



## GENDER INFLUENCE ON MANAGEMENT DECISION-MAKING IN SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED BUSINESSES IN UZBEKISTAN

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Hamidov Saidjon Baxtiyorovich  
Asia International University Uzbekistan

### ABSTRACT

This study explores the gender influence on management decision-making in small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) in Uzbekistan. The research aims to identify and analyze the differences in decision-making approaches between male and female entrepreneurs, particularly in the context of an evolving economic landscape. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the study combines quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews to provide a comprehensive understanding of how gender impacts managerial choices, risk tolerance, and strategic planning. Findings suggest that gender-specific factors significantly affect decision-making processes, with female entrepreneurs demonstrating distinct approaches to risk management, resource allocation, and leadership styles compared to their male counterparts. The results underscore the importance of considering gender dynamics in the development of policies and support systems aimed at fostering SME growth and sustainability in Uzbekistan.

### KEYWORDS

Gender influence, Management decision-making, Small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs), Uzbekistan, Entrepreneurship, Economic landscape, Risk management, Strategic planning, Leadership styles, Gender dynamics.

### INTRODUCTION

The role of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in driving economic growth and innovation is widely recognized across the globe, and Uzbekistan is no

exception. As the country navigates through various economic reforms and transitions, SMEs play a crucial role in fostering economic resilience and development.

However, the decision-making processes within these businesses are influenced by a myriad of factors, including the gender of the entrepreneurs who lead them. Understanding how gender impacts management decision-making in SMEs is essential for developing targeted policies and support mechanisms that can enhance the performance and sustainability of these enterprises.

Gender dynamics in business leadership have been the subject of extensive research, particularly in the context of developed economies. However, there is a paucity of studies focusing on transitional economies like Uzbekistan, where cultural, social, and economic factors uniquely intersect. This research aims to fill this gap by examining how gender influences the decision-making processes of SME managers in Uzbekistan. By exploring the differences in approaches to risk management, resource allocation, and strategic planning between male and female entrepreneurs, this study seeks to provide insights that can inform the creation of more inclusive and effective support structures for SMEs.

The evolving economic landscape of Uzbekistan presents both challenges and opportunities for entrepreneurs. As the government implements reforms aimed at market liberalization and improving the business environment, SME managers must navigate these changes while making critical decisions that impact their businesses' survival and growth. In this context, understanding the gender-specific factors

that influence decision-making can reveal important nuances in how male and female entrepreneurs adapt to and thrive in a changing economic setting.

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews to gather comprehensive data on the decision-making behaviors of SME managers. The findings of this research will not only contribute to the academic discourse on gender and entrepreneurship but also provide practical recommendations for policymakers, business support organizations, and entrepreneurs themselves. By highlighting the gendered dimensions of management decision-making, this study aims to promote a more nuanced understanding of entrepreneurship in Uzbekistan and support the development of more equitable and effective business environments.

### METHODS AND RESULTS

This study employs a mixed-methods approach to investigate the gender influence on management decision-making in small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) in Uzbekistan. The methodology combines quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the research topic. A structured questionnaire was developed to gather data on various aspects of management decision-making. The survey included questions on demographic information, decision-making styles, risk tolerance, strategic planning, and resource allocation.

A stratified random sampling method was used to select a representative sample of SME managers in Uzbekistan. The sample included an equal number of male and female entrepreneurs to facilitate gender comparison. The survey was distributed electronically and in paper form to SMEs across different regions of Uzbekistan. A total of 500 responses were collected, with a balanced representation of male and female participants. The quantitative data were analyzed using statistical software (e.g., SPSS). Descriptive statistics, t-tests, and regression analysis were performed to identify significant differences in decision-making behaviors between male and female managers.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gain deeper insights into the decision-making processes of SME managers. The interview guide included open-ended questions on experiences, challenges, and strategies related to business management. A purposive sampling method was used to select 20 SME managers (10 male and 10 female) who had participated in the survey. This approach ensured a diverse range of perspectives and experiences. Interviews were conducted either in person or via video conferencing, depending on the participants' preferences and availability. Each interview lasted approximately 60 minutes and was recorded with the participants' consent. The qualitative data were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis. Key themes and patterns were identified to complement

the quantitative findings and provide a richer understanding of the gender influence on decision-making.

### Quantitative Findings

**Decision-Making Styles** - The survey results indicated significant gender differences in decision-making styles. Female entrepreneurs were more likely to adopt a collaborative and participatory approach, while male entrepreneurs tended to prefer an autocratic style.

**Risk Tolerance** - Male SME managers exhibited higher risk tolerance compared to their female counterparts. Women were generally more cautious and conservative in their business decisions.

**Strategic Planning** - Female entrepreneurs placed a greater emphasis on long-term planning and sustainability, whereas male entrepreneurs were more focused on short-term gains and aggressive growth strategies.

**Resource Allocation** - The analysis revealed that women were more meticulous and systematic in resource allocation, prioritizing efficiency and cost-effectiveness. Men, on the other hand, showed a propensity for rapid investment and expansion.

### Qualitative Findings:

**Experiences and Challenges** - Interviews highlighted that female entrepreneur often faced additional challenges related to balancing family responsibilities and business management. They also reported experiencing gender bias and limited access to finance.

Adaptation Strategies - Women entrepreneurs demonstrated resilience and adaptability by leveraging networks and community support. They were more likely to engage in continuous learning and development to enhance their business skills.

Leadership Styles - Female managers described their leadership style as inclusive and nurturing, fostering a positive organizational culture. Male managers emphasized assertiveness and decisiveness as key traits of their leadership approach.

Integration of Findings - The integration of quantitative and qualitative data provided a comprehensive understanding of how gender influences management decision-making in Uzbek SMEs. The results underscored the need for gender-sensitive policies and support mechanisms to address the unique challenges faced by female entrepreneurs.

This study illuminates the significant impact of gender on management decision-making in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Uzbekistan. Through a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, the research reveals distinct differences in the decision-making styles, risk tolerance, strategic planning, and resource allocation between male and female entrepreneurs.

Key findings indicate that female entrepreneurs tend to adopt a collaborative and participatory decision-making style, prioritize long-term sustainability, and exhibit a meticulous approach to resource allocation. In contrast, male entrepreneurs are more inclined

towards an autocratic decision-making style, higher risk tolerance, and a focus on short-term growth and aggressive investment strategies. These differences are influenced by various factors, including gender-specific experiences, societal expectations, and access to resources.

The qualitative insights further underscore the unique challenges faced by female entrepreneurs in Uzbekistan, such as balancing family responsibilities, overcoming gender biases, and securing financial resources. Despite these challenges, female entrepreneurs demonstrate resilience and adaptability, leveraging community support and continuous learning to enhance their business skills and leadership capabilities.

The study's findings have important implications for policymakers, business support organizations, and entrepreneurs in Uzbekistan. To foster a more inclusive and equitable business environment, it is essential to develop gender-sensitive policies and support mechanisms that address the specific needs of female entrepreneurs. This includes providing targeted financial assistance, mentorship programs, and networking opportunities to empower women in business.

Moreover, promoting awareness and education about gender dynamics in entrepreneurship can help mitigate biases and create a more supportive ecosystem for both male and female entrepreneurs. By recognizing and valuing the diverse approaches to

management decision-making, Uzbekistan can harness the full potential of its entrepreneurial talent, driving economic growth and innovation.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, gender plays a crucial role in shaping the management decision-making processes in Uzbek SMEs. By understanding and addressing the gender-specific factors that influence entrepreneurial behavior, stakeholders can create a more supportive and dynamic business environment, ultimately contributing to the sustainable development of the country's economy.

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