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FACULTY OF ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS

MASTER'S THESIS

**OBSTACLES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN
THE ENERGY SECTOR IN KOSOVO**

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RITA NITAJ

AUTHORSHIP STATEMENT

The undersigned Rita Nitaj, a student at the University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Economics and Business, (hereafter: SEB LU) author of this written final work of studies with the title “Obstacles and opportunities for women entrepreneurs in the energy sector in Kosovo”, prepared under supervision of assoc. prof. Tamara Pavasović Trošt, PhD

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
1 FEMALE ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN THE ENERGY SECTOR	5
1.1 Overview of literature of women entrepreneurs	5
1.2 Challenges faced by women entrepreneurs.....	7
1.3 Female entrepreneurship in the energy sector	8
1.3.1 Obstacles of women entrepreneurs in energy sector.....	9
1.3.2 Opportunities for women entrepreneurs in the energy sector	12
1.4 Female entrepreneurship in transition economies	14
1.4.1 Case of Albania.....	15
1.4.2 Case of North Macedonia	18
1.4.3 Case of Kosovo	20
2 THE ENERGY SECTOR IN KOSOVO	23
2.1 Overview of the energy sector in Kosovo	23
2.2 Current situation in energy sector in Kosovo	24
2.3 Support from NGOs to women entrepreneurs in the energy sector.....	27
2.4 Brain drain of women engineers	31
3 METHODOLOGY	32
3.1 Research framework	32
3.2 Secondary data description of the private energy sector in Kosovo.....	33
3.2.1 Concentration of female entrepreneurs in the energy sector in Kosovo	34
3.2.2 Sectorial distribution of energy firms in Kosovo	35
3.2.3 Sector concentration of firms owned by females.....	35
3.2.4 Regional distribution of energy firms	36
3.2.5 Classification of female owned firms by type of business.....	37
3.3 Primary data collection via in-depth interviews.....	37
3.4 Sample description	39
3.4.1 Interviews with experts in the energy sector.....	40
3.4.2 Interviews with scholarship beneficiaries	41
3.5 Ethical Consideration.....	42
4 FINDINGS.....	42
4.1 Results from interviews with energy experts	42
4.1.1 Obstacles and opportunities for women entrepreneurs	45
4.2 Results of interviews with scholarship beneficiaries	45
4.2.1 Obstacles of young women in the energy sector.....	48
4.2.2 Opportunities of young women in the energy sector	49
5 RECOMMENDATIONS.....	50
5.1 Summary of findings	50
5.2 Limitations of the research.....	51
5.3 Recommendations	53
5.3.1 Policy recommendations from the interviewees	53
5.3.2 Additional measures and recommendations from author's own point of view	54

CONCLUSION	57
REFERENCE LIST.....	58
APPENDICES.....	i

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Data description of business ownership in the private energy sector in Kosovo .	34
Table 2: Demographic data of the Millennium Foundation scholarship beneficiaries.....	39
Table 3: Demographic data of the Women Entrepreneurs Energy Experts.....	40
Table 4: Obstacles and opportunities of women entrepreneurs	45
Table 5: Sectors divided by gender ownership	10
Table 6: Summary of findings from the interviews with the scholarship beneficiaries (First part).....	11
Table 7: Summary of findings from the interviews with the scholarship beneficiaries (Second part).....	12
Table 8: Summary of findings from the interviews with the scholarship beneficiaries (Third part).....	13

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Numbers of firms in the energy sector by gender and in %.....	34
Figure 2: Sectoral distribution of energy firms in Kosovo	35
Figure 3: Sectoral distribution of energy firms in Kosovo	36
Figure 4: Regional distribution of energy firms in Kosovo.....	36
Figure 5: Classification of female owned firms by type of business.....	37

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Povzetek (Summary in Slovene language).....	84
Appendix 2: Intervista me Përfitueset e Bursës së Millennium Foundation Kosovo “Femrat në Energji”	2
Appendix 3: Interview with Beneficiaries of the Millennium Foundation Kosovo Scholarship "Women in Energy"	4
Appendix 4: Interview questions with the Founder and Administrator of SOLAR shpk company, Energy Expert from Albania (Respondent 1).....	6
Appendix 5: Interview questions with the CEO of ALFA SOLAR Energy, Energy Expert from Kosovo (Respondent 2).....	8
Appendix 6: Sectors divided by gender ownership	10
Appendix 7: Summary of findings from the interviews with the scholarship beneficiaries (First part)	11
Appendix 8: Summary of findings from the interviews with the scholarship beneficiaries (Second part).....	11

Appendix 9: Summary of findings from the interviews with the scholarship beneficiaries (Third part).....	13
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- KAS** – Kosovo agency of Statistics
EBRD - European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
NGOs – Non-Governmental Organizations
DMMAC - Des Moines Area Community Collage
STEAM – Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics
UNESCO – United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
KWN – Kosovo’s Women Network
SMEs - Small and Medium Enterprises
MFC - The Millennium Foundation of Kosovo
MCC - Millennium Challenge Corporation
AWESK - Association of Women in the Energy Sector of Kosovo
MIRECK - Metal Industry and Renewable Energy Cluster of Kosovo
LLC - Limited Liability Companies
PIT - Personal Income Taxes
CIT - Corporate Income Tax
OSCE - The Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe
PV – Photovoltaics
INSTAT - Institute of Statistics in Albania
SSO - State Statistical Office
GEM - Global Entrepreneurship Monitor
TEA - Total early-staged Entrepreneurial Activity
WIE - Women in Economy
KEK - Kosovo Energy Corporation
KEDS – Kosovo Electricity Distribution Company
KOSTT - Kosovo Transmission System Operator Company
WiRE - Women in Renewable Energy
KESCO - Kosovo Company for Supply of Energy
ERO - The Energy Regulatory Office
GWNET - Global Women’s Network for the Energy Transition
MED - Ministry of Economic Development
ICMM - Independent Commission for Mines and Minerals
KCC - Kosovo Competition and Commission
ARBK - Business Registration Agency
AFK- Agency for Finance in Kosovo
C3E- The Clean Energy Education & Empowerment
WIE - Woman in Energy

INTRODUCTION

Women entrepreneurs have a tremendous impact on the socioeconomic development of the country. Even though the number of women owning businesses is still not yet higher compared to men, it is promising considering that stereotypes of who earns the income in the family are gradually disappearing. Even though female entrepreneurship is on the rise globally, there are still many challenges, especially in the area of domestic work, as women tend to take on a larger share of household responsibilities and childcare (Mohsin & Lei, 2020). The problem of gender inequality is even more pronounced in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). So promoting women's entrepreneurship in STEM fields will not only help empower the most talented women, but also contribute to the country's development (Castrillon, 2019). Moreover, various measures have been taken recently to engage women in the energy value chain, most of them relying on various training programs and participation in various energy organizations. These projects have shown tremendous success, but there is a need for more financial support to contribute more to women's empowerment in the energy sector (Shankar, Onyura & Alderman 2019). Recent studies show that nowadays many women working in government, leave their jobs because they no longer find them attractive. Women are increasingly trying to achieve their dreams and build their own businesses rather than work for someone else (Castrillon, 2019). This includes breaking the so-called glass ceiling, the invisible barrier that keeps women out of the highest positions in their companies, so they can open a business and overcome future obstacles along the way (Mitchell, 2011).

In transition countries such as Albania, Macedonia, and Kosovo, the number of employed women and women who own businesses remains low. In the second quarter of 2019, the working-age population aged 15-64 increased by 1.5%, while the labour force decreased by 0.8%, leading to a decline in the labour force participation rate: The inactivity rate in the region is 40%, while for women it is as high as 80% (Western Balkans Labour Market Trends, 2020). Based on the survey published in the third quarter of 2020 by the Kosovo Agency of Statistics (KAS), the unemployment rate was 30.1% (Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 2021). More worryingly, the youth unemployment rate is 54% and the employment rate of women (14.4%) is significantly lower compared to that of men (46.2%) (Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 2021). In order to increase women's participation in entrepreneurship, the government has developed several measures, such as improving access to finance, providing training for women entrepreneurs, and creating a business network to help women entrepreneurs develop their businesses. As part of this strategy, the Government of Kosovo aimed to empower women in entrepreneurship, increase women's participation in the labour market, and improve women entrepreneurs' access to finance (Ramadani, Rexhepi, Abazi-Alili, Beqiri & Thaqi, 2015, p.23). In neighboring countries, in the Republic of North Macedonia, 32.5% of women entrepreneurs own a microenterprise, 27.5% of women own small or medium enterprises, while a minority of 12.5% of them run

large enterprises (Ramadani, Gërguri, Dana & Tašaminova, 2013). As in any transition economy, women entrepreneurs face many obstacles in the Republic of Northern Macedonia, starting with finances, work-life balance, lack of time to attend trainings, etc. (Ramadani, Histrich & Gërguri, 2015a). Another country with a transition economy is Albania, which faces similar challenges for women entrepreneurs. One of the main challenges for women entrepreneurs in Albania is the lack of financial support from state or private banks that would assist them in starting or expanding their businesses. Another obstacle mentioned in the study is mobility, as the majority of women found it very difficult to travel alone, although this has changed recently, there are still such uncertainties (Imeraj & Gruda 2013).

Nowadays, there are many programs that support women entrepreneurs in Kosovo. One of them is FINCA Kosovo, a private bank that provides financial services to Kosovar people by giving them loans. FINCA Kosovo was the only private bank that launched such a training program specifically to support and empower women in entrepreneurship by providing them loans with 0% administrative costs so that they can increase their knowledge through training and at the same time start their own business (FINCA Kosovo, 2018). To continue the support for women entrepreneurs in Kosovo, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) provided a loan of USD 3 million to support the development of women in small and medium enterprises (SMEs), which could contribute to the development of the country by creating more jobs (European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 2015). Apart from this, specifically in the energy sector, the Millennium Foundation of Kosovo (MFC) has signed an agreement with the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) in which it establishes a fund to support projects in the energy sector and increase investment in renewable energy in Kosovo (Millennium Foundation of Kosovo, 2021). The MCC's mission focuses mainly on the economic empowerment of women in the energy sector. This program provides internships for women in the energy sector, with the goal of supporting young professionals through paid internships in public and private institutions in the energy sector. The agreement MFC-MCC also provides fully funded scholarships for girls to study in the most prestigious universities in the United States in the field of energy, and provides grants to women to start and maintain businesses by offering them various opportunities in the energy sector, both as employees and as future entrepreneurs (Millennium Foundation Kosovo, 2021). Another non-governmental organization that supports women in the energy sector is the Association of Women in the Energy Sector in Kosovo (AWESK). Its key principles include providing training and increasing the participation of women in the energy sector so that they can advance professionally. Also, to provide women with sufficient skills and knowledge to raise awareness about energy efficiency and environmental protection, and to empower them by providing jobs in both the public and private energy sectors, professional development, and networking so that they can further contribute to the development of Kosovo's economy (Association of Women in the Energy Sector of Kosovo, 2021). Hereinafter to AWESK, another NGO that supports women is the Metal Industry and Renewable Energy Cluster of

Kosovo. MIRECK's mission is to empower young professionals and prepare them for a long-term and successful career by connecting them with the labor market. To fulfill this mission, MIRECK continuously provides professional training for young engineers and engineering students from the faculties of Mechanical and Electrical Engineering. Since its inception, MIRECK has trained 2500 people, with 40% of the participants being female engineers and engineering students. As the number of female engineers is increasing, MIRECK has initiated the establishment of the "Association of Young Women Engineers". The aim of the association is to empower women in engineering by improving their professional skills and competencies, and to make them a role model for other women interested in pursuing a successful career in engineering, especially in the energy sector. In addition, MIRECK connects these young and motivated women engineers with potential funders to help them start a business that will be a good source of income for these women (Metal Industry and Renewable Energy Cluster of Kosovo, 2021).

Energy production in Kosovo relies mainly on lignite deposits, coal exploitation and thermal power plants, and to a lesser extent on renewable energy sources such as biomass, hydro, wind and solar (Gojani, 2016). Kosovo's energy system relies on the first source of energy, lignite; the country has huge lignite deposits and is easily accessible, although Kosovo also has a very high potential for renewable energy sources (The Independent Commission for Mines and Minerals, 2021). As stated by Kosovo Agency of Statistics, the electricity generation in Kosovo is mainly dependent in two biggest power plants which are Kosova A two units with the capacity of 800 MW installed, and Kosova B two units with the capacity of 678 MW where all together these power plants generate electricity in total of 915 MW (Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 2022). Based on the amount of these capacities it would be sufficient enough to cover the demand of electricity for the population as well as to export but considering the current power plants which are quite old it is deficient to accommodate the electricity demand at a different time, therefore the imports and exports are needed to balance the system at all times. (Energy Regulatory Office, 2022). In order for Kosovo to invest in the energy sector in the near future and attract foreign investors to strengthen the country's economy, it must first work on the first source of energy, coal-fired power generation, which is considered the worst source of air pollution (The World Bank, 2019). The energy system in Kosovo consists of the main entities: KEK - Kosovo Energy Corporation, a state-owned electricity and coal distributor, KEDS - Kosovo Energy Distribution Services, and KESCO - Kosovo Company for Supply of Energy (Obrien-Udry, 2021). KOSTT - Kosovo Transmission System Operator Company, for which ERO - Energy Regulator Office is responsible. Thus, all the mentioned companies represent 97% of energy with the largest natural resources in the country, lignite (Ibrahimi, Gebremedhin & Sahiti 2019).

The aim of this master thesis is to provide an impartial and comprehensive overview of the obstacles and opportunities faced by women entrepreneurs in the energy sector in Kosovo. The opportunities given by various NGOs for the advancement of women in the energy

sector are showing a tremendous impact in the government of Kosovo to develop better strategies for the involvement of women in the energy sector and ultimately improve opportunities for women engineers and women entrepreneurs. Some of the objectives of this master thesis are to review the literature on female entrepreneurship and identify the main barriers and the best support mechanisms to promote female entrepreneurship; to provide an overview of the energy sector in Kosovo and identify the main opportunities for women engineers; Identifying the main obstacles faced by female engineers and understanding their decisions to work in different fields, to emigrate or to try to start their own business; and last but not least, recommending strategies that can prevent brain drain and promote female entrepreneurship in the energy sector in Kosovo.

In the theoretical part of the paper, I will consult scientific literature and review reports of different national and international organizations. In the empirical part, I will collect both primary and secondary data. For secondary data, I will mainly use data from government portals and energy-related articles, official statistics from the Kosovo Agency Statistics, data from the Kosovo Tax Administration, Kosovo Business Registration Agency (ARBK) electronic data system, and recent publications from the Kosovo government. To obtain primary data, I will conduct two in-depth interviews with experts in the energy sector. In addition, I will also conduct semi-structured interviews with a sample of female students who recently received the Millennium Foundation's fully funded scholarship in Kosovo, Women in Energy. These female students have had the opportunity to study at the most prestigious universities in the United States in the field of energy and will be able to talk about their study abroad experiences. Based on the information I gathered through the analysis of secondary data and the findings from the in-depth interviews with the energy experts and the semi-structured interviews, I will draw a conclusion and make future recommendations for women entrepreneurs in the energy sector.

This thesis is divided into three sections. The first chapter analyses the literature and describes the challenges and obstacles faced by women entrepreneurs, focusing on the energy sector, while explaining the opportunities and successes of women business owners in the later sector through specific examples of case studies in the Western Balkans. The second chapter focuses on the energy sector in Kosovo, including a detailed overview of the current situation in the energy sector in Kosovo, the distribution of energy sector in Kosovo, the role of non-governmental organizations in supporting women entrepreneurs, obstacles and opportunities of women entrepreneurs, obstacles and opportunities of young women engineers, and finally examines the brain drain phenomena. The third chapter contains the methodology, with a detailed explanation of the data collection and descriptive statistics for both the primary (interviews) and secondary research (data on the private energy sector in Kosovo), as well as a brief explanation of ethical considerations. The fourth and fifth chapters explain the findings from the interviews and recommendations of this research, respectively. This study is completed with conclusions and final remarks, followed by references and appendices.

1 FEMALE ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN THE ENERGY SECTOR

1.1 Overview of literature of women entrepreneurs

The importance of women in entrepreneurship is quite evident both in the corporate sector and in the country's economy. In order to realize this potential for the growth of the economy in Kosovo, women need to be more involved in the economy as entrepreneurs or employees. Even though the number of women entrepreneurs around the world is increasing day by day, we can say that women are less likely to be involved in a business and take the initiative to open a new business and become an entrepreneur compared to men. However, there are some aspects that can influence women's entrepreneurial decisions, such as facilitators and barriers and how they affect women in the regional context. From this we can see that gender will always remain a key issue when it comes to taking the initiative to start a business and become an entrepreneur. Some of the reasons for this large gap in women's participation in business are, on the one hand, the difficult situation of taking care of children and, on the other hand, the fear of failure if they think that opening a business will succeed or fail. Thus, this is the main reason why they miss out on many opportunities and at the same time refuse to acquire all the necessary skills before opening a business (Koleci, 2018). Several potential barriers have been identified among women entrepreneurs, such as fear of failure, lack of self-confidence, lack of entrepreneurial opportunities, and low career attractiveness, all of which are perceived as a major risk and can negatively impact women's decision-making about opening their own businesses. In addition, the lack of a supportive environment that takes the initiative to motivate women to start a business has a major impact on women's demotivation to start a business (Koleci, 2018).

Most women entrepreneurs tend to be motivated to work and open their businesses due to various circumstances and the need to take care and provide security for their families. Thus, they are motivated by several reasons, and the most important reason is to become economically independent (Garga & Bagga 2009). Women in developing countries are highly valued as potential entrepreneurs. Even if they own a small business, their work is considered much more serious than a man's, mainly because they are much more careful in repaying loans, while using the income for the family and investing more in their businesses (Garga & Bagga, 2009).

In Kosovo, minorities such as Roma and Ashkali women face many rights violations. The rights of these women are mainly affected by the rule of law, the traditions of the country and patriarchal customs. From the data obtained from the analysis of gender gaps at all levels in Kosovo, it appears that Kosovo is one of the countries with the lowest number of women engaged in labour force. Therefore, the socio-economic situation in Kosovo will continue to be a major challenge, as a large number of women neither study nor work, while on the other hand, women with high levels of education still do not get the same position as men, for which they are qualified, and remain at the administrative level (Farsnforth,

Morina, Ryan, Rrahmani & Robinson-Conlon 2018). Moreover, less than 10% of women are employed and managed in companies. Kosovo is considered the country with the youngest population in Europe, with enormous potential for development.

Although many improvements have been made in gender equality over the past 50 years, the pandemic situation of COVID-19 has endangered the lives of the majority of women socially and economically. Since it is well known that most women work in health care, social services, and unpaid care, women are particularly affected by this pandemic. Moreover, in almost all cases, women are in risky situations, as this pandemic has led to most women facing violence at home, and at the same time, their work is not valued, as they are paid less, even if they do the same work as men (The World Bank, 2019). Overall, we can see how much this pandemic situation (COVID-19) has affected women entrepreneurs around the world and that gender inequality, especially in the domestic sphere, is still one of the most important issues today. Especially the lack of childcare has affected women's work, as all kindergartens, childcare centers and schools were closed and nothing worked during the pandemic, so women had no choice but to take care of their children, which led them to choose between keeping their business and working or not working and taking care of their children (Millennium Foundation Kosovo, 2021).

The global crisis COVID-19 underscored the importance of an affordable child care system. According to the 2021 Women Business and Law report, we can see that during the pandemic, women did not have enough options and were equal to men when it came to childcare needs that could not be met during their working hours. In the future, such needs should be met if there was a division of responsibilities between men and women. This is because the majority of women are most affected by unpaid work at home due to childcare. Apart from this, a great support from the government and private sector regarding childcare is also required so that women do not face such problems in this pandemic situation. Moreover, all the benefits and opportunities for women in business and workplace are highly dependent on social, economic and cultural factors. Even legal regulations cannot help in this regard if women themselves are not educated or do not have the necessary skills for employment and entrepreneurial decision making. However, one of the most important factors preventing women from working or opening a business is social and cultural norms (The World Bank, 2019).

Several studies show that fiscal policies in a country have a very large impact on the development of the economy and the increase of the female labour force by creating an environment that promotes the participation of women in all sectors of the economy. Creating such working conditions could motivate younger generations to actively participate in the labour force from the beginning, which will lead to an increase in the female labour force participation rate (Garga & Bagga, 2009). As the International Renewable Energy Agency notes, there are other barriers women face in the labour market. Starting with the nature of the work in the sector in which they work, gender role perceptions, women's participation in STEAM fields and in other jobs, there are insufficient

information about the opportunities available to women in the energy sector, and unequal access to training for entry-level workers before starting a job. Perceptions of gender roles in the energy sector are especially true for women who are more involved in technical jobs, because nowadays it is assumed that women are not physically stronger than men, so they are not compared to men who have many technical jobs. As a result, in the energy sector, a high percentage of women are underrepresented in different areas of the energy sector, especially in technical occupations (Kittner, Dimco, Azemi, Tairyan, & Kammen, 2016).

