



Press Coverage of Gendered Labour Division in the Water Sector of Uzbekistan

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Abstract

The article analyses the press coverage of gendered labour division in Uzbekistan's water sector. The study focused on the content, types, methods, forms, techniques and principles of gendered labour division coverage in the Narodnoye Slovo [Popular Word], Pravda Vostoka [The Truth of the East], and Darakchi [The Reporter] newspaper periodicals. The research aimed to review the activities and approaches of Uzbekistan's press to covering gendered labour division in the water sector, stereotypes in covering the topic, and ways to eliminate them. Three theoretical approaches were applied to the essence of journalism – i.e. agenda setting, framing and altercasting – to fulfill this task. The results of monitoring press materials indicate that whereas males more often serve as lead characters of publications as water management specialists, women are mostly depicted as housewives.

Key words: Uzbekistan, gender, water sector, Media, press.

1. Introduction

Provision of water resources and sanitary conditions contributes to the economic development of any country (Demie, Bekele, Seyoum, 2016), including Central Asian states (Rakhimov, 2009). Uzbekistan's economy is highly dependent on water availability due to its geographical location in the arid climate zone (Islam et al., 2009). The challenges arising in relation to free and unhindered access of the population to water can also affect intra-family relations, attitudes and values. Namely, to an extent women are deprived of opportunities for self-realization and self-development due to the constrained access to safe water resources and poor sanitation (Statistics on drinking water supply of apartments (houses), 2018; Statistics on sewage supply of apartments (houses), 2018; Gender, agriculture..., 2019). Female prospects and role in water management are rarely taken into account in policy and programme development (cited by: Khandker et al., 2020; Wahaj, Hartl, 2007). The media have a special mis-

sion of addressing these issues using their extensive dissemination tools. Since it is them that determine the level of public awareness (cited by: Quesnel and Ajami, 2017; Scheufele et al., 2002; Kasperson and Kasperson, 1996), they play a “special role in achieving gender equality as the most sensitive indicator of the state of society” (Sidorskaya and Radu, 2014). Thus, the validity and relevance of this study’s theme are dictated by the need for scientific investigation of the media’s role as an important instrument of effectively educating the public on the gender challenges in the realm of labour distribution in the water sector of Uzbekistan.

This study aimed to analyze the actions of the Uzbek press, its approaches to covering the topic of gendered labour division in the water sector, and the pertaining stereotypes, as well as propose ways to eliminate them in the form of science-based recommendations. The article consists of six (6) sections describing the theoretical framework and methods of the research (Section 2), gendered labour distribution in public water management, agriculture and households in Uzbekistan (Section 3), empirical analysis of periodical press publications on the topic (Section 4) comprising separate sub-sections devoted to the press coverage of gendered labour division in Uzbekistan’s water sector, “male” image in water-related publications, female lead characters of publications on water issues, the media as a factor of counteracting the entrenchment of women-related stereotypes in the water sector, as well as discussion (Section 5) and conclusion (Section 6).

2. The media and gender aspects of water resources management: theoretical framework and research methods

The works by such journalism theorists and practitioners as E.V. Lyskovsky (The linguistic features of political discourse texts in the English language (based on social and political articles)) [2017], R.M. Entman (Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm) [1993], M. McCombs (The Agenda-Setting Role of the Mass Media in the Shaping of Public Opinion) [2003], M. McCombs and S. Valenzuela (The Agenda-Setting Theory) [2007], O. Arowolo (Understanding Framing Theory) [2017], G. Marwell and D.R. Schmitt (Dimensions of Compliance-Gaining Behavior: An Empirical Analysis. Sociometry) [1967], etc. laid the theoretical framework for this research. The study also included the review of manuals, compilations of communication theories, several country gender assessments in English, e.g. *A Manual on Communication for Water Supply and Environmental Sanitation Programmes* [1999], *Communication Theories* [2003-2004], *Gender, agriculture and rural development*, etc.

Water issues should be on the Mass Media’s agenda, as the latter serve as a distributor of mass information and are capable of influencing public awareness, acknowledgement and understanding of environmental challenges (Mayeda et al., 2018). In addition, as a precious factor of economic, environmental and social well-being of the population and society (Garcia, 1998), water resources generate the highest interest among the audience.

According to Julia Wood there are three Media topics representing male and female images. In the first one, women are underrepresented. This falsely means that men manifest the cultural standard while women are insignificant. In the second category of topics, men and women are portrayed through the lens of stereotypes supporting socially endorsed gender perceptions. In the third case, perceptions of gender relations emphasize traditional roles and normalize violence against women (Wood, 2013).

