other digital products, reflect the realities of the current Uzbekistani society. The fact that they have such profuse and pervasive presence makes one wonder if they share similar religious

ideologies in their religious and intellectual productions. As the findings of the current study demonstrate, obvious contradictions by the same religious figure (in the case of Bintu Sodiq) can in fact be the result of her later alignments with the state policies with regard to religious affairs. In sum, it is fair to say that a genderization of professions persists in Uzbekistan and that such an attitude can obviously inhibit certain women from achieving their full potential. Although the current study does not claim that there is direct correlation between Islamic discourses and women's participation in higher education and genderization of professions, such religious figures, with authority and influence, seem to contribute to the perpetuation of patriarchal norms in the Uzbekistani society, particularly in women's higher education and choice of professions.

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