1.2 Challenges faced by women entrepreneurs

When it comes to obstacles and challenges, it has long been documented that the majority of women entrepreneurs are left behind and face many difficulties in the business world, starting with prejudice and stereotyping. In a diversified world, there are many cultural differences, for example, women in most patriarchal cultures are known to have fewer legal rights, which limits their ability to develop their entrepreneurial skills (Davis, 2012). One of the greatest difficulties faced by women entrepreneurs is access to and inability to obtain funding, as it is much more difficult for women today to obtain funding to start their own businesses. In addition to access to finance, another barrier faced by women entrepreneurs is informal learning related to professional networking, where most women entrepreneurs can build business relationships with each other to further develop their network connections. The biggest obstacle that most women entrepreneurs face today is the lack of technical and entrepreneurial training. Therefore, women who do not have such education are prevented from opening a business and becoming successful entrepreneurs (Davis, 2012). Women may face various obstacles on the path to becoming a successful entrepreneur. From an institutional perspective, government and legal requirements are barriers for women to fully contribute their skills and put their plans to start a business into action. Given this major barrier, most women do not receive support from the government to meet the needs of women entrepreneurs, such as childcare, transportation, and other support services that could help them develop their entrepreneurial skills (Bjørnvad, Gloor, Johansen, Sandøe, & Lund, 2019). In addition, the lack of access to education and training for women entrepreneurs is a major barrier that prevents women from understanding the basic skills to start and run a business as an entrepreneur (Bjørnvad, Gloor, Johansen, Sandøe & Lund, 2019).

There are many barriers that women face in the energy sector. According to the International Renewable Energy Agency, social, cultural, and gender norms are factors that can greatly impact the participation of women and girls in general in STEM fields. For example, perceptions of gender roles have a major impact on women's participation in the economy of the country. Most misperceptions of women in the energy sector relate to technical jobs, and most assumptions are how women do not have the physical strength to pursue technical jobs. Even women in this case have self-perceptions about their choice of occupations because choosing engineering occupations, for example, may not be socially acceptable,

while fields such as biology and medicine are much more acceptable (Fathy, Alkady, & Tawfik, 2022). Another barrier faced by women that should be taken into account is the lack of career information, which proves to be a major disadvantage for women as they do not have access to various information about their professions, especially in the energy sector, as most engineering jobs are related to technical matters and the positions have long been held by men, which is the reason why women in general have difficulties in accessing such information about the energy sector (Fathy, Alkady, & Tawfik, 2022). Based on the surveys conducted by the International Renewable Energy Agency, the majority of women indicated that they feel intimidated when applying for jobs in the energy sector even if they meet all the requirements for a particular job, while men are more likely to apply even if they meet only some of the requirements for the job because they have an advantage in technical jobs in the energy sector since they have more strength and energy. Women are also less likely to negotiate for higher salaries or any benefit within the company. They work a lot to get ahead and get into the field where men work in technical jobs in the energy sector (Dijkstra, Petrov & Mahr, 2019).

As for the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, it has caused a lot of damages to women who own businesses and to women's employment as a whole. Given the large number of women participating in the labor force, this pandemic situation has affected almost all sectors. The most affected were private childcare facilities, educational institutions, schools, beauty salons, hairdressers, many grocery stores owned by women, hotels, restaurants, and other services that suffered from government restrictions on the spread of the virus COVID -19. Because most of these services were closed, most of the women who worked there had great difficulty obtaining assistance directly from the government. More than half of the women who had recently opened a business were forced to close it because they could not cover all their expenses during the pandemic, including paying rent, wages, electricity, water, etc. (Zmijanej, 2021). In addition, most of the organizations complain about the delayed projects or most of them cancel their projects altogether because they cannot implement them. In this regard, most of them have transferred the above-mentioned services to the online platform. For example, most of the trainings that were supposed to take place during the pandemic period were transferred online, but with fewer hours than actually planned (Zmijanej, 2021).

1.3 Female entrepreneurship in the energy sector

Women entrepreneurs play an important role in society around the world, but this trend has recently become quite prominent in transitional economies as well. Women-owned businesses are crucial for many reasons, as they not only help themselves, but also the country. When women start their own businesses, it has many benefits, from acquiring skills and experience, to various trainings and workshops that can eliminate the effects of gender discrimination while contributing to the development of the country. Another important reason for women to join a business is that they can balance their work and personal lives,

which means that they can balance their work and family responsibilities, in this case taking care of children, etc. In addition, women who are involved in the labor market are considered role models, especially for the younger generation, as they have the opportunity to complete internships and apprenticeships in which the younger generation can participate (Davis 2012). In this regard, this would be beneficial not only for the public sector, but also for the private sector, as they would have the chance to continue with innovative ideas that can later be profitable for the company, using the latest technology or techniques in the workplace. Therefore, the aim of this study is to present the main findings about the women entrepreneurs in the transition countries of Kosovo, Albania and North Macedonia. My main focus is on Kosovo, current developments in the field of energy efficiency, opportunities for women in the energy sector, non-governmental organizations that support the involvement of women in the energy sector, obstacles faced by these women in the initial phase before they become entrepreneurs, the main reasons for preventing the brain drain in Kosovo, and suggestions on how to prevent this phenomenon from becoming an obstacle to the country's development.

Considering the importance of the growth of women entrepreneurs worldwide, there will always remain a deficiency for business skill training and enhancement of women who are self-employed. Therefore, a lack of training is a disadvantage for women entrepreneurs and limits their ability to further enhance their professional and entrepreneurial development while taking advantage of opportunities (Davis, 2012).

1.3.1 Obstacles of women entrepreneurs in energy sector

According to Kosovo Agency of Statistics, there are significant differences in the labor market where the unemployment rate for women is quite high 34.4% compared to men 22.6% (Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 2021). What makes this study even more interesting is that, in addition to the general obstacles that women entrepreneurs face on a daily basis, the global pandemic COVID19 has a major impact on women entrepreneurs' businesses. Considering the closures due to the pandemic situation, women were particularly affected as schools were closed, various services such as childcare and elderly care, and since women do most of the housework, it was noted that they bear almost all of the responsibility for taking care of the family, so they struggle to save their businesses. The survey data also shows that the majority of women who run businesses were unprepared for this unexpected interruption in business income. Half of them reported that they were traumatized about how much they had to spend to keep their business going without trying to close it (Manolova, Brush, Edelman, & Elam, 2020). Another barrier for women entrepreneurs during the pandemic was also information technology, as not all of them were able to navigate the various online systems in which we are all required to engage in the virtual world. Thus, the lack of technological skills caused them difficulties in performing their business tasks (Manolova, Brush, Edelman & Elam, 2020).

The implementation of the legal framework related to gender inequality will always remain an important challenge in Kosovo. For this to work, the government of Kosovo should do a lot to implement laws and policies, provide enough financial support for women who start a business, and strengthen the existing mechanisms. From the studies conducted on the advancement of women in Kosovo, it is clear that most women face great difficulties in finding a job, as the unemployment rate in Kosovo is quite high. Some of the obstacles women face in finding a new job are household and care responsibilities, lower education and training, social norms and expectations, access to safe and affordable transportation, low representation in the private sector, discrimination in hiring in different sectors (Sadiku-Dushi, Ramadani, Welsh, & Palalić, 2020). In addition, we can see that there is tremendous job discrimination and gender bias in different sectors. Due to this segregation, women are mostly prevented from taking the deserved jobs in sectors such as energy, metal and wood processing, and construction (Sadiku-Dushi, et.al. 2020). According to Agency of Statistics, the majority of women (11.8%) are less likely to be self-employed or have their own business than men, who are more than twice as likely (24.5%) (Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 2021). Apart from the above-mentioned factors that affect the employment rate in Kosovo, the rate of women entrepreneurs is quite low due to numerous reasons, such as lack of self-confidence, social networks mandatory to start a business, and higher barriers and difficulties in dealing with public institutions and courts, limited access to finance and other resources (Begolli, 2020).

In the Facilitating Empowerment report's survey on factors influencing women's economic choices in Kosovo, women were asked several questions about the obstacles they face in their workplace. They emphasized that most of the obstacles are due to working conditions and remuneration when it comes to working hours and salary to fulfil contractual obligations. It turns out that the majority of women, more than half, about 60%, face various barriers on their way to the workplace (Facilitating Empowerment, 2017). For example, low salary will always remain a crucial problem in Kosovo, especially for women working in the private sector, where the salary level is lower than the average level in Kosovo, which is considered a general barrier for the whole labour market. Other obstacles affecting women in Kosovo include lack of flexibility in working hours, lack of enforcement of workers' rights, lack of social benefits in the workplace, and fixed-term employment contracts, especially in the private sector. Some of the women interviewed complained about the lack of enforcement of workers' rights. This obstacle includes numerous concerns about holiday days, scheduling of work on weekends and holidays, sick days, and days off. For example, the women interviewed complained about having to work overtime, not having a day off on holidays so they are required to work weekends without flexible hours, not having enough days off when they do not feel well, or not receiving compensation even when they work overtime. All these obstacles they face do not comply with the provisions of the labour law (Beha, 2015).

In the recent report published by UNESCO, titled *Toward 2030*, indicate the latest statistics on women's contribution in STEM fields. According to this report, in developed countries, the percentage of women pursuing degrees in fields such as engineering, computer science, physics, and mathematics is quite low. In the United States, Germany, Finland, and Canada, 20% of women graduate in engineering. In the Republic of Korea and Japan, the percentage of women pursuing engineering degrees is very low, ranging from 5% to 10%. In Denmark, 38% of women graduate with a degree in engineering, and in the Russian Federation, 36%. In the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Cyprus, women are much more interested in the energy sector, with 50% of them pursuing engineering degrees (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2017). Some of the challenges that women face during their career development are the glass ceiling and the fact that they tend to leave their jobs several times due to child rearing, which puts them at many disadvantages to balance work and family life. As a result, women are far from influential positions or promotions regardless of their qualifications (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2017). Another critical barrier that suppresses an important place in our society is wage inequality. From the survey conducted by the International Renewable Energy Agency, it is found that wage inequality is mainly shaped by gender bias, and the results show that 63% of men are paid more compared to women doing the same job. It is found that wage inequality comes from different sectors in different occupations, for example, wage inequality in the energy sector is much higher than in administrative occupations or in occupations that do not require many non-technical activities (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2017).

According to the Kosovo Women's Network (KWN), the main reason why the majority of women do not participate in the labour force is due to responsibilities that they have to take care of their children or the household things. This results in their inability to participate in economic and political life on an equal footing with men. Dealing with such a problem could be a major challenge for women's well-being in their future professional lives. Apart from that, this unpaid work by women is not considered as a contribution to the country's economy, as they do not receive benefits that would later be considered as contributory pensions or health benefits for them (Sylejmani & Milovanović, 2019).

Most challenges for women entrepreneurs were seen during the first and second waves of COVID-19. The American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo, a non-profit, non-governmental organization, further explained how this pandemic situation has particularly impacted women-owned businesses and various other industries in Kosovo. Therefore, the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo provides an insight into the current situation during the pandemic, the struggles that most women entrepreneurs in Kosovo have faced, and the problems they have faced along the way. In terms of the challenges they faced during this time, the women entrepreneurs complained mainly about the financial problems and how far they could go to finance all the expenses in their business. According to other studies conducted by the American Chamber in Kosovo, women entrepreneurs also complained

about the need to do more unpaid work, as everything came to a standstill for a few months during the pandemic and the need for childcare, elderly care and also family members had increased. However, the key challenge for women-led businesses is that most businesses in Kosovo closed down completely due to the difficulties they faced in not being able to cover all costs, including paying rent, electricity, wages, and so on. Although some businesses survived during this pandemic, we could clearly see that the turnover decreased to a very high percentage (The American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo, 2020). Another percentage of women interviewed by the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo responded that a first step to empower women should be to change the labour law in Kosovo, as women's participation in the labour market is quite low and they are still underrepresented in leadership positions. Thus, 35.7% of the women interviewed stressed that in order to increase women's participation in the labour market, the business environment must first be improved. The majority of women who own businesses expressed the view that they could only survive with their businesses if they received grants or even the smallest support from the Kosovo government so that they would be relieved of all the debts they incurred as a result of the pandemic to cover all the costs (The American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo, 2020).

1.3.2 Opportunities for women entrepreneurs in the energy sector

Studies show that empowerment of women in developing countries can be achieved by supporting and helping them to participate in the labor market and in paid activities to which they contribute. Most studies that impact women's empowerment are related to education, socioeconomic norms, economic and business environments, all of which can somehow contribute to supporting women in the labor market (Facilitating Empowerment, 2019). Nowadays, there are many programs that support women entrepreneurs in Kosovo. One of them is FINCA Kosovo, a private bank that provides financial services to the Kosovar population by providing them with credit products such as loans. Recent programs include a training program launched in 2019. FINCA Kosovo was the only private bank to dedicate such a training program specifically to support and empower women in entrepreneurship by providing them with loans with 0% administrative costs so that they could increase their knowledge through training while developing their own businesses (FINCA Kosovo, 2021). To continue the support for women entrepreneurs in Kosovo, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) provided a loan of USD 3 million to support the development of women in small and medium enterprises (SMEs), which could contribute to the development of the country by creating more jobs (European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 2015).

In addition, specifically in the energy sector, the Millennium Foundation of Kosovo (MFC) has signed an agreement with the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) to establish a fund to support projects in the energy sector and increase investment in renewable energy in Kosovo (Millennium Foundation of Kosovo, 2022). Furthermore, MFC has launched a

program with the same objective to support women entrepreneurs to contribute to the energy sector in Kosovo. MCC's mission focuses mainly on the economic empowerment of women in the energy sector. This program provides internships for women in the energy sector, with the goal of supporting young professionals through paid internships in public and private institutions in the energy sector. The agreement MFC-MCC also offers fully funded scholarships for girls who wish to study in the field of energy at the most prominent universities in the United States, and provides grants to women entrepreneurs to start and sustain their businesses by supporting them with various opportunities in the energy sector both as employees and as future entrepreneurs (Millennium Foundation Kosovo, 2021). In order to attract the best engineering students to companies, they need to be motivated and rewarded to show their productivity in the company (Krasniqi, 2012).

Another non-governmental organization that supports women is the Association of Women in the Energy Sector of Kosovo (AWESK). The main principles of the organization include providing training and promoting the participation of women in the energy sector so that they can advance professionally. It also aims to equip women with sufficient skills and knowledge to raise awareness about energy efficiency and environmental protection, and to empower them by providing jobs in both the public and private energy sectors, professional development, and networking so that they can further contribute to the development of Kosovo's economy (Association of Women in the Energy Sector of Kosovo, 2021). In addition to AWESK, another NGO that supports women is the Metal Industry and Renewable Energy Cluster of Kosovo. MIRECK's mission is to empower young professionals and prepare them for a long-term and successful career by connecting them with the labour market. To fulfil this mission, MIRECK continuously provides professional training for young engineers and engineering students from the faculties of Mechanical and Electrical Engineering. Since its inception, MIRECK has trained 2500 people, with 40% of the participants being female engineers and engineering students. As the number of female engineers is increasing, MIRECK has initiated the establishment of the "Association of Young Female Engineers". The aim of the association is to empower women in engineering by improving their professional skills and competencies, and to make them a role model for other women interested in pursuing a successful career in engineering, especially in the energy sector. In addition, MIRECK connects these young and motivated women engineers with potential funders to help them create a start-up business that will be a good source of income for these women (Metal Industry and Renewable Energy Cluster of Kosovo, 2022).

It is critical to mention women's participation in the energy sector and the barriers they face in moving toward a more sustainable form of energy efficiency. Working towards more sustainable energy efficiency could help in a number of ways, starting with securing future jobs for women, sustainable energy technology, and promoting women in business leadership (Ferroukhi, Renner, Nagpal, García-Baños, & Baruah, 2019). According to the report and information gathered from the Facilitating Empowerment in Kosovo project, some steps have been taken to empower women in business, such as training in various

fields, appropriate skills, and various professional trainings specifically for women in business. In addition, grants were also offered to women who own or have started a business. Furthermore, other measures have been taken to support women, such as proposals for infrastructure development and the inclusion of women in the labour market. However, there are still several policies that would need to be further improved to help women find jobs (Facilitating Empowerment, 2017). Compared to previous years, women's participation in the labour market has improved globally, but this is not yet the case in Kosovo. In this regard, the support and contribution of women in the labour market would have a great impact not only on the country's economy, but also on the family as a whole. In particular, women entrepreneurs who run their own businesses and earn money themselves could use the income they earn to support their families or use it to educate their children (Facilitating Empowerment, 2017).

Some studies conducted by the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo highlighted that before promoting women's participation in the labor market, an important issue to be addressed is the need to raise women's awareness and provide them with better access to all necessary information so that they are able to apply for grants. Therefore, access to information for women who live in rural areas and do not know how the application process works would be very helpful so that they do not have problems continuing their business in the future. Although the Kosovo government has provided some grants specifically for women entrepreneurs to support their businesses, they are still not satisfied because these grants are not enough to sustain the businesses, especially during COVID-19. Henceforth, the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo proposed to the Government of Kosovo a list for women entrepreneurs to support them with other things, not only financial assistance, but also organizing information sessions and providing different trainings that would help and promote women entrepreneurs in business and strengthen the position of women worldwide (The American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo, 2020).

1.4 Female entrepreneurship in transition economies

In transition countries such as Albania, Macedonia, and Kosovo, the number of women participation in the labour force, and women who own businesses remains limited. In the second quarter of 2019, the working-age population aged 15-64 increased by 1.5%, while the labour force decreased by 0.8%, leading to a decline in the labour force participation rate: The inactivity rate in the region is 40%, while for women it is as high as 80% (Western Balkans Labour Market Trends, 2020). Based on the survey published in the third quarter of 2020 by the Kosovo Agency of Statistics (KAS), the unemployment rate was 30.1% (Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 2021). More worryingly, the youth unemployment rate is 54% and the employment rate for women (14.4%) is significantly lower compared to that of men (46.2%). According to the results, most women in Kosovo are employed in sectors such as education and health care (Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 2021). Considering the high unemployment rate in Kosovo, 23% of women surveyed in a recent study indicated that they

have started their own business due to the current unemployment situation (Bami, 2019). The government of Kosovo has developed a strategy to support women entrepreneurs in the country (Ramadani, Rexhepi, Abazi-Alili, Beqiri & Thaçi, 2015). The government called this the "Development Strategy for Small and Medium Enterprises in Kosovo 2012-2016." To increase women's participation in entrepreneurship, the government developed several measures, such as improving access to finance, providing training for women entrepreneurs, and creating a business network to help women entrepreneurs develop their businesses. As part of this strategy, the government of Kosovo aimed to empower women in entrepreneurship, increase women's participation in the labour market, and improve women entrepreneurs' access to finance (Rexhepi, 2015). The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) also organizes a fair every year to strengthen the connection between different women entrepreneurs from different regions of Kosovo through a collaborative dialogue that has similar goals (The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, 2017).

According to studies, 68% of women entrepreneurs in Kosovo own small businesses in various sectors, such as agriculture, trade, manufacturing, and construction. One of the main difficulties faced by women entrepreneurs in Kosovo is the difficulty in finding a balance between family responsibilities and work commitments (Ramadani, Hisrich, & Gërguri-Rashiti, 2015). In neighboring countries, in North Macedonia, 32.5% of women entrepreneurs own a microenterprise and 27.5% of women own small or medium enterprises, while a minority of 12.5% of them run large businesses (Ramadani, Hisrich, & Gërguri-Rashiti, 2015). As in any transition economy, women entrepreneurs face many obstacles in the Republic of Macedonia, starting with financing, work-life balance, lack of time to attend training, etc. (Ramadani, Rexhepi, Abazi-Alili, Beqiri, & Thaçi, 2015). Another country with a transition economy, Albania, presents similar challenges for women entrepreneurs. One of the biggest challenges for women entrepreneurs in Albania is that they do not receive financial support from either state or private banks that would help them start or expand their businesses. Barriers also include management skills, as starting a business requires courage and self-confidence, which women are not traditionally taught. A third barrier mentioned in the study is mobility, as the majority of women find it very difficult to travel alone, although this has changed recently, but there are still such uncertainties (Imeraj & Gruda 2013). In addition to all these difficulties, women also face gender stereotypes, corruption and weak institutions that prevent them from developing their entrepreneurial skills (Bami, 2019).

1.4.1 Case of Albania

Over the years, the role of women in society and their participation in the labor force has changed drastically. Considering what the situation was decades ago, when women were expected to take care of the household and children and were not allowed to participate in the workforce, while men mostly held all kinds of jobs, this mentality is fortunately no

longer present in this century. One of the main reasons women become entrepreneurs is the phenomenon of the glass ceiling. Having faced a variety of challenges throughout their lives, such as institutional barriers and gender discrimination, these women have finally decided to pluck up the courage and start their own businesses. Women seem to be increasingly motivated and determined to start their own businesses because it allows them to increase their income, which is sufficient to meet their needs. Another important reason that motivates women to become entrepreneurs is the idea of balancing family, household and work. From the reports of the United Nations Organization for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, most women want to leave their jobs in other companies and organization due to the lack of opportunities for advancement and therefore decide to take the first step to create something of their own and become an entrepreneur. For this reason, UN Women states that women who become entrepreneurs have many benefits, starting with economic freedom as independent women, ownership of property, decision making, and most importantly, that such a position also benefits the country through greater economic empowerment (UN Women Jobs, 2013).

As Beqo and Gehrels noted, women's entrepreneurship in Albania is a critical source of tremendous economic growth. Even though women's participation in business is much lower compared to men's, this will always remain a major problem for Albania. Small and medium-sized enterprises account for 99% of all businesses in the EU and are also considered one of the most important drivers of economic growth worldwide. At the same time, however, women's entrepreneurship in Albania has proven to be quite difficult in recent years (Beqo & Gehrels, 2017). Although, in terms of policy mechanisms, Albania is still in a transitional phase as it needs to strengthen and enforce the current legislation that in some way directly affects the country's economy. Some of the reasons that have affected the country as a whole are the traditional mentalities, gender stereotypes that have led to discrimination and inequality between men and women in Albania (Beqo & Gehrels, 2017).