The theme of “gender and water” in the media relies on several universal communications theories, and this article focused on the following of them. Firstly, it is agenda setting, i.e. raising public awareness and concern on important gender issues in the water sector through the Mass Media. Two main assumptions underlie the majority of studies on agenda setting (Lyskovsky, 2017): the press and the media do not reflect reality but filter and shape it; the Mass Media's special emphasis on selected issues encourages the public to perceive them as the most important. Through agenda setting, the media also influence the public perception and views on the topics covered in the news (McCombs, 2003). In its turn, this facilitates the process of the issues and challenges which enter the Mass Media's agenda turning into the issues of the public agenda (McCombs, Valenzuela, 2007).

Secondly, it is framing related to the angle of information presentation. As per this theory, a news piece author, for instance, decides “how to choose a topic, how to diagnose the causes of an event, and how to make moral judgments” (Entman, 1993). The framing theory is characterized by the fact that the media create a specific framework by presenting news with a predetermined and narrow contextualization. A frame can be set to improve presentation or can be used as cognitive labels to link a story with the larger picture (Arowolo, 2017). Scientists have proven that “by nature humans are cognitive creatures seeking the shortest ways to process information and preferring to think less” (Fiske, Taylor, 2010). Therefore, highlighting specific components of issues the Mass Media directly impact the audience's opinion through content. For instance, this goal can be achieved by simply increasing the quantity of media materials devoted to water issues.

Altercasting represents the third communication theory. This term means that the media inwardly “force the audience to assume a certain social role inside society” (Communication Theories, 2003-2004). Based on the altercasting theory, the audience are presented with both positive and negative roles, with a positive social role having a supporting function (Marwell, Schmitt, 1967). In this case, the idea of conforming to the qualities of a “good” person gets conveyed. In contrast, in case of a negative social role, the news target a potentially unwanted role. Thus, the audience perform actions to avoid the behavior of a “bad” person (Marwell, Schmitt, 1967). The author believes that this theory greatly contributes to the entrenchment of stereotypes, especially gender ones. The majority of the Mass Media presenting gender images perpetuate stereotypical and limited male and female perceptions (Wood, 2013). For example, the media show that whereas field works are “assigned” to men, household management including water use for household (cleaning, cleaning, washing, etc.), as well as

cosmetological and dietary purposes (personal care and care for family members) represent “female” duties.

The application of the aforementioned theories depends on the actual aims of an author of a “gender and water” news publication. To ensure the effectiveness of information presentation it suffices to “offer the reader only the information itself in the form of facts and comments – this is the informative goal” (A Manual on Communication..., 1999), for its efficiency it is necessary to supplement the material with the views of experts and reputable persons, “thus modulating the audience’s behavior, which is the second goal” (A Manual on Communication..., 1999), and for performance it is necessary to analyze a problem and its hypothesis, as well as “ways to address it, which is the instructional goal” (A Manual on Communication..., 1999). While choosing a goal, a journalist also determines a specific audience’s segment. However, the journalist should be aware that women's access to mass information is more limited than men's due to poor mobility, self-isolation and delegation of this task to men. In other words, women receive generally valid information through other family members of the opposite sex.

The articles in the *Narodnoye Slovo*, *Pravda Vostoka* and *Darakchi* Newspapers published from January 1, 2018 till December 31, 2019 formed the study’s empirical base. These periodicals were selected because they cover the gendered labour division in the water sector in the most comprehensive manner and are also disseminated throughout the country. The *Narodnoye Slovo* and *Pravda Vostoka* newspapers are Russian-language state periodicals with over 15,000 and about 10,000 circulation in 2019-2020, respectively. The *Darakchi* newspaper is considered a private outlet with approx. 80,000 circulation as of the end of 2018. Due to media convergence, these newspapers also have online websites featuring current materials. For this reason, the author selected the e-materials posted on the aforementioned online portals covering the broadest audience. The selected articles were divided into the following thematic categories for subsequent qualitative analysis:

- Press materials on water and agriculture published in 2018-2019;
- Press materials on certain topics published in 2018-2019;
- Press materials supplemented with male/female interviews;
- Press materials authored by males/females;
- Press materials with male/female lead characters;
- Press materials on certain gender issues published in 2018-2019.

The qualitative analysis of news articles aimed to detect, describe, and search for basic values, patterns and processes, rather than pinpointing merely quantitative or numerical relationships between two or more variables (Altheide, 1996; Berger, 1982). In this sense, the study’s overarching goal was to discover the place and role of men/women in printed articles, tone of publications, and based on that identifying the existing stereotypes. In doing so, the three

aforementioned communication theories – agenda setting, framing (way of presenting information), and altercasting (male/female roles in news pieces) – are of particular importance.

3. Gendered labour division in Uzbekistan

3.1. Gendered labour division in public water resources management

As per the State Committee on Statistics, out of all the economically active population 42.7% of women and 57.3% of men offered their labour for the production of goods and services in the Uzbekistan market in 2018 (Economically Active Population Indices, 2018). In particular, both females and males were predominantly employed in agriculture, forestry and fishing sectors. In addition, whereas the former were active in industry, education, trade, health and social services sectors, the latter were mostly employed in construction, industry, transportation and storage (Table I.).

Table I. Gender disaggregated labour force distribution by types of economic activity (2018).

Type of economic activity	% of the total		Gender distribution (%)	
	females	males	females	males
Total	100.0	100.0	41.6	58.4
Agriculture, forestry and fishery	27.8	25.9	43.3	56.7
Industrial production	13.7	13.5	42.1	57.9
Construction	1.3	14.6	5.8	94.2
Retail trade	12.8	9.0	50.5	49.5
Transportation and storage	1.0	7.6	8.5	91.5
Accommodation and catering	2.8	1.9	51.6	48.4
Information and communications	0.3	0.6	28.5	71.5
Finance and insurance	0.5	0.6	38.8	61.2
Education	13.6	4.6	67.5	32.5
Healthcare and social services	8.7	1.6	79.9	20.1

Arts, entertainment and recreation	0.5	0.5	44.7	55.3
Other types of activity	17.0	19.6	38.0	62.0

Source: *Economically Active Population Indices, 2018.*

Water and water issues have a deep gender nature: strength, experience and status in the water sector have male connotations (Zwarteveen, 2008). The attributes necessary to perform water management tasks – physical fortitude, determination, technical competence, self-confidence, authority – are all associated with male behavior. Consequently, gender attitudes also define policies, i.e. women are perceived as not belonging to the water policy sphere and/or their policy skills and dignity are disqualified (Zwarteveen, 2010).

In this sense, analyzing the female-to-male ratio in Uzbekistan’s water sector is rather interesting. The electronic data of the national Ministry of Water Management (MWM) demonstrate that exclusively males occupy the top positions (minister and deputy ministers, heads of territorial branches, managers of headquarter units, departments, sectors and offices, directors of subsidiary agencies) (Official MWM website, 2020). The same trend is observed within the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) of the Republic of Uzbekistan, i.e. out of 84 total positions, only 1 woman holds the post of the head of the food processing development department, 74 positions are occupied by men, with the remaining positions either vacant or not indicating the names of persons occupying them) (Official MoA website, 2019).

3.2. Gendered labour division in agriculture of Uzbekistan

Of the 150,100 farms operating in Uzbekistan, 5.4% are managed by women (Report of the MoA, 2019), including 36.3% specializing in horti- and viticulture, 35.5% – in cotton production and viticulture; 10% – in oilseeds and melon growing, 7.7% – in vegetable production, 6.2% – in livestock, and 4.4% – in vegetable and melon growing (Report of the MoA, 2019).

The data in the article *Uchastiye zhenshchin v upravlenii vodoj* [Women’s participation in water management] (2019) indicate that the share of female staff in the total number of personnel working in water management organizations is quite small – 6.3% on average by Uzbekistan’s constituencies. The majority of women are occupied in the financial, economic and engineering departments, where their share is relatively high (19-23%). Unfortunately, women’s participation in management does not exceed 5.5% (Women’s participation..., 2019). The above point to the gender-based asymmetry in the distribution of labour in the public water sector. When only men participate in water management and planning in a particular region, communities lose valuable opportunities to develop the most efficient water supply systems (Bennett, Dávila-Poblete, Nieves, 2008). After all, “women are better informed on the chal-

lenges in the water sector of a region” (Women, water and security, 2015), as well as on the methods to optimize the target efforts of local authorities.

3.3. Gendered labour division in households

Traditionally, in the developing world the water harvesting responsibility was vested with women (cited by: Demie et al., 2016; Luis et al., 2002), and it is them who often spend a significant amount of time performing the required actions (cited by: Demie et al., 2016; Amy and Jennifer, 2012). In remote communities across Uzbekistan, at least “in 61% of households women are responsible for providing their families with water, in 33% of households it is men, if the water source is located far from home” (Multi-indicator cluster study..., 2007). For this task, women spend an average of 2-3 hours a day, and in some areas up to 3.6-5.3 person-days a month (cited by: History in stories, 2013: Water project..., 2010). This is due to the fact that over 65% of consumers have access to water for less than 6 hours a day (Gender, agriculture..., 2019). Rural households are forced to use alternative water sources, including street water fountains, water pumps and/or water from rivers, lakes and ponds. The gender gap in socio-economic activities, time spent on water harvesting and distance to water source serve important indicators of women's hard labour (cited by: Shrestha et al, 2019: Crow, McPike, 2009).