One of the most successful women in Albania who is known as an entrepreneur is from Albania. She works as an electrical engineer, energy project manager and energy auditor. In addition to her experience at SunPower, she has also volunteered in various energy projects, such as GridAlternatives. She also installed photovoltaic systems on homes and worked as an instructor at a high school where she taught solar tracker construction (Bami, 2019). Like other countries around the world, Albania is a very attractive country for women entrepreneurs who want to start their own business. If the majority of women receive the necessary support from the government, if they are provided with opportunities, the necessary resources and the right knowledge, and if they are able to develop their business in such an environment, this would contribute to the economic development of the country. In addition to economic development, strengthening and promoting women's entrepreneurship will lead to more employment and promote gender equality in the country. According to the Institute of Statistics in Albania (INSTAT), the percentage of female owners and managers in 2020 is 25.5%, a slight increase compared to the previous year

2019, which was 25.4%. However, if we consider other categories of companies, such as small companies, the percentage of female owners and administrators has increased to 25.8% compared to previous years (Institute of Statistics in Albania, 2021). In addition, women's participation in political decision-making in parliament increased from 7.1% to 16.4% in 2009. This trend has continued over the years, including in 2020, when the percentage of women in parliament is 29.5% (Institute of Statistics in Albania, 2021). Moreover, along with this high percentage of women in politics, Albania claims a world leadership role for women in government, as the Albanian Prime Minister appoints 12 women ministers and only 4 men. This is considered the highest percentage of women in leadership positions (Euractiv, 2021). Thus, these drastic changes in the electoral law have enabled such progress in women's representation in local government bodies and such changes in gender representation. The reports of the institute of statistics in Albania show that 43.3% of women are employed, while the remaining percentage is considered unpaid labor in family businesses, which account for about 22.8%. Aside from that, the reports show that 18.8% of women are inactive for reasons of inactivity, either fulfilling their duties or attending school (Institute of Statistics in Albania, 2021). In the area of salaries, the Institute of Statistics shows that in 2020 the average gross salary for a salaried employee in Albania is EUR 441.26, lower for men EUR 454.87 and for women EUR 424.95. This shows that there is a gender gap and inequality between men and women in salaries. This difference between men's and women's salaries can be explained by various characteristics such as education and work experience, as well as other social, cultural and economic factors in society (Institute of Statistics in Albania, 2021).

According to a study by Ina Beqo and Sjoerd A. Gehrels on women entrepreneurs in developing countries, they chose the example of Albania. From the studies, it appears that women entrepreneurs like to choose the service sector and are more involved in maintenance, training and consulting because there are many more opportunities in these areas. Other reasons why women entrepreneurs are more interested in the service sector are the knowledge, skills and experience they have. The only barrier for women entrepreneurs to engage in other sectors, such as energy or manufacturing, is that they lack specific technical skills, which discourages them from the idea of opening their own businesses in other sectors. In addition to specific technical skills, the most important reason for women's participation in businesses is the difficulty in obtaining funding from relevant agencies, the government, or other nongovernmental organizations that provide grants for women's participation in businesses (Beqo & Gehrels, 2014).

Immediately after the communist regime in Albania, women were known to be much more concerned about education than men. Considering the fact that education is highly valued today, women in Albania pay much attention to it and are considered to have higher educational standards than men. So, compared to previous years, Albania has made great progress in drafting laws to protect women's rights and trying to advance gender equality and the fight against gender discrimination. This initiative has filled many gaps in

legislation, while also contributing to the development and empowerment of women in Albania. Such positive signs for Albanian women have become visible and accessible in recent years. Many tourists are witnessing many changes in Albania, such as improved infrastructure, more women entrepreneurs engaged in various sectors, while attracting many customers to Albania from all over the world. Many universities offer various programs for professionals to promote women entrepreneurs in Albania (Bami, 2019).

1.4.2 Case of North Macedonia

Women, especially from North Macedonia, have a low labor force participation rate, resulting in a high unemployment rate in the country. Women working in various industries are portrayed as less educated and receive low wages. The reasons for such issues are closely related to the social conditions and unstable economic situation in the country, the lack of adequate jobs for educated women and the existing traditional values and norms in the country. Reports published by the State Statistical Office (SSO) indicate that 22.7% of women in North Macedonia are unemployed, while 64.5% of women in the country are not looking for a job. In addition, there is a large number of women who are very well educated, but are also not working anywhere. Official statistics show that unemployment is mainly found in rural areas, where 64% of women between the ages of 20 and 24 are unemployed. This high percentage is worrying, considering that women of this age should be educated and already employed. Women's entrepreneurship is intentionally highlighted as one of the key issues for the country's economic development. This expresses a positive force that motivates women, especially the younger generation, to become more involved in the business world and provide them with various employment opportunities so that they have better access to the labor market. As reported by Abazi and Stavrevska, the majority of women in North Macedonia are employed in personal care services, while there are fewer women in other professions such as law, engineering and accounting. According to the report, the percentage of women entrepreneurs is still quite low, at 22.5%, and even at this percentage, women who run their own businesses have about 1 to 10 employees in the company. This low percentage of women in business is the result of entry barriers for women entrepreneurs in all sectors (Abazi & Stavrevska, 2021).

Some of the obstacles that women in North Macedonia face in business are of different types, ranging from institutional and political obstacles, regardless of where women are located in each city, to the level of trust they enjoy in the various public and private institutions, to the lack of information about grants from public institutions or funds from companies and, above all, gender discrimination, which will remain a problem for a long time. It is also clear from the responses of the interviewees in Abazi and Stavrevska's report that there are societal obstacles in North Macedonia that prevent women entrepreneurs from succeeding in their careers. Some of the societal obstacles are the patriarchal views on the role of women and the lack of family support. Such difficulties in becoming an entrepreneur prevent many young girls from having the courage to start their own businesses, even if they

have all the necessary skills and a good education. Along with this report, North Macedonia was included in the most prestigious research source on entrepreneurship around the world, the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM), by collecting data from various respondents through questionnaires and interviews with well-known entrepreneurs. The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) includes data to monitor attitudes and entrepreneurial behaviour, as well as important data on total early-stage entrepreneurial activity (TEA) and the relationship with TEA (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, 2021). Moreover, the ratio of total entrepreneurial activity between women and men in North Macedonia was 0.36 lower in 2019 than in 2016 (0.40). Thus, the regional average of TEA ratio in North Macedonia is 0.67, while the global average is 0.71 (Global Entrepreneurial Monitor, 2021). According to the latest data available in the reports of GEM, this ratio is significantly higher in other countries, for example, in Kosovo in 2014 at 0.69, in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2017 at 0.53, and in Serbia in 2009 at 0.52 (Global Entrepreneurial Monitor, 2021). Despite all the obstacles faced by women entrepreneurs before they open their own business, the Ministry of Economy in North Macedonia has developed a Strategy for Entrepreneurship Development for the period 2019-2023 as an initiative to provide financial and technical support to women entrepreneurs in North Macedonia. This strategy explains the difficulties on the way to start a business and the structural obstacles that women face in business. Therefore, the Ministry of Economy has developed strategies to overcome these obstacles, such as creating a favorable environment for women entrepreneurs to encourage them to open their businesses, creating infrastructures, promoting women, providing financial support by offering subsidies, and networking by creating connections with different companies that help women to share their views and create partnerships between successful companies around the world (Ministry of Economy, 2019).

Considering the fact that women face many challenges in everyday life when it comes to starting and running their own businesses, such difficulties are also observed in North Macedonia. An article published by the University of Notre Dame on the empowerment of women entrepreneurs in North Macedonia highlights the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs, especially in rural areas, along with other issues such as societal pressures and discrimination that continue to be barriers to success. One of the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) currently working on this issue in North Macedonia is Women in Economy (WIE). Their goal is to empower women farmers in rural areas through various activities, help them create global connections, help them enter various markets, and remove various barriers in their path (University of Notre Dame, 2022).

From recent studies, North Macedonia has seen some modest success in the energy sector. For example, EVN AD, an electricity distribution and supply company headquartered in Skopje, is working with USAID's Engendering Utilities programme, which aims to strengthen the energy and water sectors by employing more women in these sectors while encouraging young, professional women to become involved in the energy sector for the country's development. USAID's goal was to increase gender balance in EVN AD. This goal

has been achieved as there are more than 1800 professionals employed there, of which almost 21 percent are women in various positions (USAID, 2019). According to the World Bank data, in North Macedonia we can see from the statistics that about 45% of women from the middle income sector participate in the labour market, compared to 76% of men who participate in the labour market. From the publication of USAID IDEA, we can see that about 26% of women work in private companies that hold high positions and are considered top managers (USAID data services, 2022).

1.4.3 Case of Kosovo

In order to overcome the gender gap and open up new opportunities for the economic development of the country, great efforts are needed, such as removing the existing barriers and creating incentives and opportunities for women entrepreneurs in various sectors. Regarding gender inequalities, most literature reviews show that the majority of women in Kosovo have difficulties accessing the labour market and taking advantage of new opportunities in the sectors in which they currently work. In addition to women's labour force participation, gender differences are also found in entrepreneurship (Beha, 2015). The World Bank's 2017 Policy Note, only 9.5 percent of companies have women employed as top managers, while only a minority of 14 percent are owned by women themselves (The World Bank, 2021). In addition to women's participation in the labour market, another barrier limiting women's economic opportunities, especially for women who want to become entrepreneurs, is lack of access to productive resources such as credit and land. The latest World Bank data shows that women in Kosovo even have a very low percentage of land ownership, 15.2 percent, compared to men, who account for 74.1 percent. Even with such a low level of participation by women, it should be noted that the majority of women are disadvantaged along the way because they are not fully informed about how rights and services really work (The World Bank, 2021). A key advantage is that Kosovo has laws that protect women's rights, such as when it comes to inheritance and property registration, so there are rules in place to prevent such discrimination (Beha, 2015).

As outlined by Buitrago, Davalos and Chaumussy in the World Bank Policy Note, they have proposed some policy options to support women entrepreneurs and also women participating in the labour market to provide them with different economic opportunities. Most of the proposed policies aim to prevent gender inequalities, such as improving access to assets and productive resources, providing care for children and the elderly, removing barriers in labour taxation and compliance laws, and improving women's employability by providing different trainings and required skills for the sectors they are already working in (Buitrago, Davalos, Boudet & Chaumussy, 2017). Another policy that is considered very important for women entrepreneurs is access to information. In order to increase employment in the country and reduce the gender gap, it is important to involve young women and provide them with up-to-date information so that they can use it to make further decisions. This could help ensure that women are well informed and included in certain

educational and professional fields. In addition, access to information could also be helpful for women to make connections when it comes to labour relations, and it could also strengthen the labour market information system (Buitrago, Davalos, Boudet & Chaumussy, 2017).

Like all countries affected by the pandemic COVID-19, women entrepreneurs in Kosovo faced great difficulties. Many small and medium businesses were harmed during the Corona virus outbreak. According to Prishtina Insight, during this period, the Kosovo government approved an emergency aid package for businesses in the amount of 170 million euros to support them during the months of March and April. Along with this package, the Kosovo government wanted to help workers with monthly salaries in the amount of 170 euros, which would also cover pension contributions. Even after this announcement of the Kosovo government for the support, most of the companies did not receive salaries until the end of the month, while on the other hand, the owners of the companies complained a lot because they could not keep all the employees in this time of crisis (Prishtina Insight, 2020). Most of the interviewed women entrepreneurs expressed concern about the situation of their businesses during the pandemic situation. For example, the owner of "Kooperativa Krusha" produces a variety of traditional foods such as pickles and ajvar and later sells them worldwide. Currently, the company employs more than 20 women from different villages, who earned a lot of money before the pandemic, while now they are concerned how to keep all the employees employed, as the demand for such products has decreased and only the bare necessities are sold. The owner of "Kooperativa Krusha" stressed that he had already closed his store because he could no longer sell products due to the pandemic situation. Therefore, they could not afford to pay salaries for all 20 employees and constantly complained to the government of Kosovo to accelerate the aid so that they could pay at least two salaries for the employees of these businesses (Prishtina Insight, 2020).

There are many small and medium enterprises that face the same problems every day. As Doruntina Baliu reports, many women who own small and medium enterprises in Kosovo are facing great challenges due to the outbreak of the coronavirus. Another example is the case of Rudina Qosja, the owner of a well-known pastry shop in Prishtina. Her business employed more than 80% women, but currently half of the women work only part-time due to the pandemic. She, too, complained about the payment of her employees' salaries and asked the Kosovo government for more help to cover at least part of the costs, because she does not want to be in the situation of having to fire her employees just because the income was not enough in the last few months. Considering that women work in such business fields, they support their families with the money they earn from their work (Baliu, 2020). Therefore, many small and medium enterprises go bankrupt because the packages they receive for support are so low that they cannot survive paying for all the costs. Another entrepreneur who is concerned about the situation of the crisis COVID -19 is Rina Malsori, the owner of the company Fruti, which sells beverages. She further reports that the production of all beverages has been slowed down due to low demand and more than 200

workers have to work part-time. Workers in poor condition have been offered paid leave, including mothers who have other responsibilities such as childcare, and those who need to care for the elderly. Considering that Fruti Company has a large factory and works with a large number of workers involved in transportation and work in this pandemic, the company incurred additional costs because it had to take care of them and take measures to protect the workers. The entrepreneur goes on to say that sales of beverages and exports have decreased, that operations are very slow, and that the company's revenues are generally decreasing (Baliu, 2020).

Consequently, the outbreak of this pandemic affected everyone in the worst way, but here we can say that it was even more visible for women entrepreneurs who recently opened their businesses. Overall, many policies have been introduced to support women in business, including women entrepreneurs and women working in the public or private sectors. Another organisation working on gender inequality issues and women's empowerment is the Kosovo Women's Network (KWN). In a recent post, the organisation called on the government to provide assistance, support or alternative measures from the bank to women who own businesses during the pandemic so that they can stay in the market and not go bankrupt, as the percentage of women participating in the labour market or even owning a business is decreasing day by day. Moreover, Kosovo Women's Network (KWN) emphasises that it is much more difficult for women in general to access finance and get loans from banks because they do not have as much capital as men. In addition, the Kosovo Women's Network (KWN) states that women in Kosovo face many violations in the labour market, starting with extended overtime hours, which means that the majority of women also work after hours without being paid for these overtime hours (Kosovo Women's Network, 2021).

According to the latest research and data collected by Democracy for Development, it is found that a high percentage of women worldwide have lost their jobs compared to men due to COVID -19 and many women have remained inactive in the labour market. Data published by the Agency for Statistics in Kosovo for the period from the first quarter of 2019 to 2020 shows that the number of women participating in the labour force increased slightly by 4.02%, while the number of employed women increased by 5.83%. Thus, the unemployment rate of women decreased by 3.21%. The number of women registered as inactive decreased by 0.99% during this period (Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 2021). From the data published and analysed by the Kosovo Agency for Democracy and Development, it appears that only 3.3% of women are employers, while the percentage of women who are considered employees and work in different sectors is very high, 85.4%, while 11.2% of women are without employment contracts and work in different places and are considered insecure workers. Another widely used data in Kosovo, collected by the Department of Democracy and Development, states that the majority of women who work for the family business and are not paid is about 5.3%. In the Employment Agency of January till June in the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the number of jobs was registered in the period

from January to June, which means that the opportunities to apply for a job are very low and optimal in percentage terms. What makes this research study even more important is the number of women whose contract was terminated during the pandemic, about 5.3%. Some women were sent on unpaid leave, while the majority of women did not receive full pay even though they worked full hours, but the companies where they worked could not even cover essential costs or even went bankrupt (Democracy for Development, 2021).

Due to the restrictions imposed by the government of Kosovo during the pandemic to prevent the spread of COVID-19, all educational institutions were closed, businesses, childcare facilities, public transport were banned, and many other restrictions. At the same time, the burden of caring for children, the elderly, and the household in general became heavier on women. Consequently, during quarantine, women spent many hours taking care of the household and had an additional burden compared to men. Data collected by Democracy for Development in Kosovo shows that when it comes to childcare, the majority of women bear the main burden, i.e. about 24%, while only 28.1% of women and men equally share the responsibility for childcare and other household chores. In addition, women in general were severely affected by the pandemic, as they did not receive adequate support or other economic packages except during the months of May and April. For example, 61.1% of women entrepreneurs did not receive economic packages from the Kosovo government that would have prevented their businesses from going bankrupt (Democracy for Development, 2021).

2 THE ENERGY SECTOR IN KOSOVO

2.1 Overview of the energy sector in Kosovo

In the energy sector, electricity generation, management and consumption in Kosovo is one of the features that affect the economy. Kosovo has several potential primary energy sources. Energy production in Kosovo is mainly based on lignite reserves, exploitation of coal and thermal power plants, and to a lesser extent on renewable energy sources such as biomass, hydro, wind and solar (Gojani, 2016). Regardless, the energy sector has not performed well for some time, resulting in an overall weak national economy in the country. The decree of Kosovo thermal power plants and mining was introduced between the 1960s and 1980s. Monitoring is carried out by the Kosovo Energy Corporation (KEK). The distribution of energy was initiated with the establishment of KEDS and KESCO. However, the poor management of the energy sector is reflected in a lack of reliable sources, which leads to uncertainty about future developments (International Trade Administration, 2021). According to World Data Info, energy consumption in Kosovo is 3.96 billion kWh per year of electrical energy, proportionally with an average of 2,205 kWh. What is important for the energy sector is that Kosovo can fully supply itself with self-produced energy due to the total production of electrical energy, which is 6 billion kWh or in other words 142% of the

total domestic consumption of the country (World Data Info, 2021). Moreover, in addition to production and consumption, imports and exports also play an important role in the energy sector. Thus, Kosovo trades energy with other countries. The energy system in Kosovo consists of the main entities: KEK - Kosovo Energy Corporation, a state-owned electricity and coal distributor, KEDS - Kosovo Energy Distribution Services, and KESCO - Kosovo Company for Supply of Energy (Murati & Fetaj, 2022). The transmission system in Kosovo is operated by KOSTT - Kosovo Transmission System Operator Company, for which ERO - Energy Regulator Office is responsible. The Kosovo transmission network of the power system it is connected pretty well with both regional and European system throughout interconnection lines with Albania, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia with the line of 400 kV; while Albania and Serbia with line 220 kV and Serbia with the line 110 kV (Energy Regulatory Office, 2022). Thus, all the above companies represent 97% of the energy with the largest natural resources in the country, lignite (Imeraj & Gruda, 2013).

The energy market in Kosovo consists of several regulations and is managed by several distribution actors. The following actors are the Energy Regulatory Authority (ERO), the Ministry of Economic Development (MED), the Independent Commission for Mines and Minerals (ICMM), the Kosovo Competition Commission (KCC), the Transmission System Operator, and the Market Operator. The Energy Regulatory Authority (ERO) is an independent agency in the energy sector that deals with the economic regulation of a country. According to the recent report of the European Commission, Kosovo has made some progress in renewable energy sources, especially wind energy, 76 MW of hydropower and 10 MW of solar energy, but on the other hand, the country still relies on coal, which keeps causing severe health damages (European Commission, 2020). Energy consumption in Kosovo amounts to 3.96 billion kWh per year of electrical energy, which corresponds to an average of 2,205 kWh (World Data Info, 2021). Even though considering the recent investments made in the energy sector, the distribution network need to provide a indisputable supply with a high quality for its customers. Therefore, in order to receive this quality of service and supply there is always a need for a tremendous investment in medium voltage level and also low voltage level (Energy Regulatory Office, 2022). In the energy sector, the distribution system operator in Kosovo is structured in 7 districts: Prishtina, Mitrovica, Peja, Gjilan, Prizren, Ferizaj and Gjakova. The distribution system in Kosovo comprises medium voltage level 35kV, 20 kV, 10 kV, 6 kv and the low voltage level of 0.4 kV (Energy Regulatory Office, 2022).

2.2 Current situation in energy sector in Kosovo

Currently, Kosovo has been stagnating for a long time in meeting the goals of the Energy Community. This is due to the use of lignite and hard coal for electricity generation. This also affects the old coal-fired power plants for energy generation in Kosovo, namely Kosova A and Kosova B, with a capacity of 1,288 megawatts, which are over 40 years old and heavily polluted. According to the World Bank, both power plants represent the largest

source of pollution in the country and also in Europe, which is why the government has proposed to shut them down immediately and replace them with other sources of energy production (The World Bank, 2021). These coal-fired power plants cover almost 91% of the total energy production, and since they are considered quite old, they are nearing the end of their operation, which means that Kosovo is in urgent need of rehabilitation. This brings us to the point that Kosovo needs a more flexible source of energy, such as renewable energy, to create further opportunities for investment. One of the energy sources that would help in creating a reliable energy supply at an affordable cost is solar energy. Even though the percentage is still low, a good government framework could motivate people to invest in renewable solar energy. With this in mind, solar energy as an affordable energy source could help Kosovo's economy to reduce poverty by reducing unemployment and creating more jobs for people. In addition to the socio-economic factors, solar energy as an alternative energy source, besides creating jobs in different regions of Kosovo, could also bring health benefits compared to other forms of energy production in power plants, which are considered very harmful for the whole population (The World Bank, 2021).

These coal-fired power plants cover almost 91% of total energy production. As they are considered quite old, they are nearing the end of their operation, so Kosovo is in urgent need for a restoration. This brings us to the point where Kosovo needs a more flexible source of energy, such as renewable energy, to create further opportunities for investment. One of the energy sources that would help in creating a reliable energy supply at an affordable cost is solar energy. Even though the share of solar energy is still small, a good government framework could motivate people to invest in renewable solar energy. With this in mind, solar energy as an affordable source of energy could help Kosovo's economy to reduce poverty by reducing unemployment and creating more jobs for people. In addition to the socio-economic factors, solar energy as an alternative energy source, besides creating jobs in different regions of Kosovo, could also bring health benefits compared to other forms of energy production in power plants, which are considered very harmful for the whole population (Murati & Fetaj, 2022).