In 2017, the State Inspectorate for the Control of Drinking Water Use was established under the Cabinet of Ministers of Uzbekistan. As a result of the project to improve water supply and sanitation, in Surkhandarya Region alone over 340,000 citizens, including 50% of rural and urban women, gained comfortable access to these services (ADB, 2015). In particular, after gaining access to improved water supply the “respondents noted the decreased disease incidence in children and family members, as well as started to use washing machines and kitchen water piping” (Compliance Report..., 2019). Such measures undoubtedly save considerable time, improve the living conditions of rural populations, and allow women spend less time collecting and transporting water, which in turn affects women's ability to earn income (Fisher, 2008).

Thus, the gendered asymmetry exists not only in water collection, but also in its storage and decontamination – in the majority of households women are responsible for fulfilling domestic water supply tasks due to traditional social perceptions. Because men are the main family breadwinners (Wood, 2013), they are more often employed in the public sector and occupy all leadership positions in the water sector. This is evidenced by the fact of female underrepresentation among decision makers, professionals and managers, as well as their focus on seasonal and unskilled jobs (Khitarihvili, 2016).

4. Press coverage of gendered labour division in the water sector of Uzbekistan

During the study period, 144 news pieces covered various topics associated with the water and agricultural sector of Uzbekistan (Table II.).

Table II. Press publications on water and agriculture in 2018-2019.

Number of publications	Newspaper		
	Narodnoye Slovo	Pravda Vostoka	Darakchi
	38	40	66
Total	144		

The articles mainly informed about the government efforts and actions aimed at improving water management and agriculture in Uzbekistan and other countries, as well as emerging public water supply challenges, water-related violations by legal and physical persons, health-water and other issues (ex.: notification of temporary water supply cuts, increased cold water tariffs, impacts of oceans on climate change, etc.) (Table III.).

Table III. Press publications on various topics in 2018-2019.

Topic	Newspaper		
	Narodnoye Slovo	Pravda Vostoka	Darakchi
Measures to improve water management/agriculture	21	29	23
Water issues	4	3	19
Violations in the water sector	4	1	6
Health and water	-	2	10
Other	9	5	8
Total	38	40	66
	144		

The author believes that supplementing newspaper articles with interviews of officials, event participants and affected parties also plays an important role in identifying gender asymmetries as to labour division in Uzbekistan's water sector. For instance, the study allowed establishing that press publications are dominated by the opinions and views of male water managers, responsible persons in related spheres, and event initiators (Ulugmurodov, 2018; Rostec will help..., 2019; Mamutov..., 2019), etc. When in the Mass Media women are portrayed as passive rather than active civil players (Ali, 2014) – also evident in the number of interviews (Table IV) – passivity can be viewed as a “normal” female trait (Goodall, 2012). If the media constantly send such messages to their audience, it will contribute to the effective imposition of superficial values in society (Goodall, 2012).

Table IV. Press publications supplemented with male/female interviews.

Newspaper	Males	Females
Narodnoye Slovo	25	5
Pravda Vostoka	31	5
Darakchi	19	6
Total	75	16

Gender representations in the media have two complementary meanings (Ganguly, 1992). “The first meaning refers to the “making present” of women and men as well as their gendered realities in the media. The second meaning relates to “proxy” or “speaking out” towards women and men” (Lemish, 2012). The difference between them is that whereas in the first case, a woman acts as a lead character or the main “image” in a publication, in the second – she acts as a news maker (journalist, editor, agency representative) (Lemish, 2012). These two roles are clearly interrelated, bringing together cultural and political dimensions, challenging dominant systems of power that affect both how a gender is “represented” and who represents it, who “speaks for oneself” and for others, as well as how they “speak” for others (Lemish, 2012). In this regard, it is noteworthy that in general male journalists are interested in water-related issues (Kenzhayev, 2019; Bashlayev, 2019v; Asrorov et al., 2019). In addition, several selected publications were authored by male water sector experts (Kreshalov, 2019; Karshiyev, Akramov, 2019; Muradov, 2019) (Table V.).

Table V. Press publications authored by males/females.

Newspaper	Males	Females
Narodnoye Slovo	5	4
Pravda Vostoka	18	7
Darakchi	3	3
Total	26	14

This trend however is most evident in the Pravda Vostoka newspaper, with the same indicators for the other two periodicals being almost equal.

4.1. Male image in water-related publications

The analysis of national periodicals shows that journalists most often choose men as lead characters of their articles. It stands to notice that lead characters in press publications are these (both male and female) acting as the main publication objects, telling about an event, presented in supplementing photographs (if publications do not refer to specific persons), or these whose names are cited. This is due to the reality of women’s “underrepresentation” in

the public water management sector, where practically all officials are male (Table VI.). Certain researches allege that the essence of this model in the Mass Media is that men are portrayed as representatives of competent authorities “saving” women from their incompetence (Wood, 2013).

Table VI. Press publications about male/female lead characters.

Newspaper	Males	Females
Narodnoye Slovo	11	10
Pravda Vostoka	13	7
Darakchi	24	14
Total	48	31

A thematic analysis of materials is also of considerable interest (Table VII.). The table shows that while males are the lead characters in publications about the measures to improve water and agriculture management, female characters are used for covering problematic and health issues.

Table VII. Media publications on gender aspects of various topics in 2018-2019.

Topic	Males	Females
Measures to improve water management/agriculture	31	11
Water issues	8	7
Violations in the water sector	7	-
Health and water	-	6
Other	2	7
Total	48	31

For example, this trend is observed in the articles *Opredeley mery po effektivnomu upravleniyu i ratsionalnomu ispolzovaniyu vodnyh resursov* [Measures for the effective management and rational use of water resources identified], *Amudaryo deltasida kichik suv khavzalari barpo etilmokda* [Small basins under establishment in the Amu Darya delta], *Prezident pobesedoval s aktivom Syrdarinskoj oblasti* [The President had a talk with the activists of Syrdarya Region] (Measures..., 2019a; Measures..., 2019b; Amudaryo deltasida..., 2019; The President had a talk with the activists..., 2019; Districts of Jizzak Region..., 2019), etc. These publications describe the course of meetings of the President of Uzbekistan with the responsible executives of the water resources management system on enhancing water use efficiency, establishing water basins in the Amu Darya delta, as well as farmers. Although the corresponding press publications do not specify the names of the actual water sector representatives, the supplementing images portray exclusively male persons, thus forming a cer-

tain opinion among the readers that addressing water issues at the state level is a male responsibility.

In addition, several articles in the studied periodicals also convey the transcendental stereotypes. Their authors present the image of a “male agricultural worker” – dekhan and farm managers, water workers and machinery operators, irrigators and agronomists, agricultural scientists, etc. This is evidenced by the articles *V Uzbekistane vpervye otmechajut Den rabotnikov selskogo hozyajstva* [For the first time Uzbekistan celebrates the Agricultural Worker’s Day], *Fargona viloyati pakhta rezhasini birinchi bulib bazhardi* [Ferghana Region is the first to fulfill the cotton plan], *Tsennost kazhdoj kapli presnoj vody* [The value of each drop of fresh water] (For the first time Uzbekistan celebrates..., 2017; Fargona viloyati..., 2019; Galiyev, 2019), etc. Once again, the stereotyping is communicated implicitly, i.e. inwardly through photos depicting Uzbek men working in the field and gardens. A quick glance at the news piece *10 nafar yosh fermerlar Yaponiyada malaka oshirib kaitadi* [10 young farmers will undergo internship in Japan] (Nurullayeva, 2019) leaves the same impression of farming being a “male preserve” (Image 1.).



Image 1. Article *10 nafar yosh fermerlar Yaponiyada malaka oshirib kaitadi* [in Uzbek] in the Darakchi Newspaper.

However, the same article translated into Russian by A. Kechin entitled *Yaponskij opyt v sadovodstve* [Japanese Horticulture Experiences] (Kechin, 2019) is supplemented with other photos with female silhouettes in the foreground (Image 2.).



Image 2. Article *Yaponski opyt v sadovodstve* [in Russian] in the Narodnoye Slovo Newspaper.

Thus, journalists convey information to the audience from different angles and perspectives and by doing so contribute either to the entrenchment of stereotypes or, on the contrary, facilitate women's engagement in the water sector.