However, this does not mean that Kosovo is rich in renewable energy sources, but because the country has huge deposits of the first energy source lignite and it is very easily accessible, although Kosovo has a very high potential for renewable energy sources (The Independent Commission for Mines and Minerals, 2021). Considering the fact that Kosovo has large lignite reserves, the fifth largest in the world, the main problems arise in the mining process, as most of the lignite to be mined is located under private land, near which most people live, so they have to evict people from their land to be able to mine the lignite (Davies, 2018). According to Bank Watch Network, it was mentioned that the World Bank is funding the "Kosova e Re" or "New Kosovo" project to build another power plant that would replace the old power plant with a new one that could further support the mining of the world's largest energy source, lignite (Bank Watch Network, 2018). The new coal-fired power plant that was planned to be built has a capacity of 500 MW and is expected to meet

almost half of the country's electricity needs from lignite reserves. This project has been running for more than ten years, but it was finally concluded to abandon the coal-fired power plant project of Kosova e Re because the World Bank and EBRD will no longer finance it, mainly because it does not meet the requirements and at the same time would save Kosovo a lot of money. Moreover, it was announced that this coal-fired power plant will not be built anymore because Kosovo should fully focus on higher energy efficiency in order to move forward (Bank Watch Network, 2020). Kosovo has wasted many years on coal-fired power plant projects that were very costly and very harmful to the environment. These losses could be replaced with a completely different plan, such as investing in potential renewable energy sources that are considered more economically viable than coal-fired power plants. Considering this, Kosovo would be able to stop wasting time burning coal and invest in clean, efficient energy (Bank Watch Network, 2020).

To further deepen our knowledge about energy sources in Kosovo, the second largest energy supplier is hydroelectric power plants. The initiative to build a hydroelectric power plant in Brezovica brought many problems. The majority of people living in this area protested against the construction of this hydroelectric power plant, fearing that this power plant would dry up the riverbed and cause harm to all people living near this area (Bytyci, 2019). As the European Commission stated in light of the current situation, Kosovo should focus more on other energy sources instead of lignite so that it can continue to invest in other potential renewable energy sources (Beha, 2015). This could also be beneficial for the country and society as a whole, as it would help improve people's lives by reducing poverty, lowering unemployment, and boosting the country's overall economic growth. In order for Kosovo to invest in the energy sector in the near future and attract foreign investors to strengthen the country's economy, it must first work on the first source of energy, coal-fired power generation, which is considered the worst source of air pollution (The World Bank, 2021). Poor management of the energy sector is reflected in a lack of reliable sources in various ways, which has led to uncertainty about future developments (International Trade Administration, 2021).

According to the recent report Kosovo 2020 published by the European Commission, Kosovo has made some progress in the field of energy in terms of renewable energy sources, especially wind energy, 76 MW hydropower and 10 MW solar energy, but on the other hand still relies on coal, which repeatedly causes serious health problems. (European Commission, 2020). Moreover, Kosovo has only a small number of data sources on renewable energy. All secondary data were collected through online literature, energy research reports, international strategy reports, a current situation in the energy sector, and future plans are included in this comprehensive analysis. Some of the challenges Kosovo faces in the energy sector are the struggle to meet the total electricity demand, the inadequate operational management system in the energy sector, and the huge release of greenhouse gas emissions, which are a major source of carbon dioxide CO₂ here (European Commission, 2020).

2.3 Support from NGOs to women entrepreneurs in the energy sector

Reiserer reports that the Agency for Finance in Kosovo (AFK) recently became part of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and was among the first institutions to support the Women in Business program. Thus, AFK has received a loan of 1 million euros from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) to provide financial support to small and medium enterprises run by women. This loan also aims to support the reduction of gender gaps in Kosovo, so it would further help women entrepreneurs in their businesses (Reiserer, 2020). The goal of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) through its Women in Business Program project is to provide financial support to women entrepreneurs to help them access finance and enable them to sustain their businesses while expanding them (Reiserer, 2020).

Under the Millennium Foundation of Kosovo program, Fresa SHPK, a company run by women entrepreneurs, provides catering and food services to several hospitals and schools in all regions of Kosovo. They participated in a six-month program of mentoring and coaching within a platform of 20 well-known entrepreneurs in Kosovo. This program was supported by Millennium Foundation Kosovo (MCC) in collaboration with GFA Consulting Group, Free Market Institute and Santa University Miller Canter Institute for Social Entrepreneurship. The idea of this program framework is to support women entrepreneurs and train them in different areas, such as improving energy efficiency in business, finance and management (Cotura, 2021). The Fresa SHPK company is run by Edis Agani and Albina Duraku. They jointly applied for the large grant and are very satisfied as they were able to invest in different equipment that is not only beneficial for their company but also improves energy efficiency.

According to Open Businesses, only 11.4 percent of women in Kosovo own a business. This is a relatively low number of women participating in the labor market compared to the number of men who own a business (Open Data Kosovo, 2021). Subsequently, the Fresa SHPK company was able to hire many women who had participated in the training program. Currently, 22 out of 24 women are employed, which has led to the empowerment of women in Kosovo. The two founders of Fresa SHPK were very satisfied with the success of their company and with the fact that they were able to help many women who previously had no work and now can support their families with the income they earn. In addition, Fresa SHPK emphasized that most of the women they trained now hold high positions in most restaurants and were also able to open their own businesses (Cotura, 2021).

In addition, since 2017, MCC The Millennium Foundation Kosovo has supported investments in projects to reduce energy costs and increase energy efficiency with \$49 million in grants. The focus is on empowering women entrepreneurs in the energy sector, as the percentage of women in the labor market in Kosovo is low. A high percentage of women in Kosovo manage businesses that consume a lot of energy, such as manufacturing companies, bakeries, hotels, or textile companies. Considering how important energy

efficiency is and how much companies have to pay for energy, this seems to be quite a burden and investments in this area are very challenging. In addition to the mentoring and training program, MCC Millennium Foundation Kosovo also offers other opportunities to women entrepreneurs, such as grants for their businesses. All grants were awarded with the idea of investing in energy efficiency. The grants were divided into different amounts comparing the size of the companies, while the highest grant is 135,000 euros or \$160,350. With the MCC Millennium Foundation Kosovo funds, women entrepreneurs can purchase production equipment for their businesses, such as ventilation, heating, air conditioning, and anything related to energy efficiency or renewable energy (Cotura, 2021). According to the MCC Millennium Foundation Kosovo, more than 400 applications for large and medium-sized grants have currently been received. As a program to support women entrepreneurs in the energy sector, the foundation is preparing another program that will provide grants to low-income women from ethnic minorities living in rural areas, with investment grants of up to 10,000 euros or \$11,878. No further information was given on this, but upcoming details will be published on the official site of MCC Millennium Foundation Kosovo in the coming months (Millennium Foundation Kosovo, 2021).

Other opportunities for women entrepreneurs are offered by the Global Women's Network for the Energy Transition (GWNET), an international non-profit organization with the main goal of empowering women around the world working in the field of sustainable energy. The GWNET organization offers various online programmes and webinars to promote women entrepreneurs in the energy sector, support them in their professional growth, and make the energy sector more gender equitable (Global Women's Network for the Energy Transition, 2021). Other opportunities offered specifically for women include the Clean Energy Education & Empowerment (C3E) programme, led by the U.S. Department in partnership with three other universities, including the Stanford Precourt Institute for Energy, the Texas A&M Energy Institute, and the MIT Energy initiative. Thus, the goal of this programme is directly related to women entrepreneurs, their participation in the labour market, their leadership in the energy sector, and their tangible contributions in the fields of STEM. In addition, they provide further opportunities for working women and students by providing rewards and scholarships needed to train them in energy, entrepreneurship, business, and many other fields where the majority of women work (C3E International, 2021).

There are other programs that provide many opportunities for women entrepreneurs around the world, such as Women in Renewable Energy (WiRE), which was first developed in Canada and now operates worldwide. As a non-profit organization, Women in Renewable Energy (WiRE) is dedicated to helping women entrepreneurs become more involved in the energy sector. It provides monitoring, training, and many other opportunities such as networking with other agencies and associations in the energy sector. In addition, they organize many field trips that help women travel and see how most of the work is done in different areas of energy. Women in Renewable Energy (WiRE) is also part of the Equal by

30 campaign, which supports the Equal Pay for Women, Opportunity in the Future and Equal Leadership by 2030 program. Furthermore, the successful organization offers a number of rewards to working women in the energy sector, including female students in the energy sector, by providing them with WiRE student scholarships and various scholarships to well-known conferences around the world in the energy sector, where they can meet many other professionals who own the largest companies in the energy sector and stay in touch with other employees, which could have a positive impact on future employment opportunities in the energy sector (Women in Renewable Energy, 2021).

Another organization that addresses women's problems in accessing the labour market is the Kosovo Women Network (KWN). Considering that only 20% of women are currently employed in the labour market in Kosovo, compared to 65.7% of men, this means that only a very small number of women (13%) are employed, while 47% of men are employed in the labour market (Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 2021). Due to this low percentage of employed women, the Kosovo Women's Network (KWN) prepared the report "Demand, Supply, and Options for expanding Childcare Availability in Kosovo." In this report, Kosovo Women's Network, as one of the leading civil society organizations has highlighted a number of issues related to women, particularly in the labour market. Based on their studies, it is presented that one of the main reasons for the low participation of women in the labour market is the multiple care responsibilities in the household. The majority of women are not even paid for all of the tasks, which can lead to various challenges in their lives, starting with their educational attainment, participation in the labour force, women's involvement in political affairs, their future careers, and finally poverty. Considering that the responsibility of taking care of children should always be shared by both parents, mother and father, this has remained traditional in most countries, where gender roles and responsibilities are generally assumed by women who are not even paid for it. Therefore, unpaid work, which is important for everyone, but not so much appreciated, while within the framework of care is included childcare, care for the elderly people, care for disabled people or people who are sick and so on. Besides, caregiving can also be indicated with other additional household chores such as cooking, cleaning or shopping for the family. All these works are continuously performed by the majority of women, but they still do not receive wages for them (Ackerman & Robinson; Andrus, Cohen, Carvajal-Aguirre, El Arifeen, & Weiss, 2020).

This report surveyed 491 unemployed women with children to find out how much childcare services impact unemployed women, with the majority of women responding that there are not enough childcare facilities to send their children to so that they can continue to work (Zmijanej, 2021). As a result, there are not many childcare facilities in Kosovo that offer preschool education programmes, especially in various small municipalities. These childcare facilities are mostly available in the capital city of Kosovo - Prishtina, while there are few of them in rural areas. For this reason, one of the most important goals of the National Development Strategy of Kosovo for the period 2016-2021 was to increase the number of kindergartens in each of the municipalities in need, as well as to increase the

number of private care facilities for children. Kosovo should also focus more on this issue within the framework of the European Union, as this would help increase women's participation in public life, improve children's pre-school attendance, and reduce discrimination against women overall. One of the legal frameworks that Kosovo as a country should focus more on is the upgrading of care work, the majority of which is done by women in all municipalities, while at the same time trying to reduce their care time by providing childcare facilities, which would save women time for their work, and most importantly, it can reduce gender inequality by sharing the responsibility for care work equally between women and men. Therefore, creating more childcare facilities and transforming unpaid work into paid work could contribute greatly to education by increasing children's achievement, increasing women's labour force participation by creating more jobs, and reducing unemployment, which would lead to a reduction in poverty in general while developing the country's economy (Begolli & Beqo, 2014).

The advancement of women in energy has become a very important issue in recent years. According to the latest research by Sarah Bumbarger on DT Global, a non-profit organization and an international development company working for gender equality in Kosovo directly in the energy sector. Most of the trainings and workshops are organized by the Association of Women in the Energy Sector in Kosovo - AWESK. The last workshop was attended by 12 women from different professions such as engineers, economists and architects. These trainings are supported by other organizations such as USAID within the Kosovo Energy Security of Supply project (KEES), implemented by DT Global with the aim of creating more connections with people and other influential companies in the energy sector and supporting women in their leadership skills so that they are able to take further steps to open their businesses and become entrepreneurs (Zmijanej, 2021). If we refer to STEM fields, we can see a huge difference in gender inequality in the energy sector, even if women have graduated from college, there is huge discrimination when it comes to finding the right job in the energy sector, which is a largely male-dominated sector where the majority of women have difficulty getting into preferred jobs or feel intimidated to even apply. There are many women in Kosovo who are highly educated and studying in the energy sector, but once they graduate from college and apply for various jobs in the energy sector, they immediately face gender discrimination, as there is a high percentage of men working in such an energy sector. Therefore, the percentage of women in the energy sector is very low, only 10%, and within this percentage they only work in administrative positions (Bembenek, Jankowska-Mihulowicz, & Piecuch, 2014).

In this context, the Association of Women in Energy Sector in Kosovo AWESK was established as a non-profit organization to support women in the energy sector and also in STEM fields by offering them assistance through monitoring, creating connections between energy experts and employees, and also creating opportunities for young girls once they graduate from their universities. In addition, this association also supports women engineers by helping them find jobs in the public and private sectors in energy institutions such as

Kosovo Electricity Transmission System and Market Operator (KOSTT), Kosovo Energy Corporation (KEK), Energy Regulatory Office (ERO) and Ministry of Economic Development (MED) where they can integrate women in different departments of the energy sector (Bembenek, Jankowska-Mihulowicz, & Piecuch, 2014).

2.4 Brain drain of women engineers

The phenomenon of brain drain is becoming a major issue worldwide, especially for younger generations. Highly skilled people and educated professionals tend to migrate temporarily from less developed countries to the countries where there are better opportunities and better working conditions so that they can make practical use of the skills and knowledge they have acquired during their careers (Qosaj-Mustafa & Farnsworth, 2009).

According to a study conducted by Monash Business School, there is a high number of students graduating from STEM in Austria. Therefore, the Austrian government is working on this issue to encourage student engagement in STEM fields by supporting them with various scholarships in the most prominent universities in Austria. Compared to Asia and most European countries, the number of students pursuing their careers in STEM fields is higher than in Austria. According to Krasniqi, the reasons for the brain drain in Austria, who move to industries other than STEM after graduating from STEM, are the lack of opportunities to pursue and advance their careers in STEM fields and the low salary. Given these challenges of brain drain, there will be a huge shortage in the labour market, especially in mechanical and electrical engineering. This research also indicates that a one percent increase in the number of students in the fields of STEM would generate \$57.4 billion in GDP revenue over a 20-year period (Krasniqi, 2021).

The phenomenon of brain drain is higher among women for a variety of reasons, starting with the rights of women in different countries, which are not respected as much so that they would be able to express and share their knowledge in their country because they are not allowed to work, due to personal and family reasons, because they do not have the right expertise in the professions they are most interested in, because of low salaries, etc. Faced with such obstacles in a country for women in the energy sector, the government should implement strategies to curb the brain drain by improving working conditions, creating more jobs in the relevant fields, and increasing participation in the labour force; all of which can positively contribute to preventing the brain drain of women in the energy sector (Awojobi, 2014). The brain drain affects many graduates and is also becoming a serious issue for the country. Many successful companies such as Google, Facebook, and Apple are in constant need of software engineers and developers and offer many opportunities to advance their employees' careers. On the other hand, there are not many students who have such qualified skills in these fields. The most sought after people are mostly engineers, so their presence in various industries would contribute to the development of the country's economy while

increasing labour force participation (Awojobi, 2014). The problem of brain drain is crucial and could have various implications for the future, such as human capital, employment, female migration, gender equality, and most importantly, socioeconomic outcomes. The phenomenon of the brain drain mostly happens for highly-educated individuals who tend to move to other countries to find better job opportunities. This results in the loss of highly skilled individuals in the country of residence and the gain of human capital in the country to which these individuals migrate (Begolli, 2020).

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research framework

The theoretical part of the thesis consults scientific literature and reports of national and international organizations. In addition to the theoretical part, which I included in the first part of my thesis, I also focused on articles and recent video conferences that deal with the issue of women entrepreneurs in Kosovo. I conducted an empirical study collecting both primary and secondary data. As secondary data, I mainly use data from government portals and energy-related articles, as well as official statistics from Kosovo Statistics and recent publications from the Kosovo government. In addition, I included the latest news from the official websites of non-governmental organizations such as Millennium Foundation Kosovo - MFK and Association of Women in Energy Sector in Kosovo - AWESK for the empowerment of women entrepreneurs in the energy sector in Kosovo.

The empirical part of the thesis relies on both primary and secondary data. The qualitative data method is used to collect the primary data. In-depth interviews are used in situations where we are interested in more detailed explanations from respondents, when a large number of questions need to be answered, and the questions may be somewhat complex to explain (Saunders et.al 2019). In my thesis I conducted in-depth interviews with both experts in the energy sector as well as semi-structured interviews with women who had previously received scholarships. In order to identify the challenges women face in the energy sector, including barriers or stereotypes, but also positives such as supporting women in entrepreneurship, increasing women's participation in the workforce, or empowering women through leadership positions. One of the methods used for this research is the possibility of networking and exchanging contact information with the relevant companies in the energy sector, different manufacturers, international organizations, attending different trainings and workshops where women engineers would be able to exchange their plans, ideas and contact information for further collaboration. In addition, I also conducted semi-structured interviews with students who were scholarship beneficiaries of the Millennium Foundation's fully funded program in Kosovo, Women in Energy. These female students had the opportunity to study in the field of energy at the most prestigious universities in the United States. The objective was to interview the scholarship beneficiaries who completed

their studies in the United States in the field of energy, in order to gather information about their study experiences abroad and the opportunities they will have upon their return to Kosovo. Another objective of the thesis comprises of gathering data through interviews about the obstacles and opportunities faced by women entrepreneurs in the energy sector in Kosovo. It also aims to find out how difficult it is for women to work in the most well-known professions in the energy sector and what they do to overcome the obstacles that are common in Kosovo. In addition, the interviews with the scholarship beneficiaries is to find out some strategies that would help women to overcome and prevent the outflow and how to encourage them to get more involved in the energy sector in Kosovo. Finally, I also relied on secondary data. I interviewed other relevant institutions from the energy sector to get all the necessary information about the current energy situation, energy transition, energy efficiency, and women's participation in the labour market. In order to further analyze the participation of women in the energy sector, data from the Kosovo Tax Administration was used. The main interest was to find out what is the percentage of women entrepreneurs in private companies in the energy sector in Kosovo. This was done through the Agency for Business Registration (ARBK) using an electronic data system.

3.2 Secondary data description of the private energy sector in Kosovo

In order to analyze the proportion of women in the energy sector, I obtained data from the Kosovo Tax Administration on the total number of private companies registered in Kosovo that operate in the energy sector. Since the sole public-private energy provider in Kosovo is KEDS, I focused on the private sector to draw conclusions about the concentration of women entrepreneurs in the private energy sector.

The data received include:

1. Business name
2. Location of the business- including the region and the city of operation
3. Sector number and sector description- according to NACE classification system
4. Activity and activity code- according to NACE classification system

The primary variable of interest, business ownership, was obtained using the Business Registration Agency (ARBK) electronic data system. ARBK is the sole responsible institution for registering businesses in Kosovo and contains data on all businesses registered in Kosovo. Table 3 shows the total dataset obtained, including business ownership. As portrayed below, there are **311** firms operating in the energy sector in Kosovo, out of which **280** are owned by males, **22** by females and **9** are under mixed ownerships (if the female ownership in the company was less than 51%, I classified it as

mixed, since a majority owner is defined as someone who owns 51% percent of the company's assets).

Table 1: Data description of business ownership in the private energy sector in Kosovo

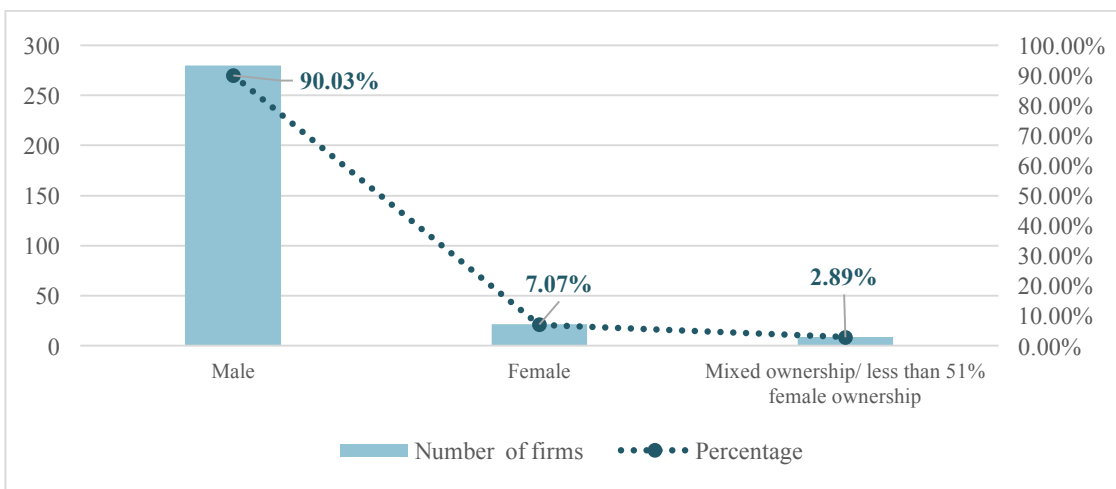
Business ownership	Number of firms
Male	280
Female	22
Mixed ownership/ less than 51% female ownership	9
Total	311

Source: Tax Administration of Kosovo and the Business Registration Agency (2022).