The analysis of publications covering fish farming and men as the lead characters in all of them is likewise of interest. These include the articles *Lovis, rybka, i bolshaja, i ...morskaya* [Bite, oh fish, big and... marine], *Orol dengizi kurishini kishlok kariyalari aldingan bilganmi?* [Did the seniors know about the drying of the Aral Sea?], *65 yoshli fukaroning balik tutishga ishtiyoki fogia bilan tugadi* [The fishing passion of a 65-year-old male citizen ended in tragedy], *Samarkandi suv omborida 300 tonna balik nobud buldi* [About 300 tons of fish died in the Samarkand Reservoir] (Yakubov, 2019; Kanoatov, 2018; 65 yoshli fukaroning..., 2019; Samarkandi suv omborida..., 2018). Yet, all these articles have a different tone. In particular, the first publication is devoted to the installation of closed water supply system for intensive breeding of “live silver” presented by the Fish Farming Research Institute jointly with the Easy Fish LLC, and is positive. The fact that fish farming is also included in a “male” trade is indicated not only by the photograph of a man with a fish in his hands, but also by the interview with Abdullo Kurbanov, Director of the Fish Farming Research Institute. This argument is further confirmed by the statement of the former fisher Adilzhan Bigeldiyev – *40 yil balikchilik bilan shugullangan uchsoylik otakhon...* [an aksakal

engaged in fishing for over 40 years...] – in the article *Orol dengizi kurishini kishlok karyalari aldingan bilganmi?* [Did the seniors know about the drying of the Aral Sea?]: “*Mujnokning yigitlari bakuvvat, chayir bulardi. Kharbij khizmatga chakirilgan yigitlarning asosij kismi dengiz flotig zhalb kilinardi*” [The Muynak guys were always strong and slick. Most of them that were called up for military service were enlisted in the navy], “*Kishlok aholisining aksariyati ota kasbini davom ettirib, yakin zhoylardagi kullarda balikchik bilan shugullanadi*” [The majority of the population continue the trade of their fathers – they fish on the adjacent lakes]. The articles *65 yoshli fukaroning balik tutishga ishtiyoki fogia bilan tugadi* [The fishing passion of a 65-year-old male citizen ended in tragedy] and *Samarkandi suv omborida 300 tonna balik nobud buldi* [About 300 tons of fish died in the Samarkand Reservoir] fishermen become victims of events: in the first case, one of 4 men died during fishing, and in the second due to the lack of water supply to the Korasuv Reservoir (headed by Mr. A. Mamatkulov) 300 tons of fish died.

Publications on water violations committed by men require special consideration. Such articles are an often case in the Darakchi Newspaper. For example, the materials *Suvga nokonunij ulangan fukaro kilgan ishidan pushajmon buldi* [A citizen who had illegally tapped into the water supply line regrets his deed] and *Suvdan nokonunij foydalanish zhinoyaga etakladi* [Illegal water use had led to a crime] (Suvga nokonunij ulangan..., 2019; Suvdan nokonunij foydalanish..., 2019) were dedicated to how an LLC director Mr. A. Kosbauliyev and a farm head Mr. M. Mirdavlyatov illegally connected to water supply networks.

Monitoring the data of the national Penal Enforcement Bureau, the perpetrators were indeed imposed administrative and criminal penalties. The article *Firibgarlikka kul urgan suvchiga zhazo tayinlandi* [A water worker accused of fraud imposed a penalty] (Firibgarlikka kul urgan..., 2019) reported that Mr. I Ruzmatov, employee of the Andizhan Branch of *Suvokova* State Unitary Enterprise, abusing his official position, promised Mr. O. Akbarov to annul his debt for water supply services in the amount of 800,000 UZS in exchange for 400,000 UZS paid to him personally. As the result, Mr. I. Ruzmatov was detained at the crime scene for fraud and imposed a criminal punishment. Both articles are written in an informative genre, do not contain author’s subjective opinions, the thoughts are conveyed in a restrained and neutral manner. Thus, the newspaper aims to inform the audience about the facts of detaining the criminals, thereby emphasizing the inevitability of punishment. This is on the one hand. On the other hand, the publication inwardly claims that the crime has “a male face”.

Another of the most relevant aspects of water-related violations was described in the article *Nelegalnyj frilans... u arykov* [Illegal freelance... along the aryks] (Bashlayev, 2019a). In that newspaper report from the 20th Quarter of Chilanzar District of Tashkent City, journalist Mr. K. Bashlayev claimed that “the large *aryk* [water canal] flowing along Katta Khirmontepa Street” has become a favorite site for illegal car washers. “*Every day dozens of young guys and girls flock here in search of work*” and customers due to the low price of illegal car wash-

ing compared to registered car washes. In addition, the author placed special emphasis on the disorderly efforts of designated state authorities monitoring water use and protection, including in the aryks. The journalist's opinion of the situation had formed after several applications to authorized agencies that could not provide him with a precise answer as to who controls the illegal car-washing activities. After reading this article, the reader succumbs to the age-old male stereotypes of possessing certain privileges in the field, professional occupation and impunity. The author of that critical report called the audience to act on the punishability of male offenders and, thus demonstrated his concern for water issues.

4.2. Female lead characters in articles on water issues

In the media, women continue to be represented in the household setting as mothers and/or sisters taking care of their families (Krijnen, 2020) with men rarely shown occupied with housework (cited by: Wood, 2013; Brown et al., 1986). For instance, the authors of the majority of newspaper articles in 2018-2019 on labour division depicted women as housewives. This is proved by the publications *Mezhdunarodnyj den selskih zhenshhin budet otmechatsya v strane kazhdoye 15 oktiabria* [The International Day of Rural Women will be celebrated nationwide on October 15], *Toshkentdagi 600 ga yakin akholi uchun 4 km.ga ichimlik suvi kuvuri yotkizilmokda* [4 km of water piping is installed for about 600 Tashkent residents] (International Day..., 2019; Toshkentdagi 600 ga yakin..., 2019). In the first case, the woman was shown in her typical image – with a headscarf over her head holding a basket full of hot bread against the background of a tandoor oven. In the second publication, the journalist interviewed a woman who was manually pumping water. In both articles, female lead characters were assigned their old social roles – the image of a “rural woman” responsible for performing household tasks and harvesting water.

A woman gets depicted as a specialist in the image of a representative of traditional “female” professions in the water sector, i.e. a flower grower or dendrologist. This trend is observed in the articles *Osvaivaya agrarnye prostory* [Mastering the agricultural expanses], *Atirgul Khalmirzayeva – hranitel'nitsa sada* [Atirgul Khalmirzayeva – the garden keeper] (Gulyamova, 2019; Bashlayev, 2019b). In these publications, women are shown as having achieved success in their trade but not representing management staff, and journalists merely inform the audience without forging an attitude towards women as equal members of society.

The issues of healthy lifestyle, proper nutrition and disease prevention have also found their place in the Uzbek press. For instance, the publications *Gidroterapiyaning muzhizavij kuchi* [The Wonderful Power of Hydrotherapy], *Tugri ovkatlanish uchun 5 tavsiya* [5 Recommendations for Proper Nutrition] (Boshbekova, 2018; Tugri ovkatlanish ..., 2018) supplemented with the photographs of women dwell on water procedures (hydrotherapy), their benefits and types, contraindications, and the need to drink 2-2.5 liters of water per day to maintain body water balance. In them, a woman seems to be a happy and self-loving person. The articles

Suvni tugri ichish insultni aldini oladi [Proper water consumption can prevent strokes] and *Shamollashdan tez va oson khalos bulish usuli* [Fast and simple way to get rid of a cold] (Suvni tugri ichish..., 2019; Shamollashdan tez..., 2019) are devoted to disease prevention by proper drinking of water and ARVI treatment by hot morning shower. They are also supplemented with images portraying women (a woman drinking a glass of water; a woman suffering from ARVI). Thus, these publications – narrowing the potential audience exclusively to females – form the reader's opinion that the whole topic of proper nutrition and disease prevention and treatment concerns only women. The subsequent perceptions that the “responsibility for rational water use”, overweight propensity and frequent diseases are “female issues”, also lead to gender discrimination in society.

4.3. Mass Media as the factor of entrenchment of female stereotypes in the water sector

Every once in a while, it is possible to run across press publications aimed at breaking the stereotypes, e.g. *Shavkat Mirziyoyev: Pribylnost – osnovnoj kriterij vo vseh sferah ekonomiki* [Shavkat Mirziyoyev: Profitability as the main criterion for all sectors of the economy], *Prezident pobesedoval s fermerami* [The president had a talk with farmers], *Yesli est mechta, to vse poluchitsya* [If there is a dream, then everything will work out] (Shavkat Mirziyoyev..., 2019; The President had a talk with farmers, 2019; Mikhailov, 2019). In these articles, women are represented as farmers and farm managers hinting that the issue of women's engagement in the agricultural sector has risen to the state level. For instance, in the essay *Yesli est mechta, to vse poluchitsya*, the heroine Ms. S. Khodzhayeva is characterized as an experienced woman knowledgeable about all the subtleties of agribusiness. In addition to growing cotton and wheat, she is likewise engaged in horticulture and fish farming, as well as other types of small business. However, it's worth mentioning that such articles are rather few. In this case, the theory of altercasting communications plays a negative role. In fact, the articles of this kind encourage the female half of the audience to strive to occupy managerial positions in the water sector and contribute to transforming the nexus concept of “woman-housekeeping-water” into “woman-water-social and political life”.