3.2.1 Concentration of female entrepreneurs in the energy sector in Kosovo

Figure 1 visually presents the number of firms in the energy sector in Kosovo by gender and in percentages. Males in this sector dominate with a majority of **90.03%** out of the total number of firms in this sector, while female have a participation of **7.07%** in this industry, whereas firms under a combination of ownership represent **2.9%** of the energy sector. Although the number of females seems small in this industry, the numbers are promising since the energy sector is deemed as difficult to penetrate with high entry and exit costs. In addition, Kosovo is a developing economy and still in transition after the war, thus female entrepreneurs and businesswomen had more limited options in the past, however this trend is changing as we can also see from the data. Thus, when combined with **2.9%** of the firms where females participate as shareholders, we can sensibly conclude that female participation in this industry is **10%**.

Figure 1: Numbers of firms in the energy sector by gender and in %



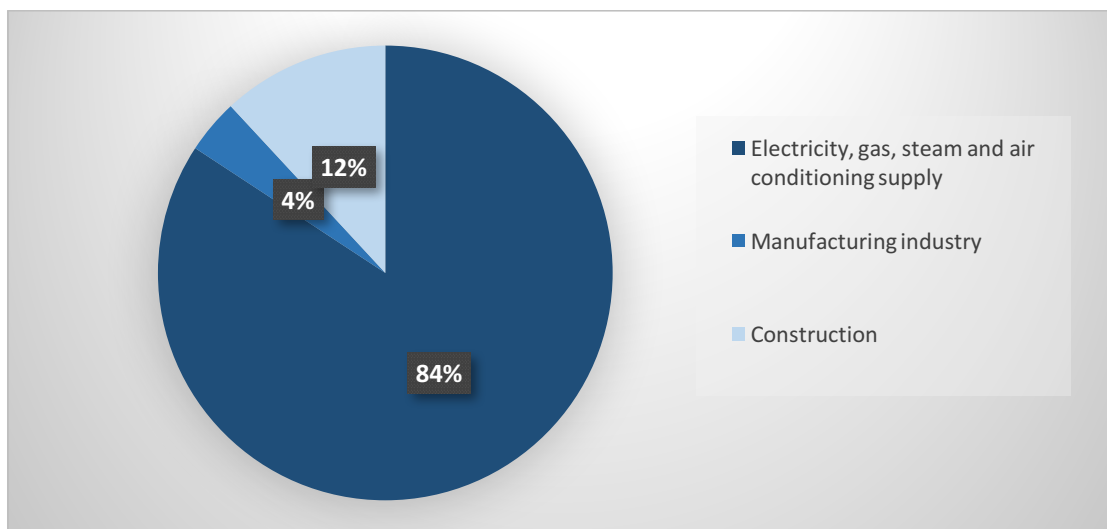
Source: Own work.

3.2.2 Sectorial distribution of energy firms in Kosovo

The **311** firms in our dataset are distributed among three (3) sectors in the economy of Kosovo. As shown in figure 2 below, most firms operating in the energy industry are concentrated in the electricity, gas, steam, and air condition supply (84%).

The second most prevalent sector in the construction section which account for 12% of firms, and the manufacturing accounts for the smallest share of firms with 4%.

Figure 2: Sectorial distribution of energy firms in Kosovo



Source: Tax Administration of Kosovo and the Business Registration Agency (2022).

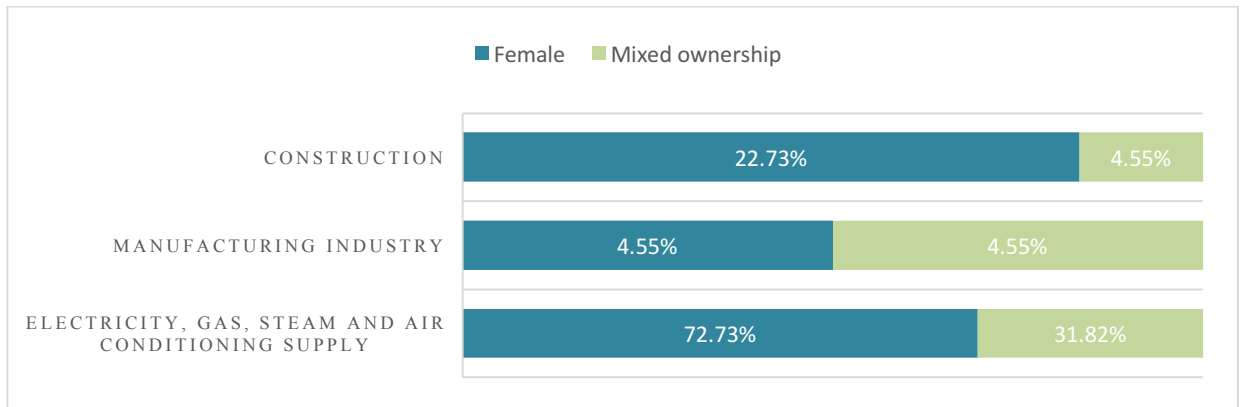
3.2.3 Sector concentration of firms owned by females

This section analyzes the sector concentration of female owned firms. Female owned firms and those under mixed ownership are predominantly concentrated in the electricity, gas, steam, and air condition supply, accounting for 72.7% and 31.9%, respectively.

The primary business activity of the firms in the aforementioned sector is electricity generation and electricity trade. The second most prevalent sector is the construction sector accounting for 22.7% of female owned firms and 4.55% under combined ownership. The activity of female owned firms operating in the construction sector is solely focused on the construction of public utility projects for electricity and telecommunications.

Lastly, there's an equal division of female and mixed ownership firms in the manufacturing industry, accounting for 4.55% each. Firms in the manufacturing sectors are involved in the manufacturing of electricity distribution and control apparatus.

Figure 3: Sectoral distribution of energy firms in Kosovo

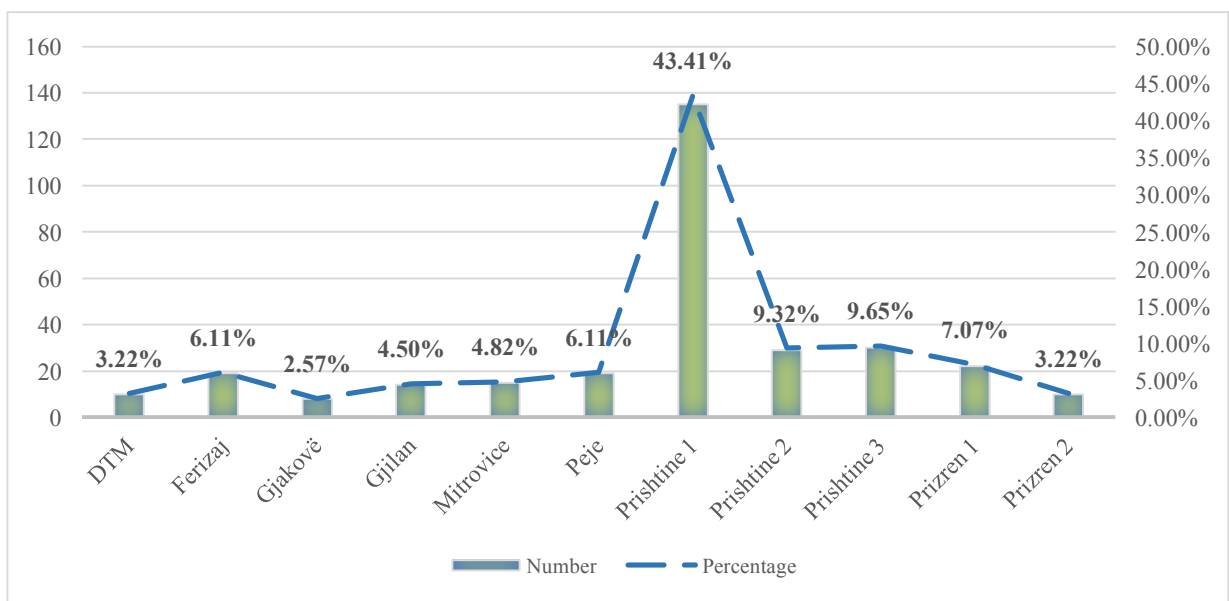


Source: Tax Administration of Kosovo and the Business Registration Agency (2022).

3.2.4 Regional distribution of energy firms

Firms in the energy sector are disseminated across eleven (11) regions in Kosovo. The regions defined in the graph below are categorized by the Tax Administration of Kosovo. Firms are mainly concentrated in the capital, Prishtina, which is divided in three (3) regions, Prishtina 1, Prishtina 2 and Prishtina 3, these three regions combined account for 62.4% of firm location. The second largest region where firms are located is in Prizren, divided in Prizren 1 and 2, and accounts for 10.3%. Other firms are also located in Ferizaj and Peje, each accounting for 6.11% of firms.

Figure 4: Regional distribution of energy firms in Kosovo

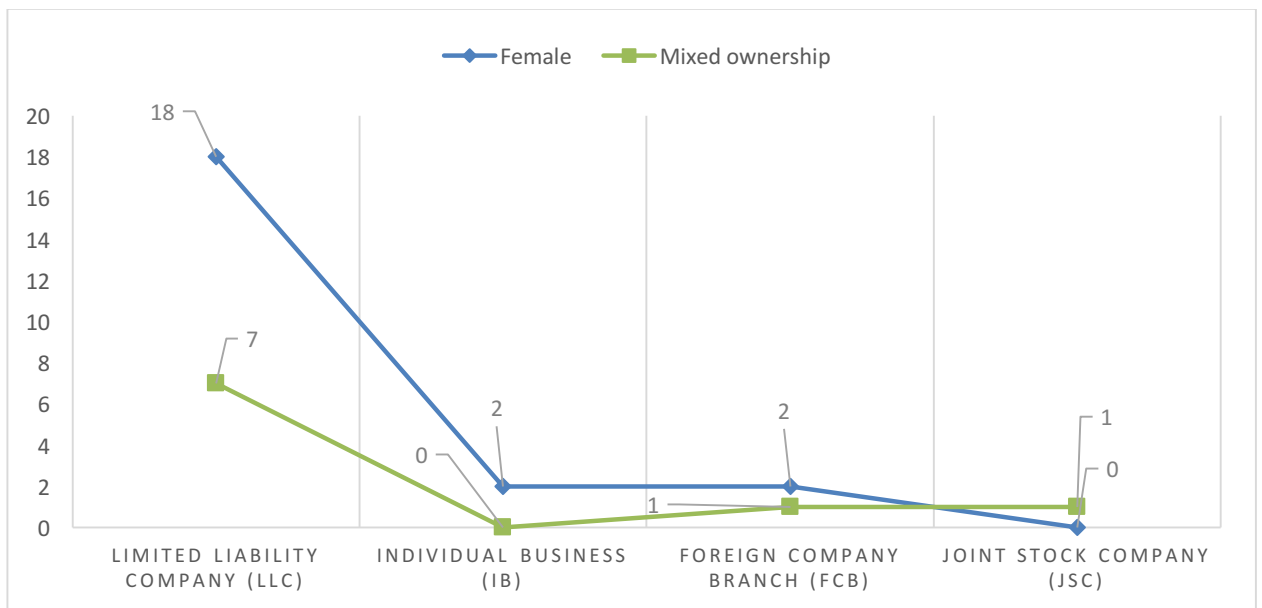


Source: Tax Administration of Kosovo and the Business Registration Agency (2022).

3.2.5 Classification of female owned firms by type of business

This sector examines the female firm structures. As depicted in figure 5 below, 18 female owned companies are organized as Limited Liability Companies (LLC), 2 are Individual Businesses or Sole Proprietorship companies, 2 are Foreign Branch Companies and 1 is organized a Joint Stock Company. The mixed ownership firms follow a similar trend of organization, with the majority being LLC companies, 7, respectively. The key importance and distinction between and LLC and sole proprietorship is the tax regime they are subject to, the former is subject to Corporate Income Tax (CIT) and the latter is subject to Personal Income Taxes (PIT). In addition, a sole proprietorship is a single-person-owned and operated firm, whereas an LLC can be organized as a corporation where the shareholders, owners, elect the board of directors which in turn hires the managers to run the company. Thus, in an LLC the owners may or may not be directly involved in the operations of the business depending how the company is structured.

Figure 5: Classification of female owned firms by type of business



Source: Tax Administration of Kosovo and the Business Registration Agency (2022).

3.3 Primary data collection via in-depth interviews

As Luo et.al. found, semi-structured interviews are less rigorous but at the same time better organized than unstructured interviews. In semi-structured interviews, the questions can be predetermined, but they can be modified during the interview and depend on the perception of the interviewers of which questions are most appropriate during the interview. Also, in a semi-structured interview, you can provide explanations to respondents about each question if they do not understand something. Some of the questions listed for the semi-structured interview can be added if you want to discover other topics, or you can omit some questions

that seem irrelevant during the interview (Luo and Wildemuth, 2017). Therefore, semi-structured interviews are considered more structured and organized than structured interviews.

The aim of the semi-structured interviews with the scholarship beneficiaries was to obtain information on the extent to which study abroad opens up many opportunities for future careers, why they chose to study abroad in the first place, and what advantages and disadvantages they experienced in pursuing their dream in the energy field. The goal was to find out the obstacles they faced on the path to study, how difficult it was for them to pluck up the courage and apply to the most prestigious universities in the United States for the energy programmes, where they found financial support for the education, and what other benefits are available in the United States for the 26 women who were scholarship beneficiaries. Finally, the in-depth interviews with the energy experts were intended to help me assess the current situation in the labour market in Kosovo, how many women work in the energy sector in Kosovo, the barriers that young girls face after graduation, and what few opportunities are available specifically in the energy sector. Another goal of the in-depth interviews was to understand some of the strategies used by non-governmental organizations such as Millennium Foundation Kosovo MFK and Association of Women in Energy Sector in Kosovo AWESK to prevent the phenomenon of brain drain in Kosovo.

There are several steps that should be incorporated into semi-structured interviews, starting with the development of an interview guide in which the interviewee has the opportunity to go through a detailed list of questions. At the beginning, each interviewer writes an outline and based on this, it is much easier to determine the type and objectives of the study that will be conducted (Luo & Wildemuth, 2017). During the interview, the interviewer can choose the order of the questions, starting with the least important to the most important, which will help him or her gather the data needed for the study. Another step that should be considered when conducting the interview is preparing for the interview. This includes finding an appropriate place and time for people to participate in the interview, confirming the appointment time, rescheduling the appointment if someone cancels, and sending reminders a few days before the interview date. In addition, the order of interview questions should be chosen to follow the structure that meets the objectives of the study. Starting with the introduction of the people who will participate in the interview, through some warm-up questions that lead to more sensitive questions that make it easier for the interviewer to obtain the data to be collected. The last step in conducting the semi-structured interview is to collect and analyze the data. Since it is important not to miss any detail when conducting the interview, it is important to record the interview. However, to do this, the interviewer should always ask the participants for permission to record the entire interview. In addition, the full transcript of the interview can be very helpful for the final step of the interview to collect all the data and proceed with the analysis. The interview process started in June, where I had the opportunity to interview students who graduated in the United States and are the last beneficiaries to receive a full scholarship from the Millennium Foundation

Kosovo under the Women in the Energy project. The total number of scholarship beneficiaries were 26 students, but not all of them were able to participate in the interview because some of them were still abroad and staying in different cities in Kosovo. Considering the circumstances created by the pandemic COVID -19, I must emphasize that it was quite a challenge to finish the interviews as most of the scholarship beneficiaries were living in different cities outside Prishtina, so I had to find a suitable time to travel and interview each of them. Another obstacle I faced during the process of interviewing was the strict restrictions on masks, and I could say that it was quite a challenge because of the high temperatures that month. For this research, I used snowball sampling to select the scholarship beneficiaries since there was not much information on the website about the personal information of the women who participated in this program.

3.4 Sample description

The target sample includes former scholarship recipients from various cities in Kosovo who have already graduated from Des Moines Area Community College in Iowa, USA. Of these 26 participants, I was able to include 12 in my sample. The interview participants were selected through a snowball sample and the interview was semi-structured. The questions were written in English because the female graduates of the College of Iowa are all proficient in English due to their degree program. The analysis of the data showed that the interview participants were mainly from Kosovo, from cities such as Prishtina, Peja, Prizren, Mitrovica, Gjakova and Ferizaj. The interviews were conducted during the month of June 2020.

Table 2: Demographic data of the Millennium Foundation scholarship beneficiaries

Scholarship Beneficiaries MFK	Age	Birthplace	Education	Merital status
Respondent 1	25	Prishtinë	Electrical engineer	In a relationship
Respondent 2	26	Prishtinë	Electrical engineer	Married
Respondent 3	25	Prizren	Electrical engineer	Single
Respondent 4	25	Prishtinë	Electrical engineer	In a relationship
Respondent 5	25	Prishtinë	Electrical engineer	In a relationship
Respondent 6	24	Istog	Renewable energy engineer	Single
Respondent 7	29	Drenas	Electrical engineer	Married
Respondent 8	25	Ferizaj	Mechanical engineer	In a relationship
Respondent 9	20	Gjakovë	Electrical engineer	Single
Respondent 10	21	Prishtinë	Mechanical engineer	Single
Respondent 11	24	Prishtinë	Mechanical engineer	Single
Respondent 12	21	Prizren	Electrical engineer student	Single

Source: Own work.

3.4.1 Interviews with experts in the energy sector

From the two interviews with the energy experts and at the same time two of the most prominent women entrepreneurs in the energy sector from Kosovo and Albania, I was able to extract some of the arguments from the data collected in the semi-structured interviews. In the in-depth interviews, the two female energy experts were able to collaborate and share ideas with each other at the same time. One of the most important motivations to start her own business and become an entrepreneur in the energy sector was the idea of being financially stable and making money on her own without having to ask someone else for money. Becoming an entrepreneur has become a necessity, especially for women who are divorced and have children, who are not doing well financially and who want to take care of their family responsibilities by trying to achieve something themselves and develop their business by becoming an entrepreneur in different sectors.

Table 3: Demographic data of the Women Entrepreneurs Energy Experts

Women entrepreneurs	Respondent 1	Respondent 2
Age	28	29
Profession	Electrical Engineer	Electrical Engineer
Birthplace	Tirana, Albania	Prishtina, Kosova
Marital status	Single	Married

Source: Own work

One of the respondent (1), interviewed who is an electrical engineer and at the same time an Albanian entrepreneur, said that it is essential to have at least a university degree in order to acquire all the necessary skills and knowledge to enter the market, regardless of which sector one is interested in. In addition, the respondent (1) mentioned several times that studying abroad was helpful in various ways, such as getting knowledge and skills in the most prestigious universities abroad, but also creating global connections that are also very helpful today in the development of their business.

From the reports of Kosovo Agency of Statistics for the Labor Force Survey from the fourth quarter (Q4) 2020, we can see that the unemployment rate for women is much higher than for men. We can say that only 15.8% of the employed in Kosovo are female, which is a very high percentage of unemployment compared to other Balkan countries. Although women in general occupy an important place in our society, only 11% of women are registered as entrepreneurs in the country, which shows a very weak participation in the business world (Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 2021).

3.4.2 Interviews with scholarship beneficiaries

Participants interviewed included 12 women scholarship beneficiaries that studied in Des Moines Area Community College (DMMAC) in Iowa, United States. In addition, these interviews focused more on individual personal experiences in the United States and the opportunities given in the labor market once the scholarship beneficiaries return to their home country after completing their studies at Des Moines Area Community College in Iowa. Thus, the majority of the girls came from families with high background education. Another factor that usually leads women to take the initiative to open their own businesses is their education and family background, which are the key motivators for women's career development. The data collection method was realized through semi-structured interviews, where I first obtained prior consent to record the responses for the purpose of data analysis.

According to Millennium Foundation Kosovo, a non-governmental organization that has been operating for years, more than 200 female college graduates who completed their studies in the United States were offered paid internships for six months under the Women in Energy program. The scholarship was offered to all girls living in all cities of Kosovo without exception. The research conducted by Millennium Foundation Kosovo (MFK) showed that 32% of the female scholarship holders were from Kosovo, 3% from Prizren, 3% from Shtime, 3% from Skenderaj, 3% from Suharekë, 3% from Zveçan, 3% from Deçan, 11% from Ferizaj, 3% from Fushë Kosovë, 3% from Gjakova, 3% from Gjilan, 3% from Glllogoc, 3% from Graçanicë, 3% from Istog, 5% from Lipjan, 3% from South Mitrovica, 5% from Obiliq, 3% from Peja, and 5% from Podujevë (Millennium Foundation Kosovo, 2021). Every year, scholarships are announced for all women around the world to give them the opportunity to study abroad in the field of energy. In 2021, there were a total of 26 female students who graduated from Iowa, USA. According to the reports of Millennium Foundation Kosovo (MFK), 87.5% of the scholarship beneficiaries found full-time jobs or internships in the most prestigious private energy companies upon their return to their home country (Millennium Foundation Kosovo, 2021).

Under the Women in Energy program (WE), 30 internships were offered to women to work in the energy sector, while the remaining 70 women were selected to complete their internship in the leading private energy companies, where some of them were also asked to sign contracts for full-time employment once they finished their internship. Millennium Foundation Kosovo has established another program called Women in Energy. The Women in Energy Entrepreneurs program has the main goal of providing technical assistance and grants to women who own businesses and motivating them to use energy efficiently. Millennium Foundation Kosovo (MFK) launched this program to help women achieve their goals and realize their potential as successful entrepreneurs in the energy sector. The program is divided into three parts to address the specific needs of women, depending on the size of the business they own. Millennium Foundation Kosovo offers women grants ranging from 10,000 euros to 135,000 euros under the Women in Energy program WEE-SMART. These grants are typically offered to provide women entrepreneurs with

equipment, various energy machines, and other renewable energy technologies to help women entrepreneurs invest in energy efficiency. On the website WEE-SMART, 60 women entrepreneurs were awarded grants of 135,000 euros (Women in Energy, 2021).