5. Discussion

The management personnel of the Ministry of Water Management and Ministry of Agriculture of Uzbekistan are represented by men. Over 90% of farm managers in Uzbekistan are also males. This is due to the traditional gender image of women spawning from the historical stereotypes about the social role of women as the “hearth guardians”. The public mind still abides by the prejudice that a woman cannot build a career due to alternating maternity and sick leaves, as well as the responsibility imposed on women (by men) for raising children.

The results of monitoring Uzbekistan's printed press against three communication theories show that journalists deem state efforts to improve domestic and foreign water and agriculture systems, relevant public water supply issues, violations associated with illegal water use, health and water problems, as well as other aspects of water management as important and

deserving media attention. In its turn, this predetermines the agenda for the press audience. The framing theory manifests itself in the fact that without filtering the reality journalists merely reflect the actual state of things, thereby only aggravating the stereotypes regarding the status of women, thus revealing the essence of the third theory – altercasting. The gender images of men and women stem from the centuries-old stereotypes about women’s social role, which the press workers unwittingly continue to convey to readers, since they themselves are in the grip of the same gender stereotypes. In addition, the press features few publications dispelling the stereotypical perception of women in the water sector. The research author believes that this factor is underpinned by the lack of competencies among journalists to cover water issues in the media. In its own turn, this further contributes to the continuation and consolidation of women's perception by society as “secondary and subordinate”, as well as restriction of their social, political and economic engagement by “glass” ceilings and walls.

6. Conclusion

The research aimed to analyze the work and approaches of Uzbekistan’s press as to covering the gendered labour division in the water sector, stereotypes in covering the topic and ways to eliminate them. The study’s objectives included the investigation of the gender status in public water management, agriculture and household settings. The additional tasks within the framework of the research were to consider the theoretical frameworks of writing press publications on the studied subject as well as to analyze the corresponding empirical base.

Practically all management positions in the MWM and MoA of Uzbekistan, as well as on the farm level are occupied by men. In households, the responsibility of supplying water to family members still remains with women.

Three universal communication theories reflect the coverage of gendered labour division in the water sector, i.e. agenda-setting, framing, and altercasting, applied depending on the aims of press publication authors: informative, teaching and modeling behavior.

Within the framework of the study, materials posted on the websites of the Narodnoye Slovo, Pravda Vostoka and Darakchi Newspapers in 2018-2019 were analyzed. Both content and qualitative analysis of the news pieces were done. The publications were classified according to the most relevant themes: government measures to improve water/agriculture systems, public issues, violations in the field of water resources management, health and water, etc. It bears mentioning that most often journalists choose men – officials, agricultural workers, fishermen – as protagonists. In addition, it is men who often play the role of “water offenders”. Thus, the newspapers implicitly claim that crime has a “male face” to it. In their turn, women are represented in the image of florists and dendrologists linking them to “female” occupations. Moreover, the authors of most articles portray women as housewives. As the result, the woman appears to the reader as a “rural woman” responsible for household chores and harvesting water. The topic of female personal care – healthy lifestyle, proper nutrition,

and disease prevention – is likewise often featured in newspapers. The corresponding publications form a skewed perception among the audience that effective water use, excess weight and disease incidence concern exclusively women. However, there are also press materials breaking the stereotypes and encouraging females to “break the mould”, go beyond the “glass” ceilings and walls, and eliminate the prejudices against them.

The majority of press publications were supplemented with interviews with men and were authored by male journalists and/or water experts.

Based on the above, in order to optimize the efforts of the media on covering the topic of gendered labour division in the water sector of Uzbekistan, it is recommended to do the following:

- Increase the number of press publications on household and secondary school sanitation and hygiene, the lack of which facilitates water-borne diseases (e.g. diarrhea, cholera, typhoid fever, parasitic infections). Addressing this issue will allow girls an opportunity to get better education, especially during puberty;
- Publish more materials aimed at establishing gender equality in the water sector of the country, namely essays on successful and socially active women with equal access to productive resources in rural areas. This will contribute to women’s social integration, which may allow boosting agricultural yields;
- Build capacities of journalists covering the subject matter;
- Cooperate with national and international experts in labour division in the water sector in order to develop joint relevant thematic materials;
- Develop media training programmes, including online courses on media coverage.

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