For the WEE-ADVANCED component, grants of a maximum of 10,000 euros were awarded for investments in energy efficiency for women entrepreneurs. The grants are designed to help women choose all the technologies they need for their business and energy equipment. For the website WEE-ADVANCED, 115 women were awarded grants of 10,000 euros (Women in Energy, 2021). The final component of the Women in Energy Entrepreneurs program (WEE) is the Pilot SIMPLE group. The goal of the Pilot SIMPLE group is to provide grants to women who have micro-enterprises businesses or especially start-up businesses. The project of the Pilot SIMPLE group is implemented in different municipalities of Kosovo such as Prishtina, Podujeva, Mitrovica, Gjilan, Graçanica, North Mirovica, Prizren, Fushë Kosovë and Ferizaj. Therefore, this grant is considered to be the lowest in the amount of 3,000 euros and supports women who do not have so much experience, and in addition to the grant also includes a 15 percent contribution from the applicants, and there were 235 female beneficiaries (Women in Energy, 2021).

3.5 Ethical Consideration

Permission to carry on this research was sought from the Millennium Foundation Kosovo and from the scholarship holders which have studied in Des Moines Area Community Collage (DMMAC) in Iowa, USA, as well as the two most prominent entrepreneurs in the energy sector in Kosovo and Albania. In order to analyze the proportion of women in the energy sector, I received data from the Tax Administration of Kosovo regarding the total number of private companies registered in Kosovo that operate in the energy sector. For the target subjects, in this case the scholarship beneficiaries, the students were adequately informed about the purpose and goals of the research and therefore were also given explanations for any unclear answers they had during my research and while conducting the interviews to facilitate their participation. Prior to answering the questions, all interviewees were taken through the mandatory informed consent procedure to obtain their consent to record the interview. This procedure was conducted during recruitment and prior to the start of the semi-structured interviews.

4 FINDINGS

4.1 Results from interviews with energy experts

From the respondents' answers, I was able to identify other important themes about how young entrepreneurs find their motivation before trying to open their own business. One of the significant reasons for becoming an entrepreneur mentioned by respondent (2) is family

business inheritance. In addition to the motivation she received from her relatives, they also helped her decide which steps to take first in starting a business. However, respondent (2) rated her family as the biggest source of motivation, as she received tremendous help from them, which led to the current success of her business and, most importantly, helped her to achieve the title of the youngest female entrepreneur in the energy sector in Kosovo.

“Being able to succeed with my business in a sector where not a lot of women are involved has made me appreciate my work. I see my business as one of the crucial tools to maintain and support my children with the proper education, and to continue the family tradition of business in the energy sector specially to pass this business in the future to my children.” (Respondent 2).

The idea of women becoming entrepreneurs is based on the fact of being economically independent, especially from their spouses, and this comes mainly for women who are divorced or who are not standing good economically. This motivates them and gives them the courage to first complete an education and later open their own business and become an entrepreneur (Respondent 1). On the other hand, the majority of women who have studied or worked abroad have benefited greatly in both their education and careers. Especially the scholarship beneficiaries who studied abroad had the opportunity to practically apply the knowledge and skills they had acquired, as they worked in laboratories and practically applied every subject they had learned in theory. What made their experience even more interesting was the fact that, in addition to the training, they were also offered internships in the most prestigious energy companies, where at the end of their internship they received certificates that they could use as proof of their professional work once they returned to Kosovo to work in the energy sector. (Respondent 2).

In the interviews, both women entrepreneurs interviewed gave the same response that gendered issues are still common in both Kosovo and Albania. Even in this century, gender discrimination is still an important issue for women entrepreneurs, especially when running a business. While interviewing the respondent 1, she was able to share her experiences when she opened her own business in the energy sector. One of the examples of gender discrimination was the arbitrariness of the tax authorities, where mostly men were employed. This discrimination in the workplace usually takes place when the opposite sex considers female entrepreneurs weak and unwilling to develop professionally.

“From my own experience, when I started my own business back in my home country I had to deal with a lot of things by myself starting from buying things for the office, doing all the financials reports of the company and maintaining all the documents in the office and so on. I remember the very first time that I went to the Tax institution in my country, as soon as they saw me that I’m a female, they would take a lot of time to check each document and they charged maximum taxes which I was aware!” (Respondent 1).

From the respondents' answers, it appears that one of the main obstacles for women entrepreneurs in starting their business is access to finance. Years ago, it was quite a problem for women to get loans from banks. They had to ask family members to get loans in their name so they could get the money to start their own business. To overcome this situation, Albanian and Kosovar women were forced to ask their family for financial support to overcome the barriers of finance since they had not saved enough money to open a business. While from the respondent 1 I was able to acquire an information of how she was standing financially from the beginning of her business (Respondent 1).

“It was very very difficult in the beginning, I couldn’t even ask anyone to loan me money so I decided to leave the country to study and work at the same time so I would be able to save money because I already had a plan from the beginning. As soon as I finished my master studied, I got employed in the most prestigious energy company in United States. I was able to learn a lot of things which I knew would be very helpful for me in the future. Besides that, I earned a lot of money which I saved so I can open the business which I have operate currently” (Respondent 1).

All things considered, from the respondent 1 I saw a very hard dedication and commitment from the beginning of her career, as a young woman who decided to leave her country to study and work at the same time, so that she could acquire the necessary knowledge to pursue her plans. On the other hand, it takes a lot of courage and strength to leave the great job she had in the United States just to come back and contribute in her own country by opening her own energy company. Unlike Respondent 1, Respondent 2 had very strong support from her family when it came to finances. In addition to the financial support from her family, she was also able to take loans from the bank. Fortunately, things have changed in this direction recently, as most banks, for example in Kosovo, give loans specifically to women entrepreneurs who want to open a business. That is, most banks in Kosovo are considered as a supportive tool, giving various loans just to encourage more women to get involved in business and support their startups.

Another important theme acquired from the interviewees is the network of connections created with people around the world. From the responses of the scholarship holders, it is clear that many opportunities were offered to them from Kosovo when they returned to their home country, but especially from the companies around the world. As respondent 1 stated:

“I felt much more comfortable working with partners from abroad because the cooperation is much better and they are much more responsible when it comes to paying the invoices. Aside from that, I will always be grateful for the company where I worked because they put me in contact with the most prestigious and successful energy companies which I continue working even today!” (Respondent 1).

One of the key obstacles for women in Kosovo is the level of qualitative education, which prevents them from succeeding in business or career. Considering the many tasks that

women have to perform during their life including here taking care of household, taking care of their children or the elderly, they always lack adequate education for these reasons. However, in addition to all the obstacles that women face, education in Kosovo always needs regulations that have a positive impact on the empowerment of women, while influencing and supporting women in the development of their business (Millennium Foundation Kosovo, 2022).

4.1.1 Obstacles and opportunities encountered for women entrepreneurs

Table 4: Obstacles and opportunities of women entrepreneurs

Obstacles of Women Entrepreneurs	Opportunities of Women Entrepreneurs
Gender stereotypes and discrimination are still common in the workplace	Financial support from NGOs
Gender barriers mostly in the fields of energy	Financial support such as grants, loans and disbursement are given from the Millennium Foundation Kosovo in partnership with Millennium Challenge Corporation in United States
Qualitative education	Business plans, workshops, conferences and various trainings were offered from the Millennium Foundation Kosovo
Policy regulations in the Energy field	Other activities such as business meetings with different stakeholders and joint lobbying were offered from the Association of Women in the Energy Sector in Kosovo
Balance between work and family	Some of the banks in Kosovo offer loans for women entrepreneurs to open their business

Source: Own work

4.2 Results of interviews with scholarship beneficiaries

The interview is divided into two parts, in the first part of the interview I asked some general demographic questions including the age of the interviewee, place of birth, education and marital status. The second part of the interview contains 13 questions for 12 respondents. In the interview, respondents were asked about their experiences as a scholarship holder in United States. They responded that one of the best experiences as a scholarship holder in the United States was the benefit of developing personal and professional skills and acquiring knowledge and skills that they could later apply in their practical part in the energy field. In addition, they were able to not only study but also travel and socialize with people from other cultures, making them more independent from their home country. Among the other benefits offered by the university in the United States, in addition to the high-quality

education and associated costs, were various professional trainings in the energy field. One of the most important things highlighted by respondents is the best hospitality and support they received from their foreign friends, which helped respondents build social connections with all other Des Moines Area Community College (DMMAC) students in Iowa. Another question addressed to the scholarship beneficiaries was whether they would be able to apply the knowledge acquired from the university that they have studied. The most common response was that studying at Des Moines Area Community College would provide myriad benefits, as all the skills and knowledge gained during their studies and training would be put into practice in a hands-on setting in laboratories. By using the latest technologies in the energy field, students can gain skills through training and internships and pass that knowledge on to other generations, but most importantly, enter the job market back home. In addition to the latest technologies they can use in the energy field, especially in renewable energy sector, the most important thing is that after their experience in the United States, the scholarship beneficiaries would be able to bring ideas for innovation to Kosovo that can later be used in a good way to bring something new to their country.

There are countless benefits and obstacles that most people deal with them in the labour market in Kosovo and specifically in the energy sector. Some of the benefits listed from the respondents are that the need for young engineers is increasing day by day, the latest technology is being used in all laboratories, there is an increase of involvement of successful and hardworking women in the energy sector, electricity producers from renewable resources, more jobs are available for young qualified engineers. In addition, the fact that demand for renewable energy and energy efficiency has increased recently has led to greater involvement of women in the energy sector. Another benefit that is highly valued by the respondents is the fact that they shared their experiences of how they were given the opportunity to complete internships in the energy sector, all of which were paid and that they felt motivated to participate in various programmes at the university to improve their skills and knowledge in the energy sector. As the fellows explained, some of the obstacles were the mindset of the people, the inability of women to show their skills and knowledge in the labour market, difficulties in finding jobs in the relevant fields in which they were trained, no highly qualified expertise, not enough opportunities for young engineers, gender stereotypes, and not many female engineers who are highly qualified for leadership positions. Other advantages include advancing technology and digitalization leading to the creation of jobs for female engineers, the free market and the continuous opening of jobs, and most importantly, that there are many opportunities for innovation and the development of ideas for students to participate in the development of these ideas and create something great for their own country.

The phenomenon of brain drain is also common in Kosovo. Considering the barriers that women face in the labour market in Kosovo, the majority of highly educated people decide to move abroad because they cannot find better job opportunities in their home country, so they immediately move to different countries where there are better life prospects.

According to the scholarship holders, some of the main reasons for brain drain is so accurate also in Kosovo are the limited conditions and opportunities for women in the energy sector, which makes even difficult for them to bring their knowledge, skills and capacities to the labour market. Moreover, there are few strategic plans for the energy sector, which can lead to the migration of people to other countries due to the lack of satisfactory conditions for a successful career and a good life. Even though there are many successful female engineers who have a successful career ahead of them, the main problem remains their low salary, which can lead to demotivation and discourage them to achieve their goals by trying to move out for better working conditions and better salaries. In addition to all the above mentioned reasons for brain drain from Kosovo, the main obstacle will always remain gender discrimination in the workplace, especially in the energy sector, where young engineers do not have the chance to get the job they want because most jobs in this field require physical strength and due to the prejudice that women cannot do the same work as men, they are forced to go to other countries to find better opportunities in the labour market where they can prove their skills and knowledge. Despite all these obstacles faced by young engineers and women in the energy sector in general, they are still motivated to work and develop professionally in the labour market so that they too can contribute to the development of the country (Scholarship beneficiaries).

The experience of studying at the Des Moines Area Community Collage (DMMAC) in Iowa, United States, has helped students learn various software programs, put theories into practice through training, work on many projects in various laboratories, and gain knowledge of the latest renewable energy technologies. In addition, they were also able to receive certificates for the internships they completed. The experience of these scholarship holders have been tremendously beneficial especially in the field of education, where they were able to acquire skills and knowledge that they can later use in their country. Thus, investment in education provides a significant boost to economic development, but more importantly, to personal and professional development. Recently, a lot has been done by various non-governmental organizations to strengthen the role of women in Kosovo. According to a study by the Millennium Foundation Kosovo, 26 women from Kosovo received scholarships to study in the United States in the field of energy, fields where they benefited greatly from the program itself. Aside from the scholarship program, MFK also provided 200 internships in the energy sector for these girls who completed their studies in the U.S. and for other women who applied through their link so that they could share their knowledge and contribute to the development of their country. Furthermore, a total of 415 women were given various grants of Smart, Advanced and Pilot Simple to start and develop their businesses, mainly in the energy fields. Last but not least, Millennium Foundation Kosovo offered another 20 women entrepreneurs sophisticated individual coaching by the most renowned personalities in the energy sector, in partnership with Miller Center in collaboration with Millennium Foundation Kosovo (MFK) (Millennium Foundation Kosovo, 2022).

4.2.1 Obstacles of young women in the energy sector

Based on the recent studies and Kosovo agency of statistics, there is still a huge number of women not being involved in the labor market due to a numerous reasons. As mentioned by the scholarship beneficiaries some of the obstacles that women face in the labor market in the energy sector in Kosovo are less employment opportunities in the energy sector, low wages offered in the energy sector, non-payment of internships in public institutions, difficulties in finding jobs in the relevant fields which people got educated, no high level expertise, limited access in the labor market especially in the renewable energy sector, small number of women involved in the energy sector, gender stereotypes that women do not possess the same strength as men to do the same job in the energy sector, certain policies and guidelines that are preventing Kosovo for achieving renewable energy targets, and in public institutions nepotism will remain a huge issue for the employment of youth generations (Scholarship beneficiaries). While in private companies there are not enough businesses that provide paid internships for young engineers. Hence, this leads to less network of people in the energy sector and at the same not enough connection of people in the energy sector where they would be able to share their ideas for innovation. Besides that, there are always only few opportunities given to women especially for leading positions in the energy sector. Even though, there are a lot of programs which are created from NGOs who support women in energy and a lot of grants given especially from USAID in Kosovo, but the main problem remains the lack of news, information and connection of people to receive all the information regarding the recent news about the grants and jobs in the energy sector. Considering all the consequences about the employment in the labor market, Kosovo as a country should continue to fight corruption so there will be first an order in the country to further work in the development of Kosovo. Hence, in order to overcome such barriers the involvement of as many women in the energy sector and the awareness of citizens about the role of women in the energy sector should be a priority, the support of women, prioritization of women in education and entrepreneurship, enough space for women to show their skills and knowledge so they would be able to contribute in high positions in energy sector, persistency of women to achieve their goals especially when they are educated in the required fields, practical part should be a priority to motivate women for work, various technical tools and skilled instructions for training should not be missed.

There are a lot of risk factors included along the way, one of them is access to finance and work setting. Considering the fact that there is still a difference between man and women in the workplace and the wage gap where not all the employees are getting paid equally even if they do the same job. Another risk is discrimination in hiring practices, where we could understand from the respondents how most of the men get employed in energy companies because the managers think that women are not able to do the same job as men do due to the physical strength that they have. Thus, women due to such risks women try to escape from such workforce and try to build something on their own so they do not have to give explanations to anyone and what is mostly important being discriminated in salary payments

(Scholarship beneficiaries). Subsequently, the major drivers that have influenced women worldwide to have courage to take the first steps and build up their own career is the idea of trying to become independent and successful in their professional career. Moreover, educational background together with family inheritance are seen as important reasons for women entrepreneurs to penetrate in the market. In the recent publications, we can see that developments in Kosovo and Albania are going in a positive direction compared to the previous years as per women entrepreneurs the number of businesses led by women is increasing day by day (Respondent 2).

Considering all the circumstances that women face in the society there were numerous obstacles that they face along the way of becoming entrepreneur which I have divided in two groups. The first group of the obstacles that women face is connected with factors such as creating confidence for women who start their own business, finding the right people who give the proper advices for business, providing access to financial resources including here any grants given or any support from the government or organization, lack of advisors or mentors for women entrepreneurs and start-ups, finding worldwide connections for clients and international partners, difficulties coping with the business risks, not enough knowledge and skills for entrepreneurial decision making. While the second group of what type of obstacles women face in the process of becoming an entrepreneur especially girls who are young they get discriminated in the terms of finding the costumers as soon as they open their business since not a lot of people might know the company and the person itself so they might judge the entrepreneur by the age, not enough support by the government or any other organization which might support young entrepreneurs and start-ups, not being accepted in any tender because of the working experience or any other requirement due to being the new company, not enough support by any other entrepreneur or other businesses, not enough financial support and so on.

4.2.2 Opportunities of young women in the energy sector

The benefits received from the MFK, program Women in Energy are numerous. One of the most important benefits that they valued mostly was the scholarship for students which has covered all expenses including here education, living expenses, costs of trainings and costs of extra classes in the university. From the respondents it is emphasized the given opportunity of trainings in all energy fields including here renewable technology and the use of the latest technologies and the opportunity to apply the theoretical knowledge gained in various laboratories. Additionally, due to the trainings which the students finished in United States they received certificates issued by the most prestigious companies in the energy field. Moreover, other benefits received from the program WE are qualitative education, acquaintance with other cultures as well as adaptation and functioning in a challenging environment, development of personal traits, expansion of perspective in the labor market, creation of new societies, and above all my individuals own independence (Scholarship beneficiaries).

Some of the opportunities which were offered to the scholarship beneficiaries after completing their studies in the United States are that private companies were more open to employee people in their companies. What is even important is that most of the well known companies offered paid internships with the possibility to get a full contract after finishing the internship. Conclusively, the opportunities came mostly from private companies because they were more interested to see how these students learn how to use the latest technology in the energy field so they would be able to transfer the skills and knowledge for the company. Thus, from 12 respondents, 7 of them got employed in private companies in the energy sector, 2 of the respondents got employed in public institutions, 1 of them got employed in private company in the energy sector but the department of IT and the remaining 2 respondents are still in search for a job but currently finishing their internships one in a private company and the other in public institution.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of findings

Female entrepreneurs are showing a tremendous impact in the creation of businesses and in the economic development of the country. Even though there will always be challenges that women will face in daily basis, there is always a need for support, assistance and motivation for them. Some of the recommendation which should be made to the policymakers would be:

- Support from the government for Start-ups, for women entrepreneurs who start their own business what is mostly needed is financial support, since most of them are encountered with many problems of not finding enough resources even financial or any other support that might be beneficial for them. Hence, it is quite important to support them not only financially but also creating assistance in any documents for administrative procedures or creating them network with other start-ups so they would be able to communicate much more with clients and share ideas.
- Financial support from the government or obtaining loans from the banks could also be another recommendation for the policymakers, considering the fact of how difficult is for women entrepreneurs who have start-ups businesses they do not possess enough resources to keep their businesses without losses. A great example for the government would be to create a program that would help entrepreneurs apply for grants especially for start-up companies. By giving them the adequate grants, they would be able to assure enough financial support from their beginning of their career as entrepreneurs. In the other hand banks and other investors are hesitant to finance start-ups especially women entrepreneurs since there is not enough trust and confidence that women would be able to create something without risking everything that they have. Thus, by creating such programs either for

government or banks that are directly related with finance would serve as a great incentive to assist women in running their own business.

- One of the most important recommendation for the policy makers is developing any programs, trainings or workshops for women entrepreneurs. Having such ideas for creating programs or internship would be very beneficial for women before starting their business, because not all of them possess the required skills and knowledge in business. These trainings might prevent women entrepreneurs from any risk from bankrupting or any other obstacle by giving them assistance on how to success in their business and at the same time assist them how to develop themselves professionally.

- Besides offering trainings and workshops, women should be offered free access in transportation which means all the transportation expenses would be covered to the exact location where the training or workshop will be held so they won't have issues covering the expenses.

- Another recommendation which goes along with the training and workshop offered for women interested in business programs, it would also be a great idea to offer child-care assistance where women who have kids would have the chance to leave their kids at child-care assistance instead of not having the chance to attend the training they would be able to send their kids in child-care assistance which the program might offer.

5.2 Limitations of the research

Based on the on the semi-structured interviews conducted with the participants, I could have gathered much more information so I would have a wider and a more comprehensive overview of my research objective of the thesis. But, not all participants in this case girls who were scholarship beneficiaries decided to be part of the research objective. From all 26 participants of the interview, 12 of them decided to take place in the interview while 6 of them where out of the country and could not be part of the interview, and the remaining 8 refused to participate in the interview due to their personal reasons.

Considering the current pandemic situation with COVID-19, the process of conducting the interview was very difficult. The process of the interview and the collection of data was within a month and a half period starting from the beginning of June until the end of July approximately from 2nd of June – 28th of July. I found it difficult for the main fact that not all the participants were willing to take place in the interview in the date which I suggested because most of them where located in different cities and they were working during those working hours while I had to drive to those cities and find a proper time for interviewing them which was mainly after working hours from 18:00 p.m. But, the biggest challenge was convincing them to have this interview due to the spread risk of COVID-19, where all the participants where obligated to answer all the interview questions with mask on which was considered a quite challenge for them in those hot summer days. Hence, I was constantly

calling them in advance to try to find a proper timing for interviews for each of the participants.

Another challenge while conducting the interviews was the time difference between countries, 6 of the participants were still in United States after their studies where they decided to stay there for another 6 months to finish their internship. I have tried to contact them multiple times but they refused to participate in the interview via Zoom due to the obligations that they had and also the time difference. While for the remaining 8 of the participants, there was also another challenge to interview them because 2 of them refused to participate in the interview due to health issues while 6 of them refused to participate in the interview due to some personal reasons which they did not identify in advance. Other limitations of the research that I had is the representative sample that I had because it would be better to have a wider representative sample such as interviewing older generations who are energy experts as well and who do have much more experience than younger generations. Aside from that, other limitations came across also in interviewing scholarship beneficiaries who were involved only in the energy sector, thus it would be much better to have the chance to interview also younger generations who are concentrated in working in different sectors rather than energy sector.

I have dealt with other challenges in different institutions such as Kosovo Energy Corporation (KEK) and Kosovo Electricity and Distribution Services (KEDS), where I had the chance to go and visit few offices where most of the women were working in different departments of energy. The majority of women that were working in such departments were quite old and they did not understand English language. I considered this as a challenge because when I asked these women to take an interview regarding my research topic they have been reluctant to speak due to the English language even though; I have told them that everything will be translated in Albanian in order for them to understand the whole purpose of the research subject. Instead, we only made a common conversation where they informed me for the approximate number of women being involved in energy projects and how many women were working in energy departments in such institutions. Most of the literature that I have used and materials gathered were in Albanian language where I faced some difficulties of finding the proper words to translate in English language such as information regarding brain drain in Kosovo, there were not enough sources that could fit to most of the questions that I made in the interview for the brain drain, that's why I had to do the semi-structured interviews and to find out through multiple questions where does the problem of brain drain comes from and what are the reasons that cause the brain drain of female engineers in Kosovo. The semi-structured interviews were conducted both in Albanian and English language, the reason why I made this choice is that due to the lack of finding the exact words in English especially for "brain drain" and how to find the proper explanation in Albanian language.

5.3 Recommendations

5.3.1 Policy recommendations from the interviewees

From all the data gathered from interviews we can see that there are changes being made every day regarding the involvement of women in the energy sector. As stated from the respondent 1, positive changes are quite visible especially this year in Albania, the Prime Minister, especially the current one, has given many positions to girls, and women in governance and decision-making, including the example of the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure who is a female as well, where this ministry has never been directed by women in Albania. Also a very good example is also the Ministry of Entrepreneurship and Decision Making who is quite young and comes from business background and is directed by female as well. The spirit of political leadership will be reflected in further services. Thus, this will serve as an example for the private sector to take and not prejudice women by gender but to look at their leadership skills, backgrounds and their education for this (Respondent 1). Some of the policy recommendation given in the interview by respondent 1 is having better opportunities, better work conditions, some type of support or any time of incentive that would help women entrepreneurs to develop their own company. Furthermore, the government should work more towards creating different kinds of programs to promote engineering, and to promote women in technology engineering. So to follow the models of other developed countries and the way they have encourage girls and women whether to study in technical fields or open their businesses in such fields. Moreover, another policy recommendation would also be the creation of any associations that targets women involved in business since there are not any any association in Albania of women who would support each other but also support their interests in front of the state or before lawmakers (Respondent 1).

While some of the policy recommendation suggested from the respondent 2 would be to recruit women employees actively since there are an enormous number of females who actively participate in the energy sector; provide training opportunities or any type of workshop that would be beneficial for them; provide flexible work schedules for women since most of them might have young kids who they have to feed before going to work or during the work-time, offer equal opportunities so there won't be any gender discrimination; an effective career mapping for women employees on how to keep their businesses growing and away from any risks in the labour market; provide provisions for self-care or for family support; policy changes to promote women leadership to get promoted in higher positions; work more towards policies for gender equality through legislations and so on (Respondent 2).

The other strategies for policy recommendation provided by the scholarship beneficiaries are to offer internship opportunities in various sectors and departments of energy which would help in the professional preparation before getting the job, also better working

conditions for women so they would be able to work efficiently and be more motivated to work especially in energy sector where physical work is needed, expansion of opportunities, exposure and continuous motivation of young women, to find potential entrepreneurs and motivate them by giving incentives. Also, get more support from the country by offer training programs, or other opportunity experience outside Kosovo would help in the professional development (Scholarship beneficiaries).

Additionally, other mechanism that would help women succeed in the business is the constant support from family and friends, improvement in the education system by providing the best new technologies in all the sector and industries, offer better salaries based on education background, support of various association and organization, motivate qualified people who study abroad by giving internships as soon as they return in their home country, support from public and private institutions, offer them scholarship to study in the most prestigious schools in Europe, offer opportunities for professional internships in public and private companies, offer grants for women entrepreneurs, offer various entrepreneurship and management trainings, awareness of companies especially in the private sector to get to know more the young generations to see their skills and capabilities, appreciation of employees specially by giving them any incentives so they would be more motivated to further work in public or private sector (Scholarship beneficiaries). Another suggestion from the scholarship beneficiaries is the establishment of adequate institutions to help young people get involved in the labour market, to have high level instructors for workshops and trainings, laboratories and various tools for energy sector should be provided especially in universities in the energy sector, and above all offering grants for start-ups companies and women who want to create different NGO's (Scholarship beneficiaries).

5.3.2 Additional measures and recommendations from author's own point of view

Policy changes or institutional reforms are always needed to help women entrepreneurs develop their businesses. The best way to support women entrepreneurs, especially if they do not have family or financial support, it is always a good idea to have someone to guide and mentor them along the way to avoid much of the risk in their business. In addition to the recommendations from the interviews, some policies should be undertaken in place to address the barriers and challenges women face on a daily basis and work towards women's empowerment. These actions and policy recommendations are as follows:

- Lack of financial support has always been an issue for all the people who decide to open their business especially for women entrepreneurs at the beginning of their career. Thus, supporting women financially by providing them with grants would highly benefit them in their start-ups.
- Besides financial support, another policy recommendation would be providing women entrepreneurs with any type of resources including here any needed

equipment as they begin their business as a start-up. Hence, having the required equipment's it would be much easier for them to further develop their production.

- The government should make a call for grants especially for new companies' start-ups at least twice a year in order to exploit the potential of women entrepreneurs in the energy-sector.
- All the recent information about the grants are usually posted in the official webpages of the government or any other organization webpage and not everyone have the change to get informed about the news which might be relevant for their business. In order to increase the awareness of people being informed regarding the grants or any financial resource it should be better to recommend a policy for public campaigns to enable the awareness about the funding opportunities which the government or any other organization might offer for women entrepreneurs. This can be done by organizing any type of event where a huge number of people would be invited so anyone would get the chance to be involved. Hence, by spreading the information in person rather than in any social media or any other media platform would be quite successful especially for women who live in rural areas to find out which funds are currently available and where they would have the chance to apply.
- The most cost-effective policy recommendation for the government or other NGOs that support women entrepreneurs in any sector to create mentoring programs so that women can have their own mentors to help them start their business, and avoid any risk by offering suggestions or advice. Meanwhile, this can lead to the development of the country and the performance of women in business.
- There should be more investment in creating much more facilities so women would be able to rent these places at a reasonable price where they would be able to open their businesses from the beginning without spending a huge amount of money just on the building or the offices
- The government should subsidize business development activities such as B2B, various fairs held in different locations, conferences, training or workshops, etc. for women entrepreneurs in the energy sector.
- The government should encourage and promote women entrepreneurs in the energy sector by providing facilities and incentives in establishing and developing businesses in the energy sector.
- Creating a database for women entrepreneurs would be a great recommendation for policy makers, as women need to be encouraged, especially when they start their own businesses. Moreover, through this database, they would not only have the opportunity

to build a wide network, but they would also be able to follow any meetings, trainings or workshops that might be interesting for their professional field. In addition, this public database should include all the details of the company so that this database can later serve as a reference for other people or international donors who want to donate in one of the companies to support the growth and development of women who own these companies.

- The Government of Kosovo should cooperate with the beneficiary engineers under the scholarship programmes of the Millennium Foundation Corporation Kosovo - MCC by involving them in the preparation of long-term strategic documents for the energy sector. These documents should therefore contain all the necessary conditions for the optimal use of efficient energy.
- Kindergartens or any support facilities should be created from the government to support women in business that would allow women entrepreneurs to send their children or in facilities that take care of elderly people. Finding the proper donors that would donate in such ideas would be beneficial for women to be more concentrated and more productive in their business activities.
- Advising centres should also be created in the country which would help in the reduction of tensions and conflicts between work life and family life, considering the fact how women are treated in rural areas where only men are allowed to open their business while women must take care of household and children instead of trying to exploit their capacities to challenge themselves to work equally as men do.

Considering the huge gap that exists between businesses owned by men and women, is just a small percentage of women who own business especially in the energy sector. Thus, in order to support women in their start-ups, the government should impose a temporary measure to reduce taxes for three years in the very first steps of their business this would serve as a support mechanism and an incentive for women entrepreneurs starting their own business. This policy measure would help women to get fully concentrated and invest in their business. This measure would boost the creation of businesses owned by women, would decrease the unemployment rate, and at the same time it would contribute in the development of the country.

Conclusively, following all these policy recommendations would provide a wide opportunity for improvement of the existing barriers that the majority of women face nowadays and at the same time it would support women to get much more involved in the business and reduce the huge gap that exists in the ownership of the businesses. Having much more women entrepreneurs involved in the business would be a successful step towards the development of the country precisely economically.

CONCLUSION

Supporting women entrepreneurs and their development in their start-ups or any other business that they possess it is considered as a mechanism for job creation, professional and economic growth. Although there is an increase of women entrepreneurs' day by day there are always barriers which they face in the process of opening their own business.

Based on the interviews obtained by the energy experts and at the same time entrepreneurs in the energy sector, one of the main reasons that motivate women to take risks to open their own business and become entrepreneurs is the idea to be fully independent in the business decision making. Another reason obtained by the interviews of energy expert is the huge desire to make their own money and profits for their company without having to be dependent in anyone else. Thus, in order to become successful and achieve success in their professional life, they have to pass in different barriers and obstacles along the way. One of the crucial obstacles which considered to be a key determinant is the balance between family and work, since most of the entrepreneurs struggle a lot to keep a slight balance between these two, considering the importance of the family in one side and professional life in the other side. Having that in mind how most of the women entrepreneurs dedicate most of their life to the family commitments and profession there are always difficulties keeping both of them as a wife and as a mother but at the same time to succeed in each of them. Hence, in order to overcome such barriers that these women face both in personal life and working life they have to work hard and be persistent to gain much more skills and knowledge every time. Being successful in business, especially for women in this century persistence and self-confidence are highly needed so they would be able to overcome any risks and to not be demotivated even if there might be any downs along their way. These two are key in succeeding and achieving the required goals.

Considering the significance of the energy sector for the country's economy and the effect of the changes, it is important to follow up all the changes and adopt policies in terms of gender equality in the energy sector. Kosovo as the youngest country, has taken a lot of steps toward this issue by offering scholarship for women in the STEM fields, organizing trainings and workshops which were supported by international organizations and any other private companies in the energy sector, internships were offered from private and public sector. Thus, gender equality is having a crucial importance in the energy sector. These changes should be marked as a positive sign in the legislation for a better future for the economy of Kosovo. Even though, the participation of women in the energy sector remains still low in number due to the stigma of choosing men in the industries where work is supposed to be physically bearable. Thus, creating policies, changing legislation, and giving some recommendation would help in the creation of jobs, participation of women in the workforce and at the same time it would help in the empowerment of women.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Povzetek (Summary in Slovene language)

Namen magistrskega dela je podati celovit in nepristranski pregled ovir in priložnosti, s katerimi se srečujejo podjetnice v energetske sektorju na Kosovu. Priložnosti, ki jih ponujajo različne nevladne organizacije za napredek žensk v energetske sektorju, kažejo izjemen vpliv (pritisk) na kosovsko vlado, da razvije boljše strategije za vključevanje žensk v energetske sektor in na koncu izboljša možnosti za inženirke in podjetnice. Cilji tega magistrskega dela so med drugimi tudi pregled literature o ženskem podjetništvu ter prepoznavanje glavnih ovir in najboljših podpornih mehanizmov za spodbujanje ženskega podjetništva; opraviti pregled energetskega sektorja na Kosovu in opredeliti glavne priložnosti za inženirke; identificirati glavne ovire, s katerimi se srečujejo inženirke in razumevanje njihovih odločitev za delo na različnih področjih ter odločitev za izselitev iz države ali poskus ustanovitve lastnega podjetja; in nenazadnje priporočiti strategije, ki lahko preprečijo beg možganov in spodbujajo žensko podjetništvo v energetske sektorju na Kosovu.

V teoretičnem delu magistrskega dela si bom ogledala znanstveno literaturo in pregledala poročila različnih domačih in mednarodnih organizacij. V empiričnem delu bom zbrala tako primarne kot sekundarne podatke. Za sekundarne podatke bom uporabljala predvsem podatke iz vladnih portalov in članke v zvezi z energijo, uradne statistike Kosovske agencije za statistiko, podatke Kosovske davčne uprave, elektronski podatkovni sistem Kosovske agencije za registracijo podjetij (KARP) in nedavne objave kosovske vlade. Za pridobitev primarnih podatkov bom opravila dva poglobljena intervjuja s strokovnjaki s področja energetike. Poleg tega bom opravila tudi polstrukturirane intervjuje s skupino študentk, ki so nedavno prejele v celoti financirano štipendijo Millennium Foundation na Kosovu, Women in Energy. Te študentke so imele priložnost študirati na najprestižnejših univerzah v ZDA s področja energetike in delile svoje izkušnje v zvezi s študijem v tujini. Na podlagi informacij, ki sem jih zbrala z analizo sekundarnih podatkov in ugotovitev iz poglobljenih intervjujev z energetske strokovnjaki ter polstrukturiranih intervjujev, bom podala sklep ter nekaj prihodnjih priporočil za podjetnice v energetske sektorju.

To magistrsko delo je razdeljeno na tri dele. Prvo poglavje analizira literaturo in opisuje izzive in ovire, s katerimi se srečujejo podjetnice s poudarkom na energetske sektorju, hkrati pa pojasnjuje priložnosti in uspehe lastnic podjetij v tem sektorju s posebnimi primeri študij primerov na Zahodnem Balkanu. Drugo poglavje se osredotoča na energetske sektor na Kosovu, vključno s podrobnim pregledom trenutnega stanja v energetske sektorju na Kosovu, vlogo nevladnih organizacij pri podpori podjetnicam in na koncu preučuje pojav bega možganov. Tretje poglavje vsebuje metodologijo s podrobno razlago zbiranja podatkov in deskriptivno statistiko, tako za primarno (intervjuji) kot sekundarno raziskavo (podatki o zasebnem energetske sektorju na Kosovu) ter kratko razlago etičnih vidikov. Četrto in peto poglavje pojasnjujeta ugotovitve in priporočila tega magistrskega dela. Magistrska naloga je zaključena s sklepi in končnimi opombami, ki jim sledijo reference in priloge.

Interview in Albanian language

Appendix 2: Intervista me Përfitueset e Bursës së Millennium Foundation Kosovo “Femrat në Energji”

Fillimisht ju falënderoj shumë për mundësinë dhe gatishmërinë e juaj për ta ndarë kohën dhe përvojën tuaj në Amerikë si bursiste e Millennium Foundation Kosovo.

Ashtu si dhe ju kam informuar paraprakisht, ky hulumtim është pjesë e master tezës time. Tema e këtij studimi është:

“Pengesat dhe mundësitë për gratë ndërmarrëse në sektorin e energjisë në Kosovë”.

Ky hulumtim ka për target të gjitha femrat bursiste që kanë përfunduar studimet në fushën e energjisë në Amerikë. Për më tepër kjo intervistë ka të bëjë me përvojat e juaja personale në Amerikë dhe se sa juve u ipen mundësi në tregun e punës në Kosovë.

Metoda e mbledhjes së të dhënave do të realizohet përmes intervistave gjysëm të strukturuar dhe kërkoj nga ju fillimisht të marr miratimin paraprak për inçizimin e përgjigjeve me qëllim të analizes së të dhënave.

Kjo intervistë do të ju merrë kohë perafërsisht deri në 30 minuta.

Ju falënderoj përzemërsisht për pjesëmarrjen tuaj në këtë hulumtim.

Intervista është e ndarë në dy pjesë, pjesa e parë në disa pyetje të përgjithshme demografike:

Emri dhe mbiemri:

Mosha:

Profesioni:

Vendbanimi:

Në vijim është pjesa e dytë e intervistes me pyetjet:

Pyetjet e Intervistes

1. Cila ka qenë përvoja juaj si bursiste në Amerikë?
2. Cilat janë benefitet që i keni përfituar nga Millennium Foundation Kosovo “Women in Energy”?
3. A do keni mundësi të i aplikoni këto njohuri që i keni marrur?
4. A shihni pengesa në tregun e punës konkretisht në sektorin e energjisë ? Nëse po, cilat janë ato?
5. Cilat janë dobitë dhe pengesat që ju i hasni në tregun e punës në sektorin e energjisë në Kosovë?
6. Cilat janë mundësitë që i’u janë ofruar në tregun e punës në Kosovë, pas përfundimit të studimeve në Amerikë?
7. Cilat janë barrierat që femrat në energji ballafaqohen dhe çfarë duhet bërë që ti tejkalojnë ato?
8. Si ka ndikuar edukimi i juaj në Amerikë në zhvillimin tuaj profesional?
9. A keni njohuri për femrat ndërmarrëse në sektorin e energjisë? Nëse po, na jepni disa shembuj në cilat rajone dhe fusha?
10. A e shihni vetën si një femër ndërmarrëse në sektorin e energjisë?
11. A mendoni që femrat ndërmarrëse në Kosovë ballafaqohen me sfida të ndryshme? Nëse po, cilat janë sfidat nëpër të cilat ato kalojnë?
12. Çka mendoni për fenomenin “Brain Drain” në sektorin e energjisë për femrat/grate në Kosovë?
13. Cilat janë disa nga strategjitë që do të parandalonin fenomenin e “Brain Drain” për femrat potencialisht ndërmarrëse në sektorin e energjisë?

Appendix 3: Interview with Beneficiaries of the Millennium Foundation Kosovo Scholarship "Women in Energy"

First of all, thank you very much for your opportunity and willingness to share your time and experience in America as a Millennium Foundation Kosovo Fellow. As I informed you in advance, this research is part of my master thesis. The topic of this study is:

"Barriers and opportunities for women entrepreneurs in the energy sector in Kosovo".

This research targets all women scholarship holders who have completed their studies in the field of energy in America. Furthermore, this interview is about your personal experiences in America and how many opportunities are given in the labor market in Kosovo.

The data collection method will be realized through semi-structured interviews and I ask you to first obtain the prior approval for recording the responses for the purpose of data analysis.

This interview will take you approximately 30 minutes.

Thank you very much for your participation in this research.

The interview is divided into two parts, the first part into some general demographic questions:

Name and surname:

Age:

Professions:

Residence:

The following is the second part of the interview with the questions:

1. What has been your experience as a scholarship holder in America?
2. What are some of the benefits you have received from the Millennium Foundation Kosovo "Women in Energy"?
3. Will you be able to apply this knowledge you have acquired?
4. Do you see obstacles in the labor market specifically in the energy sector? If so, what are they?
5. What are the benefits and obstacles you encounter in the labor market in the energy sector in Kosovo?
6. What are the opportunities offered to you in the labor market in Kosovo, after completing your studies in America?
7. What are the barriers that women in energy face and what should be done to overcome them?
8. How has your education in America affected your professional development?
9. Are there any women entrepreneurs in the energy sector? If so, give us some examples in which regions and areas?
10. Do you see yourself as a woman entrepreneur in the energy sector?
11. Do you think that women entrepreneurs in Kosovo face different challenges? If so, what are the challenges they face?
12. What do you think about the "Brain Drain" phenomenon in the energy sector for women / women in Kosovo?
13. What are some of the strategies that would prevent the Brain Drain phenomenon for potentially women entrepreneurs in the energy sector?

Appendix 4: Interview questions with the Founder and Administrator of SOLAR shpk company, Energy Expert from Albania (Respondent 1)

First of all, thank you very much for your opportunity and willingness to share your time and experience as a female entrepreneur in the energy sector. As I informed you in advance via email, this research is part of my Master thesis, where the topic of the study is:

"Obstacles and opportunities for women entrepreneurs in the energy sector in Kosovo".

As mentioned, aside from this I will do a comparison between transition economies where a chapter will be included for Albania.

This research targets women entrepreneurs in the energy sector, female engineers, and potential women investors or who are currently working in any energy project that would help in the development of the country. The purpose of this research is;

- *To provide an impartial and comprehensive review of the situation in energy sector and to identify the key obstacles faced by female engineers*
- *Find out the opportunities given by the government for women entrepreneurs in the energy sector or any support mechanisms from NGO's for female engineers*
- *To recommend strategies that can prevent "Brain Drain" and encourage female engineers to work for the development of their own country instead of moving abroad for better opportunities*

The data collection method will be realized through semi-structured interviews and I ask you to first obtain the prior approval for recording the responses for the purpose of data analysis.

This interview will take you approximately 30-40 minutes and your questions can be either in English or Albanian.

Thank you very much for your participation in this research.

Interview questions:

1. Could you please give me a brief overview of your company and what led you to taking that first step setting up your own business?
2. What are some of the challenges that you faced as a woman after immediate return to Albania to contribute for better energy policies in your country?
3. Do you see any obstacle for women in the labor market in Albania specifically in the energy sector? If so, what are they and what should be done to overcome them?
4. Are there obstacles aside to lead and inspire the future generation of girls in the energy sector?
5. Over your career, have you witnessed any changes in the energy sector that have launched more women into leadership position?
6. Is there any opportunity or support mechanism given to women entrepreneurs in energy sector in Albania? In this case for example from the government or any NGOs?
7. In your experience, do you perceive that women working in the modern renewable energy sector or seeking such work face gender-related barriers?
8. What about your company, do you have any women employed or how is the percentage of the people involved in your company?
9. What do you think about the “Brain Drain” phenomenon in the energy sector for female engineers in Albania?
10. What are some of the strategies that would prevent the Brain Drain phenomenon for potential women entrepreneurs in the energy sector?
11. What do you think, would it be better for the government to propose anything in this case or what should be done to prevent the brain drain in this case?

Appendix 5: Interview questions with the CEO of ALFA SOLAR Energy, Energy Expert from Kosovo (Respondent 2)

First of all, thank you very much for your opportunity and willingness to share your time and experience as a female entrepreneur in the energy sector. As I informed you in advance via email, this research is part of my Master thesis, where the topic of the study is:

"Obstacles and opportunities for women entrepreneurs in the energy sector in Kosovo".

This research targets women entrepreneurs in the energy sector, female engineers, and potential women investors or who are currently working in any energy project that would help in the development of the country. The purpose of this research is;

- *To provide an impartial and comprehensive review of the situation in energy sector and to identify the key obstacles faced by female engineers*
- *Find out the opportunities given by the government for women entrepreneurs in the energy sector or any support mechanisms from NGO's for female engineers*
- *To recommend strategies that can prevent "Brain Drain" and encourage female engineers to work for the development of their own country instead of moving abroad for better opportunities*

The data collection method will be realized through semi-structured interviews and I ask you to first obtain the prior approval for recording the responses for the purpose of data analysis.

This interview will take you approximately 30-40 minutes and your questions can be either in English or Albanian. Below you will find questions in both languages where you would have the chance to decide in which language you want to answer them.

Thank you very much for your participation in this research.

Demographic questions:

Name and Surname:

Age: 29

Profession: Engineer

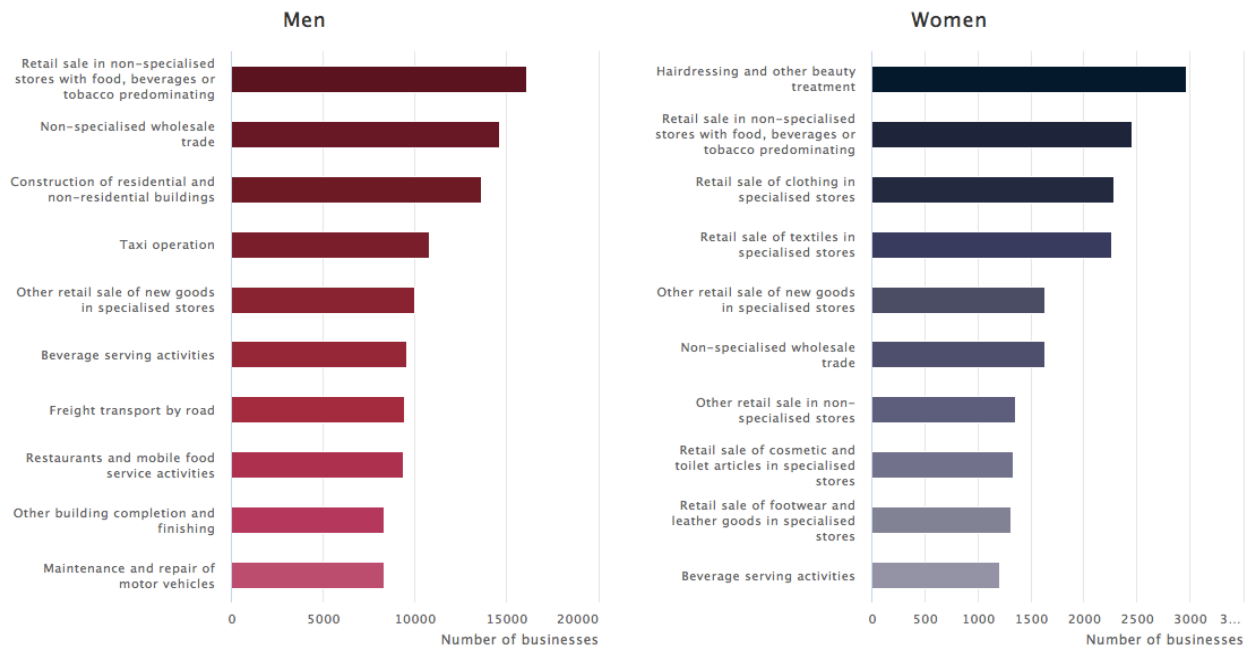
Birthplace: Prishtine

Interview questions:

1. Could you please give me a brief overview of your company and what led you to taking the first step setting up your own business?
2. What inspires you to work in the energy industry?
3. Do you see any obstacle for women in the labor market in Kosovo specifically in the energy sector? If so, what are they and what should be done to overcome them?
4. Are there obstacles aside to lead and inspire the future generation of girls in the energy sector?
5. Over your career, have you witnessed any changes in the energy sector that have launched more women into leadership position?
6. Is there any opportunity or support mechanism given to women entrepreneurs in energy sector in Kosovo? In this case for example from the government or any NGOs?
7. Did you receive any help from the government, any grant or any family support before opening your own company ?
8. In your experience, do you perceive that women working in the modern renewable energy sector or seeking such work face gender-related barriers?
9. What about your company, do you have any women employed or how many people are employed in your company?
10. What do you think about the “Brain Drain” phenomenon in the energy sector for female engineers in Kosovo?
11. What are some of the strategies that would prevent the Brain Drain phenomenon for potential women entrepreneurs in the energy sector?
12. What do you think, would it be better for the government to propose anything in this case or what should be done to prevent the brain drain in this case?

Appendix 6: Sectors divided by gender ownership

Table 5: Sectors divided by gender ownership



Source: Open Data Kosov

Appendix 7: Summary of findings from the interviews with the scholarship beneficiaries (First part)

Table 6: Summary of findings from the interviews with the scholarship beneficiaries (First part)

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	
1	<p>QUESTIONS:</p> <p>What has been your experience as a scholarship holder in United States?</p>	<p>(Respondent 1)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -developing professional skills -focusing more on hands-on approach practices 	<p>(Respondent 2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -skills and knowledge gained -acquainted with American culture -travel to different places 	<p>(Respondent 3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -gained practical knowledge in the energy field -prepared professionally 	<p>(Respondent 4)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -great experience -personal and professional development 		<p>(Respondent 5)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -one of the greatest experiences 	<p>(Respondent 6)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -meeting different people with various professions and cultures 	<p>(Respondent 7)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -gained skills and knowledge -professional and technical experience 	<p>(Respondent 8)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -high quality education -trainings offered -scholarship holder which covered all expenses -support from foreign students -professional career development -grow professionally and personally 	<p>(Respondent 9)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -very rich both academically, socially and culturally -hospitality of foreign students -social connections with other students 	<p>(Respondent 10)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -professional and technical experience 	<p>(Respondent 11)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -great experience which has helped me in personal and professional development 	<p>(Respondent 12)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -became more independent -great experience which helped me in professional and personal development
2	<p>What are some of the benefits you have received from the Millennium Foundation Kosovo "Women in Energy"?</p>	<p>(Respondent 1)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -scholarship which covered education and all the costs + extra classes -trainings in renewable energy technologies 	<p>(Respondent 2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -scholarship which covered education and all the other costs -offered trainings and internships in energy fields 	<p>(Respondent 3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -opportunity to apply theoretical knowledge in the laboratories -the use of the latest technology in the field of energy 	<p>(Respondent 4)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -scholarship which covered education and all other costs 	<p>(Respondent 5)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Professional growth -personal development 	<p>(Respondent 6)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -developed professionally and personally -pursuing education in a different country 	<p>(Respondent 7)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -scholarship which covered education and all other costs -grow professionally and personally 	<p>(Respondent 8)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -became more independent -qualitative education -acquaintance with other cultures -adaptation and functioning in a challenging environment -development of personal traits -expansion of perspective, 	<p>(Respondent 9)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -financially independent from the family -prepared professionally for the labor market -scholarship covered my studies and all other expenses -gained skills and knowledge 	<p>(Respondent 10)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -scholarship which covered education and all other expenses -various training in energy sector 	<p>(Respondent 11)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -scholarship which covered education and all other expenses -various trainings which were energy related 	<p>(Respondent 12)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -scholarship which covered education and all other costs -various trainings in energy sector 	
3	<p>Will you be able to apply this knowledge you have acquired?</p>	<p>(Respondent 1)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -the benefit of using the latest technologies in energy and skills gained by practical work 	<p>(Respondent 2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -skills and knowledge gained will help me through the development of the country in the energy sector 	<p>(Respondent 3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -opportunity to train and work with the latest technology in renewable energy and other fields of energy 	<p>(Respondent 4)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -skills and knowledge gained -new ideas for innovation -latest technologies for 	<p>(Respondent 5)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -mostly the practical knowledge gained 	<p>(Respondent 6)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -mostly the practical part gained 	<p>(Respondent 7)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -ideas for innovation and recent technology used for renewable energy -mostly skills gained through practical part 	<p>(Respondent 8)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -skills and knowledge gained during the studies -practical part in various laboratories 	<p>(Respondent 9)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -gains knowledge both theory and practice -the laboratories have been updated with the latest technology 	<p>(Respondent 10)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -yes, especially in renewable energy sector through the latest technology -practical part mostly 	<p>(Respondent 11)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -gained knowledge mostly from practical part and from internships and trainings 	<p>(Respondent 12)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Yes, especially in energy sector 	
4	<p>Do you see obstacles in the labor market specifically in the energy sector? If so, what are they?</p>	<p>(Respondent 1)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -not enough investors -only a few jobs for engineers -certain policies and guidelines that are preventing Kosovo for achieving renewable energy targets 	<p>(Respondent 2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -lack of jobs -low wages offered in the energy sector 	<p>(Respondent 3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -in public institutions, nepotism is present in the youth employment -in private companies not enough companies in energy sector to employ young generations 	<p>(Respondent 4)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -few employment opportunities -low wages -non-payment of practical work 	<p>(Respondent 5)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -[obstacles]-limited space and opportunities and the access in the labor market especially in the renewable energy sector 	<p>(Respondent 6)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -difficulties in employment -non payment of practical work 	<p>(Respondent 7)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -not a lot of work opportunities in energy sector -stereotypes in the work environment that women do not possess knowledge and strength in energy sector 	<p>(Respondent 8)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -[obstacles]-difficulties finding a job in the energy sector -nepotism -not enough connections with people -less network of people in energy sector -less opportunities for women especially for leading positions in energy 	<p>(Respondent 9)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Regulations by law on export and import should be improved -safety at work should be applied -the creation of a fund for the creation of basic materials in our territory -increase of cooperation between 	<p>(Respondent 10)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -small number of women involved in the energy sector -stereotype that women cannot do the same job as men 	<p>(Respondent 11)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -the problem of corruption -nepotism -many opportunities in the labor market in the energy sector, various projects given by USAID in Kosovo 	<p>(Respondent 12)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -lack of women in energy sector 	

Source: Own work

Appendix 8: Summary of findings from the interviews with the scholarship beneficiaries (Second part)

Table 7: Summary of findings from the interviews with the scholarship beneficiaries (Second part)

5	What are some of the benefits and obstacles you encounter in the labour market in the energy sector in Kosovo?	(Respondent 1) -(benefits)-technology and digitalization are moving forward which lead to creation of jobs -(obstacles)-the mindset of people that men have advantages over females create insecurities in women	(Respondent 2) -(benefits)-the free market and the continuous opening of jobs -(obstacles)-lack of variety of jobs, prejudice from society and low wages	(Respondent 3) -(benefits)-the need of young engineers is increasing -(obstacles)-no competition between companies to attract young people	(Respondent 4) -(benefits) - a lot of opportunities for innovation and development of ideas -(obstacles)-the support from institutions is small which results in stagnation of employment and	(Respondent 5) -(benefits)-technology and digitalization used in the most laboratories -mindset of people	(Respondent 6) -(obstacles)-inability to show my knowledge and skills -(benefits)-a lot of successful and harworking women in energy sector	(Respondent 7) -(benefits)-the growth of electricity producers from renewable resources, more jobs for young engineers, increased the value and work of engineers -(obstacles)- mindset	(Respondent 8) -(Benefits) a lot of young engineers who are highly skilled -(obstacles) difficult to find jobs in energy sector	(Respondent 9) -benefits-the need of young engineers is increasing -mindset of people	(Respondent 10) -(benefits) the demand for renewable energy and efficiency of energy is growing -(obstacles)-no high level expertise, not enough opportunities for	(Respondent 11) -(benefits)- internships offered -motivation of women to get involved in the energy sector -(barriers)-gender stereotypes	(Respondent 12) -Benefit is the support from different organizations, for example from MFK and MCC. -Obstacles are lack of women in the energy sector.
6	What are the opportunities offered to you in the labour market in Kosovo, after completing your studies in United States?	(Respondent 1) -private companies expressed interest for offering a job	(Respondent 2) -currently not offered any job opportunity in the energy sector	(Respondent 3) -the interest was higher in private companies in the energy sector	(Respondent 4) -private companies offered internships for practical work	(Respondent 5) -offered a job in one of the most successful companies in terms of renewable energy, solar panels.	(Respondent 6) -offered jobs in private and public companies in the energy sector	(Respondent 7) -private companies offered internships	(Respondent 8) -opportunities came mostly from private companies -public institutions were interested more in previous experience	(Respondent 9) -didn't get any job offer yet	(Respondent 10) -offered internship in most of the public institutions - offered job in the private energy companies	(Respondent 11) -offered a job as Customer Support and Onboarding Specialist at Radix	(Respondent 12) -experience and knowledge gained -private companies called for internships
7	What are the barriers that women in energy face and what should be done to overcome them?	(Respondent 1) -mindset for gender equity -women can't handle jobs that require strenth in installation -this can be overcome by (various awareness campaigns, promote women engineers, offer internships, scholarship, free courses etc).	(Respondent 2) -barriers -gender inequality -in order to overcome: the involvement of as many women in the energy sector, and the awareness of citizens about the role of women in the energy sector	(Respondent 3) -the prejudice that women are not good enough in energy industry -due to family obligations women cannot be committed to all the work required in energy sector -in order to overcome: various programs prepared for women in energy	(Respondent 4) -a lot of stigma about women working in the field of energy -the prejudice that women can't do the same job as men -in order to overcome: women support each other, motivation for inclusion of women in	(Respondent 5) -starting from the education in the energy sector and all the way along their career just being a women	(Respondent 6) -barriers)-working in energy sector is still treated as men job -gender inequality in job positions In order to overcome:give enough space for women to contribute in high positions in energy sector	(Respondent 7) -(barriers)-the prejudice about the ability of girls to do the same job as men -in order to overcome this: women should work even harder and they should be supported by other people as well	(Respondent 8) -stereotype of society -most of the jobs in energy sector are considered as men's job -in order to overcome: be persistent and work as much as you can	(Respondent 9) -gender stereotypes -non-approach as the opposite sex during consultations and project proposals -prejudice -non-implementation of a given task	(Respondent 10) -barriers: gender stereotype -in order to overcome: support and trust of women, practical part, various technical tools and skilled instructions for training shouldn't be missed	(Respondent 11) -barriers: not enough work opportunities for women in the energy sector -in order to overcome: offer more scholarship to young engineer to motivate them in further	(Respondent 12) -not enough work opportunities for young engineers -prejudice of people
8	How has your education in United States affected your professional development?	(Respondent 1) -valuable experience -laboratories were equipped with the latest technology -turn theory into practice by using various technologies in energy	(Respondent 2) -learned various software programs -turned theory into practice by trainings and developed my skills as a leader	(Respondent 3) -valuable experience, strengthening and preparing personally in the professional development as a women in energy sector	(Respondent 4) -gained experience in practical part -worked in many projects in various laboratories -developed me professionally	(Respondent 5) -Professional growth -personal development	(Respondent 6) -the connection between theory and practice -ideas for investment that would contribute in the development of the country especially in renewable energy	(Respondent 7) -professional development -gained knowledge in the latest technology for renewable energy -trainings and practical work in laboratories	(Respondent 8) -necessary skills gained mostly from practical part -latest technologies used in energy sector	(Respondent 9) -more confident at any job -developed professionally and personally	(Respondent 10) -professional growth and personal development -learned about the job marked through different cultures	(Respondent 11) -internship -received certificates from workshops in all the fields of energy	(Respondent 12) -more confident now in each jobs -latest technology used
9	Are there any women entrepreneurs in energy sector? If so, give us some examples in which regions and areas?	(Respondent 1) -Gentijana Alija - Alfa Solar Energy	(Respondent 2) -Pranvera Dobruna-Kryeziu the first women to be appointed as director of Kosovo Energy Corporation	(Respondent 3) -Fahrrije Hoti, women entrepreneur in the field of agriculture -more entrepreneurs in fashion and design but less in the field of energy	(Respondent 4) -women who are in high positions in various organizations and businesses	(Respondent 5) -Gentijana Alija - Alfa Solar energy, a leader who has her own company in solar panels	(Respondent 6) -apart from Millennium Foundation Kosovo don't know any women entrepreneur in energy sector	(Respondent 7) -many women in a leading positions in public institutions in energy sector in Kosovo	(Respondent 8) -I know many female engineers in leadership positions in public institutions	(Respondent 9) -Mimoza Cana- Gjakova, textile production Arioneta Doll - Gjakova, production of wood materials	(Respondent 10) -Gentijana Morina, Alfa solar energy - CEO company in solar panels	(Respondent 11) - a lot of female leaders in the energy sector and higher positions	(Respondent 12) -a lot of female leaders in the energy sector and high positions in different institutions

Source: Own work

Appendix 9: Summary of findings from the interviews with the scholarship beneficiaries (Third part)

Table 8: Summary of findings from the interviews with the scholarship beneficiaries (Third part)

10	Do you see yourself as a women entrepreneur in the energy sector?	(Respondent 1) -Yes, Consultancy company	(Respondent 2) -Yes, definitely a leading women in the energy sector	(Respondent 3) -definitely yes, first gain experience grow professionally and then make ideas reality by working hard	(Respondent 4) -definitely yes	(Respondent 5) -Definitely yes, in the renewable energy sector	(Respondent 6) -Yes, especially in the energy sector	(Respondent 7) -Yes, first in leading positions and then after gaining experience why not also as an entrepreneur in	(Respondent 8) -Yes, definitely in the energy sector where I think I belong	(Respondent 9) -I will launch my business idea, in which have been working for some time	(Respondent 10) -gain a bit of experience and then for sure, entrepreneur in energy sector	(Respondent 11) -for the moment no, since I see myself as working in cyber security rather than in energy sector	(Respondent 12) -Yes, especially in energy sector
11	Do you think that women entrepreneurs in Kosovo face different challenges? If so, what are the challenges they face?	(Respondent 1) -Mentality of people -gender disparities that women are not got enough in the energy fields	(Respondent 2) -prejudice -underestimation and criticism	(Respondent 3) -a lot of challenges but without having them you cannot grow professionally and develop your business as an entrepreneur	(Respondent 4) -equal involvement of women in all spheres of education and society	(Respondent 5) -various challenges such as prejudice, suspicion, and distrust that most of the women entrepreneurs face today	(Respondent 6) -lack of support from institutions in Kosovo -the fear of balancing between private and professional life -with the development of technology it has motivated women to contribute in the energy sector	(Respondent 7) -challenges: main one is financial support to start e new business -sufficient human resources to maintain and develop it	(Respondent 8) -difficulties first start with the lack of ideas and then later on how to develop the idea -plan -financing, risk management, implementation, market entry	(Respondent 9) -Social and academic challenges	(Respondent 10) -underestimation, unserious approach to women, low job positions to women and low salary	(Respondent 11) --women are given many opportunities to complete their studies and trainings abroad	(Respondent 12) --we lack women entrepreneurs in the energy sector
12	What do you think about the "Brain Drain" phenomenon in the energy sector for the women in Kosovo?	(Respondent 1) -the desire for better wages, job conditions and opportunity drivers -gender discrimination is the main barrier	(Respondent 2) -lack of jobs and low wages	(Respondent 3) - limited conditions and opportunities for women in the energy sector	(Respondent 4) -offer opportunities for women to implement their knowledge, skills and capacities	(Respondent 5) -it is happening in all sectors	(Respondent 6) -only few strategic plans for energy sector hence this might cause the migration of people in different countries	(Respondent 7) -by not having enough opportunities of work and less space to further develop yourself in	(Respondent 8) -satisfactory conditions are not provided for people to have a successful career and good life.	(Respondent 9) -easier access in labor market abroad -better working opportunities -better wages	(Respondent 10) -get educaten and the proper experience so you would be able to contribute in your own country	(Respondent 11) -there are a lot of women engineers but not a lot of job opportunities	(Respondent 12) -better opportunities abroad -better salaries
13	What are some of the strategies that would prevent the Brain Drain phenomenon for potentially women entrepreneurs in the energy sector?	(Respondent 1) - different apprenticeship programs -providing different scholarship for women -offering various technical courses for free -technical trainings -leadership courses	(Respondent 2) -ensuring better working conditions -creating more job opportunities -eliminating prejudices against women entrepreneurs	(Respondent 3) -inernship opportunities -better working conditions for women so they would be more motivated to work in energy sector	(Respondent 4) -support from family and friends -offer good job opportunities -improvement in the education system -offer better salaries based on education background	(Respondent 5) -expention of opportunities -unremittins work -exposure and continous motivation of young women -potential entrepreneurs	(Respondent 6) -support of various association and organization -training of women in energy sector -motivate qualified people who study abroad by giving internships	(Respondent 7) -support from the country -offer training programs -other opportunity experience outside Kosovo would help in the professional development	(Respondent 8) - support from public and private institutions -scholarship provided -opportunities for professional internships in public and private companies -grants for women entrepreneurs -various entrepreneurship and management trainings -awareness of companies, especially human resources -appreciation of employees	(Respondent 9) -infrastructure is regulated -increase of cooperation between local producers should be made -the creation of a fund for the creation of basic materials in our territory	-Establishment of adequate institutions - High level instructors - Laboratories and various tools for energy sector -knowledge-based assessment and not gender based; -creating favorable working conditions; sufficient salaries; as well as creating opportunities to grow professionally	(Respondent 11) -offering various scholarships -and grants for women entrepreneurs	(Respondent 12) --support for women entrepreneurs through internships -better working conditions

Source: Own work